The Common Ground: Case Studies and Portraits of African American Male Mentors and High Performing Mentees at an HBCU

Dissertation

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By

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ABSTRACT

Today, it is still more likely to read about African American males ages 18-24 engaging in nefarious behavior involving guns, drugs, and violence than it is to see their names on honor roll, dean’s, or graduation commencement lists. For the select few young men who have successfully avoided the high school to prison pipeline (ACLU, 2008) to attend college, this is cause for celebration, and at the same time inquiry.

The challenges facing African American students in higher education have been well documented (Arnold, 1993; Fleming, 1984). The need to connect with African Americans who have been successful in higher education in regards to increasing their self-efficacy (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996; Hackett & Byars, 1996), their persistence and resilience in college (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Smith, 2007), as well as their overall satisfaction in college (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) has also been well documented. Given these findings, the purpose of this study was to explore mentor-mentee perspectives and experiences that impact African American male persistence and academic excellence in an Historically Black College and University (HBCU).
The overarching question driving this research is: How and when does the mentoring relationship, created between African American male scholars/administrators and African American male students impact the willingness of students to persist and excel in an HBCU? This study employed qualitative methods and portraiture to generate, analyze, and report data (Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997; Yin, 2006). Specifically, two individual interviews were conducted with each student participant and each mentor. In addition, the researcher’s narrative and voice, informed by portraiture methods, was included to illuminate an African American mentee-mentor experience over time. The study is the first in the research literature on mentoring African American males to explore case studies of mentor and mentee perspectives in side-by-side portraits. Following established protocols for interpreting qualitative data, five themes emerged to characterize mentors’ and mentees’ values and needs: 1) racial uplift 2) mending 3) nurture 4) timelines and relevance 5) mirroring, seeing, and perceiving and 6) future path. Within each of these subthemes mentors and mentees expressed distinct needs. Thus the concept of like-person role model asserted by Tinto (1993) can be expanded to include specific features of mentors’ and mentees’ lives and emerging understanding of one another’s values. Further, findings from this research point to the importance of mentor and mentee positioning (e.g. leading, following, and parallel negotiations about the mentee’s future) and the role and value of spirituality in mentoring relationships. Overall, findings from this research support the assumption that mentors and mentees should be ‘matched’ along more than ethnic identity
characteristics alone in order to protect the inherently fragile nature of mutual understanding and acceptance in the mentor-mentee relationships.
For my parents, Austina Edwina and Howard Jerome Jackson, Sr.
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And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So God granted him what he requested.

1 Chronicles 4:10

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Our Deepest Fear

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

African Americans have long desired the opportunities and access that come with having an education. From slavery to present, this value has been omnipresent in the African American community. This has been an ongoing struggle in our community throughout history. Too often the road to acquiring an education for African Americans has been wrought with obstacles and distractions that served to stifle and destroy dreams of earning an education.

Historically, education for African Americans has been linked to a sense of liberation and a will to improve the plight and disposition of our people (Perry, 2003). Former slaves, Frederick Douglas and Denmark Vesey, are good examples of the aforementioned values. Granted, they never received a formal education, but they displayed a passion for education and vigorously sought it as a means to advance empowerment and freedom from the captivity of servitude (Perry, 2003).

Following the end of slavery, emancipated Blacks continued to place high priority on attaining an education and by 1890, one third of Black children were attending schools (White & Cones, 1999). At the close of the Civil War, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded to serve the educational
aspirations of African Americans (Allen et al., 2007). With access to education established and the proliferation of HBCUs established in multiple states, education became central to the expectations and aspirations of the Black family and community. These ideals have been reflected in the teachings and writings of some of the most influential men and women of our time including Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Audre Lorde, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary McLeod Bethune.

African Americans continue to place high regard on the value of a college education and enrollment consistently provides evidence of this aim. The number of African American students in college grew 45% between 1980 and 2000, and by the end of the twentieth century, 1.5 million Black undergraduates were enrolled in higher education institutions (Harvey, 2003). However, much of this growth can be attributed to the achievements of African American women, rather than to the community at-large. The number of African American women receiving undergraduate degrees roughly equals their representation in society at large (Corbett, Hill, & St. Rose, 2008). Conversely, African American males continue to be underrepresented in their rates of college completion. Despite substantial evidence of Black males desire to attend college, they continue to be less likely to complete high school and attend college than White males and Black females (Harper, 2006; Holzman, 2006).

Educational issues and problems faced by African American males in elementary and secondary education are not isolated to those environments.
Similar trends can be seen in post-secondary education (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Even though the number of African American males entering higher education increased significantly during the late 1960s and again during the 1980s and 1990s, African American men continue to lag behind their female and White male counterparts with respect to college participation, retention, and degree completion rates (Noguera, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999). According to Strayhorn (2008) of the 15 million undergraduate students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States, fewer than 5% are Black males. Levin, Belfield, Muennig, and Rouse (2007) noted that African American men between the ages of 26 and 30 on average had 0.72 fewer years of education than their White male counterparts. Additionally, African American college men have to contend with the perception that they are less capable than their peers, resulting in low academic achievement and even lower retention (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Harper (2006) noted that 67.6% of Black males, who enter college, do not persist to graduation within six years. While African Americans continue to demonstrate a desire for education, Black male enrollment and completion rates in higher education are unimpressive compared to other groups, most notably Black women (Cross & Slater, 2000; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008). Currently, African American men account for 4.3% of the total enrollment at 4-year higher education institutions in the United States (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008). Surprisingly, college enrollment among Black men is the same as it was in 1976 (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008). Harvey (2008) notes, out of the 73.7% of African American men who graduated from high school in 2000
compared to 79.7% for Black women, only 33.8% of African American men enrolled in college compared to 43.9% of their female counterparts. Further, data from the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education ("African American Women Continue to Hold Huge Lead Over Black Men," 2008) reiterates this gender disparity by noting that in 2006, African American women earned 94,341 bachelor’s degrees compared to 48,079 awarded to Black men. The gender gap provides yet another example of the challenges experienced by Black men in relation to the higher education landscape. The quality of relationships with supportive faculty has been identified as a contributing factor to some of these students persisting to graduation.

Some argue that the disturbing trends of low completion rates of African American male college students can be attributed to a lack of motivation or inherent ability within the Black community and among Black males in particular (Griffin, Jayakumar, Jones, & Allen, 2010). However, this is not the contention of the researcher. The factors related to the underachievement of African American males are vast and cannot be easily attributable to a simple set of circumstances; they are multidimensional and complex in nature (Harper, 2006). According to Cohen and Nee (2000), educational disparities have historical roots, in that, "Black men...have been victims of an intersectional contextual failure, (with a) combination of ineffective schools, neighborhood and individual poverty, (and) diminishing low-skilled living-wage employment opportunities" (p. 1196). Thus, it is incumbent upon the organizational, community, and familial structures present in Black males’ lives to engage them in the promises that a college education can provide. The need
for this engagement does not end once a student enrolls in a college/university. For students coming from very challenging social, family, and academic backgrounds, the need for quality personal relationships are critical as part of their acculturation and maturation process.

The historical underrepresentation of African American males as positive contributors to the higher educational landscape and the societal and systemic barriers to their access to culturally relevant educational support is one of the catalysts for this research. As an African American male, I have been subject to the same community, social, and systemic structures that have consistently failed African American males, but I have had access to supports that most of my peers did not. The influence of like-person role models (Tinto 1993) was pivotal for me in overcoming the challenges to acclimate and excel in the higher education setting. Examining the role these quality relationships play in African American male persistence and academic success are important to creating positive changes in the experiences of and outcomes for African American males in higher education.

Factors Influencing Quality of Relationships with African American Students and Predominantly White Institutions

In the limited research that has examined the quality of relationships between faculty, staff and African American students, two primary factors have emerged as influencing these relationships. One is that African American students may experience difficulty connecting with White faculty because they do not perceive them as realistic role models (Arnold, 1993; Fleming, 1984; Guiffrida,
Fleming (1984) found that African American students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) often perceive faculty as culturally insensitive (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Fries-Britt, S. & Turner, B. (2002). Tinto’s (1993) also concluded that while mentor programs are generally effective in increasing college retention for all students, the availability of “like-person role models” was especially important to the success of students of color (p. 186). Employing the qualitative methodology of focus-group interview with both African American parents and students, Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) concluded that African American students attending a PWI perceived faculty as unapproachable because of their stereotypical comments, insensitivity to African American culture, and generalizations of students’ opinions as representing those of all African Americans. Later research by Milner, Husband, and Jackson (2000) posited that African American male graduate students were more apt to listen to and relate with their African American professors. Their research further concluded that African American graduate faculty were perceived as being more able to relate to African American student struggles and were perceived as more trustworthy in their advice because of their acknowledged cultural/racial connections. Similarly Stewart’s (2002) research identifies the importance of understanding and supporting African American students’ sense of spirituality, especially in the context of PWIs.

Second, research in the context of PWIs suggests that it is important for African American students to be exposed to and connect with African Americans
who have been successful in higher education (Burrell, 1980; Giffrida, 2005; Sedlacek, 1987; Willie & McCord, 1972), as these connections have been linked to increasing their self-efficacy (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996; Hackett & Byars, 1996), their persistence and resilience in college (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Perna & Titus, 2005; Smith, 2007; Tierney & Venegas, 2006), as well as their overall satisfaction in college (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Fries-Britt & Turner; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, barriers to successful relationships between White faculty and African American students must be well-understood in order to make changes that benefit Black students who pursue their college educations in PWIs (Brown, Donahoo, & Bertrand, 2001; Davis, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner 2002; Giffrida, 2005; Seifert, Drummond, & Pascarella, 2006).

**African American Students and HBCUs**

According to Brown, Donahoo, and Bertrand (2001), faculty at Historically Black colleges and universities create a cultural ambiance (development of Black consciousness and identity, racial pride, and ethnic tradition) that is necessary for social functioning and mental health. Generally categorized as institutions of higher learning founded to educate the descendants of former slaves prior to 1964, HBCUs were developed by the American Missionary Association (AMA) following the Civil War (Brown, et al., 2001). In addition to the AMA, HBCUs were also funded and established by Black churches, the Freedman’s Bureau, local communities, and private philanthropists (Brown, et al., 2001). There are 106 HBCUs in the United
States. Most are located in 19 southern former slave states, territories, and bordering states (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia). Also, Michigan and the District of Columbia.

In a study of 34 Black juniors and seniors successfully persisting towards graduation at an HBCU and a Traditionally White Institution (TWI), Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) studied experiences that both challenged and supported their academic success. Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) assert the importance of “listening closely to what Black American students tell us about what happens to them and how they feel, act, and think” (p. 316), rather than relying heavily upon numbers like enrollment rates, grade point averages, and graduation rates as sole determinants of student satisfaction, retention, and persistence. Their study also illuminated the importance students’ assigned to the need to feel a sense of community within the institution and a willingness of faculty and staff to go “beyond the call of duty to provide encouragement and support” (p. 321). Students at the HBCU reported a sense of feeling at home on their campus with activities geared towards their interests, filled with meaningful connections with faculty and peers. Conversely, students at the TWI felt a lack of “a critical mass of Black peers and faculty and describe campus activities as being geared toward Whites” (p. 319). The study also highlighted a theme of energy on campus as either cultivated or diverted. Students attending the HBCU articulated an “enhanced energy from the tremendous
confidence they gained during interactions with faculty and peers” (p. 319). In contrast, students attending the TWI described their energy as diverted away from their studies by their role as the “token” representative of their race. In other words, those students perceived their voice was called upon to be the “Black voice” whenever they spoke. The lack of a family-like structure and engagement with Black faculty was identified as an exceptional barrier to successful relationships with White faculty at TWIs.

According to student satisfaction research on African American students on the campuses of predominantly White institutions, students placed high value on faculty that were identified as extending themselves beyond their job descriptions (Fries-Britt and Turner, 2002; Guiffrida, 2005). Overwhelmingly, faculty and staff who were perceived as highly supportive by Black students were identified as “student-centered” (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 707). In agreement, Strayhorn (2010) suggests that institutions should examine ways to increase student-faculty contact with African American males through roles that include “advisor to minority student organizations, supervisors of independent research, and mentors to African American men” (p. 98) as a means of facilitating “good practices” (p. 98).

Strayhorn’s (2008) study on the role of supportive relationships in facilitating African American male success in college sought to measure the association between supportive relationships and success in college. In his findings, Strayhorn (2008) posited that potentially due to the lasting relationships between students and faculty persons working pre-college and summer bridge programs, the
participation in these programs by African American students has the potential for improving postsecondary success rates among Black men. He also identified the central importance of meaningful relationships (i.e. faculty, peers, etc.) in developing the nature and direction of developmental outcomes of African American college students. Lastly, Strayhorn (2008) found that African American males who reported frequent positive relationships with persons on campus have a higher level of satisfaction with college overall.

Research further suggests that relationships with one another, college personnel, and an inclusive climate encourages African American student success and facilitates retention (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008; Tinto, 1994). More specifically, Hirt et al. (2008) identified three themes in their study of 70 HBCU administrators from 25 HBCUs. The first theme indicated that administrators at HBCUs believe relationships with their students nurture African American students in a family-like nature. These relationships were shaped by 1) “the ethic of care” (p. 220); 2) a student-focused relationship designed to facilitate a shared moral responsibility to encourage cultural advancement; and 3) relationships formed that served to sustain the relevance of HBCUs in higher education. Importantly, African American students attending predominantly White institutions report the same student success and retention when the aforementioned relationships were present and available (Guiffrida, 2005).

Many African American students enroll in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These institutions have long been recognized for the degree
completion rates of their African American students (Fishcher, 2007; Schmidt, 2007). Representing only about 4% of all postsecondary institutions, HBCUs enroll approximately 16% of all African Americans earning bachelor’s degrees, particularly in critical areas like the sciences, mathematics, and engineering (Baskerville, Berger, & Smith, 2008). Additionally, according to a 2006 National Science Foundation report, from 1995-1999 almost a third of African American doctoral recipients reported receiving an undergraduate degree from an HBCU (Thurgood, Golladay, & Hill, 2006), and the top eight institutions that produced African American science and engineering doctorates in 1997-2006 were HBCUs (Burrelli & Rapoport, 2008).

Other data reveal that several HBCUs including Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Fisk University have graduation rates that are well above the national average of 42%. Spelman’s African American student graduation rate is 77%, while at Morehouse and Fisk 64% of undergraduates complete their degrees within 6 years (Black Student College Graduation Rates, 2006). These data on the achievements of HBCUs are even more impressive given that their students are primarily low income— with 98% qualifying for federal need-based aid (Gasman, 2008). Additionally, HBCUs operate with fewer resources, including 91% less in endowments than all other institutions (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). These financial challenges, according to Merisotis and McCarthy, result in HBCUs’ spending only 57% of what other schools spend on instruction, 63% on student services, and 49% on academic support functions. Researchers (Perna, 2006; St. John, 2003; St. John, Paulsen, & Carter, 2005; Titus, 2006) have noted a relationship between
insufficient financial support and student attrition. Specifically, Jones (2001) stated, “The contribution to the successful persistence and graduation of African American students of adequate amounts and types of financial aid cannot be overly stressed. Financial aid is often the primary consideration in making the decision to continue or leave” the institution (p. 9). One of the many ways this impacts retention is through the acquiring of jobs by students to cover essentials while in school. While working is encouraged during undergraduate studies (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993), students’ grades often suffer when they attempt to work full time while attending classes (Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). While the need for financial assistance plays a significant role in African American students continuing or leaving college, the limitation of resources for these students, whether they be financial or emotional heavily influence efforts to retain them. These issues underline the need for further research that can increase persistence of African American students on historically Black college campuses.

Need for Further Study of Mentor and Mentee Relationships

While prior research has firmly documented obstacles to White faculty/African American student relationships at PWIs (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Hernandez, 2000; Hurtado, Faye Carter, & Spuler, 1996, Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Patton, 2006), and the value of mentoring relationships between “like-person role models,” much less is known about the nature of relationships between students and personnel on college campuses that enroll large numbers of minority students such as Historically Black colleges and Universities (Hirt, et. al, 2008). More
specifically, less is known about the role of Black faculty/staff as mentors and the role it plays in influencing African American male persistence in college. For this reason, the primary focus of the proposed study is to understand the nature of mentoring as one framework for conceptualizing the role it plays in African American male students’ ability to persist in college. The results of this study are intended to contribute to this void within the scholarship.

Significance of this Study

This research is important as the mentoring literature stands to gain tremendously from the examination of the impact of African American faculty/staff on African American males’ ability to persist and excel academically at a historically Black college and university. The in depth views of the mentoring experience from both the mentor/mentee perspective serves to provide texture to this research in a way that is meaningful and generalizable. In light of the consistent narrative regarding Black males as undesirable, undeserving, and lacking drive and ambition, this research is critical to the goal of seeing them for the deserving, viable, and worthy people that they are.

This research is also important for those serving in mentoring capacities and in programs that provide mentorship opportunities for African American students. Much of the literature on mentoring focuses on the role that mentorship plays on the person being mentored, not on the impact on the mentor. Mentor satisfaction and fulfillment are critical in building and maintaining a mentorship corps. Not only will this research provide insight into practitioner related issues, it will also be
helpful in developing an understanding of how best to theorize and support the mentor-mentee relationship, especially in the context of HBCUs.

The research will be guided by six questions:

1. How do you define the role of mentor?
2. How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor?
3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in the students’ lives?
4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s academic insights?
5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense of their opportunity to learn and excel?
6. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform the student’s identity as being a highly educated, African American male?

Methods and Procedures

Method

It has been argued that quantitative measures alone have been unable to capture the complexities involved in understanding the experiences of minority college students (Hurtado, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Hence, qualitative inquiry was employed for this study. Based on the need for more emic perspectives on mentoring, this study will be conducted with qualitative case study methods that enable researchers to understand participants’ perspectives about their lived experiences. I will utilize case study methodology to uncover both
what is common and what is particular about these cases (Stake, 1994) through the analysis of interviews (Patton, 1990; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1994). Five important components distinguish case studies: (a) guiding research questions, (b) plans based on theory, (c) a unit of analysis defining the case, (d) logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria used for interpretation of the findings (Yin, 2003). Marshall and Rossman (1989) add that qualitative research methodology values the participants views of reality and seeks to discover these views in an interactive process allowing the participants to create the research data in their own voice or words (Rolle, Banning, & Davies, 2000). As will be discussed later, analysis of the case studies will include inductive coding procedures as well as the use of portraiture methods that will include my voice alongside the views and experiences of the mentors and mentees. Through case study and portraiture methods, the history, context, and texture of mentor and mentee experiences may become visible.

Participants

Participant selection for this study will be conducted through purposive sampling (Silverman, 2000). Five African American male college students between the ages of 18-24 and between the classifications of second semester freshman to senior will be selected to participate in the study. My purpose in identifying students at different student classifications is to understand the role that African American male mentors play in persistence in college among students of varying classifications. Additionally, this sample will provide unique socio-economic, socio-
cultural, and emotional cross-section of students that I hope will allow me to draw further distinctions during the analysis phase of this research. The five mentors of the African American male student participants will be solicited for their participation in this study. By utilizing the mentors of the identified mentees, I will be able to provide a full picture of the mentor/mentee relationship.

Setting

The Jefferson Agricultural University (JAU) is a private historically Black college and university institution located in the southeastern United States and has an undergraduate enrollment slightly above 1,500 students, more than 98% of whom are African American. Several essential criteria contribute to the selection of the research setting for the study: 1) this HBCU offers initial mentoring support via a Peer–Mentoring program and actively encourages faculty to serve in mentoring roles; 2) with a smaller student population this HBCU offers a more familial space where it is possible to more easily engage in informal as well as formal mentoring relationships; and 3) as a fulltime faculty member and resident in faculty housing at JAU, I have a deep contextual knowledge of the university as well as an understanding of the expectations and experiences of the students.

Data Collection Methods

Interview data and interviewing methods will be used as a primary data collection method (Fontana & Fry, 2005, Stake, 1995). The interview is used to deeply understand perceptions of participants and is one of the most common and prevailing ways in which scholars try to understand our fellow humans (Fontana &
Frey, 2005). For this research, a standardized, open-ended interview process will be used (Patton, 1990). The interviews will be informal and semi-structured in nature. The advantage of such interviews is that free expression of ideas may be more easily and accurately facilitated during the face-to-face verbal exchange (Cohen & Manion, 1989).

Two individual interviews will be conducted with each student participant to get a sense of how they conceptualize, think about, and name mentors and their role in their persistence and ability to excel. This study is interested in gathering data related to experiences that serve to motivate and push students to persist and excel. Each interview with the participants will be conducted for 45-60 minutes. Individual follow-up interviews will play an important role in the cyclical process of data collection and analysis that is inherent in the constant comparative method. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), it is necessary to follow up with participants to focus or expand upon particular topics or themes that emerged in earlier interviews.

One individual face-to-face interview will be conducted with each faculty/staff mentor. Follow up interviews will be scheduled if after the transcription process I find that there is a line of responses that requires further clarification. The participant will be notified of this possibility at the beginning and end of the interview process. Participants who consent to be interviewed will be given the opportunity to view the basic interview schedule prior to the interview. This step will be included in order to give the mentors and mentees time to consider
their responses in advance. The goal is to encourage more meaningful responses, which in turn, will provide richer data. Spontaneous replies will be included by asking clarifying questions that will make it possible to elicit both planned and unplanned responses that will again aid in the gathering of meaningful data.

Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) argue that this style of interviewing allows the researcher to use both a structured approach as well as a more conversational style in order to answer the research questions. This style of in-depth interviewing is appropriate for this study as the purpose is to create the opportunity for participants to express their perspectives on mentoring and mentorship relationships as possible.

Data Analysis and Coding

Data will be analyzed using portraiture, a method through which to bring to life the participants’ stories of understanding and relating to particular experiences, such as mentoring (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). The key to this method is in recognizing that participants have authority over the meaning. Their words, tone, posture, histories truly matter in the way their experiences are described and interpreted. Like traditional qualitative methodology, portraiture relies on the practice of systematically observing and interviewing participants in naturalistic settings. In addition a careful reflective practice is required in this method, so that the researcher’s experience and the participants’ perceptions are equally valued, and yet understood as distinct. To this end, as Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis argue, portraiture has an expressed
commitment to conscientious attention to voices, histories, their relationships and their differences. As a researcher, former and current mentee, and current faculty/mentor, findings from a portraiture process may be immediately applicable, as they become reflective of my own history of experiences with mentoring, being mentored and being an active participant with African American mentees. In this way Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986) describes the methodology of portraiture as a source of empowerment for schools, communities, and researchers.

Coding

I will transcribe all of the interview data by hand. By engaging in the transcription process, I will be able to identify and formulate additional interview questions required to provide further context to the research questions (Charmaz, 2005). The data will be examined from multiple perspectives, which will allow for better understanding of the interplay of the themes that emerge in and among the cases. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) posit that in order to execute good data analyses, researchers should (1) read data more than once; (2) keep track of themes, hunches, interpretations and ideas; (3) look for emerging themes; (4) construct typologies; and (5) develop concepts and theoretical propositions (p. 130-131). Once the data are transcribed, I will take each case and break down key topics that emerge into chunks of data (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). By way of member check, at the conclusion of the interviews, each participant will be provided a written transcript of their interview and will be invited to make any changes they feel are necessary to honestly convey their position. In this way, the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba,
Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one establishes questions used to guide this inquiry, discusses the significance of this research, and provides an overall introduction to the study. Chapter two provides a review of the related literature for this research. Chapter three details the methodology and research design for this study. Chapter four presents cross-case analyses of three (of the five) mentor and mentee pairs, along with the researcher’s narrative of being both a mentee and mentor in relation to all three cases. Chapter five addresses the implications of findings from this research for the field of research on African American male mentoring experiences and success in higher education.

Limitations of this Research

This is focused research, necessarily limited by the unique lives and experiences of the participants. Thus, the findings are not intended to be representative of a larger population of mentees and mentors. Rather, the intent is to offer directions and possibilities for engaging in mentoring relationships in other institutions, especially HBCUs. The data are also limited by including only two interviews with participants. A more extensive qualitative study would include multiple interviews over time, in multiple settings. A focus group interview protocol might also contribute to a deeper understanding of mentor and mentee perspectives, whereby
participants would have opportunities to hear one another’s experiences in order to build a collective opportunity to build on (and disconfirm) one another’s stories.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through case study analysis, this research outlines five mentoring relationships between African American male college students and their mentors. Of these five relationships three will be analyzed as ‘dual portraits.’ This study highlights African American male students who are persisting and showing evidence of resilience in the midst of the storm (Swanson, et. al, 2003). This study is inspired by the need to address the historical marginalization of African American males across every level of education. This investigation provides insight into the successful mentoring practices of African American male faculty/staff with African American male college students that are both persisting and academically excelling in college. Through the use of interviews, their stories of academic success serve as part of the positive counter-story of African American males and their performance in college. Also, by identifying attributes of successful mentors of African American male college students, colleges and universities will be able to examine their own practices relative to the current support systems in place for African American males in their programs. After this assessment, informed modifications, additions, and/or subtractions to their programs can be executed. Ultimately, this study aims to make colleges and universities more effective in their service to historically underserved and marginalized populations.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter one established the research questions, discussed the significance of the study, and provided an overall introduction to this study. To recap, this study examines how and when the mentoring relationship created between African American male faculty/administrators and African American male students impacts the willingness of students to persist and excel in an HBCU. Specific research questions concerning this study were:

1. How do you define the role of mentor?
2. How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor?
3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in the students’ lives?
4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s academic insights?
5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense of their opportunity to learn and excel?
6. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform the student’s identity as being a highly educated, African American, male?
This research has many layers and is grounded in multiple strands of literature. The first section of this chapter reviews the literature on the challenges and obstacles facing African American males prior to entry into college, followed by reasons for American male resilience and underachievement. Additionally, a brief history of mentoring, mentoring practices, and successful mentoring programs are explicated. The theoretical frameworks’ driving this study is next, followed by the conclusion.

Obstacles Facing African American Students Prior to College

Research has indicated that academic problems that stand to stifle the educational progress of Black males begin early, largely impairing their ability to graduate from high school (Davis, 2003; Epps, 1995; Howard-Hamilton, 1997). In elementary and secondary education, teachers and counselors are far more likely to inflict negative expectations upon African American males as it relates to attending college than their White counterparts (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Epps, 1995; Jones, 2002; Ogbu, 2003). Black males are also disproportionately disciplined, more likely to face expulsions, and suspended longer and more frequently than White students (Hale, 2001; Majors & Billson, 1992; Polite & Davis, 1999). Before examining the mentorship literature, it is necessary to begin this review with the many challenges and obstacles African American males face during their formative years and ultimately the resilience required to make it to college. By better understanding these challenges, colleges and universities can potentially establish more culturally relevant and effective mentoring programs for these students.
Unequal financial educational investment between high and low poverty communities

African American children have borne a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty, economic and educational decline, and drug addiction in the U.S., and are at a much higher risk than White children for experiencing other socially and academically debilitating challenges that serve to threaten their survival (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Luthar & Brown, 2007; McLoyd, 1990). As it pertains to educational decline, Edmonds (1979) wrote, “Schools teach those they think they must and when they think they needn’t, they don’t. That fact has nothing to do with social science, except that the children of social scientists are among those whom schools feel compelled to teach effectively” (p. 16).

The social science literature is wrought with dreary conditions and experiences of African American males in education (Bailey & Moore, 2004; Davis, 2003; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008; Moore, 2000; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Strayhorn, 2008). Researchers note that terms such as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, and dangerous are often used to describe Black males (Jackson & Moore, 2006; Majors & Billson, 1992; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; Parham & McDavis, 1987; Strayhorn, 2008). That said, early approaches to understanding culture and race in learning processes in different models of development were rooted in the discriminatory philosophy of their time (Richards, 1997). Another glaring example of the disproportionate burden of educational decline involves the imbalance in the funding of education for African American students.
Ladson-Billings (2006) posited the following:

The Chicago public schools spend about $8,482 annually per pupil, while nearby Highland Park spends $17,291 per pupil. The Chicago public schools have an 87% Black and Latina/o population, while Highland Park has a 90% White population. Per pupil expenditures in Philadelphia are $9,299 per pupil for the city’s 79% Black and Latina/o population, while across City Line Avenue in Lower Merion, the per pupil expenditure is $17,261 for a 91% White population. The New York City public schools spend $11,627 per pupil for a student population that is 72% Black and Latina/o, while suburban Manhasset spends $22,311 for a student population that is 91% White. (p. 6)

These disparities beg not only the question of why they exist in such obvious contradiction to one another, but why no one/agency has intervened to require equity in regards to resources and other funding issues (pay-to-play, facilities upkeep/renovations, etc.). Despite efforts to improve “inferior” academic levels among disadvantaged youth, a substantial achievement gap still exists between the test scores of Black students and others (Booker, 2006; Jencks & Phillips (1998); Ladson-Billings, 2006). This discrepancy cannot be wholly attributed to the disparity in per pupil educational investment, but when the allocation of funds is so drastically one-sided, it is not unreasonable to infer the connection. The following section briefly discusses ongoing presence of racial intolerance and the obstacle it presents for minority youth.

**Subordination and devaluation of minority groups**

One can argue that racial tolerance in the United States has increased, but evidence of racism in American society still exists. This arises from systematic and institutionalized practices resulting in the subordination and devaluation of minority groups (Jones, 1991). Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer (2003) posit that
there are two consequences of subordination and devaluation for minority youth. First, minority youth often live and mature in high-risk environments characterized by systemic structural barriers to individual effort and success (2003). Second, instances of resilience, success, and competence displayed by minority youth in spite of adverse living conditions often go unnoticed and unrecognized, thus denying individuals a sense of success and accomplishment (Swanson, et al, 2003).

Unfortunately, when successes are acknowledged, the factors that lead to success and resilience in high-risk environments are neither identified nor considered for duplication (Swanson, et. al, 2003). By not identifying factors that lead to resilience and then replicating them, means the negative factors that fuel the systemic structural barriers faced by minority youth continue to pervade not only their classrooms, but also more heinously, their minds. If students are not provided exemplars and samples of success, they will be left to identify the only paths provided to them, which are often laden with activities that lead to avoidable failure and misfortune (i.e. gang affiliation, drug use and distribution, and early incarceration). In spite of the innumerable obstacles facing African American youth, they still prove themselves to be resilient. The following sections examine reasons for resilience.

Reasons for African American student resilience

Numerous research studies have examined the academic achievement of African American students (Freitas & Downey, 1998; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Rogers & Summers, 2008). However, the reasons underlying the
successes reported are not well understood (Slaughter & Epps, 1987). Despite having to contend with many obstacles, African American youth continue to succeed in school; however, far too little is known about the factors that contribute to this success (Stewart, 2006). In this section, I will briefly discuss some of the variables possibly affecting the academic success of African American students.

**Parental Involvement**

Researchers have suggested that parental involvement in youth’s schooling is a pivotal process by which parents influence their children’s academic success (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). This is typically accomplished through attendance at teacher conferences and other school activities like open houses and extracurricular activities. It is through activities and participation in these kinds of school events that parents are able to demonstrate the importance they attach to schooling and academic achievement (Stewart, 2006). It is reported that parents who are involved in their children’s school experience are likely to place high emphasis on schooling and school related activities (Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). Thus, influencing their children to be more immersed in their own academic achievement and overall academic and developmental success.

**Student motivation**

Although parental influences may be a powerful indicator of student academic achievement, there are other factors that directly or indirectly affect students’ academic success. Reynolds (1991) investigated the relationship between student motivation and academic achievement. He concluded that academic
motivation exerted small direct and indirect effects when geographic, home, peer, and school variables were included in his model.

Several other researchers have found that individual motivation positively influences academic performance (Eccles, Adler, & Meece, 1984; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Keeves, 1986. Additionally, Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler, 1992 found that individual motivation positively and significantly predicted academic achievement in a sample of African American students with low socio-economic status.

A sense of school and school membership

The school environment and the students’ sense of belonging may foster or hinder students’ academic achievement. Schools emit their own unique influence on the academic achievement of their students through both the school climate and teachers (Stewart, 2006). Schools identified as effective, normally are identified by above-average student achievement scores, have been found to have strong instructional leadership from the principal, closely monitors student progress, have high expectations for students, establishes clear goals, and has an orderly learning environment (Edmonds, 1979). This is equally true for the influence and impact of the quality of school life on the adjustment and academic performance of African American students (Stewart, 2006). The academic performance of African American students is heightened when they perceive their teachers and other school personnel as supportive and helpful (Pollard, 1989).
Additionally, school membership or belonging is cited as another reason for student resilience. In some research, belonging is defined as student perception of teacher warmth; in other studies it involves the level of student classroom participation, and in some inquiries it is defined as student engagement (Booker, 2006). In spite of the variations in the operational definitions of achievement and belonging in these studies, a broad view of the impact of belonging on achievement does materialize (Powell & Jacob-Arriola, 2003). When belonging involves student perception of teacher support, encouragement, and warmth, achievement is directly and significantly related (Booker, 2006). The following section examines the reasons students underachieve.

Reasons offered for African American student underachievement

Despite almost 40 years of urban school research and reform aimed at improving disadvantaged student achievement performance, current data on urban achievement reveal that these programs have not accomplished what they set out to do (Becker & Luthar, 2002). In this section, I will examine factors in the literature that suggest why underachievement is still a major concern.

The impact of economic hardship

African American children always have taken on a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty and economic decline in America, and they are at a significantly higher risk than White children for experiencing an array of socio-emotional problems (McLoyd, 1990). Bronfenbrenner (as cited in McLoyd, 1990) espoused the impact of economic hardship on family processes as a function of
personal characteristics of individual family members, including the child. Its principal assumptions are that:

...(a) poverty and economic loss diminish the capacity for supportive, consistent, and involved parenting; (b) a major mediator of the link between economic hardship and parenting behavior is psychological distress deriving from an excess of negative life events, undesirable chronic conditions, and the absence and disruption of marital bonds; (c) economic loss and poverty affect children indirectly through their impact on the parent’s behavior toward the child; and (d) father-child relations under conditions of economic hardship depend on the quality of relations between the mother and father. (p. 312).

Consequently, under these conditions, distressed mothers’ increased the use of aversive, coercive discipline in turn contributing to antisocial behavior in their children (McLoyd, 1990). This behavior resulted in continued underachievement in these students.

In creating a comprehensive theory that takes into account both normative developmental processes and specific risks faced by African American youth, Spencer (2003) acknowledged the following: (1) instances of resilience, success, and competence displayed by minority youth in spite of adverse living conditions often goes unnoticed and unrecognized, hence denying individuals a sense of success and accomplishment (Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003); and (2) that even when successes are acknowledged, the factors that lead to success and resilience in high-risk environments are neither identified nor considered (Cunningham, 1999). This creates a gap both in the support and achievement of African Americans males beginning as early as elementary school. Spencer (as cited in Swanson et al., 2003):

...noted that a decline in scholastic achievement for African American males begins in the 2nd grade, and reinforced by academic tracking and
negative stereotyping by influential adults, can become fully entrenched by the 4th grade. African American males are particularly vulnerable because they face significant negative stereotyping. It can be assumed that by early childhood, cognitive egocentrism associated with the preschool years can no longer protect them from negative teacher perceptions. Furthermore, awareness of how others perceive them continues and, in fact heightens during middle and late adolescence (Cunningham, 1999). (p. 617)

The need for a systems-focused theoretical framework that can analyze, represent, and explain the mechanisms of experiences and outcomes of risks facing African American youth cannot be overstated. The following sections will review literature regarding mentoring and mentorship practices.

Mentoring and mentorship practices

The Greek story of Mentor

For those unfamiliar with Homer’s Odyssey, I will briefly review the story. Mentoring dates back far before the ancient Greeks and the character of Odysseus, however mentoring is most often connected with his character in the story.

Odysseus, king of Ithaca, left to fight in the Trojan War, leaving his wife and infant son Telemachus at home. He designated his old friend Mentor as guardian to his son and to the royal household, anticipating a mighty victory and quick return home. However, much to Odysseus’s dismay, the war lasted 10 years. Having incurred the wrath of the gods, he was made to wander another 10 years. Meanwhile back in Ithaca, young nobles were occupying his palace in hopes of usurping power.

Eventually, the goddess Athena intervened to ensure Odysseus’ safe return. Part of her role was to prepare Telemachus to be reunited with his father. She appeared to him in several forms, including the human form of Mentor. After Odysseus’ reunion
with Telemachus, by then aged 21, king and prince fought off the usurpers and regained control of Ithaca.

Mentoring articles that focus on the figure of Mentor himself (Anderson & Lucasse Shannon, 1995; Haensley & Parsons, 1993) refer to him as wise, kind, a surrogate parent, a trusted advisor, an educator, and guide. Additionally, his role is described as nurturing, supporting, protecting, role modeling, and possessing a visionary perception of his ward’s true potential. These are special attributes that carry responsibilities that everyone is not equipped to attend to. These attributes are “seen as demanding integrity, personal investment, and the development of a relationship with the young man based on a deep mutual affection and respect (Colley, 2001, p. 182). It is in the spirit of these descriptions of Mentor that I set my gaze on the role of mentorship in the present day.

Mentorship

Definitions and Descriptions of Mentoring

Mentoring as a concept dates back thousands of years (Dickey, 1997). Stemming from Greek mythology, the word “mentor” has its roots in Homer’s Odyssey. Notwithstanding its long history, there lacks a consistent and widely accepted definition of mentoring (Dickey, 1997 and Zimmerman & Danette, 2007), theory of explanation of what roles and functions are involved in the mentoring experience, and how these experiences are perceived by college students (Jacobi, 1991 and Philip & Hendry, 2000). According to Crisp and Cruz (2009), with over 50 definitions of mentoring there is significant ambiguity surrounding the definition of
mentoring and how it is used throughout the literature. For example, for some researchers the term mentoring has been used to describe a specific set of activities enacted by a mentor (Bowman and Bowman, 1990), while other researchers have defined mentoring in terms of a concept or process (Campbell & Campbell, 1997 and Roberts, 2000).

Further, the literature includes definitions specific to, and reflective of the researcher’s discipline. Approaching mentoring from a business perspective, Roberts (2000) defined it as “a formalized process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, so as to facilitate that person’s career and personal development” (p. 162). Correspondingly, Campbell and Campbell (1997) considered mentoring as a set of behaviors in which experienced, more seasoned members of the organization provide support to less experienced employees to increase the likelihood that new employees become successful members of the organization.

Within the field of higher education, there is not a consistent definition of mentoring and it has been repeatedly noted within the literature (Dickey, 1996; Miller, 2002; Rodriguez, 1995). Prevailing definitions of mentoring have often been broadly defined and in some instances lacking completely. For example, Brown, Davis, and McClendon (1999) and Murray (2001) both broadly defined mentoring as a one-on-one relationship between an experienced and less experienced person for the purpose of learning or developing specific competencies. Conversely,
Blackwell (1989) more specifically defined mentoring positing that mentoring "is a process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (p. 9). Strayhorn (2007) defined mentoring as the process by which a student or protégé is positively socialized by a faculty member or mentor into the institution and/or profession.

In other instances, educational researchers have not explicitly provided an operational definition of mentoring (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Rodger & Trembly, 2003). It is not uncommon in qualitative studies that the definition of mentoring is "revealed by participants, allowing the definition to be reflective or representative of their own academic experience" (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, p. 528). Hence, the need to firmly define mentoring within the context of qualitative inquiry is subjective and the goal of the study should be considered when broaching this decision. Additionally, quantitative studies have also failed to provide a clear description of mentoring by which a proper examination of the impact of a mentoring program can be conducted.

However, Jacobi’s (1991) review of mentoring literature identified three ways in which researchers agreed about mentorship. First, researchers shared the opinion that mentoring relationships are focused on the growth and accomplishment of an individual and include several forms of assistance (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Haring, 1999; Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Second, they concurred that a mentoring experience may include broad forms of support
including assistance with professional career development (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Brown et al., 1999; Kram, 1985), role modeling (Brown et al., 1999), and psychological support (Green & Bauer, 1995; Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Researchers have agreed that these broad forms of support should also include planned activities with a faculty member (Collier & Morgan, 2006; Ishiyama, 2007). Outside of those that are listed here, there has been little agreement regarding the specific activities that should be included as part of the forms of support to students. For example, Collier and Morgan (2006) provided mentoring activities that included access to peer mentoring videos, weekly college adjustment tips and participation in quarterly discussion groups, whereas Ishiyama (2007) provided support to students in the form of participation in undergraduate research, whilst Pagan and Edwards-Wilson’s (2003) mentoring activities were limited to two or more meetings and telephone conversations with a faculty member and letters from the program office.

Third is the agreement among researchers within the literature that mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Green & Bauer, 1995; Kram & Isabella, 1985). However, with the advent of social media and widespread access to technology like the internet that drives it, what is considered personal has now been enhanced (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Collier & Morgan, 2006). Additionally, with advancements in mobile communication, texting in particular, being able to be in continuous and instantaneous communication with
protégés has forever changed the mentoring relationship in terms of reciprocal access.

**The Role of the Mentor**

Within the higher education mentoring literature, the role of mentor has not been exclusive to faculty. Many of the core functions of mentorship have been shown to be provided by peers, friends, religious leaders, college and university staff, senior or graduate students, and/or family (Kram & Isabella, 1985). According to Kram and Isabella (1985), not only do peers have the same potential to serve the critical functions of mentoring, but that it is more likely to be available to individuals. They outline a continuum of peer relationships including the information peer, collegial peer, and the special peer. In the information peer relationship, the mentee benefits the most from the exchange of information about their work and about the organization. The collegial peer relationship is characterized by a moderate level of trust and self-disclosure and distinguishes itself from the information peer by the inclusion of increasingly complex individual roles and by widening boundaries that extends to emotional support, feedback, and confirmation. The primary functions of the collegial peer are career strategizing, job-related feedback, and friendship. Lastly, the special peer is the most intimate form of peer relationship and it is characterized by having the widest range of support including confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship (Kram & Isabella, 1985).
Philip and Hendry (2000) identified five types of naturally occurring mentoring relationships adolescents and young adults may experience including: classic mentoring (one-on-on relationship between experienced adult and a younger person, similar to an apprentice), individual-team (young group of people look to an individual or a few individuals for advice), friend-to-friend (offers a safety net, common among women friends), peer-group (common among a group of friends, often when exploring an issue), and long-term relationships with “risk taking” adults (similar to classic mentoring, but the person being mentored has a history of rebellion).

Identification of mentees and benefits and costs of mentorship

A number of authors acknowledge that there are potential benefits as well as costs to mentoring (Green & Bauer, 1995; Kram, 1985). One of the intrinsic satisfactions that mentors derive from the mentor/mentee relationship is from spotting untapped talent, and watching the protégé grow and develop (Green & Bauer, 1995). Not surprisingly, mentoring becomes a source of social support for the mentor. According to Jacobi (1991), the protégé comes to serve as a trusted and respected colleague. Mentoring may also enhance the mentor’s performance and reputation potentially leading to categorical rewards, particularly in more formalized mentoring arrangements (Ragins & Scandura, 1993). Conversely, mentoring can be costly, leading to frustration, exploitive or unhealthy relationships, or reduced performance on the part of the mentor (Green & Bauer, 1995; Ragins & Scandura, 1993). With the potential for high benefits or high costs
ever looming, mentors are likely to be more selective as their experience and awareness of the potential positive and negative outcomes become clearer. Green and Bauer (1995) assert that mentors “are more inclined to provide mentoring to individuals who have more potential to deliver benefits, as opposed to costs” (p. 540). In other words, the rules for forming a relationship with any person, whether for personal or professional reasons do not disappear in mentor/mentee relationships.

Accordingly, in Kram’s (1983) argument of the initiation stage of mentoring, she asserts that mentoring is more likely for protégés who are seen as having talent, drive, and positive attitudes toward their work. Also, Healy and Wechert (1990) suggest that “…individuals must often show exceptional promise to be accorded protégé status” p. 20. In Noe’s (1988) dialogue about women and mentoring, he invokes the notion of leader-member exchange (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) as a sound way to understand why mentoring relationships form. He posited that mentoring, an in-group relationship, forms when potential mentors perceive subordinates to be competent, trustworthy, and motivated to take on responsibilities (Noe, 1988). Allen, Poteet, and Russell (2000), found in their study of 282 mentors, that mentors were more likely to choose a protégé based on perceptions regarding the protégé’s ability/potential than based on perceptions regarding the protégé’s need for help. Further, this study found that women were more likely to choose a protégé based on the protégé’s perceived ability than were men.
Selection of Mentors by Mentees

Protégés identify their own unique sets of desirable characteristics of mentors. In Sayeski and Paulsen’s (2012) study of cooperating teachers as indicators of effective mentoring, they identified three concrete practices for the development of cooperating teachers: (1) the role of “technical-rational support” in relationship to the concept of “transformative” mentoring; (2) the tension between the provision of ideas and suggestions and the ability to allow students to explore and experiment within the classroom; and (3) the relationship between good teachers and successful mentors (pp. 125-126). This study included evaluations from 389 student teachers’ evaluations of their cooperating teacher. Across the literature, feedback is identified as one of the top desired traits of mentors. Additionally, mentoring training models place high value on scaffolding or collaborative mentoring (Granott, 1993) or cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994). In both cases, mentors do not provide explicit suggestions or recommendations, opting to guide the novice through questions and programs in order to allow the pre-service teacher the opportunity to reflect upon their own practice and internalize a mindset for evaluating his or her own practice. More pertinent to mentoring, Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) assert that mentees value the traits of being explicit in the offering of suggestions as they develop their teaching skills. The research also found that frequent, direct feedback, inclusive of specific suggestions and high quality questions that prompt them to reflect on their own practices are desirable traits. The last two traits identified as desirable in a mentor was the ability to serve as a
model of how to effectively teach, while also providing the pre-service teacher room to experiment and try new and different things. In other words, providing the mentee a sense that though there are traits the mentor wants the mentee to acquire, the goal in mentoring is not to coerce the mentee into becoming a mini version of the mentor, rather the best version of who the mentee is meant to be. An interesting result of this study was the notion that not all good teachers make good mentors. Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) assert that “Only good teachers can be good mentors” p. 125. They further lament, traits of these good teachers include modeling what they preach, and not only coaching and being supportive, but providing examples of how to be a good teacher. These findings connote that everyone is not meant to be a mentor and there are valuable attributes that should be considered when taking on the responsibility of mentoring and when selecting someone to serve as your mentor. It is important to note here that there is little literature on the selection of mentors by mentees/protégés. This data would have been helpful in acknowledging the mentee/protégé’s decision to initiate, accept, or deny mentorship.

**Stages of Mentorship**

Mentoring relationships progress through a series of stages and have been empirically studied within the framework of business relationships. Kram’s (1983) study is the most comprehensive of studies to have examined the stages of the mentoring process. Her study outlined four phases of mentoring relationships based on interviews with 18 pairs of mentors and mentees from the same company. The first phase of mentoring, the initiation phase, lasts between 6 months and a
year. This stage, as the title suggests, is viewed as the time when the relationship between the mentor and mentee began. The second phase, which lasts between 2 and 5 years, is termed the cultivation stage. This is the phase where the level of mentorship and engagement expands allowing for key facets of the relationship to unfold including trust, regular advisement, and guidance seeking. The third stage is separation, characterized by psychological or structural changes in the organizational context. This stage disrupts the cultivation stage causing the relationship between the mentor and mentee to be altered and the mentee gains independence. The fourth and final stage of mentoring is redefinition. This period is when the relationship evolves into a new, significantly different relationship, or the stage where the relationship ends (Kram, 1983).

Kram’s (1983) four stages of mentorship illuminate and acknowledge the process of growth and development during this relationship. For this relationship to be sustained, it must evolve. If the mentorship is having the intended results, the mentee will seek their independence and advance toward a path that was initiated by the mentor. When described, this relationship is not too dissimilar to that of the parent and child. The parents train the child as best they can, providing them with the wisdom and experience to make informed decisions (initiation stage). The child has roughly 18-21 years to accept and put into use the lessons passed down to them by their parents (cultivation stage). Once the child becomes an adult or graduates college, the child, in many instances is expected to now fend for themselves in the same manner as their parents (separation stage). This is where the relationship
between the mentor and mentee either evolves into something new or is fractured (redefinition). The following section will highlight successful models of mentorship.

Models of Mentorship

Busen and Engebretson (1999) assert, good mentors should guide protégés, rather than force them to perform beyond their level of expertise. Pushing mentees beyond their limits could lead to professional failure. There have been several models of mentorship identified in the literature. Three very prominent models are the apprenticeship model, the competency model, and the practitioner model (Geen, 2002). The apprenticeship model asserts that the most impactful way to learn is to emulate someone with experience. “The mentor’s role is to provide a model for imitation” (Geen, 2002, p. 10). The reflective practitioner model lays its foundation on self-analysis and reflection; more specifically, pedagogical practices that encourage professionals to question their own actions and motivations for doing things (Geen, 2002). Lastly, the competency model that sees the mentor’s role as “acting like a coach or ‘systematic trainer who observes protégés before providing regular feedback on their progress with reference to pre-determined knowledge, understanding and skills” (Jones et al., 2009, p. 272). The next section provides exemplary models of successful formal mentoring programs for minority students.

The Importance of Formal Mentoring Programs

The following examples of successful formal mentoring programs and research studies provide data on the persistence of minority college students that are influenced by the presence of mentors. Jacobi (1991) states that “whereas
mentoring has been long associated with an apprentice model of graduate education, it is increasingly looked upon as a retention and enrichment strategy for undergraduate education” (p. 505). Formal mentoring programs provide the opportunity to examine mentoring from a calculated and deliberate perspective. By examining these programs, one is able to more accurately assess their impact on minority students.

Astin (1984) and Tinto (1993) identify several variables that contribute to student attrition. Tinto finds that academic and social integration are determinants that influence students’ decisions to persist in school or drop out. He posited that students arrive on campus with multiple built-in characteristics, including family backgrounds, pre-college educational achievements, academic abilities, and other personal attributes, all of which significantly impact rates of student persistence. More specifically, African American male students enter college socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged. By actively integrating them into the social fabric of the institution (i.e. student activities, minority leadership initiatives, student government, etc.), their chances of persistence and matriculation are enhanced exponentially (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

Astin (1984) highlights the importance of student participation in the mainstream of campus life. In-depth involvement in campus activities might include sports, fraternal organizations, and leadership activities (i.e. student government and membership in academic major organization). Astin (1984) argues that active involvement supports the student’s bonding with the institution. He further states
that highly involved students spend a considerable amount of time on campus, interacting frequently with faculty members, other students, and devotes considerable time to studying. Where both Astin and Tinto agree is that when students bond with and to the university and develop a close relationship with peers, faculty, and staff, they are more likely to matriculate and graduate. The literature further suggests that it is often very difficult to mainstream African American men into campus life; thus it is more important than ever to aggressively involve them in a formal mentoring process (Hughes, 1987; O’Brien, 1988)

Successful Formal Mentoring Programs

_The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)_

_Minority Fellows Program (MUFP)_ was developed to identify and cultivate promising ethnic minority students who were completing their second year of college and demonstrated academic promise (Patitu & Terrell, 1997; Rockingham, 1993). The program consisted of a campus-based internship under the guidance of a mentor, a summer leadership institute, and a paid summer internship. A survey was used to assess the program’s success. Each item measured for both mentors and mentees had a high mean. On a 5-point scale, all means for mentors were 3.6 and above (from strongly disagree to strongly agree), and for mentees the means were all above 4.0. Of the mentees surveyed, 100% agreed the MUFP program should continue, while 83.3% of the mentors agreed.

Frierson, Hargrove, and Lewis (1994) examined the perceptions and attitudes of eighteen undergraduate African American students who participated in
a summer research mentoring program at a large university. Their study attempted to address two questions related to African American undergraduates that participated in a nine-week summer research program: (1) What type of student-faculty relationships are expected for those students in formal programs?; (2) What associated effects does faculty's race or gender have on the perceptions and attitudes of African American students participating in mentoring programs? The results of the study found that of the eleven African American female and seven African American male participants, those with Black or female mentors had more positive perceptions and attitudes toward research and the research environment than those with White male mentors. These findings support the notion that the presence of Black faculty is important in providing positive attitudes toward research, academic careers, and college in general.

The Black Man’s Think Tank

The Black Man’s Think Tank is a successful African American male mentoring program found on the campus of the University of Cincinnati and housed in the African Cultural and Research Center and the Office of Ethnic Programs and Services. Eric Abercrombie formed it in 1993. The Think Tank provides an avenue and forum for Black male collegians to discuss issues and concerns that confront Black male students in higher education. The result of their discussions led to a mentoring and leadership program matching undergraduate Black male students with Black male professional staff. According to LaVant et al., 1997), “…Students often fail not because of academic reasons, but because they do not know how or are
unable to set priorities, balance male-female relationships, or learn to sacrifice” p. 47.

The Black Male Initiative

The Black Male Initiative was established on the campus of Texas Southern University. The purpose of this initiative was to encourage African American youth in inner cities to enter colleges and universities to continue their education. The program promotes the values of education and provides workshops and other informative events that secure successful role models, and business and community leaders to participate and inspire students. The program aids students in understanding their capabilities and talents, while offering them several opportunities to maximize their potential.

The Meyerhoff Scholars Program

This successful program is based at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Freeman Hrabowski, III, president of UMBC created the Meyerhoff Scholars Program in 1988. The primary mission is to increase the number of African American men who earn doctorates, in hopes of ultimately improving the number of minority college faculty in engineering, medicine, and the sciences. Early on, other Maryland initiatives were coming under legal fire for discrimination, as a result, the program began admitting and offering services to African American women in 1990 and to other ethnic groups in 1996. However, the primary issues and concerns remain on African American men. According to Hrabowski, mentoring is an essential component of this program stating that “the challenge we are
confronted with is creating role models of smart Black males who can help other little boys to want to be like them” (Morgan, 1996, p. 17). The mentoring component of the program identifies students early, provides role models in a supportive environment, and exposes them to other students who are like them.

**The Faculty Mentor Program – University of Louisville**

The Faculty Mentor Program at the University of Louisville was initiated in 1984 to enhance the retention and persistence of African American students. The philosophy of the program is for an experienced and caring faculty member to assist in providing a nurturing environment, to help the student become connected with the system, feel connected, and ultimately tap into their talents for optimum use while in school. The Faculty Mentor Program at the University of Louisville assigns a faculty mentor to all African American freshmen admitted to degree-granting programs. Mentors are identified from across all disciplines of the university, and specific assignments are made based on student’s proposed major. This connection serves as the foundation of the relationship. The role of the mentor includes proactive contact by phone, letter, and electronic mail whenever possible, culminating in sustained bi-monthly or monthly face-to-face contacts. The mentor also serves as the mentee’s primary advisor. Early contact is pivotal as students are met and introduced to the program during the summer orientation and registration period. Mentors are expected to document their contacts with their mentee and continue to track them throughout their college career and often beyond graduation.
Salinitri (2005) designed and studied a program (T.I.M.E.: Teachers’ Interfaculty Mentorship Efforts) at a Canadian University. The program paired low-achieving first-year students with pre-service teachers in the same discipline. The mentees were paired with a teacher who had both experiences of earning a degree and teaching. Students mentored by pre-service teachers remained enrolled at nearly double the rate the university anticipated (50.4% vs. 95%). Where normally 20 out of the 40 at-risk students (whose grades were not high enough to enter their chosen discipline, and many of whom were on probation) would have withdrawn, 39 remained (Salinitri, 2005).

Mentoring had a significant effect on retention. In 2001, 8.6% of the experimental group was required to withdraw from the program. In 2002, the number of required withdrawals fell to 0%. Conversely, 32.7% in 2001 and 4.3% of the control group and 26.9% of the second control group (group with no intervention) were required to withdraw from their programs. Additionally, 71.4% in 2001 and 88.5% in 2002 of the mentored students were in good academic standing at the end of the first year as opposed to 34.5% in 2001 and 57.1% in 2002 and 23.1% (second control) of the control groups (Salinitri, 2005).

Strayhorn (2007) utilized a sample of 554 Black college students who completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) in 2004 to examine the influence of faculty-student mentoring on minority college student retention. The CSEQ is used to collect information about students’ experiences in
three areas: college activities, college environment, and estimates of gains (Strayhorn, 2007). He was able to conclude that there is value in formal research-focused mentoring programs, implications for diversification in the faculty ranks, suggesting that through mentoring relationships with diverse faculty, those interactions can “powerfully socialize Black students to the realities of an academic career” (Strayhorn, 2007, p. 78). Lastly, Strayhorn asserted that with the high correlation between student satisfaction and retention, it is reasonable to assume the findings of his study have implications for college faculty and staff that are charged with maintaining and increasing campus retention rates.

It is evident by the aforementioned research and the growing body of literature that examines the influence of mentoring on minority students, that interaction with faculty plays a critical role in the retention and persistence of minority students (Astin, 1993; Guiffrida, 2005; Strayhorn, 2007). What is promising about the mentoring research on African American males is that based on faculty-student interaction, success rates of these often underrepresented and academically and socially maligned students continues to climb. However, less is known about the impact of African American male mentorship of African American males on the campuses of historically Black colleges and universities. This study seeks to fill this void. Two themes became apparent in the mentorship literature regarding African Americans and minorities either explicitly or implicitly, resilience of these students and the presence of caring invested faculty. The following sections outline the conceptual frameworks the researcher drew from to conceptualize this
These frameworks include resilience theory, care theory, cultural modeling, othermothering, and student-centered faculty.

Theoretical Frameworks

Resilience Theory

I will draw from two conceptual frameworks of literature to frame and interpret the purpose of this study; resilience and care theory. Resilience as it pertains to children, has been well defined across the literature. Garmezy, Masten, and Tellegen (1984) define resilience as, "manifestations of competence in children despite exposure to stressful events" (p. 98). Rutter (1985) defines resilience as facing "...stress at a time and in a way that allows self-confidence and social competence to increase through mastery and appropriate responsibility" (p. 684). Masten (1994) refers to resilience in an individual as successful adaptation despite risk and adversity. Additionally, she asserts that resilience refers to a pattern over time, characterized by good eventual adaptation despite developmental risk, acute stressors, or chronic adversities. However, Gordon (1995) offers the definition that most closely aligns with what is being examined in this study. Gordon states that resilience is the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances. These circumstances may include biological abnormalities or environmental obstacles. Further, the adverse circumstances may be chronic and consistent or severe and infrequent. To thrive, mature, and increase competence, a person must draw upon all of his or her resources: biological, psychological, and environmental (p. 242). The fact that African American male children from the most
disparate circumstances not only overcome their circumstances, but also eventually thrive in spite of them is worthy of further investigation. The impact from having to endure, and ultimately persevere through the multitude of familial and environmental factors to make it to college is also worthy of further research. Examining the influence of mentorship and why Black males persist in college because of those relationships will provide valuable information to the educational entities that recruit and seek to retain them.

**Care Theory**

Approximately 30 years ago the concept of care and eventually “the ethic of care” became widely discussed and debated. Since then, scholars have offered new perspectives through a variety of scholarship from many disciplines. For this study, the researcher concentrated on the works of philosopher Nel Noddings (1988, 1992, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005).

**Nel Noddings and Caring: A Feminine Approach.** The notion of an “ethic of care” was explored thoroughly and in great depth by Nel Noddings (2003a) in her *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics: and Moral Education*. It is in this seminal work that Noddings (2003a) discusses her care theory and tries to demonstrate what “a practice of caring might entail” (Schutz, 1998). She explores the phenomenon of care in terms of a dyadic relationship between the care-giver and the cared-for and stresses that care involves “time spans, intensity, and certain formal aspects of caring” (p. 17). Based on Martin Buber’s (1958) *I-Thou* relationship, Noddings (2003a) stresses that caring is a moving away from self and a
movement towards “formal chains of caring” which put individuals in a “state of readiness to care” (p.17). Lauding the views of Freire (1987, 2003), Noddings (2003a) posits that for caring to take place the cared-for as learner does not become an object, rather a subject in this dyadic relationship. According to Freire (2003), the learner must see herself engaged in a process of becoming fully human. Noddings also elaborates on two important concepts that clarify the caring relationship—engrossment and motivational displacement:

Caring involves stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference into the other’s. When we care, we consider the other’s point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. (p. 24)

Noddings (2003a) goes on to write that “To act as one-caring, then, is to act with special regard for the particular person in a concrete situation” (p. 24). This caring act is a way of generosity. Human beings wish to care not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the cared-for. Noddings (2003a) uses the relationship between teacher and student as an example:

When the student associates with the teacher, feeling free to initiate conversation and to suggest areas of interest, he or she is better able to detect the characteristic attitude even in formal, goal-oriented situations such as lectures. Then a brief contact of eyes may say, “I am still the one interested in you. All of this is of variable importance and significance, but you still matter more.” (p. 20)

Noddings (2003a) further asserts:

It is no use saying that the teacher who “really cares” wants her students to learn the basic skills that are necessary to live a comfortable life; I am not denying that, but the notion is impoverished on both ends. On the one extreme, it is not enough to want one’s students to master basic skills, I would not want to choose, but if I had to choose whether my child would be a
reader or a loving human being, I would choose the latter with alacrity...The student is infinitely more important than the subject. (p. 20)

“Engrossment,” according to Noddings (2003a), “need not be intense nor need it be pervasive in the life of the one-caring, but it must occur” (p. 17). One must shift his or her own reality to that of the Other. Noddings (2003a) writes that one must see the Other’s reality as a possibility of his or her own. When the Other’s reality does indeed become a prospect for the carer, then the carer truly cares.

**Cultural Modeling and Caring**

Cultural modeling does engage in concepts and practices of caring. Lee (2007) fashions this conversation in relation to issues that she considers to be the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching (Noddings, 1984). Lee goes on to state that there are several professions that explicitly address the ethical dimensions of their work to include: medicine, the ministry, firefighting, and even the military (Hansen, 2001; Shulman, 2005). In regards to teaching as a caring profession, Lee (2007) passionately asserts that teaching is a caring profession that most people enter because they want to do good for youth. She believed that as a teacher, she must see the growth and development of each student she teaches as a life opportunity entrusted to her hands, as an investment, of sorts, in the future of that youth, her children, and society at large. “This moral and ethical commitment is what allows a teacher to wrestle with her own demons, prejudices, and limitations, rather than to take the easy way out and blame the student, his family, his neighborhood, or the board of education” (p. 128-129).
In this vein, there are implications for this kind of ethical commitment for subject matter learning. First, is that teachers must come to know each student and life circumstances that the student brings with them into the classroom. Second, teachers must recognize what may be the sources of vulnerability for their students (Lee, 2007). Both of the aforementioned implications require an investment on the part of the educator in the personal well-being of students in a manner that can best be described as ethical caring.

Othermothering

Foster (1993) was the first to employ the term othermothering to refer to the holistic and comprehensive relationship between Black teachers and Black students. Collins (2000) stated, “Unlike the traditional mentoring so widely reported in the educational literature, this relationship goes far beyond that of providing students with either technical skills or a network of academic and professional contacts” (p. 191). This relationship is about getting up close and personal, with focus, and willful intent to provide a familial bond and connection that extends well beyond the classroom and into spaces many educators “consider as crossing professional boundaries” (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 715).

The practice of othermothering in the African American community extends as far back as when the first slaves were brought to the United States (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1999). During that period, othermothers were defined as “women who assisted blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities” (Collins, 2000, p. 178). Because many children were orphaned due to sale or death of their birth
mothers, “mothering others’ children in slave communities was a necessity” (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 715). This practice allowed othermothers to socialize and educate children in their own ways and cultural traditions in an attempt to uplift the Black community (Guiffrida, 2005).

Beyond slavery, othermothering continued to have a prominent effect when segregated schools began (Guiffrida, 2005). Beauboeuf-Lafontant, (1999) explored the aspects of segregated schools and found that good teachers in Black schools often went above and beyond assisting students in their formal education. In fact, teachers in segregated schools were often considered important members of students’ extended families (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993).

In her study of the life histories of 14 veteran Black women teachers, Foster (1993) found that a majority established kinlike relationships with their students and would habitually visit their homes to advocate for students, collaborate with their parents, and even tutor students’ parents. Further, she noted that African American teachers that demonstrated an approach consistent with the philosophy of othermothering established a belief in the potential of every African American student to succeed academically. Foster (1993) concluded that the passage of the idea of othermothering was passed on to these teachers indirectly through their own elementary and secondary education in segregated schools and also directly in their teacher preparation programs at HBCUs. From their all Black faculty at their HBCUs, Black pre-service teachers learned it was their moral and spiritual
obligation to uplift the Black community by attending not only to students’ academic
development, but also to their social and psychological development (Foster, 1993).

**Student-Centered Faculty**

Similarly, in Guiffrida’s (2005) study to understand students’ perceptions of
faculty that facilitate meaningful relationships with African American students, he
outlined descriptors of student-centered faculty that furthers attributes of
successful mentors of African American students. Though his work aimed to
enhance the ability of White faculty, as well as faculty of color, to understand and
support their African American students, the results of his study provide an analytic
tool whereby mentoring can be better understood. The main theme that kept
arising in students’ description of faculty considered as student-centered was “going
above and beyond” (Guiffrida, p. 708). Below, I share a more descriptive outline of
what the concept of going above and beyond means as described by the participants
in Guiffrida’s (2005) study:

1. Providing comprehensive career advising. Examples of this include
   “listening to students to understand their professional fears, dreams, and
goals” (p. 708) and belief faculty would provide professional connections.
2. Providing inclusive academic advising. Examples of this included faculty
   requiring “students to meet with them regularly to monitor their academic
   progress and personal progress at college” (p. 709).
3. Providing a holistic approach to their advising. This advising includes asking
   students about issues that are both academic and personal.
4. Providing support and advocacy in providing students with resources, time, and encouragement to succeed. Specific examples of this kind of support ranges “from extra tutoring, to helping students locate money to stay in school, to talking to their families for them regarding academic and personal issues” (p. 710).

5. Raising the bar: Believing in students and pushing them to succeed.

Examples included demonstrating more positive beliefs in their academic abilities and conveying the message early on “that they must perform at higher levels than White students to be viewed equally” (p. 712).

Also, Guiffrida (2005) goes on to state that this kind of support is not limited to just African American faculty, offering that students were able to receive this “same type of holistic career advising from White faculty” (p. 709).

Faith and Spirituality in Integrated Identity Development

Utilizing phenomenology and portraiture as a framework, Stewart (2002) investigated the awareness and integration of multiple sociocultural identities, including race, class, and gender in the experiences of five African American students at a predominantly White college. The role of faith and spirituality in Stewart’s research offered insight into the role these facets played in students’ relationships within the university setting.

According to Stewart (2002), identity integration and wholeness are critical concepts for all people especially African Americans and other marginalized populations, who hope to attain “true self-consciousness” in defiance of the
“symbolic violence” (Lutrell, 1996) of schooling and educational practice (p. 579). At the beginning of the 20th century, DuBois wrote, “The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—his longing to attain self-conscious [selfhood], to merge his [sic] double self into a better and truer self” (1994, pp. 2-3). Baker-Fletcher (1998) posits, this longing also represents a spiritual consciousness that recognizes the interrelated nature of human existence and the desire to be whole within oneself. Research on the experiences of African American students on predominantly White campuses has consistently pointed to the fragmented, disjointed nature of that experience (Sedlacek, 1987; Stewart, 2002). Additionally, this research has pointed to the dependence on spirituality by African American students as a means of “navigating through their educational experiences and developing a positive racial identity in the midst of a culturally hostile environment” (Stewart, 2002, p. 579).

Conclusion

As argued by Rigsby (1994), “resilience research, like many areas of social science, needs serious attention given to theory building that focuses on understanding the causal structures and processes that give meaning and direction to social life” (p. 91). As the literature review exposed, African American males are placed at risk more often and at earlier ages than White students. The obstacles and barriers they must face and endure for the opportunity to attend college, speaks to how special the charmed few African American males are to extend their education beyond high school. One focus of this study is on how and when mentoring
experiences relate to past experiences/or present obstacles in students’ lives. The academic success of the students in this study will provide a counter-story to the many African American males that do not ascend beyond their circumstances.

Fortunately, despite having to contend with many obstacles, African American youth continue to succeed in school. What is still of grave concern are the historical factors that negatively affect historically marginalized populations are still affecting African American males in grades as early as the 2nd grade (Cunningham, 1999). For behavioral and social scientists invested in the reasons for and the harnessing of factors that lend themselves to resilience, there is still much that remains to be done (Luthar & Brown, 2007). With the influence of parents still being one of the main contributors of why students are resilient, it is particularly urgent that researchers extrapolate the most critical ingredients from existing promising interventions that reduce parents’ risk for maltreatment and promote positive parenting (Luthar & Brown, 2007). This still remains difficult and elusive as the numbers of low-income, underage, and single mothers continues to swell.

However, with burgeoning research on social networks providing parents with support and assistance that often improve their disposition that often lessens their tendency toward coercively disciplining their children, there is reason to hope (McLoyd, 1990). Even more alarming is the continued reporting of research on the African American family and the problems reportedly stemming from it. The continued focus on its failure could, in all likelihood, be contributing heavily to the
inaccurate images of African American families in the literature and media (Stewart, 2006; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990).

The presence of an ethic of caring was omnipresent in the ideals and premises outlined within the review (Lee, 2007; Murrell, 2002; Spencer, 1999). As Noddings (1992) asserts, “we have to show how to care in our own relations with cared-fors” (p. 22). Professors and administrators must continually examine the concept of “tough-love,” making sure that their actions are guided by the “open-dialogue” that is shared and maintained by both the mentors and mentees. This incongruence could result in this relationship mirroring the destructive images that students have of themselves that draw their origins from the home. Noddings (1992), further maintains that dialogue is open-ended, meaning that neither party knows what the outcome will be at the outset of the conversation. Dialogue provides mentors and mentees with opportunities to talk about what they are attempting to show (Noddings, 1992). Equally important, it gives mentees opportunities to question “why,” helping both parties to arrive at well-informed decisions. It is through open-dialogue that researchers will continue to gather uncensored data on resilience, moving education in a direction where resilient youth from underprivileged environments will be the expectation, not the exception.

The mentorship literature identified multiple characteristics of successful mentors including being described as nurturing, supporting, protecting, and possessing a visionary perception of his ward’s true potential. These traits that most have come to expect from those who serve in mentoring roles are not easy to
come be. The substantial investment in first getting to know potential protégés, identifying their needs, goals, and aspirations, and then whether one is best suited to provide those needs is time intensive. This is why the literature proffers that the relationship, once confirmed, must be reciprocal between the mentor and mentee.

The challenge that confronts potential mentor/mentee relationships on the campuses of historically Black colleges and universities is that the trust required by the African American males is often stifled because of their past experiences with adults that have failed them. For Black males, their fathers are often the culprits in those relationships. This lack of trust in males tends to push African American college males towards more nurturing and supportive mentoring relationships with female faculty/staff that they allow to othermother them. Conversely, when caring and nurturing males attempt to mentor/otherfather African American college males, it is seen as a threat to a manhood Black males are often forced to embrace far ahead of their time.

Essentially, mentors must attend to their students’ with a caring, nurturing, supportive, and visionary approach that fosters resilience in the lives of each student that enters into the mentor/mentee relationship with them. This role is not to be entered into lightly, with the long-term gains or losses undeterminable to the mentor. However, the intention should be an acute focus on the needs of the “cared-for”/mentee and not the needs of the mentor. Mentors must enter into each dialogue with his students openly, so that they feel/know that what they have to say and what they feel, can and does impact the outcome of the conversations and plans.
negotiated on their behalf. As mentors have once struggled to find their purpose, path, and voices as students and now professors, they must not forget the road they travelled in order to receive and ultimately utilize the guidance once provided to them on their way to personal and academic fulfillment.
CHAPTER 3
QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of this study is to examine how and when the mentoring relationship created between African American male professors and administrators and African American male students between the ages of 18-24 impacts the willingness of students to persist and excel in an Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Therefore, this study is about the influence the presence of revered like-person role models play in African American male student success. Chapter one established the essential questions used to guide this study. Chapter two reviewed literature and summarized research on mentoring, including student-centered faculty, and othermothering. This chapter details the context of the study, research design, provides an overview of the qualitative methods employed in the research process, outlines sampling technique, and data analysis procedures.

Context of the Study: Jefferson Agricultural University

Jefferson Agricultural University is a private historically Black college and university that served as an opportune setting for this study. As a fulltime faculty member there, I have a deep contextual knowledge of the university as well as the expectations and experiences of the students, faculty, and staff. This institution is
located just blocks from the State Capital in a southeastern city in the United States with a population of more than 400,000. Founded in the late 1800s, JAU was built as an extension of Christian missionary work by northerners in the Reconstruction-era South. It established itself as a center of educational opportunity for freedmen and over the years graduated many of the region’s most accomplished African Americans. The University is comprised of more than 40 buildings and over 100 acres of land. As with most small colleges, many of the buildings and facilities serve multiple functions related to education programs, support services and other mission-related activities.

JAU has an undergraduate enrollment slightly above 1,500 students, more than 98% of which is African American. 75% of the student population resides on campus (53% male and 47% female). In-state students account for 56.8% of the student population while 41.2% of students are out of state residents. 2% of students are classified as international representing 14 countries. The student to faculty ratio is 14:1. The average age of students at JAU is 20 years old. 25% of the student body is first year students.

The president of JAU is the first female president in the history of the institution. She is an experienced educator and administrator with nearly 40 years of teaching, consulting, and administrative experience spanning preschool to higher education. She has served as a classroom teacher; elementary and middle school principal; university professor and consultant to several national educational organizations. Prior to assuming the helm at Jefferson Agricultural University, she
held administrative positions of increasing responsibility including instructor, Dean, Assistant Provost and lastly, Vice President for Administrative Services.

Research Design

It has been argued that quantitative measures alone have been unable to capture the complexities involved in understanding the experiences of minority college students (Hurtado, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Hence, qualitative inquiry was employed for this study. Morse and Richards (2002) assert that the purpose of qualitative research is “discovery—to find out what is going on” (p. 198). The data is presented in the context of the mentors’, mentees’, and researcher’s experiences, adding credibility to the results. The experiences in this study encapsulate both present and past mentoring and life experiences of the researcher, mentors and mentees. The case study research method was chosen to investigate the research questions.

Yin (2002) defined case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the limits among phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. According to Stake (2000), case studies generally examine issues that “facilitate the planning and activities of inquiry, including inspiring and rehabilitating the researcher” (p. 440). Additionally, topics tend be selected in relation to the intent of the study and will vary in selection dependent upon the focus of the researcher (2000). Case study brings to light the question of what can be specifically learned from a single case. Schwandt (1997) theorizes that “...a case study strategy is preferred when the inquirer seeks answers
to how or why questions” (p. 13). The questions posed in this study make case study the most appropriate qualitative mode of inquiry. Each case in this study offers unique insight into the participants, their experiences, and the complexities of understanding a single case. Stake (2000) posits:

With its own unique history, the case is a complex entity operating within a number of contexts—physical, economic, ethical, aesthetic, and so on. The case is singular, but it has subsections (e.g., production, marketing, sale departments), groups (e.g. students, teachers, parents), occasions (e.g. workdays, holidays, days near holidays), a concentration of domains—many so complex that at best they can only be sampled (p. 440).

In regards to using case study analysis in education, Lightfoot (1983) posited that “…we needed descriptions of life in schools that conveyed pictures of them, and that these portrayals needed to be relatively unencumbered by theoretical frames of rigid perspectives” (p. 9). I found this facet of case study analysis essential to being able to capture the essence of the participants.

Utilizing the case study mode of analysis allowed me to acquire a thick description of the findings. According to Geertz (1973), a thick description is defined as an illustration that looks beyond the act (thin description) and describes and probes the meaning, contexts, intentions, situation, and circumstances of the action. Hancock (1998) affirms Geertz asserting that case study, as a research design, offers richness and depth of information not typically offered by other methods.

Stake (2005) outlines three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The intrinsic case study derives from the researcher’s interest in a specific topic and his or her desire to understand and interpret that phenomenon.
Further, intrinsic cases are not symbolic of other cases, and do not illustrate distinct traits or complications.

In contrast with intrinsic case study, instrumental case study is concerned with a specific case and is conducted to provide insight into an issue or refinement of a theory. Furthermore, the instrumental case study “plays a supportive role, facilitating understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p. 445). This research was designed to build on the previous literature on mentorship, othermothering, and caring (Feldman, 1999; Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008; Mawhinney, 2011, Noddings, 1998).

Lastly, the collective case study is an instrumental case study extended to several cases. In other words, the collective case study centers on several collectively investigated cases with the goal that individual cases will lead to superior knowledge about a larger collection of cases on similar topics (Stake, 2005). This research utilized several tenets of the collective case, as it investigated 10 different cases with the goal of understanding the impact of mentoring on African American male college students.

In sum, previous mentorship and othermothering theories provided the basis for the questions investigated in this study. As it relates to the aforementioned types of case studies, both the intrinsic case study and the collective case study were used in this research. The intrinsic case connects to my own aspirations to build on previous research and personal interest in the impact of mentorship. This research investigated 10 cases, providing the connection to the collective case study. The
The primary data collection technique used for this study was individual and focus-group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005, Stake, 2005). The interview is used to deeply understand perceptions of participants and is one of the most common and prevailing ways in which scholars try to understand our fellow humans (Fontana & Frey, 2005). It has been argued that quantitative measures alone have been unable to capture the complexities involved in understanding the experiences of minority college students (Hurtado, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Notes of recurring topics, key words and phrases were documented in the researcher’s journal. These terms were then organized into theme categories and the emergent themes identified. Portraiture was used as an analytic tool by which to examine the data. In portraiture, “it is not only important for the portraitist to paint the contours and dimensions of the setting, it is also crucial that she sketch herself into the context” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 50). As an African American male scholar that currently works with African American college students and that attended an HBCU, I offer a pertinent view on this research. I am heavily informed by the research in the literature review, and have personal experiences related to the study that will be interwoven into the “aesthetic whole” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 113). Portraiture
is explicated more in depth later in this chapter. Hence, qualitative inquiry was employed for this study.

The use of the qualitative research method interview in the social sciences has steadily ebbed and flowed over the past few decades (Glesne, 2006; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Morgan, 1996; Wilson, 1997). The interview is used to deeply understand perceptions of participants and is one of the most common and prevailing ways in which scholars try to understand our fellow humans (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviewing includes a wide range of forms and a vast array of uses. The most common form of interviewing involves individual, face-to-face verbal interchange, but interviewing can also take the form of face-to-face group interchange and telephone surveys (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Typically, this form of qualitative inquiry centers on a particular issue (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006) and is similar to other research methods in that it provides researchers access to the ideas, opinions, viewpoints, attitudes, and experiences of their subjects under study (Madriz, 2000). Similarly, Wilson (1997) characterized a focus group as a small group of four to twelve people who meet with a trained researcher to discuss a specific topic in a non-threatening environment in an effort to examine participants’ sentiments, ideas, and perceptions while encouraging and utilizing group interactions.

**Face-to-Face Open-Ended Interview**

A standardized, open-ended interview process was employed in this study (Patton, 1990). The interviews were informal and semi-structured in nature. The
advantage of such interviews is that free expression of ideas may be more easily and accurately facilitated during the face-to-face verbal exchange (Cohen & Manion, 1989). Specific research questions concerning this study were:

1) How do you define the role mentor?

2) How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor?

3) How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in the students’ lives?

4) How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s academic insights?

5) How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense of their opportunity to learn and excel?

6) How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform the student’s identity as being a highly educated, African American, male?

The unstructured nature of the interviews had many benefits in the study. It allowed for exceptional depth and range of the data collected (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The utilization of the semi-structured interviews granted me access to the mentoring relationship through the eyes of both the African American male mentors and mentees (Patton, 1986). More importantly, this form of interview permitted me to explore the thoughts, and feelings of the participants’ in a manner that captured the essence of their experiences. The opportunity to respond to questions at will without regard to length, allowed for additional depth in their responses (Ary, et al., 2006).
Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) argue that open-ended interviewing allows the researcher to use both a structured approach as well as a more conversational style in order to answer the research questions. This style of in-depth interviewing is appropriate for this study as the purpose is to extrapolate as much information pertaining to the participants’ experiences on mentoring both from the mentor and mentee perspectives.

**Empathic Interviewing**

I also engaged in empathetic interviewing, meaning that I took the non-traditional approach of taking a stance rather than attempting to remain neutral during the interview process (Fontana & Frey, 2005). This view is counter to the scientific image of interviewing, which is grounded in the concept of neutrality. Not surprisingly, much of the traditional interviewing literature concentrates on “the language of scientific neutrality and the techniques to achieve it” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696). The interview is not merely the neutral exchange of dialogue where one asks questions and receives answers. There is a commitment on both the part of the researcher and participant to invest personally, emotionally, and authentically in the investigation that ultimately becomes the interview. Fontana & Frey (2005) suggested that “it is time to stop treating the interviewee as a ‘clockwork orange,’ that is, looking for a better juicer (techniques) to squeeze the juice (answers) out of the orange (living person/interviewee)” (p. 696).

Based on the intrinsically personal nature of these cases, I felt that taking a stance was unavoidable and required. However, in order to maintain the focus on
the voices of the participants, I held my responses and feelings’ regarding a specific response until that section of the interview was complete. It was in sharing my own feelings and interacting with the participants that I was able to establish a quid pro quo of good faith. Douglas (1985) advocated for the sharing of personal feelings and private situations to the interviewee as a showing of good faith. There are increasing numbers of social scientists that see the need to interact “as persons with the interviewees and acknowledge that they are doing so” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696).

According to Seidman (1998), the interview involves a combination of life history and informed assumptions. Further, he suggests that the interviewer pursues answers to open-ended questions with the intention that the participants might reconstruct their experiences within the topic under study with little interference from the researcher. In line with these beliefs, the interviews with the participants lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Participants were asked questions and were provided as much time as needed to reflect and respond.

As the primary method for collecting data, one individual interview was conducted with each participant. Also, a follow-up interview was conducted with participants. **Focus-Group Interview**

Bangura (1994) found that college students of color were more comfortable sharing their perspectives in focus groups than in individual interviews and that the dialogue that occurred in focus groups better reflected students’ real world dialogue than individual interviews. Other advantages of focus group interviews include (a)
allowing members more time to listen and reflect upon their own experiences, (b) the possibility that what one member says could stimulate memories of other members, and (c) the opportunity for the researcher to listen to contrasting viewpoints when members disagree on a particular topic (Loftland & Loftland, 1995).

Whilst there are many advantages to using focus groups, this interview format also makes it difficult to prevent one focus group member from dominating, and thus shaping, the entire conversation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Additionally, some participants may be uncomfortable sharing personal information in a group format. To address these limitations, the second of the two face-to-face interviews was scheduled to follow the focus group interview. However, I was unable to facilitate the focus group interview with the mentee participants due to multiple scheduling conflicts. As the focus shifted to the dual portraits I was able to draw on the interview data alone. In addition I kept ongoing reflective notes that included references to differences and similarities among the participants.

An individual follow-up interview with the participants was conducted for 45-60 minutes. Individual follow-up interviews played an important role in the cyclical process of data collection and analysis that is inherent in the constant comparative method. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), it is necessary to follow up with participants to focus or expand upon particular topics or themes that emerged in earlier interviews.
Each interview was scheduled and confirmed prior to the date of interview. A complete interview protocol is located in the Appendix. In the course of the interviews, there were several clarifying and follow-up questions that developed. These questions provided greater insight into the depth of the participants’ responses and are further explicated in the individual cases (see chapters four and five). The interviews were audio-taped, video-taped, and transcribed verbatim. At the conclusion of the interviews, each participant was provided a written transcript of their interview and was invited to make any changes that did not effectively capture their sentiment during the interview. By providing participants with this opportunity, the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the findings were increased.

**Research Setting**

Four criteria contributed to the selection of the research setting for this study: (1) access to the university; (2) proximity; 3) formal and informal mentoring opportunities and; 4) size and affiliation with a Christian denomination.

**Access**

Gaining entry to the research setting, hereafter referred to as Jefferson Agricultural University (JAU), was accomplished through acquiring and adhering to the guidelines of the JAU and The Ohio State University's internal review boards (IRB). Pursuant to guidelines placed on research involving human subjects, specific requirements had to be met prior to the beginning of data collection. A research
proposal detailing every facet of the proposed study was submitted to The Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP) for approval.

**IRB Approval Process**

The IRB approval process was thorough and lengthy. The first submission to the ORRP was October 11, 2012. Five days later, the response from the ORRP indicated several concerns that had to be addressed before a determination could be made on the research protocol submitted for the study. Those concerns included: 1) questions about background and personal challenges that may elicit sensitive information (e.g., information that may pose risk to reputation, risk of psychological stress, etc.); 2) revision of recruitment procedures so that private information is not gathered from faculty in order to recruit students; 3) clarification of faculty recruitment plan; and 4) what educational records would be accessed and by whom. A pleasant exchange began with the ORRP, making every attempt to satisfy each concern outlined by the committee. Four total submissions of changes were provided to the ORRP between October 2012 and January 2013. The fourth and final submission was accepted and subsequently approved on January 25, 2013. The protocol number for this study is 2012E0601. Upon receiving institutional approval, I was required to submit the approved human subjects clearance to the chair of the IRB committee at JAU. JAU's approval of research on its campus was contingent on clearance by the ORRP at The Ohio State University and the IRB committee at JAU.
Proximity

Jefferson Agricultural University is a private historically Black college/university (HBCU) that serves as an opportune setting for this study. As a fulltime faculty member there, I have a deep contextual knowledge of the university as well as the expectations and experiences of the students, faculty, and staff. This institution is located in the southeastern United States and has an undergraduate enrollment slightly above 1,500 students, more than 98% of whom is African American. Living in faculty housing provided unfettered access to the campus and allows for interview opportunities that can extend beyond standard working hours. Several participants requested interview times beyond the work day. These times were easily accommodated, making availability of interview times one less potential barrier to a comfortable and in depth interview.

Formal and Informal Mentoring Opportunities

Another reason why JAU was selected as a research site is its institutional commitment to mentoring. Faculty and staff are encouraged during freshman welcome week to avail themselves to students in a supportive capacity. The goal of the initial introduction to students is to make students aware of whom the faculty/staff persons are and in what ways they can be of assistance to them throughout their matriculation. The ultimate goal is for incoming students to make a connection with a faculty member that can serve as their mentor.

The institution wants students to have multiple mentoring opportunities beginning with the Peer Mentors. The Peer Mentors is a campus-mentoring
program that is housed within the Office of First-Year Experience (FYE). Upper-classmen are trained by FYE faculty over the summer in ways to support the needs of the incoming class. This training includes sessions facilitated by vice-presidents from every essential department at the university. This training provides students with support information that will be used to assist incoming freshmen with questions, concerns, and needs as they arise for the new students. Peer mentors are assigned students based on mutual geographic locations as much as possible. The goal is to connect new students with peers from home cities and states that can immediately relate to many of the transitional needs of new students which include how to combat home sickness, where local shopping and dining areas are, and places for religious and spiritual worship.

**Size and Affiliation with Christian Denomination**

JAU also provided a small university environment with just over 1500 students where access to a close-knit familial community would more likely exist. I wanted to conduct this research in an environment that provides a space for far more meaningful interactions than a large land-grant university or even a large HBCU would offer. JAU also has a uniquely large number of African American males students that outnumber the female student population (766 males to 740 females). Data consistently reports the high number of African American female graduates to African American males. JAU is positioned to serve a counter statistic to most colleges and universities, not just HBCU’s. Additionally, there is a greater number of African American male faculty to African American female faculty (47 male to 34
female faculty) allowing a high opportunity for African American male mentoring opportunities of high-achieving African American males. Lastly, its Christian denomination base provided an opportunity to conduct research in an environment where students willingness to acknowledge the role of their faith in both their success and decision-making processes made JAU an ideal setting to conduct this study.

Preparing for Data Collection

Prior to the collection of data, each participant was e-mailed copies of the informed consent document and interview protocols. Participants were provided with times to meet with me in an open forum in an attempt to offer further clarification of the study and any questions or concerns regarding their participation. At the close of this meeting, attendees were asked to e-mail me regarding their decision to participate in the study or to set up a follow-up meeting to gain answers to questions they did not want to discuss in the open forum. Once participants informed me of their commitment to participate in the study, they were asked to provide dates and times when they would be available for 45-60 minutes of uninterrupted time in order to complete the research interviews.

Once participants arrived for their interviews, I provided a copy of the informed consent document to the participant and asked the participant to follow along with me as I read over the document in its entirety. Reading over the document in the presence of the participant created an opportunity for the participant to ask clarifying questions regarding research protocols and for me to
have further assurance that the participant understood their rights and protections as provided to them in accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the supervision of The Ohio State University’s Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP).

At the beginning of each audio and video recorded interview session, I reiterated that participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. Additionally, participants were informed that their names will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process and pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of results.

**Participant Selection and Purposeful Sampling**

Participant selection for this study was conducted using purposeful sampling (Silverman, 2000). Five (5) African American male college students with a grade point average of 2.8 or higher, between the classifications of second semester freshman and senior were identified to participate in this study. The goal of identifying students at different classifications was to understand the role that mentorship plays in African American male students at varying stages of their undergraduate experience to persist and excel in college. Research indicates that low-achieving African American students are less likely to have positive experiences with faculty, thus rendering that population undesirable for this study (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With permission of the Jefferson Agricultural University’s human subjects internal review board (IRB), I outlined the proposed study in main campus
classes during class times when the researcher was not teaching. Interested students were provided with the student request to participate letter (see Appendix A) that offered a brief description of me, outlined the study, procedures, and my contact information (e-mail, cell phone, and office phone number). Additionally, students were provided with a date, time, and location to hear a more in-depth overview of the study with a follow-up question and answer period. Students that wanted to receive further information regarding the study were encouraged to e-mail or call me directly.

Additionally, during classroom visits, students that were interested in participating were provided an e-mail sign-up sheet in order to receive the student request to participate recruitment letter. The recruitment letter was sent to potential subjects inviting them to learn more about participating in the study. Those who did not provide their e-mail were able to share their interest by utilizing the contact information on the request to participate form provided to interested students at the close of class (see Appendix B). Those who let their interest be known during the classroom overview were invited to learn more about the study on January 31, 2013 at 11:00am and 4:00pm. During these sessions, potential participants were provided the opportunity to review the consent document before deciding whether or not to participate in the study. When students decided to participate and signed the consent form after the session, they were able to sign up for individual interview dates and times on a pre-filled out calendar. Follow-up
e-mails were sent to confirm date, time, and location of the interview. All student participants were fulltime students enrolled at Jefferson Agricultural University.

A similar recruitment process was employed in the enlistment of university mentors. Recruitment of faculty/administrators commenced after student participants were identified. Each student participant was asked to list/identify African American male faculty/administrators on campus that they considered their mentors. I then contacted prospective faculty/administrative participants via e-mail. The e-mail included the faculty/administrator Request to Participate Letter (see Appendix B) that provides a brief description of the student investigator, outlines the study, procedures, and the researcher’s contact information (e-mail, cell phone, and office phone number). Faculty/administrative staff were provided with dates to participate in an overview session with the researcher where they were allowed to hear a more in depth overview of the study, ask questions, receive and sign the informed consent form, and sign-up for interview times. Faculty/administrators were given the opportunity to opt out of attending the in depth overview session with the researcher and have a one-on-one session in a mutually agreed upon office.

Privacy and anonymity was attended to for all potential participants through multiple means to express interest to participate individually. Prospective participants were encouraged to contact the researcher directly via phone or e-mail to express their interest if they did not want to participate in the open sessions.
Additionally, the student and staff/administrative sessions were held separately in order to add a final layer of privacy between the two groups of participants.

**Participating Students**

*Rodney*

The first student participant, hereafter called Rodney, is a senior Business Administration major. He is 21 years-old and 4-year start on the JAU football team. When I first met Rodney, it was during his freshman year (4 years ago). Even though he was just a teenager, he bore all the signs of an intuitive and focused young man. As a top defensive lineman recruit, he had a stature that was intimidating and a stare that he’s used so often on the field, that he subconsciously shares it without even knowing it with unsuspecting passerby’s. Even though he is one of the brightest and intellectually stimulating young men you would ever want to meet, he’s fine with being the intimidating big guy in the room that you can either take or leave. He’s never been one to seek validation from others. Not to say he does not appreciate being told he looks sharp or played a great game on Saturday, but he will not allow himself to be defined by the thoughts and opinions of others. Having met his family on multiple occasions, I am clearer why he is able to self-affirm. Even though his father was not in the picture, he had a very present grandfather who trained him up in the way that he should go. Additionally, his mother is a very educated and strong-willed woman that made sure he had his priorities in order academically, socially, and athletically. He has a disposition that commands respect; partly because of his powerful gaze, but more so because of his lead by example
persona. It is no surprise he was the captain of the football team. He is a thinker that sizes up people and the relationships in life. He is clear on their purpose and leads these relationships based on his needs and his ability to serve in a capacity that he is comfortable with. I do not mean to make him sound self-centered. I mean to articulate that he is purposeful in who he allows in his life and in particular who he allows to have influence or sway in his life. His willingness to participate in this study and what his insights brought to bear were significant to this research.

Kevin

The second student participant, hereafter called Kevin is a sophomore Psychology major. He is 19 years old. The first time I observed Kevin, I remember thinking he had sad eyes. Not having interacted with him directly, his facial expression always suggested he had something on his mind or that he was sad. This misperception continued until his performance in Chapel during freshman orientation a couple of years ago. This sad-eyed young man that appeared pretty much unapproachable stepped to the microphone in the campus chapel and began to sing! His voice was simply amazing! Those eyes that always seemed so sad now began to light up with excitement and passion for the spiritual song he was singing. At that moment, I realized there was far more than meets the eye to this young man. That year, Kevin sang at several functions where he represented the university. I eventually introduced myself and told him how awesome a voice I thought he had. He humbly said thank you with barely even cracking a smile at first. Again, those sad eyes were prominently fixed. I then happened upon him in the office of his
campus advisor and I was able to better see how he interacts in a space where he is more comfortable and feels safe to be more outgoing. I spoke to him and was able to learn about his goals and aspirations for his time at JAU and immediately following graduation. I was very impressed with his thorough planning! Now, I was able to view those sad eyes differently. Now, they did not appear sad, rather they now appeared determined and focused. His soft and quiet disposition made it easy to misjudge him by outwardly appearances. He is a deeply spiritual young man who is an ordained minister. So, his spiritual compass is acute. Thus, he carries himself in a manner consistent with being humble, respectful, kind, and altruistic. As I presented this study to his class, I remember seeing him in the class and wanting him to submit to participate. I wanted to see how mentorship on the JAU campus had impacted him. Much like the surprise when he stepped to the microphone to belt out his beautiful song, I was equally amazed by the story he shares during his interview.

Jeron

The third student participant, hereafter called Jeron, is a sophomore Political Science major. He is 22 years old. As a researcher, sometimes you find your subjects and other times, your subjects find you. Since Jeron arrived on campus a year ago, he stood out. Being an educator, I know there are several ways that a student can set themselves apart. Unfortunately, many of those ways are negative (i.e. sagging pants, hats on in buildings, disregard for women and elders, no sense of direction, etc.). However, Jeron is the student that stands out in all the ways that as
educators, we clamor to provide assistance, to affirm, and to support. He is always dressed in a collared shirt, articulate, respectful, and informed about events occurring both in the local and global community. What is most impressive about Jeron is that the bright and intelligent disposition he portrays in person is equally matched by his academic success in the classroom. In my experience working with young men, this level of consistency is not common place. One evening after work, I went to support the debate team as they battled against the cross town rival. When I arrived, I noticed Jeron on the stage. As I continued to observe the debate, Jeron soon took to the podium. I never heard him speak so eloquently. Hearing Jeron offer up his argument and justifying his argument the way he did honestly game me chills. I saw in him potential that made me want to be a part of his success. It made me want to offer him access to my entire network and each experience I’ve had along the way in hopes of helping him avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that I’ve taken in my life. He made me want to be to him what all of my mentors were to me. I wanted to be a door opener. I wanted to be an affirmer. I wanted to be the gardener that sowed the seeds of access and success. I see promise in Jeron in ways that I would hope that my mentors saw in me...in ways that Martin Luther King, Jr.’s saw in him...in ways that Barack Obama’s saw in him. One might find it a stretch or grandiose to make such connections, but one need only to shake Jeron’s hand, look him in his eyes, and share a brief conversation with him to get the feeling I am speaking of. It can best be summed up as promise. When he chose to participate in
this study, I knew that what he would share would be profound. In his usual fashion, he exceeded my expectations.

*Allen*

The fourth student participant, hereafter referred to as Allen, is a senior Liberal & Interdisciplinary Studies major. He is 22 years old. The first time I met Allen; he came to my office and introduced himself. He was bright, articulate, well-mannered, and very skilled in inter-personal communication. I was impressed right away. Allen was a member on the basketball team and was very well known on campus, but never carried himself in an arrogant or cocky way. He was consistently level-headed, thoughtful, and humble. What stood out about Allen was that he did not just show up in my office when he needed something, he instinctively knew that by stopping by on regular intervals and updating me on his status, it would over time build a stronger bond between us; and it did. He would confer with me on matters from approaches to his courses, papers, and major to friends, women, and home concerns. He became one of my most apt pupils; in regards to seeking and applying advice; I would offer to his life in a relatively quick fashion.

His junior year, I was privileged to write his letter of recommendation to pledge my fraternity. Upon gaining membership, he subsequently became the chapter president. Because my job duties at the time included multiple speaking engagements in front of the student body, he soon expressed interest in becoming a better speaker. Soon after, at my urging, he decided to run for Student Government Association (SGA) President. We worked on the art of speech writing and
presentation as he ran and successfully was voted SGA President. He spoke on behalf of the student body during the official opening of JAU; as it transitioned to university status, at the Mayor’s luncheon, and several other prestigious events during his tenure. Each time, we would work together to hammer out a speak fit for a young Barack Obama! Allen has that kind of political glow about him. He is the kind of mentee that sizes up situations and will err on the side of caution and bring a matter to his mentor that is too small, rather than make a decision that may have larger implications than he had anticipated and it backfire on him. He has proven to be one of the savviest and successful students I have ever worked with. His decision to participate in this study has yielded the kind of well thought out and introspective responses that I have come to expect from him.

Eric

The fifth and last student participant, hereafter called Eric, is a senior Human, Performance, & Wellness major. He is 21 years old. When Eric arrived on campus, he was one of the first students that introduced himself to me. He was a muscular football player and with an untrained eye, would appear to many to be very intimidating and mean. However, he was one of the kindest and nicest young men I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. He respectfully introduced himself, informing me that he was told to do so by his high school teacher, which happened to be my high school classmate. We began to affectionately refer to each other as “Hometown.” Over time, like clockwork, Eric would bring each athlete from our home town to my office to introduce them to me. He was trained very well to
identify, appreciate, and nurture his network. This was evident in the way he would insist that each new student athlete from “home town” met me and introduced them to me accordingly. Eric and I were not just from the same city, but we also attended the same high school alma mater where I was an All-State running back and where our state championship banner and team photo is prominently displayed in the sports corridor. Even thought it had been 17 years since we hoisted our trophy, there was an underlying respect between Eric and I because he heard stories of our championship team and the central players on that team.

Over the past 4 years, Eric must have brought at least 20 students to meet me from home. Each time, he would say, “This is Mr. J. He’s a championship running back from Bethel. You need to get to know him.” It was as if Eric instinctively knew the value of having someone from home to connect with and to call upon when the road would inevitably get rough. He seemed to know that it was as much an obligation for me to avail myself to these young men from “hometown” as it was their duty to show their respect and introduce themselves to me. Eric rarely needed much from me. However, I always made sure he knew how proud I was of him excelling on the football field and in the classroom. I also made sure to let him know that I was available to assist him in any way possible. He always respectfully would respond, “I know Mr. J.” When I needed to identify students to work on Rock the Vote, volunteering to work the voting polls, or to speak to incoming students, Eric was at the top of my list. I cannot remember a time when he said no when asked to participate in an event or function on campus. When he pledged his fraternity, that
was different from mine, I still was there extremely proud showing him my full support. Ironically, even though he pledged another frat, him knowing I was a long-time fraternity man, he and his line-brothers often sought my mentorship in matters of Greek life. Eric was an exceptional person to whoever made his acquaintance. The university president recognized Eric during his graduation in 2013 for his consistent efforts for the uplifting of the student community and the high character he maintained on and off the field during his four years at SAU. When he agreed to participate in this study, I knew his contribution would be significant. As always, he did not let me down.

**Participating Faculty/Administration**

**Ellis**

The first faculty/administrative participant, hereafter called Ellis, is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology department. He is in his second year as a professor and he is 34 years old. Ellis is one of the newest additions to the JAU faculty. He and I also attended the same historically Black college and university for our undergraduate degrees. I had the opportunity to work with Ellis prior to his service at JAU. He worked for a community organization for the city. I remember being impressed with him as a young professional. There was something about him I could not really place a finger on at the time, but I knew he was unique. After he came aboard at JAU, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that he was a minister. Coming from a long line of ministers myself, I guess there was a natural kinship with him and the good feeling that made him standout to me. He is also a huge Michigan
fan, so I finally had someone to battle with week in and week out during the college football season. Very early on, I was able to observe Professor Ellis’s commitment and investment in our students through his advising of the Christian Fellowship Organization (CFO) and revitalizing the overall Christian ministry on campus. Even though he is young, he has made his positive presence known on campus and I was not surprised that he was named a mentor in this study. Being named by one of his mentees to participate in this study at JAU and his commitment evidences a valuable advocate for our students here. By sharing his own mentorship experience and personal development, he has enriched this study.

_Lazarus_

The second faculty/administrative participant, hereafter called Lazarus, is an Assistant Professor in the Criminal Justice department at JAU. He is 39 years old. Professor Lazarus is one of the most beloved professors on campus; not because he is the easiest, but because he is believed by many to be one of the fairest. This is an impressive feat at a time when many undergraduate students would prefer easy over rigorous, and something given rather than earned. I have been able to observe his passion for students on multiple occasions as I sat in and observed his classes. Lazarus’s students appeared to always be prepared in his classes. There was an eagerness to learn that was so infectious in his class, that it made me want to learn more about the subject matter being discussed. In speaking with Professor Lazarus on several occasions, I have found him to be a very principled man with a clear sense of the impact that he aspires to make on his students during each interaction.
He does not squander those opportunities. Just sitting in Lazarus’s office for 5 minutes, one could clearly see his impact on his students as evidenced by the droves that stop-in to say hello, ask a question, or confirm an assignment. It is what you want to see occurring in the offices of your faculty when their doors are open.

Since my arrival to JAU, Professor Lazarus was promoted to Chair of his department. I firmly believe they chose well. His voice in this study is such a powerful one. I am so glad he was nominated to participate and that he agreed to share his life and story with me. As he referred to his father several times during his interview, Professor Lazarus is “just an awesome man” and I am thankful for his contribution to this study.

Coach

The third faculty/administrative participant, hereafter called Coach, is the Head Football Coach at JAU. He is 55 years old. He is one of the most respected and revered members of the JAU community. He has committed his staff to making sure his athletes have the highest grades in the conference each year and most graduate and attend graduate school in their chosen fields. He is not a man of many words, but when he steps to the podium to deliver a speech, each audience member is at full attention. He is from an era in U.S. history that belongs in this study, because the perspective of the Civil Rights Movement and those directly impacted by it tends to bring clarity and simplicity to a world that likes to operate in the gray. Coach is a man of very few words, but this was a very profound interview experience. I
wanted to include his story because of his intersection with my own. His input in this study was exceedingly valuable and appreciated.

*Thomas*

The fourth faculty/administrative participant, hereafter called Thomas, is a Military Science professor at JAU. He is 42 years old. Thomas is an alumnus of JAU and officer in the military. When I first arrived at JAU, we met and greeted each other because we discovered we were both members of the same fraternity. The similarities did not stop there. He too was a former track standout and had a passion for mentoring and motivating students to excel in college. In my capacity as Director of First-Year Experience, I was able to work with Thomas because he volunteered to teach one of my Freshman Studies courses. When I say “volunteered,” I mean without pay. His passion for making an impact early in the lives of these students was so strong that for three years, he taught these courses without pay. This spoke volumes to his dedication to setting our students along the right path. When not teaching my courses, he taught courses in the Military Science program on campus. I would often see him speaking with students across campus and I could tell the students were captivated and engaged and he was motivating and passionate about whatever he was sharing. I was confident a young man in this study would identify him. He recently was called to serve his last Tour of Duty overseas. Not only am I thankful for his input and experiences he shared within this study, I am exceedingly thankful for his efforts to secure the freedoms of Americans across this country and throughout the world.
Terry

The fifth and last faculty/administrative participant, hereafter called Terry, is a Vice-President at JAU. He is 39 years old. Terry is one of the most charismatic, young college administrators I have had the opportunity to work with. He is one of the most engaging people on campus and makes himself available to both staff and faculty alike. Because of his witty and funny nature, he is a natural fan of many students that have the opportunity to engage with him. He is a champion for the students on our campus and they know it. As the youngest Vice President on campus, he has a “swag”/presence that many of the young men on campus can more easily identify with. He uses that to their good and his advantage. The nature of his position requires him to engage with students when they are at their best and at their worst. This provides him with a unique perspective of the students and also provides the students with a unique perspective of him. I believe that as decisions he makes in regards to the good, the bad, and the ugly things he has to deal with circulates in the student campus community, many are made to feel at ease because of the fairness by which he addresses matters that come before him. However, many take care to not end up on his bad side also. That said, I believe that he offers a fair and respectable balance between the two. His ability to effectively measure his actions, are essential to his success in his current role.

Terry reminds me of one of the most impactful mentors I have had in my life, Dr. T.C.H. He was the co-advisor of my master’s program at Ohio State. Now that I am 39, I can appreciate how young he was as a 31 year-old scholar at the time. Even
though I was just seven years younger, I truly looked up to him as not only a big brother, but as a father figure. He just had a way about him that always assured me that everything was going to be alright and that he was going to be there to see me through. Being the only male African American professor in our program, he was mentor and hero to the only three African American males in the program at the time. When Dr. T.C.H. spoke, all of us listened. He would always take time to affirm us, speak to us, encourage us, and remind us of what we were capable of. He was like the greatest coach, brother, friend, father, and uncle all rolled up into one. He had tremendous faith in me. Because he believed I could do it, I believed I could do it too. It changed my life. I have been chasing this dream since I entered the program in winter 2001, but to this day, he still encourages me to get it done. To this day, I hear his voice ring in my head. To this day, I long for the day when I pen my thanks to him in the acknowledgements section of my dissertation for asking one of the most essential questions to every speak life into my future. I long for the day when I can take the stage and kneel to be hooded and don the title “Dr. Jackson.” These are the dreams that his mentorship and “otherfathering” have allowed me to dream. These are the heights that once I achieve them, my nephews, nieces, and students will know too that they can achieve them also, because I paved the way. His mentorship to me is why this topic has such meaning and purpose to me. It is why I will make it my life’s work. I vow to be the seed sower to others that Dr. T.C.H. was and is to me. I see similar traits in Terry and I am glad to have his administrative voice present in this study.
Table 3.1 Summary of Mentee and Mentor Qualities and Institutional Commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Institutional Commitment</th>
<th>Connections with Researcher</th>
<th>How long</th>
<th>Other Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodney</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Purposeful, Intuitive, Focused, Bright</td>
<td>Football Team Fraternity Member Fraternity Officer President of the Business Organization Business Major</td>
<td>From same hometown Members of the same fraternity Both of us played football Both held offices in the fraternity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chair of major Fraternity Advisor Position Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Respected, Revered, Committed, Professional, Motivating</td>
<td>Head Coach Teaching Recruiting Fund Raising</td>
<td>Former Track and Football Coach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Football Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bright, Articulate, Well-mannered, Consistent, Level-headed</td>
<td>Basketball Team Student Government Pan-Hellenic Council President Liberal Studies Major</td>
<td>From the same state Members of the same fraternity Both held offices in fraternity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Basketball Coaches Psychology professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Impressive, Minister, Passionate, Motivating</td>
<td>Faculty member Advisor to organization</td>
<td>Went to the same college undergrad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Multiple students across disciplines across campus (continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Members of the same fraternity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeron</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bright, Intelligent, Promising</td>
<td>Debate Team Political Science major Student Government</td>
<td>Member of organization I advise</td>
<td>3 Vice-President on campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazarus</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Beloved, Impressive, Motivating, Passionate, Eager</td>
<td>Chair of Department Advisor of campus fraternity chapter</td>
<td>Members of the same fraternity Co-advise campus chapter of fraternity</td>
<td>4 Multiple students across disciplines across campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Beautiful voice, Sad eyes, Quiet</td>
<td>Christian Fellowship Organization (CFO) Choir Travel Choir Psychology Major</td>
<td>Both come from families with ministers Sang in the choir all throughout school</td>
<td>2 Campus Pastor Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Passionate, Committed, Dedicated, Motivating</td>
<td>Military Science Faculty Recruiter</td>
<td>Both members of same fraternity Both ran track in college</td>
<td>4 Multiple students across disciplines across campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Muscular, Kind, Respectful, Mindful</td>
<td>Football Team Fraternity Member Human Performance &amp; Wellness Major</td>
<td>From the same hometown</td>
<td>4 Football Coach Position Coach Track Coach Me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Data Analysis Process

According to Glesne (1999), data analysis entails “organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 130). Huberman & Miles (1994) describe data analysis as a process that involves an ongoing, continuous engagement that is initiated the moment the first data are collected. I conducted on going data analysis through themes that emerged from several close readings of the data (Glesne, 1999). I transcribed all of the interview data by hand. By engaging in the transcription process, I was able to identify and formulate additional interview questions required to provide further context to the original research questions (Charmaz, 2005). The data were examined from multiple perspectives that allowed for better understanding of the interplay of the themes that emerged in and among the cases. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) posit that in order to execute good data analyses, researchers should (1) read data more than once; (2) keep track of themes, hunches, interpretations and ideas; (3) look for emerging themes; (4) construct typologies; and (5) develop concepts and theoretical propositions (p. 130-131). By engaging in several close readings, I was able to identify multiple themes. Finally, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) theorize data analysis while engaging in qualitative inquiry in the following passage:

Table 3.1 (continued)

| Terry  | 39 | Engaging Charismatic Witty Effective | Vice President Various Committees | Both members of fraternities | 3 | Multiple students across disciplines across campus |

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The researcher first establishes broad outlines of the phenomena studied. These derive from an examination of the data. The next step is to assemble the chunks of data, fitting those pieces together so that they are a coherent whole. The researcher withdraws for a minute, details and looks for the larger picture that emerges. It facilitates a process, Guba (1978) calls convergence: figuring out which things fit together—either because the investigator feels intuitively that they should or because the participants say that they do. The next step is the process of pulling apart field notes, matching, comparing, and contrasting, which constitutes the heart of the analytic process. From this process, patterns emerge. (p. 192)

Once the data were transcribed, I took each case and broke down key topics that emerged into chunks of data (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). These chunks were broken down into the following categories (1) initial themes/key words; (2) summary of key words; (3) categories/interpretive notes; and (4) researcher's story/history of relationship with participants. With each progressive category, the data was further reduced. This category identification process relied heavily upon the three-stage procedure described by Strauss and Corbin (1998): (1) identifying conceptual labels for each conversational turn; (2) grouping these conceptual labels into a manageable number of robust conceptual categories; and (3) relating these categories to one another to arrive at a formulation of the core category. An example of this chunking process is shown in the following sample by the mentor Thomas. Two of the many categories that were visible among the mentors were “taking advantage of opportunities” and “The importance/value of timing of mentoring experiences. The sample shows the theme with the portion of the transcription that it aligns with.
Taking advantage of opportunities

*There may be something that may have nothing to do with academics that may ring a bell that may transcend into academics where a student will say, you know, I can apply this to my focus as far as when I’m going to get to my goals and objectives in life. So, anything that I think you can mentor a person on can be a learning experience and that experience can expound upon anything whether it be in academics or within a particular concentration. So, my view and perspective is, every encounter...every engagement could be that learning tool that you can use. And you may have to use something that is not academic to reach a person and then transcend and transform that into something academically to get them to where they need to go.*

The importance/value of timing of mentoring experience

*Sometimes the light bulb goes off during the first interaction or first engagement, it may be after follow-up. Some people just don’t get it the first time. I think, many times, the earlier we catch students and put them in that thinking process the better.*

This process occurred for each mentor and mentee. The themes were then placed on two charts, one for mentors and one for mentees. The categories were listed and the participants with the portion of the transcription that aligned with that theme were included. The following section describes the thematic identification and case presentation.

**Thematic Process and Case Presentation**

The coding process for the cases provided me with several opportunities to continuously engage with the data. It was during this process that I was able to both further immerse myself in the data and to more clearly identify themes.

As Eisner (1991) reminds us, the qualitative researcher should use inductive analysis—allowing the researcher to guide points of interest, categories, themes, and patterns. I used inductive analysis to identify the themes associated with each
participant. During this process, there were several themes that overlapped. This was expected. However, there were several themes that did not connect with other participants. Where some would argue that the lack of overlap of all of the categories was inconsistent, I contend that individuality and uniqueness of experiences creates differences in the way people view things. Also, no two participants shared the same background. Participants came from two family homes and single homes; homes where both parents had higher education degrees and some with none; and some came from middle to upper-class socioeconomic backgrounds and others low-socioeconomic backgrounds. The participants’ ages were mitigating factors as to why some categories were associated with some participants and not others. This was particularly true of the mentors where the age differences ranged from 6 to 26 years. The differences in mentee ages ranged from 1 to 3 years. I was able to acknowledge and celebrate what made each participant different using portraiture as an analytic. I did not focus on what was missing from the narrative that was present in others, rather I called attention to the data that was new and different from the unique perspective of each participant. I attributed most of the overlap between and among mentor participants to similar experiences growing up and developing a Black male identity, more specifically, their experiences mentoring and being mentored throughout their lives and the role of these experiences in their past and current successes.

During the initial processing of the data for the mentees, there were 59 themes identified. Going through the data a second time, I was able to reduce the
number of themes to 20. The third and final reduction of the themes involved grouping the smaller themes into 6 broader themes. There were three additional close readings that did not render additional themes or reductions. The following is an example of the final grouping process for the mentees that shows the larger themes in bold, sub-themes numbered, and the quotes from the participants associated with the specific themes italicized:

Summary of Themes and Connections for Mentee Participants

RACIAL UPLIFT

1. Importance of mentor reaching out
   Jeron - *Him reaching out to me shows that he does appreciate my desire for a greater education and my academic life*

2. Legacy
   Allen - *So, for being a black male, that's doing pretty well for himself at the age of 22, as far as in his campus-life and social life, it motivates me to do what my mentor did and that 's stretch my hand back to let younger youth know that no matter what your situation, race, or color, you can also be successful.*

   Eric - *allowed me to go home and somewhat brag and show people that I can do it and that it's possible for my younger family members. But now, four years later, I'm about to graduate and I've changed a lot of people's mind. You know, they feel like, if he can do it, then I can too.*

   Rodney - *I know I can go back home and talk to the youth how my mentors spoke to me when I was growing up to give them insight, not so much into making it into a career field, but how they can make it through high school and on to college... I just want to say how big of an impact mentors make in the African-American community*

3. *Looking back*
   Allen - *He's basically that person who has made it and hasn't forgotten about the people behind him. So, when I meet with my mentor and I'm having problems, in a sense, he's reaching his hand back to pull me up with him.*
MENDING

1. Trust
   Jeron - It’s just someone you look up to. It’s just someone I get advice from.

   Allen - For me personally, it’s the trust level. Once my trust for the person has become greater than when I first met them and I become comfortable enough to express or to ask for guidance or advice on a situation and based on the feedback I get on a situation. It’s really once you get that trust from them and you see how trustworthy they are and how loyal they are to you and how loyal you are to them to keep your information confidential between you two.

   Eric - I think it starts off with trust

   Rodney - you just feel like it’s the right time that you can trust someone

2. *Absent father
   Eric - my father wasn’t in my life.

   Rodney - a lot of kids don’t know their fathers or didn’t grow up with their fathers around. I’m one of those; I grew up in a single parent home. So, it was just my mom and me. Then, once I got older and starting going out, I had male mentors that kind of led me in the right way and along the right path.

3. *Keeps his word
   Eric - My dad tells me he’s going to do things all the time, but doesn’t keep his word. So, any man that keeps his word is highly respected in my book.

   The chart on the following page illustrates the major themes and the sub-themes that were identified during the coding process for the mentees.
Table 3.2 Mentee chart of complete listing of major themes with smaller sub-headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Uplift</th>
<th>Mending</th>
<th>Nurture</th>
<th>Timelines/ Relevance of time</th>
<th>Mirroring/ Seeing/ Perceiving</th>
<th>Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of mentor reaching out</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Importance of access to mentor</td>
<td>Mentors evolve as mentee moves through stages of life</td>
<td>Mentorship and Like-person role-models</td>
<td>Mentor raising mentee's personal expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Timing of bestowment of mentorship</td>
<td>Leads by example</td>
<td>Mentorship influencing academic excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking back</td>
<td>Absent father</td>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>Taking advantage of opportunities</td>
<td>Observing mentor's way of life</td>
<td>Guiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeps his word</td>
<td>Mentoring as nurturing</td>
<td>Past not determining future</td>
<td>Academic insights heavily informed by parents not mentor</td>
<td>Lack of mentor growing up and impact on grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking up to mentor like a father</td>
<td>Maturity level of mentee determines mentee's ability to acquire a mentor</td>
<td>Male mentors not having strong impact on view of academics</td>
<td>Knowledgeable in particular areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td></td>
<td>The younger you receive a mentor the better</td>
<td>Great need for mentors</td>
<td>Reaching goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship as helping</td>
<td>Mentorship relationship is not always clearly defined</td>
<td>Importance of sharing experiences</td>
<td>Impact of parents on view of academics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going above and beyond</td>
<td>It's like the mentor has seen the future</td>
<td>Outside the home</td>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing potential</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee seeing himself in the mentor</td>
<td>Given chances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 3.2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being doubted</th>
<th>Mentoring of African American males should not be confined to African American males or those with college degrees</th>
<th>Guidance based on experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treating you like family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of mentor growing up facing obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with mentor beyond that of family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Impressed by demeanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors are highly valued by mentees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Desire for a greater education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the chart, some sub-categories are located under more than one major theme. If a category was identified as fitting under more than one category based on its characteristics, it was listed accordingly.

During the initial processing of the data for the mentors, there were 89 themes that were identified. Going through the data a second time, the researcher was able to reduce the number of themes to 51. The third and final reduction of the themes involved grouping the smaller themes into 7 broader themes. These themes were identified as racial uplift; mending; nurturing; positioning; timelines; mirroring/seeing/perceiving; and path. There were three additional close readings that did not render additional themes or reductions. The following is an example of the final grouping process for the mentors that show the larger theme in bold, the
sub-themes numbered, and the quotes from the participants associated with the specific themes italicized:

Summary of Themes and Connections for Mentor Participants

RACIAL UPLIFT

1. **The importance of providing hope to black males**

Lazarus - *He never owned a suit, so I got him a suit for graduation and that was like the greatest thing in the world to him cause he’s never had that experience with a male...he’ll take the time to do that regardless of how tired he is...regardless if he wants to do it. He’s just awesome. So, that’s where I get that from. That’s just natural for me just through observing him it’s just natural to care about the future of young black males...it’s natural to care about that...and it’s natural to want to assist in any kind of way...and it’s just natural to empower them to be able to do the things that I was able to do.*

2. **Mentors making needed connections**

Lazarus - *...They will spread the word...go see Lazarus, go talk to Mr. J., cause I do that. I say go on the second floor and see if Mr. J. is in his office so you can go talk to him about that. You know because you need to know that certain people are here for certain issues. You know that certain people can handle a certain student better than others and it is our responsibility to be able to say go see Mr. J., talk to Jackson about that. You know, we should be able to do that. I love the word powerful, but that relationship is powerful.*

Terry - *I actually start to connect students...because I think part of this is, I don’t know if you’re going to ask later, but a part of this is asking/knowing as a mentor that you may not be the guy...And so, if I’m not the guy, I may say, well what is it, as we were talking about places to hook people in, you know Jackson you’re from X city, so let me hook you in with Jackson because Jackson knows this or has this experience and so on and so forth. And I think that that’s the place that helps them...I’ve taken them on from freshman year and so on and so forth and Jackson is getting on and he’s talking about grad school, I think in that mentoring conversation you may pick-in as a mentor (basketball reference), but that person still has an inherent connection to me because I’m the person who made the connection...And I think that there are two sides to that. There’s the side that says, what is your role as their mentor?*
The other side is what is your role once you have directed them to the mentor that is able to carry them to their next phase?

3. Legacy

Lazarus - And young black males still need us to be in their corner. So, that they can get to the point where they can do the same thing for somebody else. I think that’s the ultimate result. The ultimate result is to see someone that you mentored do the same thing for somebody else. That’s the ultimate result in that. Not so much the success, as much as that desire to help. One of the things about mentoring students is that students will tell other students...

Thomas - My thing is that I look at it from this perspective, if I don’t help some of the men and women that are out there who’s going to help my children? Sometimes for you to develop, you have to go back and develop people; whether they know what’s good for them or not. They won’t see it initially, but educationally, like my soldiers, I’ll force them into a class that I know is going to help develop them, so they can go develop somebody else. That’s my legacy.

During the coding process, themes were assigned based on the interview data provided by the participants. Hence, each case presented with its own set of unique themes. The following chart illustrates the major themes and the sub-themes that were identified during the coding process for the mentors.

Table 3.3 Mentor chart of complete listing of major themes with smaller sub-headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Uplift</th>
<th>Mending</th>
<th>Nurture</th>
<th>Timelines/Relevance of time</th>
<th>Mirroring/Seeing/Perceiving</th>
<th>Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of providing hope to Black males</td>
<td>Importance of being honest/real with mentees about realities of life</td>
<td>Importance of being honest/real with mentees about realities of life</td>
<td>The process of development in a mentoring relationship</td>
<td>The importance of Like-person role-models</td>
<td>Mentorship Bestowment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 3.3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentors making needed connections</th>
<th>Importance of providing hope to Black males</th>
<th>Going beyond</th>
<th>Using past experiences as a guide for mentorship</th>
<th>Observing mentor's way of life</th>
<th>Coaching as mentorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Influence of mentor's father/uncles on mentorship approaches</td>
<td>Taking advantage of opportunities</td>
<td>Identity development</td>
<td>Challenges of helping students to see the path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching out to students</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Importance/value of timing of the mentoring experience</td>
<td>Mentee comparing and contrasting biological father's actions vs. those of mentor</td>
<td>Mentor/mentee dialogue should emphasize academic performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is not meant to be a mentor</td>
<td>Holding mentees accountable (academically, socially, etc.)</td>
<td>A sense of timing in students' awareness as of being highly educated African American males</td>
<td>Mentoring of African American males should not be confined to African American males or those with college degrees</td>
<td>Mentor raising mentee's personal expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of reaching back to youth</td>
<td>Mentoring as nurturing</td>
<td>Timing of mentorship development/relationship</td>
<td>First-generation students' response to mentorship vs. traditional</td>
<td>The lack of mentors at HBCU's contributes to lack of completion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor's father no considered nurturing</td>
<td>Mentorship relationship is not always clearly defined</td>
<td>The fallacy in trying to make mentees smaller versions of themselves</td>
<td>Success through academics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
In the chart, some sub-categories are located under more than one major theme. If a category was identified as fitting under more than one category based on its characteristics, it was listed accordingly.

The case study process allowed me to visually see the key themes emerge. By seeing these themes visually, I was able to observe the variances in and among the participants. With each close reading, I was able to gain both an in depth understanding of the participants as individuals and what made them distinctively different in their respective groups. For example, in the theme mending, Allen uses
Conversely, Jeron posits, "it's just someone you look up to. It's just someone I get advice from." Both are talking about the value of trust and its importance in the mentoring process, but one says it directly, while the other is more implicit in its presentation. These subtle, yet important themes were critical in helping the reader see a more clear articulation of what case study analysis provided to this study.

Portraiture as an Analytic Tool

Data were also analyzed using portraiture, a method through which to bring to life the participants’ context, histories, and meanings (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). Like traditional qualitative methodology, portraiture relies on the practice of systematically observing and interviewing participants in naturalistic settings. To that end, as Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) argued, portraiture has an expressed commitment to scientific rigor and analysis. Additionally, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986) described the methodology of portraiture as a source of empowerment for schools, communities, and researchers. However, what sets portraiture apart is its commitment to developing an artistic narrative that paints the subject in the best possible light. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) described this affective mechanism as aspects of “goodness.” When creating the search for goodness, she was researching the cultures and subcultures of six successful high schools that had been identified as effective schools that produced strong graduates with high rates of college attendance.
In an attempt to illuminate the lives and voices of the African American males and their mentors in this study, this unique form of social science inquiry was utilized as a counterpoint to the traditional approach to researching issues related to people of color by searching for what is “good,” as opposed to what is not good about such communities (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997). Two studies in particular resonate with this study. Using the stories of college students of color, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) supplied multiple examples of racism that students face in their academic environments. They used the term “microaggressions” (Delgado, 1992; Solorzano, 1998) to describe those unconscious or subtle forms of racism that people of color recognize and absorb on a daily basis. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) suggested that exposure to microaggressions during long periods of time, without support systems to combat their wearing effects, leads students of color to adopt complex coping mechanisms or leave the university. Similarly, the young men that participated in this study face microaggressions, but they are not racial in nature. Because the young men are African American and attend an HBCU, encountering racism on campus is unlikely. However, subtleties like bias, apathy, lack of student investment and caring are recognized and absorbed and lead to students departing the college each year.

Solorzano and Bernal (2001) conducted a study highlighting the various types of resistance practiced by high school Chicano students. The students’ levels of resistance ranged from oppositional behavior that had no elements of social justice associated with it and worked against the student, to resistance that was
purposefully conducted to challenge negative stereotypes and work toward academic excellence and social transformation. The students that participated in this study resisted the temptations to engage in the kinds of illicit activity that result in college dismissal and potential incarceration, opting to select a staff or faculty member as a mentor, working towards academic excellence, and persisting to graduation.

Why Portraiture?

This study examining the impact of African American male mentorship of African American college males’ ability to persist and excel at an HBCU is looking for the “goodness” in a population that traditionally is not expected to persist, excel, or attend college. The societal challenges college-age African American males face along their journey is both unique and troubling. However, there are those that have traversed the often unfair and prejudiced landscape of this country to arrive on college doorsteps. Unlike what many expect or believe, these young men are excelling, persisting, and thriving academically and socially. Portraiture allowed me to choose these components as base colors to the paintings I offer in this study.

Portraiture acknowledges that identity, experiences and judgment of the researcher is infused throughout the research process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) assert:

In portraiture, the voice of the researcher is everywhere: in the assumptions, preoccupations, and framework she brings to the inquiry; in the questions she asks; in the data she gathers; in the choices of stories she tells; in the language, cadence, and rhythm of her narrative. (p. 85)
I selected portraiture because it is important to me, as a scholar of color concerned about issues related to Black male mentorship, persistence and caring, that my experiences be both heard and validated in this academic space. Additionally, I believe in the importance of relationship building in order to gain a more honest and authentic response from research participants leading to further knowledge construction. Portraiture posits that “It is through relationships between the portraitists and the actors that access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed” (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 135).

The value that portraiture places on the relationship between the researcher and participants allowed for a level of intimacy between them that cleared the way for increased self-understanding by both parties. I found that the telling of my personal story alongside the stories of the participants served to extend a greater understanding of self-understanding which allowed me to paint a more vivid picture of the phases, roles, and impact of African American male mentorship on college age African American males and their mentors. The catalyst for deep inquiry and the construction of knowledge arises out of intersubjective experiences, which is grounded in one’s own self-understanding (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In the following passage I reflect on what mentors have meant to me in my life, following the interview with the mentor Terry:

*For me, mentors have served several surrogate roles throughout my life. The roles of father, brother, sister, uncle, etc. were consistent voids filled by mentors*
throughout my existence. The presence of these caring and engaged persons served as bridges to my understanding, self-awareness, and success. They were the glue that held my world together until the roles they were filling were no longer required. At that point, the relationships shifted to account for new obstacles and challenges I would face and like chameleons, they simply adapted.

It was through my relationship development with each participant that I was able to reflect and reach a greater understanding of the purpose and meaning that mentors held for me in my life, also by extension my role as a mentor in the lives of others. New understandings of my personal motivation to support and stand in the gap for young men that need mentorship were achieved through my post reflections with the participants. Bernstein (1992) espoused, “It is in our genuine encounters with what is other and alien (even in ourselves) that we further our own self-understanding” (as cited in Moss, 1996, p. 67). Jackson (1989) furthers this discussion as he traces the connection between the building of relationships and the development of knowledge, and between the connection and mutuality in relationships and validity in research when he stated:

Knowledge of the other is not just a product of our theoretical thought and research activity; it is a consequence of critical experiences, relationships, choices, and events both in the field and in the quotidian world of our professional and family lives...Ethnography then becomes a form of Verstehen, a project of empathic and vicarious understanding in that the other is seen in the light of one’s own experiences and the activity of trying to fathom the other in turn illuminates and alters one’s sense of self...Self and other share the same world, even though their projects differ. To fathom another is not, therefore, all projection and surmise, or insular subjectivity blindly reaching out to an alien other. To compare notes on experience with someone else presumes and creates a common ground and the understanding arrived at takes its validity not from our detachment and objectivity but from the very possibility of our mutuality, the existence of the relationship itself. (pp. 34-35)
I attribute much of my ability to survive and persevere in life to the significant roles African American male mentors played in my life at every stage of development. The common ground found between the mentors, mentees, and me is this study created a kinship that to the portraitist is “fundamental to self-understanding, to mutuality and validity, and to the development of knowledge” (Lightfoot & Lawrence, 1997, p. 136). Portraiture provided the vehicle for me to be clear about my intentions and to honestly, and inspiring seduce the audience into thinking more deeply about the goodness held within African American males without the fear of being accused of tainting or biasing the results. For example, in the following passage, I reflect on the promise I see in the mentee Jeron:

_As a researcher, sometimes you find your subject and other times, your subjects find you. Since Jeron arrived on campus a year ago, he has stood out. Being an educator, I know there are several ways that a student can set themselves apart. Unfortunately, as it pertains to African American males, society, without hesitation, offers a consistently negatively narrative (i.e. sagging pants, hats on in buildings, disregard for women and elders, general disregard for self and others, regular use of vulgar and degrading language, etc.). However, Jeron was the kind of student that stood out in all the ways that as educators, we wish every student would... One evening following work, I went to support the debate team as they battled against our crosstown rival, and there was Jeron, speaking as eloquently as I’d ever heard him. Hearing him offer up his argument and justifying his argument the way he did honestly gave me chills. I saw in him potential that made me want to be a part of his success. It made me want to offer him access to my entire network and each experience I’ve had along the way in hopes of helping him avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that I’ve made in my life. He made me want to be to him what all of my mentors were to me. I wanted to be a door opener. I wanted to be an affirmer. I wanted to be the gardener that sowed the seeds of access and success. I see promise in Jeron in ways that I would hope that my mentors saw in me... in ways that Martin Luther King, Jr.’s saw in him... in ways that Barack Obama’s saw in him_

“The way in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both what we know and our relationships with our research participants” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 114)
This passage describes the deep admiration, respect, and depth of the relationship I have with Jeron. Knowing how difficult it can be to choose the right path coming from certain communities, I have never turned my back on a student that deserved to be acknowledged for their good deeds rather than bad. The relationship with the participant is what allowed me to provide such a vehement and detailed narrative which serves to extend the audience beyond academic circles as posited in portraiture. It is the feel good story that I want for my character in the movie and I can honestly impact how the story ends.

The use of Voice in Portraiture

Similarly, in portraiture, the “data must be scrutinized carefully, searching for the story line that emerges from the material” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, p. 12). The analysis process combines the six characteristics of voice (voice as witness; interpretation; preoccupation; autobiography; discerning other voices; and in dialogue) in the construction of the portrait. However, Davis (1997) points to voice as interpretation as the governing voice in the portraiture process:

...Voice as interpretation pursues particular lines of inquiry, listens for resonance, observes carefully, and reflects continuously on the input of data, searching for and testing the strength of the coherence that will unify the interpretation. In terms of the construction of the final portrayal, voice as interpretation determines language, frames and selects images, modulates articulation, and balances the separate parts of the portrayal into a cohesive aesthetic whole.” (p.113)

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), to create an authentic narrative requires “careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of...
time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole” (p. 12).

The data are presented in a case format, espousing a narrative style of storytelling that began with the observation of each participant as they entered the interview environment and a brief distinguishing fact (i.e. 6’ 4” broad shouldered football player). This was the beginning of the creation of the “authentic narrative” that would unfold as the researcher carefully and systematically engaged the participant with the goal of arriving at an aesthetic whole as outlined in portraiture. I then provided the themes that were most salient throughout the participant’s interview. I found that being able to examine the interview transcripts for the positive ways that each participant was impacted by the mentoring relationship was both challenging and empowering. It was challenging because of my tendency to view and examine the social world in a manner that illuminates what is wrong rather than acknowledging the presence of promise and potential (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). It was empowering to set aside the conditioned response to seek what is amiss or weak and heighten the focus on what works, on underscoring what is healthy and strong. By engaging in this non-traditional focus, “we inevitably see the dark shadows of compromise, inhibition, and imperfection that distort the success and weaken the achievements” (p. 142). Traditionally, research problematizes an issue and seeks to address that issue through data collection and analysis. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, (1997) assert:

Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what
is good and healthy and assumes that expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfection. The researcher asking first, ‘what is good here?’ (p. 9)

In examining “what is good here,” I decided that to provide a complete portrait of the mentoring experiences of the mentors and mentees in the study that it would be best told in painting a dual portrait. More specifically, telling the story of the mentee, followed by the story of his mentor. I felt that by sharing their stories one after the other, and making connections between what the mentee aspired to receive and what the mentor intended to be sent, provided the authentic whole that portraiture seeks to present.

To do this effectively, I found that portraiture, with its focus on narrative, was able to more effectively broaden the audience by sharing my own experiences both with mentoring and being mentored following each case. The use of storytelling aligns with portraiture’s goal to “move beyond the academy’s inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them” (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 10). My stories are personal, vivid, and intimate; allowing the audience to step into one or all three of the sets of shoes portrayed in the portrait.

As I shared the stories of the participants and my own, each was laced with their individual set of imperfections that provided rich backgrounds laden with resilience and promise. I was mindful not to impose my definition of what was good onto the participants in the study; because their experiences would paint a picture
that would clearly delineate between what was good and bad from the participant's perspective. When presenting three lives that are intertwined, as is the case in this research, voice is important.

**Six Characteristics of Voice**

**Voice as Witness**

Portraitists use voice to develop texts in six ways: voice as witness; voice as interpretation; voice as preoccupation; voice as autobiography; listening for voice; and voice in conversation. First, voice as witness illuminates the my stance as discerning observer, far enough from the activity to see the whole and to depict patterns that actors in the environment might not notice because of their closeness to the story (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). The following illustration from the interview with Terry exemplifies this voice.

Terry acknowledges both the impact of social media and also a sense of disdain with how it has changed the values of students today. When he shares how special he felt when his vice-president said something to him having a special meaning and as a vice-president himself today having to perform "somersaults" to get a student to respond to him, this speaks to a need for a shift in approaches on some level in regards to what potential mentors must do to build their mentee pool.

The portraitist endeavors to expose those habits of behavior and perspective that normally recess into the backdrop of human experience, fading into the background (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997).

**Voice as Interpretation**

Voice as interpretation illuminates the role of the portraitist as observer, witness, and his attempts to make sense of the data. The following illustration first
shows my interpretation of the transcribed data from the mentor Terry followed by the portion of the original transcription.

Terry’s case affirms othermothering research, specifically an ethic of caring. The way that Terry articulates the building of the mentoring relationship to fill a void, calls for a deeper level of understanding and an approach that shows a greater depth of caring consistent with the literature (Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008). (Researcher’s interpretation)

To me, I think students build those relationships to fill a void in their life. So, those relationships, a lot of times they are filled through a guidance counselor, a church member, or one of those folks. Somebody who stabilizes them or gives them an anchor. (Original transcription)

Voice as Preoccupation

Voice as preoccupation refers to the ways a portraitist’s observations and text are shaped by the assumptions he brings to the inquiry, reflecting his disciplinary background, theoretical perspectives, intellectual interests, and his understanding of relevant literature (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). In this instance, voice refers to the lens through which he sees and records reality. In this excerpt from my observation/reflection of the mentor Thomas, I reveal my assumptions regarding Thomas being an exemplary mentor. Relying on my background as an observant teacher and principal, I was able to assess his effectiveness in making an impact on the students under his tutelage.
My interests and presuppositions weave their way through this passage.

Thomas is an alumnus of JAU and an officer in the military. When I first arrived at JAU, we met and greeted each other because we discovered we were both members of the same fraternity. The similarities did not stop there. He too was a former track standout and had a passion for mentoring and motivating students to excel in college. In my capacity as Director of First-Year Experience, I was able to work with Thomas because he volunteered to teach one of my Freshman Studies courses. When I say “volunteered,” I mean without pay he offered to teach this course. His passion for making an impact early in the lives of these students was so strong that for three years he taught without pay. This spoke volumes of his dedication to setting our students along the right path. When not teaching my department, he taught courses in the Military Science program on campus. I would often see him speaking with students across campus and I could tell the students were captivated and engaged. He was motivating and passionate about whatever he was sharing. I was confident he would be identified by a young man in this study as a mentor.

Voice as Autobiography

Voice as autobiography in portraiture reflects the life of the portraitist. The researcher is able to bring his own history—familial, cultural, ideological, and educational—to the inquiry. His perspective, questions, and his insights are inevitably shaped by these profound developmental and autobiographical experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). The following excerpt of my connection to the mentor Ellis reflects my explicit autobiographical stance and begins to reveal the personal history that he brought to this inquiry.

As I walk the JAU campus, I am constantly scanning to either lay eyes on one of my advisees, mentees, or students that I do not know personally, but we speak each time we see each other. These levels of engagement are important because they all feed into the overall sense of responsibility I feel to engage them all on some level as often as I can. Being one of the youngest ranking faculty on campus and one of the most visible at student functions, I know that my presence does not go unnoticed by the student body. This is deliberate and by design. I know that I must do more than just wear suits and bowties to make an impact in students’ lives. I have to do more than hold titles and give nice speeches. I have to avail myself to students in places and spaces that matter to
them. Those places are the cafeteria, residence halls, sporting events, and other student led functions. I have to show my interest in those things that matter to them in hopes to one day be able to offer them the motivation they need to do continue to do the right thing.

Ellis eloquently articulates the importance of providing hope in the following passage:

…I think that just in interacting with people like you (the researcher), like myself that have gone to college and overcome things in high school and beyond high school. People who have made it through college who have made it through graduate school, people who have good jobs, who have good character, I think it gives them hope because of the fact that so many young men and young women grow up with that lack. They don’t see positive black male figures, so by them seeing that in us, I think it creates hope for them personally. I can do this. I get a lot of questions like, how did you get to where you are? What did you major in? What did you go to graduate school for? So, things like that speak to their sense of opportunity.

For many of our students, a wing and a prayer is what brought them to JAU, but going beyond JAU will take the provisions of hope and prayer by others and myself. It was through dialogue with my mentors that I raised my own personal expectations and reached further than I thought was possible. Because I was blessed with so many great mentors and appreciate what their presence in my life meant to my success, to be that kind of mentor to others is one of the few ways for me to repay that debt. A little bit of hope can go a long way.

By sharing my own life story, it does not reduce the reader’s trust in portraiture; rather it enhances it (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). It does not distort my responsibility as the researcher and the authenticity of the work; it gives them clarity. “A reader who knows where the portraitist is coming from can more
comfortably enter the piece, scrutinize the data, and form independent interpretations (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 96).

**Voice as Discerning Other Voices**

Voice as discerning other voices/listening for voice refers to the portraitist seeking out a story, trying to capture its texture and cadence, exploring its meaning and repositioning its sound and message into the text through carefully selected quotations. The following excerpt is an example of a carefully repositioned quote into text.

Ellis begins a dialogue on a few topics that serve to extend the literature on mentorship. One theme that is present across the cases in this study is the challenges mentors face getting their mentees on the right path. This challenge is not discussed specifically throughout the literature, but is a prominent theme highlighted in this study. Ellis speaks about his difficulty in the following passage:

*I think one of the most challenging things in working with young people is helping them see that path and I guess to even more so plan for those pitfalls that they know are coming or could expect, but for some reason have a hard time navigating around. But, I think those past experiences of myself and them actually allow me to provide more insight and guidance.*

Listening for voice not only requires observing, listening, and questioning, it also calls for the portraitist to be attentive to silences. In listening for voice, there is potential for a story in every fine detail.
Voice in Dialogue

Finally, voice in dialogue reflects the relationship between the researcher and actor where the emerging trust and intimacy is captured. The portraitist places himself in the middle of the action, very different from the portraitist's use of voice as witness where he is situated along the periphery.

Ellis: You know, what's so funny is just this past Tuesday, a young man was in my office and he said me, and it makes me feel good just kinda thinking about it because I know what he meant when he said it. He said, “I've never met anybody like you before.” He's a senior and not someone that I'm actively mentoring or engaging with, he's just someone in class who was in my office and I was helping him with a project in another class. He said, “I never met anyone like you before and I want to continue talking with you throughout the years.” And it makes me feel good, but at the same time, it's actually disappointing because one, it is a compliment to me that it's something about my character, something about me that he identifies with and admires. Then there's disappointment at the same time because, you know here's this kid, he's a senior so we're talking 21-22 years old...and you know, when you kind of break it down, it's kind of like him saying you know, I've never met somebody professional that looks like you, that looks like me, Black male. I think that just in interacting with people like you (the researcher), like myself that have gone to college and overcome things in high school and beyond high school. People who have made it through college who have made it through graduate school, people who have good jobs, who have good character, I think it gives them hope because of the fact that so many young men and young women grow up with that lack. They don't see positive black male figures, so by them seeing that in us, I think it creates hope for them personally. I can do this. I get a lot of questions like, how did you get to where you are? What did you major in? What did you go to graduate school for? So, things like that speak to their sense of opportunity. If that makes any sense?

Researcher: That makes absolute sense. I think that it is pretty powerful. I kind of felt like it was bittersweet that this young man is this old and this far along academically, but has such a short window to sort of glean as much information as he can from someone that looks like him and sounds like him...someone that he identifies with on some level...but at even a very basic level wants to aspire to be and carry themselves in the way in which you do...wanting to further engage you. He believes that if he begins to measure himself up against you, then one day he can be as sharp as you.
Ellis: *You know iron sharpens iron.* (laughing)

Researcher: *Yes! The fact that he did not have that in the previous three years...that he did not have someone to engage with like you is pretty sad.*

Ellis: *Yes. Yes it is.*

This excerpt also illuminates how the portraitist “feels the symmetry of voice—hers and the actor’s—as they both express their views and together define meaning-making. The reader also hears the researcher's methodology, her questions, her interpretations, her interventions” (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 103).

In summary, the portraitist engages the use of voice in several modalities in the field and in the display of research. Each modality of voice expresses a different level of visibility and presence for the portraitist in the presentation of the data from a minimalist position of restraint and witness to a stance of explicit, audible dialogue. Portraiture was the most appropriate lens by which to construct my final representations of the mentors and mentees in the next chapter.

Portraiture allowed my relationships with the participants to provide texture to the rich data that the stories of the mentors and mentees provided. I learned that it requires restraint to engage in portraiture, because the researcher has to be ever mindful that the story is not all about you, while in cases like this study, the researcher’s story is essential to the whole picture. However, I found that to describe the intimate and personal relationship of mentoring, portraiture provides
an analytic tool to describe and tell these stories that case study alone does not provide.

**What Case Study and Portraiture bring to the Field**

As a key figure in the weaving of the narrative or aesthetic whole in this research, I was challenged to answer the question, “How do I account for my presence in the lives of the participants?” This question made positionality important for me as the researcher. In the design of this study, I felt that the use of both case study and portraiture as methodological frames would be essential. Fortunately, the importance of utilizing both served to better explicate the experiences of the participants and allowed me to be present throughout. Case study allowed me to get the necessary distance from the participants in order to tell their stories fully. Portraiture allowed me my thoughts, feelings, and relationship with the participants to be present as part of the whole, rather than a separate addendum to the picture. However, I found that either method alone does not allow me to tell the complete story. What is vital to understanding this research is that we all know each other and that there is a strong familial sense and connection to all of this research.

**Validity and Reliability of Findings**

There has been immense dialogue with regard to the difficulty of establishing validity criteria in qualitative research. According to Whittmore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), the challenge to developing validity standards in qualitative research is the necessity to incorporate rigor, subjectivity, as well as creativity into the scientific
process. Guba and Lincoln (1981) theorized that while both qualitative and quantitative research methods require truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality to be valid, the nature of knowledge of both methods are different; therefore, the approach to validity and reliability should be also. In light of the difficulty researchers had in establishing validity criteria in qualitative research, Creswell (1998) proposed several strategies to ensure trustworthiness: 1) triangulation; 2) clarification of researcher bias; 3) to provide a rich, thick description of the study; 4) to search for negative cases; 5) prolonged engagement; 6) to conduct audit trails; and 7) to perform member checks (pp. 201-203).

**Triangulation**

According to Patton (1990), triangulation is meant to be the exploratory tool for the researcher and is not limited to three types of methods or perspectives in qualitative research. Rather, triangulation denotes the usage of multiple sources of collecting data in order to realize and substantiate findings. Mathison (1998) posits good research demands triangulation because it enhances the validity of the research findings. I adhered to triangulation through a combination of case study characteristics implemented in this study. Further, by offering multiple perspectives throughout the study (mentor, mentee, and researcher) I further adhered to triangulation. Lastly, triangulation came to bear when recurrent themes and findings occurred in and among the mentee and mentor interviews and my reflections.
**Researcher Bias**

The next strategy employed to ensure trustworthiness was accounting for researcher bias. Geertz (1973) asserted, with the researcher as the data collecting instrument, biases and personal interpretations are inevitable. To combat this, Glesne (1999) suggested that researchers reflect on their own subjectivity and determine how it will be used and monitored in their research. Throughout this research, I consistently asked myself: *how do I situate myself as an African American college student, an African American male scholar, a mentor, a mentee, a son, a future father, which directly reflects my views and beliefs?* I also have a deep spiritual connection to God through my Christian faith. As a grandson of a Pastor and son of a Deaconess, my life has been immersed in my faith since birth. I inherently view life through a spiritual lens. Hence, mentoring for me is a vocation with faith as its base. It grounds me and allows me to see the “good” that Lightfoot and Davis (1997) seek to find through portraiture in this work. Further, based on my own experiences, I have great respect for the Black male mentors that have shaped my life indelibly. I’m also committed to paying it forward by mentoring others and there is a spiritual lens to all of this that situates who I am as the researcher. Rather than attempt an impossible ‘removal’ of my spirituality in research, I acknowledge, honor, and extend my views as a way to connect and interpret. At the same time, I am aware of how my experiences might overwhelm or obscure key ideas expressed by participants. The case study, inductive coding process was especially important as a way to create distance and gain perspective on the unique qualities and histories of
each participant’s experience. Portraiture methods, then, allowed me to find my voice and the participants’ voices as our stories intersected.

Additionally, my subjectivity was explicated through this investigation by attending to Erikson’s (1992) question: How do I represent my own voice and the voice of others at the same time? My weekly reflections reflected my biases and they were made overt as I often shared my personal connection to each case in the study. Distinguishing my personal voice from that of the participants is consistent with what Peshkin (2000) refers to as “problematics” where he intersects his interpretations of findings with his personal subjectivity in order to maintain his interpretations of findings throughout the reporting of the data. He further explains that:

Throughout the problematics, I have intended to clarify the intersection of my subjectivity and what I incorporated in my interpretation. I do not do this for the sake of confession or self-indulgence, but to clarify the sources of my imagination that underpin my interpretation and ultimately, my representation of what I learned... (Peshkin, 2000, p. 9)

In relation to this study, with an emphasis on African American male mentorship, I constantly questioned what the participants were discussing. Due to the interpretive nature of this research (Eisner, 1991), I was able to use my prior experiences juxtaposed with the interpretations of the participants to find greater understanding of this research.

**Thick Description**

Another method utilized to ensure validity was providing a thick description. By using a thick description, it allows for the reader to place themselves in the
context of the study (Glesne, 1999). I wrote significantly on the connections of the participants to me, each other, and their personal experiences so the reader will have both a detailed image of the rich context of their stories and an understanding of the role mentorship plays in each of their lives.

External Audits

The next method used was external audits. This method is ideal for establishing validity of the research project. Members of the researcher’s doctoral committee examined notes, coding schemes, transcriptions, and reflections as often as possible.

Member Checks

The last approach employed to ensure rigor was member checks. Janesick (1994) posited that it is important for the researcher “to find a way to allow for the participants to review the material” (p. 216), in an effort to reduce ambiguous and misleading interpretations made by the researcher. Glesne (1999) defined it as sharing collected material with the participants in an attempt to ensure accuracy. I provided the transcribed interviews to each participant in order to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

Selection of Final Cases for Presentation

For the final presentation of data in chapter 4, three mentor/mentee groups (two cases each) were selected. The groups were: Lazarus “The Old Soul” and Allen “Confident and inquisitive”; Ellis “The Preacher” and Jamison “Smooth and agreeable”; and Thomas “The Soldier” and Rodney “Steady and in charge.” These
groups of cases were selected because of the compelling narrative they provide individually and when examining them together to see the role that mentoring plays in the lives of the mentors and mentees.

Additionally, the cases were selected because of the high level of variance they offered in the final presentation. The first variance among the participants was the age differences. Generational variance in ages provides perspectives that enhance the impact of chronological similarities and differences among African American mentors and mentees. Were the older mentors more effective because of a natural deference to authority or as millennials, were the students more apt to respect the mentors that were close to their age because of the likelihood of being raised by an older sibling than parent? How did the perspectives of a mentee that was mentored for 2 years differ from a mentee that was mentored for 4? These variances exist among these cases and provide a rich texture for analysis.

Variance in experience of the mentors was another reason these cases were selected. Experience connects to age in that the older a person is, the more years and experiences they acquire. The pairs were also selected based on their unique personal and professional experience and the relationship of these experiences to their roles as mentors. Personal experiences with previous mentors, engagement in sports or religious activity provided another layer of texture among mentee participants. The same is true of the mentors. Having mentors and mentees from multiple fields allowed me to consider more nuanced conclusions about the mentors’ passion for mentoring and the mentee’s particular needs and interests.
Additionally, the level of engagement of the participant during the interview informed case selection. Each case lent to the overall success of this study, but the selected cases provided more substantial data representative of the range of participants’ views.

Lastly, cases were selected because of the strong linkage to my experiences either being mentored or mentoring. This is important because in order to create as complete a portrait as possible in this study, there had to be synergy between the stories of the participants and my own. The more synergy that could be found among the mentor/mentee cases and me, the more I could engage the audience in the importance of this research.

Conclusion

In this chapter I was able to describe the research processes and methodologies I employed to examine the impact of African American male faculty/staff’s role in the persistence and success of African American males on the campus of HBCU’s. I introduced the participants, the research site, and goals of this research. Utilizing case study, data analysis, and portraiture, I was able to draw distinct conclusions about each analytic and assert that the use of portraiture, combined with inductive analysis proved to useful tools in the research process. Portraiture is possibly one of the most compelling dimensions of this research. The ability to use voice in multiple ways to tell this story of mentoring from three distinct lenses (i.e. mentor; mentee; researcher) is what in the 4th chapter will create the “aesthetic whole” of this research.
In the next chapter, I will present three ‘dual portraits’ of mentor and mentee cases. I endeavor to articulate the unique characteristics of the mentoring relationships and of the mentors and mentees. This will allow one to step into the shoes of any of the participants and measure the value and potential held within that relationship.
CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This chapter provides in depth analysis of the themes that arose from this research that centered on the impact of African American male mentorship on African American male college students' ability to persist and excel at an HBCU. Background information of the university where the data was collected will be provided, including a substantial description of the institution, its president, faculty, staff, and students. Presentation of the data will consist of the identification of emergent themes as they presented in each case, followed by connections of the data to the literature review, closing with connections/reflections of each case with the researcher. I am going to present these three dual cases with the first being led by quiet leadership, the second guided by a strong spiritual connection, and the last being heavily influenced by a father. Because of the individuality of each participant, each case will present themes that were most pronounced for him. Some will have the same themes discussed, but this will not be consistent across the cases presented. In examining “what is good here,” I decided that to provide a complete portrait of the mentoring experiences of the mentors and mentees in the study it would be best told in painting a dual portrait, more specifically, telling the
story of the mentee, followed by the story of his mentor. I felt by sharing their stories one after the other, and making connections between what the mentee aspired to receive and what the mentor intended to be sent, I could provide the authentic whole that portraiture seeks to present.

To do this effectively, I found that portraiture, with its focus on narrative, was able to more effectively broaden the audience by sharing my own experiences both with mentoring and being mentored at the end of the chapter. The use of storytelling aligns with portraiture’s goal to “move beyond the academy’s inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them” (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 10). My stories are personal, vivid, and intimate, allowing the audience to step into one or all three of the sets of mentoring portraits.

As I shared the stories of the participants and my own, each story was laced with its own individual set of imperfections that provided rich backgrounds laden with resilience and promise. I was mindful not to impose my definition of what was good onto the participants in the study; because their experiences would paint a picture that would clearly delineate between what was good and bad from the participant’s perspective. When presenting three lives that are intertwined, as is the case in this research, voice is important.
Presentation of Cases

Rodney and Coach

Rodney “Steady and in charge”

Rodney is a muscular and imposing senior student-athlete aged 21. We met in my office for his interview. He is a well-respected student and athlete as evidenced by his promotion to team captain for the majority of his playing days at Jefferson Agricultural University (JAU) and by his regular presence speaking to prospective and incoming students about the pitfalls of college and ways to avoid them. Rodney has been a mainstay on the dean’s list since his freshman year at JAU boasting a grade point average of 3.8, which resulted in several internship opportunities with Fortune 500 companies and All-Academic Athletic awards. He is the product of an exceptional upbringing in a home that did not include his father.

As I began to prep Rodney for his interview, his eyes are fixed on mine with a high level of certainty and self-confidence. In that moment, he appeared more prepared and comfortable with the unknown of his impending interview as I was with the known. I could see the leader in him peering back at me, making it clear his readiness to meet this challenge, just as he has so many other times in his past, by staring it down. It was not a disrespectful stare, but one of self-assuredness and fortitude that he is prepared for whatever is to come.
Themes that presented in Case

Racial Uplift

“Advice and Trust”

Rodney has been an athlete from his earliest memories. The experience of having to build, earn, and evaluate one’s trustworthiness has played itself out for Rodney hundreds of times over the course of his athletic playing career. A mentor to Rodney is “someone you can look up to or go to for advice or follow his or her lead over a course of time.” One’s decision to trust is based in more of a gut feeling than a textbook description, “you just feel like it’s the right time that you can trust someone.”

“Timing of bestowment of mentorship”

The issue of time proved to be very prevalent for Rodney. The bestowment of the role of mentor includes conditions that are both observable and measurable, “...You see that they are doing the right thing and they are laying the path or groundwork for something you want to follow.” The ability to see someone lay groundwork speaks to a level of access and proximity by which one is able to engage and witness the efforts of the mentor. Again, trust factors in because Rodney must be willing to trust that the path that is being laid is not only viable, but meets his specific goals and aspirations.

“Strong impact of parents on view of academics”

Rodney spoke very affectionately about his mother and the importance of her presence in his life. As a single parent, there were many obstacles she faced. For
women in particular, raising a son in a father-less home poses several challenges
that do not often end in success stories. However, for Rodney, his mother was the
catalyst for both his academic and athletic success. “My mom always told me that
you had to do well in school in order to play football. So, that kind of drove me from
day one till this day that I wanted to be the best academically, so I would be allowed
to play football. I always had to have a higher GPA. Just growing up, I had to have a
3.5 in middle or high school to play football. Even though you needed a 2.0 to be
eligible, my mom said I had to have a 3.5. So, I had to study harder so I could play
football. Now that I’m in college, it just drove with me, in that I saw the benefits of
having a high GPA.”

The expectation of Rodney’s mother for him to maintain the honor roll in
order to compete athletically, serves as an incredible counter-story to the beliefs
that are commonly held about the African American community. One of those
beliefs is that there is not as much emphasis on academics as there is on athletics.
However, a parent like Rodney’s not only defies this stereotype, but also offers proof
that athletics are not always seen as the only ticket out in the black community.
Academics have long been the path to success in this community and Rodney is but
one example.

“Looking up to mentor like a father/importance of presence of male mentor”

Rodney is a very insightful and well-adjusted student-athlete. If one were to
look at or engage him in conversation, most would walk away impressed and
possibly assume that he came from two-parent household where both parents were
college educated. However, if they were to delve deeper, they would find that, that was only half true. Rodney grew up with an absent father. For any growing child, to not have a father in the home creates unforeseen challenges both for parents and children. Rodney spoke about the presence of mentors in his life from a very early age and their role in showing him the way. He also spoke pointedly about the importance of having the male perspective, in spite of having a present and highly engaged mother. “A lot of kids don’t know their fathers or didn’t grow up with their fathers around. I’m one of those; I grew up in a single parent home. So, it was just my mom and me. Then, once I got older and starting going out, I had male mentors that kind of led me in the right way and along the right path... you can have your mom and your grandma talk to you and tell you what you need, but at the end of the day, you still need that man’s perspective on life just to help you get through certain situations or things that your mom may not even wanted to tell you.”

Advocate for the Community/Racial Uplift

Many student-athletes in Rodney’s position either are self-indulged and self-centered after living a life where their needs have been catered to significantly due to their athletic ability or they are community service driven giving back to the communities that nurtured them into the upstanding young men they grew up to be. Rodney is the latter. Even though he has experienced the privilege that accompanies the fame of athletic success, he is ever mindful of a deep seeded responsibility to go back and be a beacon of light to the young men and women that will one day follow in his footsteps. “I know I can go back home and talk to the
youth how my mentors spoke to me when I was growing up to give them insight, not so much into making it into a career field, but how they can make it through high school and on to college... I just want to say how big of an impact mentors make in the African-American community."

Positioning (beside, leading, following)

Leading

Another observed extension of the literature was Rodney’s implicit desire to lead or direct the mentor/mentee relationship. It was clear that his self-confidence as an educated and successful young African American man, positioned him to have a very clear vision of the role that he wanted and needed his mentors to play in his success. He positioned himself to serve as the conductor of the orchestra that was this mentoring relationship. Rodney exemplifies this in the following passages: “You’re not going to follow their exact same path, but you kind of use the outline of what they did academically to get in their career fields and how they progressed along in their career path. By engaging with my mentors, it becomes more attainable and realistic to reach my goals.” Rodney’s words highlight his proactive role in picking and choosing what facets of the mentor’s life that he will use to help shape his own future success. Further, how he positions himself to dialogue “with” his mentor, rather than allowing himself to be “dictated to” by his mentor opens the conversation around the active or passive roles mentees play in the mentor protégé relationship.
Connection of the Case to the Literature

The themes in this case provide consistencies with the data presented in the literature review. Rodney affirms the importance of “like-person role models” (Tinto, 1993), “…since they have already done it, it kind of shows you the door, so the groundwork is laid. By just seeing that, depending on your mentor, it can show you that you can do it.” This case is also consistent with the literature in regards to the raising of mentees personal expectations (Guiffrida, 2005), “I think academically, all of my mentors have had master’s degrees or multiple degrees. So, I’ve always had African-American males strive academically. So, I’ve tried to do the same in my academics.” In addition to the aforementioned prominent themes was the importance of parental participation in the mentees academic success and persistence. This theme is consistent with work of Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999) that asserted that one of the major indicators impacting African American student persistence is parental encouragement. Lastly, Rodney’s interview produced themes that included racial uplift and cultural advancement (Case, 1997; Hirt, J. B., Amelink, C. T., McFeeters, B. B., & Strayhorn, T. L. (2008); Pasour, 2004). Hirt et al. (2008) identify cultural advancement as one of the three constructs of the othermothering framework. Cultural advancement is performed as individuals receive advice, mentoring, and in some instances parenting from more experienced representatives of the African American community (Hirt, et al., 2008). By engaging in the aforementioned acts, advocates of this construct display their vested interest in individuals outside of an
immediate family unit encouraging development and also allowing the transmission of the African American culture to occur (Case, 1997; Hirt et al., 2008; Pasour, 2004). In their study of student affairs professionals, the researchers report “relationships with students are the primary means through with they carry out their shared moral commitment to cultural advancement. RN’s desire to go back to his community and speak to youth as the mentors in his youth spoke to him continues the tradition/legacy of African American cultural advancement advocates of the past and present.

Similar to other cases in this study, several smaller themes affirm Guiffrida’s (2005) study from a holistic perspective. Themes that fit these criteria include receiving advice, trust, stressing the importance of taking advantage of opportunities, mentorship influencing academic excellence, and guiding.

Rodney extends the mentoring research by calling attention to African American males looking up to African American male faculty/staff mentors as father figures, “...once I got older and starting going out, I had male mentors that kind of led me in the right way and along the right path... you can have your mom and your grandma talk to you and tell you what you need, but at the end of the day, you still need that man’s perspective on life just to help you get through certain situations or things that your mom may not even wanted to tell you.” Also, the impact of the absence of fathers (biological or step) during formative years impacting development (i.e. masculinity, identity, etc.), “a lot of kids don’t know their fathers or didn’t grow up with their fathers around. I’m one of those; I grew up in a single
parent home. So, it was just my mom and me.” Nothing in this case disconfirmed existing mentorship literature.

Coach “The Ole Ball Coach”

There is something about head football coaches that places them either on two polar different sides of the spectrum of being funny and gregarious, calm and collected, or deathly serious and silent. Coach is a combination of the latter. Upon first observation, one might be cautious to approach because of his serious disposition, but once you get to know the man, you are able to feel both comforted and protected by his strength and resolve. He is a dominating force that when he enters the room, there is a wave of energy that informs everyone of his presence. It’s not too dissimilar from the first time I met the basketball legend Michael Jordan. No, Coach is not 6’9” and cannot palm a basketball with one hand, but he carries with him a confidence and certainty that few people possess. Also, coaches often have a fathering way about them about them. This is primarily due to their roles as surrogate fathers to their players. The role of father comes with a level of inherent deference and reverence from children. The same was true the day of Coach’s interview. As the researcher, it is my job to manage the interview climate and make the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible. Upon offering coach a seat, after he entered my office for the interview, I found myself trying to make myself comfortable. The fact that this great man in my eyes agreed to lend his wisdom to my study was an honor and I wanted him give me his sign of approval for having selected such an important topic as mentorship to research. As I stated in chapter 3,
Coach is a man of very few words, but this was a very profound interview experience. You will hear more about coach as I share my own story and how it intersects with his. This case is one of the many reasons why portraiture mattered, because I needed coach to tell his story to show how it fit with others. However, I needed portraiture to help fill in the gaps.

Themes that presented in the Case

Timelines/The role of time and experience
Using past experiences as a guide for mentorship

For Coach, the role of time held several meanings throughout the development and maintenance of the mentor/mentee relationship. As a timeline, he spoke to the decisions and life choices we all make that ultimately become our life story. What he provided in his portrait was a lesson on the importance of not judging someone completely on their past experiences, rather using the past, the good and the bad, as a foundation for future growth. He shares his perspective here:

Well, you look at it like everybody is not going to be perfect when they come to your program. There are some things they have probably done in their past. The good thing about being a mentor, you don’t dwell on the past. You hope to present things to help them have a better future and that’s the project to me of being a mentor. Let’s correct what you did wrong...whatever you did wrong, let’s overlook that but let’s not do it again and let’s prepare ourselves to do something better...a good example would be, you become a mentor to a young man who’s academics were terrible when they came into your program...then he finishes up with a 3.5, 3.6, or 3.7 and graduates with honors. Well, that’s correcting the past and as a mentor, those are the things that you do especially on an educational level.

The hope and faith of the mentor for his mentee is such a valuable tool. It provides an opportunity to the mentee to start again not because his past is forgotten, but because it has been acknowledged and forgiven. It is in the
acknowledgement of the past that the mentee can now operate in their truth. That is, they are flawed, but by taking steps to not make the mistakes of the past, they can be made as whole as possible as they continue to progress into their future.

Observing mentor’s way of life

When I was younger, I often heard the phrase, “Do as I say and not as I do,” said by older adults. I often thought how strange a statement, “Do as I say and not as I do.” Eventually, I think I put that odd expression in the box marked, “I’ll understand these things once I get older.” Now that I am older, I am still perplexed at that statement. What it suggests, in my adult mind, is a level of access that one gains as a rite of passage as one ages, when actually, it is an opportunity for someone to hold a subordinate to a standard they are unwilling to adhere to themselves. It is utter hypocrisy. Coach did not operate this way. He was raised during the era when “dressing for success” really meant something. It was an opportunity to show others you wanted more for your life and ultimately you were a good stock to invest in. In his home, a man said what he meant and meant what he said. Most importantly, he grew up in a time when you judged a man by his actions, not by the actions of others. As he reflected about the ways that mentors help their mentees become successful, he spoke about the impact of observing a mentor’s life on a mentees future success.

I always say if you’re very organized in this program and you’re doing what’s necessary to help someone become successful, success breeds success and young men see it. They see you are successful how you carry yourself, how you do things a certain way, and a lot of people buy into it and that’s what we try to exhibit...they can decide whether they want to emulate you...be like you or
don't want to be like you and I think it's all about how you carry yourself and how you present yourself.

Coach reminded me of the all too important role of mentor as guide. There were several smaller themes that made Coach's interview enlightening, but the aforementioned themes and lessor unmentioned themes were well supported by the literature.

Connection of the Case to the Literature

Busen and Engebretson (1999) assert, good mentors should guide protégés, rather than force them to perform beyond their level of expertise and pushing mentees beyond their limits could lead to professional failure. The value placed on guiding the African American males in this study provides evidentiary support for this assertion. Being an athletic coach, Coach knows far too well the role that guidance plays in the breaking down and building up of athletes under his charge. Intriguingly, the value of mentorship in sports has not been well examined throughout the mentorship literature (Pitney and Elhers, 2004). Even though mentorship in sports coaching is not the focus of this study, this case will hopefully provide a brief insight into an under-researched area.

There have been several models of mentorship identified in the literature. Three very prominent models are the Apprenticeship Model, the Competency Model, and the practitioner Model (Geen, 2002). The apprenticeship model asserts that the most impactful way to learn is to emulate someone with experience. “The mentor’s role is to provide a model for imitation” (Geen, 2002, p. 10). The reflective practitioner model lays its foundation on self-analysis and reflection, more
specifically, pedagogical practices that encourage professionals to question their own actions and motivations for doing things (Geen, 2002). Lastly, the competency model that sees the mentor’s role as “acting like a coach or ‘systematic trainer who observes protégés before providing regular feedback on their progress with reference to pre-determined knowledge, understanding and skills” (Jones et al., 2009, p. 272). The competency model fits more closely to Coach’s mentorship, but no one model can capture the dedication and investment by the mentors in this study.

In analyzing the mentee cases, three types of mentoring relationships began to surface: mentees desiring to be led in the mentoring relationships, mentees desiring to lead the mentoring the relationship, and mentees desiring to be equal partners in the mentoring relationship in concert with the mentor. Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, and Erickson (2005) believe in three fundamental types of mentoring relationships as it relates to mentors: responsive, interactive, and directive. The responsive mentor, much like the mentee that desires to be led, looks acutely to his protégé for “guidance and direction. The protégé sets the action agenda through question posing...presenting problem and concerns...sometimes even unintentionally” (Young et al., 2005, 175). This method is identified by Mead, Campbell, and Milan (1999) as autonomous and links this type of mentoring style to more experienced protégés. The goal in these cases is to create a space where mentees can exercise full control over their mentoring using reflection, empathy, and peer-to-peer questioning in an attempt to create answers to problems.
Consequently, if used ineptly at an early state, like many college student and faculty relationships, it could result in chaos and confusion rather than purposeful enrichment and learning (Mead et al., 1999).

As it pertains to the aforementioned models, Coach would fall more so in the directive relationship. Directive mentors have a set plan and agenda to work towards. Coach references part of his plans for his mentees in the following quote, "...a good example would be, you become a mentor to a young man whose academics were terrible when they came into your program...then he finishes up with a 3.5, 3.6, or 3.7 and graduates with honors. Well, that's correcting the past and as a mentor, those are the things that you do especially on an educational level.” His assertion of “correcting the past” suggest a concerted effort/plan to engage his student in activities that would ultimately lead him to a place academically he had not previously achieved. This is a small example that affirms how he sees his role as director in the relationship and planning to move this mentee from poor grades to high achievement. Directive mentors also have a clear expectation for protégé performance and “will seek through a variety of means, to guide the protégé and to encourage corrective action” (Young et al., 2005, 176). Mead et al. (1999) refer to this type of relationship as hierarchical and suggest that it is most suitable early in a relationship, especially if the protégé is a novice, as is the case with most college students.
Examining the Mentor/Mentee Relationship as a whole

Rodney and Coach share very similar characteristics. Both present as the strong silent types, but once you get to know them, they are two of the nicest people you want to meet. What I found interesting about the relationship between Rodney and Coach is how they both co-evolve into something new and dependent upon each other on different levels. Coach seeks to impart wisdom, growth, and understanding of what it means to be a whole person, while Rodney is observing and searching for guidance for the right path to lead him where he aspires to go. Observe the interview statements as they document almost a conversational statement and response to one another during their interviews.

The following question was posed to Coach:

Q: How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and or present obstacles in students’ lives?

First thing is, to be in this position (as football coach) you have to have degrees and young men look up to that and it’s not anything that you flaunt or that you brag about, but in order to be employed here you have to have earned a college degree...you have to have had a college education and they see that. Also, at some point you may have to play the role of professor and you may have to teach. And to me, coaching is teaching anyway, so you’re constantly teaching. You’re teaching how to do this, you’re teaching rules, you’re teaching life...and once you start teaching life, they start to buy into it. Because the purpose of being here, and we tell them all the time, you’re here to get an education, you’re here to get a degree and we push that. Once they see what you’re pushing and what you’re selling, then they believe that to be a part of this, this is what I have to buy into.

The following similar question was posed to Rodney:

Q: How and when do your mentoring relationships relate to your sense of opportunity to learn and excel?
A: Like I said in the previous question, since they have already done it, it kind of shows you the door, so the groundwork is laid. You’re not going to follow their exact same path, but you kind use the outline of what they did academically to get in their career fields and how they progressed along in their career path. By engaging with my mentors, it becomes more attainable and realistic to reach my goals. By seeing Black males make it academically and beyond just athletics or the hip-hop industry. You can see the role that academics play in your mentors. By just seeing that, depending on your mentor, it can show you that you can do it. Everyone has self-doubt at some point in their life, so seeing someone actually accomplish those things kind of gives you the freedom to relax a little bit and know that you can do it with the right amount of work.

During the close readings and analysis of the data, I began to notice the beautiful symmetry between a mentee’s aspiration for himself and the goals his mentor set for him. It does make me question, which came first, the goal or the aspiration? Because this group of students, in this case Rodney, was already high achieving it is possible that the aspirations were instilled at an earlier stage in life and the selection of Coach and others like him was not a random process at all. Rather, the selection process was quite acute and defined. In considering those questions, I also acknowledge that Rodney is the kind of protégé that chooses to lead in the mentor/mentee relationship. It is apparent in the statements he makes like, “You’re not going to follow their exact same path, but you kind use the outline of what they did academically to get in their career fields and how they progressed along in their career path. Rodney is clearly in charge of his destiny and enjoys being in the driver seat.
Allen “Smooth and Agreeable and Ellis “The Preacher”

Allen “Smooth and Agreeable”

Allen is easily the most popular student on campus. After spending a few minutes with him, it quickly becomes apparent why. He is quick to smile, slow to anger, well connected across campus (from the custodians to the President of the university), an athlete, respectful to staff, faculty, and students, and Student Government Association President. For every reason that students in his shoes tend to be stuck-up, cocky, or arrogant, Allen sees the privilege and spotlight he enjoys as opportunities to show humility, respect, and high accountability. The day of Allen’s interview was to be no different. Greeting me with a “dap” (cool handshake) and slight hug, he was ready to work, to tell his story of mentorship.

Themes that presented in the Case

Timelines/ The role of time and experience

*Mentors evolve as mentee moves through stages of life*

For Allen, the theme of timelines was very present throughout the presentation of his portrait. Several sub-themes were brought to the surface during his interview. Allen was the first of the mentees to speak about how the mentoring relationship evolves over time. Mentors like friends often change over the years. They change based on geographical location (mentor or mentee move), engagement in different activities or activities transition to advanced stages (moving from recreation league football to high school football or changing from baseball to track & field), or the relationship has run its course and both parties begin a new cycle with another individual. Allen speaks briefly about the evolution here:
...At different stages of your life you experience different mentors. For instance, in high school I had a mentor. Before high school I had a mentor and now in college I have a mentor. I think that when you get in different stages of your life, you need someone that has experience in something that I'm getting ready to experience...

Allen sees great value in having access to mentors as he positions himself to enter into whatever new phase that presents itself in his life. This acknowledgement of the need of different mentors at different phases in life speaks to an awareness and appreciation of the wisdom that accompanies phase specific mentoring.

*Maturity level of mentee determines mentee’s ability to acquire a mentor*

In line with value placed in the wisdom of mentors, Allen also spoke to how one’s ability to identify a mentor is tied to their maturity level. As an educator, I often see students in need of my guidance and support as a mentor. These young men are the ones that sit in my classes weekly, hear the sermons that I give, better known as PSA’s (public service announcements), regarding the importance of understanding that “you are who you aspire to be everywhere you are...in class, in the dining hall, and on every social media website.” Yet, they still enter class with the smell of a freshly smoked Black & Mild cigarette, hats on, and beltless pants well below their waists, before having to hear me chide them for it. It is not that they do not have access to good mentorship; it is because they lack either the maturity level to know they need it, or are insistent on resisting the expectation of growth and change that accompanies advanced education. Allen described it this way:
I really don’t think you can put a particular time or age-limit on it, I feel like its really the maturity level of the person and how much you can really understand before you can actually get a mentor... I’m a firm believer that the younger you are when you get a mentor the better. Especially in the world we’re living in. We draw from our history to make the present and future better.

If a student is not ready to transition to their next phase of development, coercion is not the answer to facilitating it. However, creating environments where mutual respect, understanding of differences, and clearly defined expectations, facilitates an atmosphere where students can opt for growth and change when they are ready. Allen invites the growth that comes with the tutelage of mentorship.

*It’s like the mentor has seen the future*

Allen has benefited from a long-term relationship with his mentor. One of the many benefits of this lengthy relationship is the ability to reflect on his own development as a more informed decision-maker and young adult. Allen is also able to reflect on the influences that impacted his growth and development. With the luxury of time now on his side, he is now able to rejoice in selecting such an informed, invested, and engaged mentor. Allen revels in the supportive and seemingly clairvoyant premonitions of his mentor from his freshman year to present:

*Well, from my mentor, ever since my freshman year, it was instilled in me that I could excel to be this great person on and off campus... it actually hit me most recently when I saw a picture of us on Facebook and the caption was, “This brother is going to do great things!” And so, you look at it now and you’re like, wow, he saw it before I did. So, that gives you even more motivation to excel and it builds and in a sense adds extra points to your relationship with your mentor because it’s like alright, he’s seen the future once he can do it again.*
However, many students are far less trusting and discerning of whom they should be seeking council. As a result, many are not experiencing the growth and development Allen has. This is another reason why this work is important.

Positioning (beside, leading, following)

The theme of positioning is another prevalent theme for Allen. His devotion to his mentor and the mentoring relationship speaks to Allen’s desire to follow the lead of his mentor. In my observation of the three positions identified in this study, following is a position that requires the most trust between the mentor and mentee. The trust must be elevated because the mentee is looking to the mentor to provide the road map to the destination that the mentee aspires to travel to. This is why the mentor must be confident in his ability to navigate his mentee on his own, or wise and savvy enough to enlist the assistance of more-informed others that can facilitate in the grand arrival to the mentee’s destination. Observe Allen’s reliance on his mentor and faith that his mentor will take him where he aspires to go.

*For past situations, I think it’s really how the mentee looks at it, but definitely past things are past things... mentors are kinda like that person on your shoulder and in your ear that’s like, “no, do that or yeah, go ahead and take advantage of that while you can.” There are a lot of things people wish they could go back and change and wish they had mentors to teach them... I’m a firm believer that the younger you are when you get a mentor the better. Especially in the world we’re living in. We draw from our history to make the present and future better. So, if we have someone who has experienced these same things that we are going through in the present, it helps us to make our future better. So, hopefully we will not make the same mistakes our mentors did... It’s a tough world that we live in, but I’m glad I had someone there to school me... having been schooled about discerning between who is for me or not has definitely helped me address many obstacles in my life currently as far as people are concerned... You have insight into a situation that is old to your mentor, but is very new to you. So, you get a lot of early warnings about certain situations... your mentor has been there before and says, “Naw you’re not going*
to need that class. Instead of communications, throw in a foreign language there.” So, it all comes together, especially for academics. It’s really key for me because, once you get to the college level you basically get to pick your classes and if your classes aren’t going to help you towards your major, which then leads to your career, then you are wasting time and money. So, it’s actually a lifesaver in a sense to have a mentor for academics.

Allen elegantly paints a portrait of mutual devotion and shared goals between mentor and mentee. His positionality of following the lead of his mentor and the ways in which his mentor has clearly challenged and engaged him over the years, suggests a successful mentoring relationship that will benefit him well into the future.

Connection of the Case to the Literature

The key themes identified in this case provide consistencies with the data presented in the literature review. In Guiffrida’s (2005) study, one of the tenets he outlines in describing what it means to “go beyond” as a mentor is providing comprehensive career advising. He provides examples that include, “listening to students to understand their professional fears, dreams, and goals” (p. 708). Allen confirms this concept as he describes one of the identifying qualities in a mentor as, “someone who has particular knowledge in the craft or career that I choose to study and follow...” Another concept Guiffrida (2005) outlined was providing inclusive academic advising. Allen exemplifies this concept as he describes the meticulous care given by his mentor to identify courses that he needs in preparation for life beyond college, “...your mentor has been there before and says, naw you’re not going to need that. Instead of communications, throw in a foreign language there.” One of the areas heavily discussed in this case was how the mentor raised the bar for Allen.
Guiffrida (2005) discussed this concept in the following passage, “Believing in students and pushing them to succeed. Examples included demonstrating more positive beliefs in their academic abilities and conveying the message early on “that they must perform at higher levels than White students to be viewed equally” (p. 712). Allen shares the following feelings about how his mentor has raised the bar for him, “Working with my mentor makes me want to do better. Right now my mentor has given me the motivation academically, to go to grad school, not on the Ph.D. level, but my mentor gives me the push that says, “I can do it and that I’m capable of going above and beyond what my personal expectations are as a student.” Though Guiffrida’s (2005) study aimed to enhance the ability of both White and Black faculty on predominantly White campuses (PWIs) to provide support for African American students, it is evident that the concepts he outlined for his study are applicable to faculty, staff, and students on the campuses of historically Black colleges and institutions (HBCUs).

This case study extends the mentorship literature in several ways. The first most profound way is in Allen’s clear desire to be “led” by his mentor throughout the mentorship relationship.

Allen is making very clear connections between unspoken agreements to follow the lead of his mentor in order to not repeat the same mistakes that he did. Previously, Allen shared the importance of being mentored by someone that has “a particular knowledge in the craft or career” that he chooses to study and follow. Allen observing his mentor successfully navigating his life to reach a place of
personal success lends itself to Allen wanting to acquire both the knowledge and experiences gained by his mentor throughout his life in an attempt to gain similar success of his own. The concept of being led in the mentorship relationship is not clearly defined in the literature.

Another way Allen’s case extends the literature is by drawing attention to the importance of leaving a legacy for those behind him to follow. By observing his mentor provide a legacy for him, it has spawned a desire for him to reach back and provide mentorship and guidance to those behind him. Allen does an exceptional job articulating the importance of reaching back and racial uplift in the following passage:

He’s basically that person who has made it and hasn’t forgotten about the people behind him. So, when I meet with my mentor and I’m having problems, in a sense, he’s reaching his hand back to pull me up with him. So, for being a black male, that’s doing pretty well for himself at the age of 22, as far as in his campus-life and social life, it motivates me to do what my mentor did and that’s stretch my hand back to let younger youth know that no matter what your situation, race, or color, you can also be successful. So, my mentor has set a chain reaction that is going to better someone’s situation through me and through the next person and through the next person. So, it’s always about leaving a mark. Especially being a black male, it’s a big, big, thing to break out of the statistics we are put in every day.

Concepts brought to bear during Allen’s interview that were worthy of sharing, but were not profoundly present during interview were the relationship with mentor being beyond that of family, the great need for mentors throughout the multiple stages of life/development, and the negative effects of not having a mentor and the obstacles faced without one while growing up.
Ellis “The Preacher”

Ellis is one of the youngest and most liked faculty members at JAU. He is one of those people that always appear to be wearing a warm and welcoming smile. Even though he is new as faculty member, his commitment to our students is not. He worked for the state and facilitated a program on campus in the previous two years that received much support from the student body, endearing him to many. Though he is young in years, one need only a few minutes with him to get a sense of the old soul he possesses. To look at him from the surface, one would mistake him for a student, before delving deeper to discover that he is a minister also. Coming from a long line of ministers myself, beginning with my maternal grandfather, I have a particular high level of discernment of Men of the Cloth. It was an honor to meet a young man committed to his ministry at such a young age and to also see him use his spirituality as a guide to help others. His presence was particularly positive as he entered my office for his interview. He was armed with his smile and an air of confidence befitting someone that lives their life in service to others. I looked forward for our interview to begin and so did he.

Themes that presented in the Case

Nurture

Importance of building relationships beyond the classroom

One of the prominent themes that Ellis spoke passionately about is the importance of building relationships beyond the classroom. This commitment to mentee engagement beyond the classroom was a critical theme articulated by several of the mentors in the study, both older and younger. This commitment
One of the things that I actually try to do as an instructor is, I have the mindset that if all I do in class is teach, then I don’t do my job. So, one of the things I consider to be very impactful is when somebody is able to build a relationship with the students outside of class as well as in class. For me that relationship outside of class allows me to be more effective in the class. If professors and educators would have a passion for making that impact outside of the class...if the first day of class they could start looking around and possibly that first week/first month get a feel for the characters they have in class and start identifying people and saying you know what, I can do something with this kid...if they would have a passion for it I think it would be powerful. I think it’s necessary and imperative, because when I think about my college experience, I had great professors, great educators, Hampton only have the best. I had great professors, but a lot of what I didn’t have, and I’ll take the blame for it too was I didn’t have that relationship outside of class. I didn’t, and a lot of it was me not seeking that relationship. I come from a family where I had positive male figures I could go to. I really didn’t have to go outside of my family for mentors, because you know growing up I had two cousins that went to Hampton before me, one is a vascular surgeon and the other is in hospital administration. I have other cousins that were in college before me, so I’ve always had that in family mentor, but that professional kind of tailor fit to what I wanted to do with myself mentor, I didn’t have that. So, this is something that I’m very passionate about, connecting to students on this level. Because I understand the importance of it...I understand the impact of it.

Ellis’s drive to provide the outside of classroom support is a critical component in education, not only from a mentoring perspective, but also from a retention perspective. The mistakes that students make do not tend to happen when we have them as captive members of our audience, where they can ask and have answered issues they are facing. It is when they are beyond the security of our classrooms and offices where they often need access to guidance and mentorship. Ellis facilitating opportunities for students to engage with him beyond the classroom...
goes a long way toward averting some of the mistakes students make when they are left to their own devices.

Mirroring/Seeing/Perceiving
The importance of Like-person role-models

Ellis also was passionate about the importance of African American males having access to like-person role models. With so many African American males coming from communities where it is more likely to have had access to an African American male that has served time in prison, than on a college campus, the presence of positive like-person role models for these young men are limited. Experiencing the positive influences of his access to positive and college-educated African American males pushes Allen to serve in this capacity for as many young men at JAU as possible. The following passage sheds light on his thoughts regarding like-person role models:

A young man was in my office and he said me, and it makes me feel good just kinda thinking about it, because I know what he meant when he said it. He said, “I’ve never met anybody like you before.” He’s a senior and not someone that I’m actively mentoring or engaging with, he’s just someone in class who was in my office and I was helping him with a project in another class. He said, “I never met anyone like you before and I want to continue talking with you throughout the years.” And it makes me feel good, but at the same time, it’s actually disappointing because one, it is a compliment to me that it’s something about my character, something about me that he identifies with and admires. Then there’s disappointment at the same time because, you know here’s this kid, he’s a senior so we’re talking 21-22 years and you know, when you kind of break it down, it’s kind of like him saying you know, I’ve never met somebody professional that looks like you, that looks like me, Black male.

At colleges and universities, especially HBCUs, one must be ready to mentor when the opportunity presents. This means that faculty and staff have to view mentorship as an opportunity to make a profound impact in a student’s life. African
American males in particular are a demographic that is both difficult to recruit and retain. Ellis’s willingness to take on students as mentees, whether they are enrolled in his course or not, provides additional insight into the dedication he brings to bear in his role as a faculty member. It is this kind of commitment that provides the kind of support that facilitates both higher retention of African American males and academic excellence.

Mending

The importance of providing hope to Black males

The theme of mending is an emotional theme that presented itself. Within that theme, Ellis was particularly passionate about the value of providing hope to Black males. Hope is sometimes an undervalued, and underprovided need for many students, especially those that often do not have the luxury of generational success to be motivated by. Ellis shares his thoughts on how hope can manifest itself on campus.

I think that just in interacting with people like you (the interviewer), like myself that have gone to college and overcome things in high school and beyond high school. People who have made it through college who have made it through graduate school, people who have good jobs, who have good character, I think it gives them hope because of the fact that so many young men and young women grow up with that lack. They don’t see positive Black male figures, so by them seeing that in us, I think it creates hope for them personally. I can do this. I get a lot of questions like, how did you get to where you are? What did you major in? What did you go to graduate school for? So, things like that speak to their sense of opportunity.

Hope is often the luxury of the privileged, no matter which racial group it resides in. But, like so many things with immeasurable value, it often does not cost a thing to give. Emily Dickenson said it best in the title of her poem; “Hope” is the thing with feathers, because through hope, so many dreams are allowed to take
flight. Many dreams stay grounded because of that “lack” that Ellis referred to in his passage.

Timelines/ The role of time and experience

A sense of timing in students' awareness as highly educated African American males

The last prominent theme that I want to share from Ellis’s interview regards the sense of timing in the students' awareness of themselves as highly educated African American males. He shares about his experiences of when students he mentors acquire some of the intangible skills that support future success and his aspirations for his mentees in this respect.

...Some of the things that have been measurable would be you can see a sense of maturity level changing. You know that initial goofy freshman is still silly, yet very choosy when humor is acceptable as supposed to when it is time to be professional. Things like punctuality, fulfilling expectations, conversations that we’ve had pertaining to his personal life (the young man I’m mentoring now), specifically relationships. I see him changing by taking more responsibility, being more proactive, always seemed to be very outgoing, but maturity level definitely changing. He is actually a freshman right now, so I look forward to future change. By the time he is a senior, I’m hoping this young man is presidential. So, definitely by students maturity I am able to see them taking and having a greater sense of identity of being not only highly educated young Black men, but capable. And I think that those things, I guess the intangibles would be a good way to describe them, I think those are probably the most significant... you can take a young person who is actually strong academically, but just terrible interpersonal skills, doesn’t know how to shake hands or look anyone in the eye when you speak to somebody. You know, I think those things are significant improvements that you can notice about somebody you mentor.

By noting some of these measureable changes, as a mentor, one is able to then reassess current expectations and possibly raise, lower, or maintain them.

Successful mentorship requires an on-going assessment of changes in social,
academic, and professional development. Ellis did a great job of illuminating this in the previous passage.

*Connection of the Case to the Literature*

This case affirms the literature in several areas. The first and most prominent affirmation of the literature is the mind set of going above and beyond for the sake of mentees and students. Ellis is passionate about the importance of faculty engaging students beyond the classroom as evidenced in a previous passage. Ellis’s insistence that faculty not only engage students beyond the classroom, but also seek out potential mentoring relationships from the first day of class speaks to the value and commitment he places on this attribute of being an effective mentor. Like Tinto (1993), Ellis places much value on the presence of like-person role models. Ellis’s case sheds light on why mentors like him are so passionate about the way that they serve the African American young men under their tutelage. The U. S. educational system still has a ways to go in bridging gaps and cracks in the support systems of African American males in all phases of their lives, including higher education.

Ellis begins a dialogue on a few topics that serve to extend the literature on mentorship. One theme that is present across the cases in this study is the challenges mentors face getting their mentors on the right path. This challenge is not discussed specifically throughout the literature, but is a prominent theme highlighted in this study.
Ellis highlights this difficulty in the following passage:

*I think one of the most challenging things in working with young people is helping them see that path and I guess to even more so plan for those pitfalls that they know are coming or could expect, but for some reason have a hard time navigating around. But, I think those past experiences of myself and them actually allow me to provide more insight and guidance.*

Lastly, much of the mentorship literature in higher education has focused on the benefits that students from underserved populations specifically, gain because of their engagement in mentoring relationships and informal interactions with faculty (Guiffrida, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Hirt, J. B., Amelink, C. T., McFeeters, B. B., & Strayhorn, T. L., 2008). The primary focus of this study is on the benefits of students and how they are positively impacted by the presence of African American faculty/staff. However, throughout the data collection process and subsequent research to connect these cases to the literature, it is evident that there is scant research on the impact of the mentoring process on faculty and in matter of these cases, faculty of color (Griffin, 2012). Future research on benefits of mentoring on African American faculty on historically Black campuses will be a meaningful addition to the current mentorship literature.

*Examining the Mentor/Mentee Relationship as a whole*

As I examined both of these cases as a whole, the unique portrait of their relationship was able to reveal the special characteristics that makes it successful. As a minister, Ellis's spiritual vocation calls him to provide both guidance and wisdom. His calling requires him to give first and ask questions later. In sum, he is meant to be a blessing to others. Allen is the pliable, humble, and accountable
protégé that sees his opportunities in the spotlight as avenues to making a
difference through the way he lives his life. He seeks to be lead and the guidance of
experienced and invested others. It is not difficult to see how these two bonded to
create a mutually beneficial mentoring relationship. The narrative appears to be
responsive to the other’s goal for the relationship when statements in their
interviews are read side-by-side. In the following passage, Ellis describes his
mentorship style and how he uses his past experiences as a guide for his mentees, as
a means for preparing them for the pitfalls that are surely to come:

*It's kind of two-fold, I think the mentoring that I provide is based on past
experiences in my life and past experiences in their lives as well. I actually
think that it makes it more effective... So, using past mistakes and successes to
actually create this blue-print for what life is actually going to be like for them
and at the same time considering those things we’ve already spoken about
regarding their personal life, and then using their personal experiences to set
that blue-print as well. I think one of the most challenging things in working
with young people is helping them see that path and I guess to even more so
plan for those pitfalls that they know are coming or could expect, but for some
reason have a hard time navigating around. But, I think those past experiences
of myself and them actually allow me to provide more insight and guidance.*

When describing what a mentor is to him, Allen affirms receipt of the message that
Ellis is trying to deliver by using his past experiences as a guide to avoiding pitfalls:

*A mentor to me is a person who is kind of outside of the home. For me
personally, it was someone far past the relationship I had with my mother and
father. So, it was someone who has particular knowledge in the craft or career
that I choose to study and follow. So, it’s someone who gives me guidance
based on their past situations that might fit my present situation. That’s the
definition of a mentor for me.*

Through the portrait of this mentoring relationship, I was further able to see
the importance of synchronization between the mentor and mentee. In observing
the role of synchronization in this relationship, I was able to see what I began to call the “mindfulness of mentorship.” Like any fine crop (the mentoring relationship), the seeds (the mentees) require regular tending. Each crop requires certain types of care during different seasons (scenarios, situations, and experiences). The mentor is a farmer that must tend to multiple crops that are all in different phases based on how their season is impacting the development of the seeds. Ellis provides a sample of his mindfulness in the following passage:

At first, it may just be a couple of questions about class, about an exam, or about homework. But, then it turns into a conversation about sports, what are you doing this weekend, how are you spending your break? But, then, the questions and conversations get a little more personal where they begin to disclose some of the things that they are dealing with. From that point on, it becomes more of that mentor/mentee relationship where we talk about those personal things, we talk about those professional goals, we talk about how they are doing academically, and I hold the accountable for not just goals that they set, but also attaining those goals. And I provide any assistance possible both personal and professional. I hold them accountable by actually remembering what they were supposed to do and reminding them and waiting on them to get back to me to let me know how they did. But, anytime I see them on campus, talking with them, anytime they are in the office I mention it to them. Never wanting them to think I actually forgot about the plan and what the goal was. Constantly reminding them what the goal was and seeing where they are along the process. Pushing them to get a little bit further and scolding them for not actually finishing.

I was able to clearly see Ellis’s tending and minding the mentoring relationship and transition of the relationship from surface dialogue to a more personal and in depth space. The deeper level is where the long-term growth and development that results in high levels of resiliency and success lie. The mindfulness of his mentorship can be seen in his desire to let his mentees know he has not forgotten the tasks or fruit they were supposed to bear in their unique
season. I was also able to take away from Ellis the sheer effort that goes into providing engaged mentorship. It takes committed individuals to do it right. The following passage by Allen illuminates Ellis’s successful efforts in reaching the deeper level with him:

“For me personally, it’s the trust level. Once my trust for the person has become greater than when I first met them...and I become comfortable enough to express or to ask for guidance or advice on a situation...and based on the feedback I get on a situation. For me, my relationship with my mentor goes far beyond my career choices and questions, academics questions, etc. I can say to my mentor, I’m seeing this girl, and I think she’s pretty cool, what do you think I should do? Should I say this? So, I think the job description of a mentor goes far beyond career and academics. It’s really once you get that trust from them and you see how trustworthy they are and how loyal they are to you and how loyal you are to them to keep your information confidential between you two. That’s when you can set up to give someone that title.

Allen does an awesome job of giving reverence, respect, and value to the investment his mentor makes in him. He acknowledges that the role of mentor can be a very powerful tool in the life of the mentee if a foundation of trust can be laid.

Jeron “Confident and Inquisitive” and Lazarus “The Old Soul”

Jeron “Confident and Inquisitive”

As he enters my office, Jeron appears cautious, yet determined. But, he is not easy to read. In my observation of him, if he is not smiling, one is left to their own devices to determine what he may be feeling or thinking. With this in mind, I do my best to make Jeron laugh in hopes of more accurately gauging his level of comfort going into his interview. He is President of the Christian Fellowship Organization (CFO) on campus. In this capacity, he is a well-respected and recognized leader on
campus. He is much easier to read, or one would imagine, when he is with his fellow CFO members. I can see the joy he derives from his friends and the admiration he enjoys as the leader of an organization that is very dear to him. He is the son of a preacher and very devout in his faith. Despite his quiet demeanor when not representing his organization, he is very comfortable in front of a microphone singing in the campus gospel choir. His voice is amazing! The way he comes alive while performing is truly remarkable. As I direct him to his seat in my office for the interview, I inquire about his day and any future vocal performances. When he smiles and glances up at me, I can see I have hit the right cord to gain his full attention that he is now ready to perform.

Themes that presented in the Case

Nurture

Importance of access to mentor

One of the prominent themes that derived from Jeron’s interview was the access a mentee has to his mentor. This is an important subject in mentoring. In my research of this topic, little if any attention is paid to the importance of access to one’s mentor. One cannot be an effective mentor if they are not present. Observe Jeron’s thoughts on this theme in the following passage:

Some people are reachable and some aren’t. Reachable to the extent that there is access, but that access is limited. For example, looking up to the President (Barack Obama), he is someone that I would like to be like, but I have no access. My professors that I look up to, I want to walk in their shoes and I have extensive access. Even if I have limited access to a mentor, when I get the opportunity, I try to gather as much information as I can during those times when they are available to me... I always don’t have my parents here, I have Professor Lazarus when I can’t reach home.
Jeron provides a sound example of what is meant by “access” to one’s mentor. He reminds us also of the high regard the mentor is held in. When he noted that “I have Professor Lazarus when I can’t reach home,” he is then placing his mentor second in line to his number one support system. The expectations of familial relationships and those similar are much higher and carry a much greater burden of support than other relationships.

Mirroring/Seeing/Perceiving

In contrast, Jeron offers his thoughts on the role that his mentor plays in his academic success that is unique. In each of the five mentee cases in this study, each shared experiences and feelings that supported the idea that African American male mentors played a large role in this academic success. This is where Jeron sets himself apart.

Not to sound mean, but I look to him more as a spiritual/emotional/life mentor than academic mentor. Not school, because I have parents that be like, stay on top of your work. So, I already have somebody for that. I personally don’t think I need anyone else for that. My academic insights are heavily informed by my parents.

I cannot say that I was particular surprised by Jeron’s statements, but it did make him stand out. With a mother with a terminal degree and a father that recently returned to graduate school to earn his graduate degree, it is clear the value that his family places on higher education. Jeron’s ability to assess his own personal needs and how they can be best served by his mentor, speaks to his positioning as wanting to be an equal partner/to walk beside his mentor in this relationship when it comes to decisions that impact his future.
Mentee wants to lead the mentoring relationship

Using the previous passage, I was able to see very prominently Jeron’s confidence in identifying what he needs from his mentor. He told me, “I already have somebody for that. I personally don’t need anyone else for that,” when referring to whether his mentor impacts his academic success. He further indicates his place firmly in the driver’s seat in the following passage about how a mentor is selected and how that process works for him.

...Someone who can relate, not someone who can tell me what they think, but someone who has actually been through the situation. To me, and this might sound crazy, but you have a mentor without even saying, “will you be my Mentor?” It’s just someone you look up to. It’s just someone I get advice from. You know, when I was in high school. I wasn’t like, “hey, I want you to be my mentor.” It was just like, that’s someone I admire, somebody is going down the same path that I will... I didn’t necessarily say hey, I want you to be my mentor. It was just something, like I see something in them that I want for myself. The mentorship is not as formal as one might perceive it to be. That relationship could exist and one even know it exists.

Jeron clearly has defined expectations of his mentor that include that he has actual experience in the areas that he is offering guidance and that they are currently headed in a professional direction that he aspires to travel in. He also mentions another powerful topic, that is that the subjectivity of the mentoring relationship. Before this research, I often inferred that there was some formal process that occurred for defined mentoring relationships to exist. Even though as I have mentored countless young men, there have been few where there was a formal request for me to serve as their mentor. Based on Jeron’s assertion, faculty and staff should be mindful of the possible mentoring relationships they may be engaged in, but not in a formal way. In other words, we should mentor and guide students in
our purview first, and ask questions later. As an educator being a role model is not an option, it is an expectation. Jeron’s mentor, Professor Lazarus accepted this challenge.

**Connection of the Case to the Literature**

The key themes identified in this case provide consistencies with the data presented in the literature review. Jeron affirmed previous research by Strayhorn (2007) that suggested that Black students that interact frequently with faculty members have “significantly higher college satisfaction” than those who did not engage in such relationships (p. 77). Further, when Jeron asserted that seeing where his mentor is and connecting that to where he aspires to be and also observing his mentor and desiring to walk that same path, he confirms Tinto’s (1993) research that illuminated the importance of “like-person role models.” Jeron does not specifically speak to his mentor being “like-person,” but based on my time with him and the responses he shared, Professor Lazarus is also one of his role models.

Jeron’s case also disconfirms Tinto’s (1993) Theory of Departure that details the process by which students become integrated into the life of the university. Based on van Gennep’s (1960) research that examines transitions from childhood to adulthood among members of tribal societies, Tinto asserted that successful integration into college required that students separate from their past associations, which included breaking away from their families (as cited in Guiffrida, 2005). Jeron’s connection to his parents and their role in motivating him academically and
not his mentor or someone affiliated with the university provides this contrast as he asserts, “I already have somebody for that. I personally don’t think I need anyone else for that. My academic insights are heavily informed by my parents.”

Although Tinto’s (1993) model is among the most widely cited for understanding the student departure process, it has been criticized by researchers (Hurtado, 1997; Tierney, 1999) for failing to take into account cultural variables including parental roles and community commitment. Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999) asserted that one of the major indicators impacting African American student persistence is parental encouragement.

This case extends the research by calling attention to the importance of “access” to realistic mentors, guidance being offered is based on practical rather than theoretical experiences, and that the mentorship relationship can be present and operating, but not in an official or clearly defined space. Additionally, the importance of the observable way of life of the mentor playing an important role in the identification, creation, and maintenance of the mentor/mentee relationship is illuminated also.

Lazarus “The Old Soul”

Professor Lazarus is the straight-laced, junior faculty member recently named Chair of his department at JAU. He is one of the most popular faculty members both among his colleagues and his students. He is known to be hard, but fair when it comes to the expectations of his students. He attended an HBCU for his
undergraduate degree and a large predominantly White institution situated in the Midwest for his graduate degree. He is equally passionate about both of his alma maters. His department is Criminal Justice and his passion for his field can be felt when having any discussion about incarceration rates and the role the prison system plays in the disparate number of African American males in college versus in prison. When he was informed he was identified by one of his mentees to participate in this study, he was honored and excited to lend his experience mentoring African American male students to this research. When he entered the interview room, he was focused and prepared to tell his story. He brought with him talking points that he wanted to make sure he covered during his interview. After gauging that he was ready to begin, I read to him the research protocol once again and proceeded to press record on the recording devices and began the interview.

Racial Uplift

*Legacy*

The first strokes of Lazarus's portrait begin with the importance of leaving a legacy through the young men he mentors. Mentoring is about having faith that what you invest today will turn into rewards tomorrow that you will not directly reap. It is by that definition a true selfless act. Lazarus paints a passionate portrait of ways that the role of mentor allows him to engage in this process. He talks about this selfless investment in the following passage:

*Young black males still need us to be in their corner. So that they can get to the point where they can do the same thing for somebody else. I think that's the ultimate result. The ultimate result is to see someone that you mentored do the same thing for somebody else. That’s the ultimate result in that. Not so much*
the success, as much as that desire to help. One of the things about mentoring students is that students will tell other students...

One of the beautiful things about Lazarus’s statement is that the only result that he aspires to have come out of his mentoring experience is that his mentee one day step in his shoes and mentor others. In a society that often asks the question, “What’s in this for me?” before stepping up to the plate, here is an instance where the incentive is generational racial uplift. This theme was prevalent across the mentors in the study.

Nurture

Mentoring as Nurturing

The theme of nurture was very present in Lazarus’s narrative. In the passage that I share here, he is adamant about the power of nurturing for young men during their college years.

...I mean, but the ability to nurture is powerful brother...it really is. To influence and nurture someone and to do it in 2 or 3 years when they’ve been on the earth 18 with this point of view, and then come to you for 4 years and you are able to get them on board with life, and what’s real and that success is real and it’s waiting for you... When you are in a true natural mentor/mentor relationship where the student naturally gravitates towards you and you to them, students tend to take on some of the characteristics of the mentor. Some of those characteristics are outlook. Just that...you know they may not be able to dress like you or speak like you, but they share an outlook. And that outlook is, I am capable of being a scholar...I am capable of doing great things academically and I think that that identity that the mentee develops comes from that true relationship with the mentor. The one word that I can give you to describe that relationship is “influential.” You become very influential...and students in those relationships want to be like their mentor. They really do. So, if you speak a certain way, if you say something to a young lady a certain way, then they think its ok, because one they want to try to impress you as a mentee so that’s what they’re going to do... you really have to be careful in how you shape young people. They’re fragile. They are very fragile and I love it when they come like that. I really love it when they come like that. I mean there’s nothing wrong with coming broken, because what we do, we mend those breaks brother and we come back with something much stronger. I’m very
proud of the students we’ve graduated out of here...very proud of them. Because, they came one way and they left a certain way.

I do not know of a more powerful way to state what Lazarus said about how “We mend those breaks.” Through the nurturing process that accompanies the mentorship, if and when it is required, healing can begin through the continual advisement process about both academic and life issues and concerns. This passage, more than any other in this study, illuminates the “fragility of mentorship.” I do not mean to suggest or infer that the relationship is unstable between the mentor and mentee rather that because of the vulnerability of the mentees that bestow the title of mentor upon faculty and staff, we must take great care not to cause any further harm than what the mentee has already experienced. Lazarus affirms my position in the following passage:

...Mentorship is powerful and the sad thing about it is everybody can’t do it. Everybody can’t be a mentor. So, those of us who can, it’s our responsibility...it’s like a God-given responsibility. You know? So, you’ve got to raise them up brother. Everybody cannot do it. And I don’t think everybody should be doing it. I don’t everybody should do it because the one thing about the relationship.

I have found that although there is an expectation of mentorship on HBCU campuses, the reality is, everyone cannot and should not be doing it. Lazarus makes an excellent point in acknowledging how powerful a tool this relationship is and it should not be trusted to just anyone. With topics as sensitive as thoughts of suicide and self-mutilation having been brought to bear during meetings with my mentees, I know first-hand the necessity of being able to offer support within my own areas of expertise and when the situation calls for outside resources to step in. Mentoring is
more than saying an encouraging word from time to time, it is an investment in someone else’s life. It requires someone that is committed to nurturing the mentee in both the good and trying times.

Timelines/The role of time and experience
*Using past experiences as a guide for mentorship*

In this last example, Lazarus shares how the use of past experiences with his own father helps to guide him in his mentorship role with his mentees. Of the five mentors, Lazarus’s relationship with his father was the most impactful when it came to approach to the mentoring relationship. This was a surprise to me. The relationship with my own father is very present in how I mentor and approach the mentoring process. Much of my success I attribute to the lessons I learned from him. He is a large part of my personal portrait. Lazarus vividly describes how he uses past experiences to guide his mentorship in the following passage:

\[I\text{ think...because I don’t have kids, but I had a really, really good father. You know, he is awesome. You know I told him that this past weekend. I was talking to my mom about him. I said, you know he’s really an awesome male. Ok, and I’m going to tell you why...You know when I look at my dad he’s a very strong person, but he’s a very powerful male. He’s a very powerful male figure and what I mean by that is he’s an awesome father...he’s an awesome uncle...he’s an awesome cousin...an awesome relative...he’s just a guy, you know. And so, even though I don’t have any kids, when I deal with kids, you know, I just pretty much use my observations of him throughout the years growing up have really shaped my thoughts on kids and how the relationship they should have with a male...and I’m talking about young guys because even my friends who didn’t have fathers in the home would always come over to the house just cause of how he engaged them. I don’t approach it like a father-figure or anything like that, I just approach it like a strong male that understands that younger males need that and I know they lack it a lot of times.\]

What I found interesting about this stream of consciousness for Lazarus was his ability to step outside of his role as son to observe the character of his father. He
was able to not only observe the measure of his father as a father to him, but recognized the multiple times his father “otherfathered” other members of his family. Unlike many children, instead of being upset or selfish that he had to share his father with others, it only made him respect him more.

I have a first cousin who’s never had his father or a male figure in his life and he just moved next door to my daddy. He’s fifteen. They just moved next door and he’s always at my mom and dad’s house with my dad, talking to my dad, always doing stuff. I mean he’s always outside and my Aunt came over on Sunday and she said, you know he never came out of his bedroom until now and he appears to be so happy... I mean he never tells my cousin he has to go home or this, that, or the other. He understands that he’s his Uncle as well as a father figure. He understands that...and he embraces that. And in the same breath, I have a little cousin, she’s 2, picked her up put her on his shoulders and walked her in the yard. So, when I see him doing that, you know, I’m just saying this guy is a really strong male. He really is. Cause he’ll take the time to do that regardless of how tired he is...regardless if he wants to do it. He’s just awesome. So, that’s where I get that from. That’s just natural for me just through observing him it’s just natural to care about the future of young black males...it’s natural to care about that...and it’s natural to want to assist in any kind of way...and it’s just natural to empower them to be able to do the things that I was able to do.

Lazarus and I share similar observations of our fathers growing up and as grown men. Once we were older, we were able to better put into words how awesome our fathers were not only to us, but to our cousins, nieces, and nephews. I was hoping to tell a profound story of “otherfathering” throughout this research, but the only stories that offer a narrative that fits that theme is the story of Lazarus and his father and my own. However, it is possible to loosely conclude, based on the depth of the relationships in this study, that the mentoring relationships shared are examples of “otherfathering.”
Connection of the Case to the Literature

Many studies in higher education examine the interactions between students, faculty, and how those interactions impact persistence, retention, and overall satisfaction in college (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Pascarella, 1980). Several of these studies have a primary focus on the informal interactions between African American college students and the faculty that serve them (Guiffrida, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This research is still growing and providing needed insight into the motivating factors that influence persistence and academic achievement of these academically fragile populations. However, much less research is centered on the experiences of the African American faculty that often serve these populations and motivate them to persist and excel academically through to graduation. These mentor studies provide valuable insight into the motivations of these African American male faculty/staff that work to mentor and guide the African American mentors under their charge.

Throughout this research, there are several exemplars of the commitment African American faculty and staff make when it comes to supporting and preparing Black males for success in the classroom and life beyond their undergraduate institutions. They will be explored in depth throughout this section with each case providing affirmation, disconfirmation, or extensions to the current literature on this area of mentorship. Because of the dearth of research on the impact of African American faculty on undergraduate education, this data will serve to fill a gap in the literature.
Consistent with the literature, Lazarus and other mentors engage regularly in developmental relationships with students (Umbach (2006). These relationships, as described in detail throughout the mentor cases, outline the multiple efforts and strategies used by mentors to enhance the present and future of their mentees. The motivation behind the emotional, time, and networking investments in mentees span several reasons. However, Hegstad (1999) and Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs (1997) noted that previous experiences as protégés is one significant factor in the desire to mentor. Participants in Griffin's (2012) study described this engagement as a form of generalized exchange. According to Griffin (2012), generalized exchange means “a professor can interact with a student and not anticipate a direct benefit; however, the professor may receive some form of benefit from someone his or her mentee interacts with in the future or because of his or her mentee’s contributions to a larger network or community (p. 18). In line with Griffin's (2012) study, Lazarus and other mentors in this study viewed their exchange with mentees “as being part of a larger pipeline project: someone helped them in the past so that they could go on to help someone else in the future” (pp. 18-19). One of the omnipresent themes across these mentor cases is the importance of racial uplift/leaving a legacy. The idea that this moment with this young man is an opportunity to touch the future and it is not to be squandered. Lazarus said this in several passages during his interview. The following are some examples:

...And young black males still need us to be in their corner, so, that they can get to the point where they can do the same thing for somebody else. I think that’s the ultimate result. The ultimate result is to see someone that you mentored do the same thing for somebody else. That’s the ultimate result in that. Not so
much the success, as much as that desire to help. One of the things about mentoring students is that students will tell other students...

For Lazarus, he describes this particular theme the “ultimate result,” or the sum of all things when it comes to mentorship. The ability to pass on the importance of the spirit and in many ways the obligation of mentorship forward, is tantamount to any other goal he may desire in this relationship.

Another theme consistent with the literature that was observed in this case is mentoring as nurturing. This concept is prevalent in the othermothering literature. Found in African American feminist literature, othermothering has been utilized in previous studies to highlight the nurturing and cross-familial patterns of care found in African American culture (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, and Strayhorn, 2008).

Lazarus described nurturing in the following passages:

I mean, but the ability to nurture is powerful brother…it really is. To influence and nurture someone and to do it in 2 or 3 years when they’ve been on the earth 18 with this point of view and then come to you for 4 years and you are able to get them on board with life and what’s real and that success is real and it’s waiting for you...you really have to be careful in how you shape young people. They’re fragile. They are very fragile and I love it when they come like that. I really love it when they come like that. I mean there’s nothing wrong with coming broken, because what we do, we mend those breaks brother and we come back with something much stronger.

Hirt et al. (2008) describe three components of othermothering: an ethic of caring, cultural advancement, and institutional guardianship. Mentorship as nurturing affirms more specifically the ethic of caring. The researchers define this as an “attentive and emotional response to the other that is an ongoing part of one’s own engagement with students...that forms a pervasive social conscious within
African American communities extending the concept of family and nurturing to interactions within educational institutions” (Hirt et al., 2008, p. 218).

The idea that the mentoring relationship goes through processes of development is supported by the literature also. Kram (1983) empirically studied these stages within the context of business relationships, but it is still relevant here. He proposed a model that identified four phases of the mentoring relationship based on interviews with 18 pairs of mentors and mentees from one company. The four stages are initiation (lasting between 6 months and a year); cultivation (lasting between 2 and 5 years); separation (this is where the mentee gains independence); and the fourth and final stage redefinition (when the relationship evolves into something new and significantly differently or when the relationship ends). These cases go through the first two stages of Kram’s model. It is also foreseeable that the last two stages will occur, with the caveat that it is more likely that the relationship evolves into something significantly different than ending.

Several other themes in this case study are consistent with the literature in regards to providing a holistic approach to mentoring and advising (Guiffrida, 2005). Those themes were as follows: the importance of building the mentorship relationship beyond the classroom, trust, providing hope, raising personal expectations, making connections (networking and life connections), and spirituality. Seeing the mentee as a whole person is pivotal to the success and maintenance of these relationships.
This study extends the literature by opening a dialogue about the role of technology in the mentoring relationship. Much of the research surrounding mentorship regards “going beyond” as engaging students in personal conversations, activity separate and apart from school, and providing insight for life not just in the classroom. The consideration of the use of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, texting, and e-mail as modes of support is not present in the mentorship literature. However, with most colleges and universities today utilizing each of these as a means for recruitment and retention, the value of this means of communication cannot be underscored. Lazarus opens this dialogue in the following passages:

...One thing I do is always keep in contact with them. Stay in contact with them weekly, “what's going on?” If it’s just a text or on Instagram...what’s going on? How’s it going? What you need? Because the mentor/mentee relationship doesn’t stop when they graduate. They commence on, but it doesn’t stop there.

It is important to note that research has included internet and video components as part of the students’ mentoring activities (Carlson and Single, 2000; Collier and Morgan, 2006), but has not progressed to include social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to name a few. Lazarus was one of two younger mentors to speak about the use of social media/technology as part of the mentorship process, but as mentioned previously, research on the importance of being able to communicate with students in social media spaces that most faculty currently are not participating in, is an enhancement to this relationship that cannot be overemphasized. Future research on this component will be important moving forward. Nothing in this case disconfirmed existing mentorship literature.
Examining the Mentor/Mentee Relationship as a whole

As I examined both of these cases as a whole, the unique portrait of their relationship was able to reveal the special characteristics that make it successful. The first correlation I was able to draw about this mentoring relationship is the high value both the mentor and mentee places on their relationship with their fathers. The life lessons that each takes away from those relationships has proven vital to their growth and development as men. In the following passage, Jeron reflects on advice offered to him by his father:

*My father would talk to me about raising my discernment level about many things that have helped me in both present and past obstacles. My father says it all the time. When I went home last weekend, my father, he’s a Pastor, he said you have to be careful about what you put yourself around or who you put yourself around. He was saying how you only see the surface, you are going to start seeing people for who they really are, because the surface may look like they are for you, when deep down inside people may not mean you any good. Right after he said that, this week I’m starting see people who they really are.*

Lazarus countered with the following reflection of the influence of his father on his life simply through observation:

*He’s a very powerful male figure and what I mean by that is he’s an awesome father...he’s an awesome uncle...he’s an awesome cousin...an awesome relative...he’s just an guy, you know. And so, even though I don’t have any kids, when I deal with kids, you know, I just pretty much use my observations of him throughout the years growing up have really shaped my thoughts on kids and how the relationship they should have with a male.*

The portrait begins to take shape as I envision these two men, one in his early twenties and the other in his late thirties, on a course to meet each other at JAU. On this campus of nearly 800 young men, Jeron is drawn to and selects Professor Lazarus to serve as his mentor. Lazarus being highly influenced by a
father that was able to “show” him what a young man deserves out of a relationship with an invested male in his life, while Jeron’s father focuses on his son’s discernment so that he is able to determine that who is around him has his best interest at heart. These cases are about the impact that a highly influential father in the home can have on the future decisions of his son. The parallels in the upbringing of this mentor and mentee suggest a positive correlation to its success. It also has implications for potential successful pairings of mentors and mentees based on family systems with present or absent fathers in the home.

The Researcher’s Connection to the Cases

Portraiture posits that “It is through relationships between the portraitists and the actors that access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed” (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 135).

The value that portraiture places on the relationship between the researcher and participants allowed for a level of intimacy between them that cleared the way for increased self-understanding by both parties. I found that the telling my own story alongside the stories of the participants served to extend my own self-understanding which allowed me to paint a more vivid picture of the phases, roles, and impact of African American male mentorship on college age African American males and their mentors. The catalyst for deep inquiry and the construction of knowledge arises out of intersubjective experiences, which are grounded in one’s
own self-understanding (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In the following passage I reflect on what mentors have meant to me in my life, following the interview with the mentor Terry:

> For me, mentors have served several surrogate roles throughout my life. The roles of father, brother, sister, uncle, etc. were consistent voids filled by mentors throughout my existence. The presence of these caring and engaged persons served as bridges to my understanding, self-awareness, and success. They were the glue that held my world together until the roles they were filling were no longer required. At that point, the relationships shifted to account for new obstacles and challenges I would face and like chameleons, they simply adapted.

It was in my relationship development with each participant that I was able to reflect and reach a greater understanding of the purpose and meaning that mentors held for me in my life, and also my role as mentor in the lives of others, thus creating a greater understanding of how I influence others. Bernstein (1992) espoused, “It is in our genuine encounters with what is other and alien (even in ourselves) that we further our own self-understanding” (as cited in Moss, 1996, p. 67).

I attribute much of my ability to survive and persevere in life to the significant roles African American male mentors played in my life at every stage of development. The common ground found between myself, mentors and mentees in this study created a kinship that to the portraitist is “fundamental to self-understanding, to mutuality and validity, and to the development of knowledge” (Lightfoot & Lawrence, 1997, p. 136).

The following reflections matter because as I have endeavored to honestly tell these stories of successful African American college students on HBCU
campuses, I also realize that in each story, mentor and mentee, there is a piece of my story. At 39, I am the legacy, the hope, the result of multiple invested mentors reaching back and guiding me across the treacherous landscape that life can be for a Black male. At 18-24, I was the college student that sought like-person role models, elders that had experienced the lessons they were trying to teach me, and above all whom I could trust not to lead me astray. In each of the following connections to the cases presented, I paint pictures of hope and resilience of dreams not deferred.

Researcher’s Connection to Mentee Rodney

Rodney reminds me of the self-confidence I had as a student-athlete. As an accomplished athlete and student, there was much that I felt I knew. Also, because of the exceptional mentorship I received growing up, my discernment levels were very high, giving me a false sense of a greater understanding of what exactly I needed from more experienced and successful African American men. This led to a small phase in my life where I felt that I needed to have more control in the mentoring relationships I was engaged in. This was a miscalculation, at least in the case of Dr. H., my undergraduate college advisor.

This phase was characterized by a series of decisions, some good and some bad, that I made independent of consultation with my mentors. The most prominent decision I made during my undergraduate experience was to withdraw my acceptance of an offer to teach in Northern, VA in exchange for an opportunity to teach in Columbus, OH and attend The Ohio State University (OSU). The miscalculation was in understanding the process for attending OSU as part of my
employment. I chose to teach in Columbus Public Schools (CPS) under the pretense that “fee waivers” meant not only that I did not have to apply to attend OSU to and earn my master’s degree, but that it was going to be paid in full through the fee waiver. Ignorance like that occurs when 22 year-olds make decisions without conducting adequate research on their own or conferring with informed others for clarity about drawn conclusions. It is important to note, this was pre-Google, Yahoo, or any other prevailing internet search engine available today, meaning I was unable to conduct the kinds of searches then most people can conduct from the luxury of their cell phone today.

Had I conferred with Dr. H., one of the only reasons I aspired to attend OSU, he would have made clear the issues that almost made my plan to go to Columbus a colossal failure. The mentee leading the relationship tends to be successful when the mentee is older, experienced, and/or more informed. Novice mentees leading the mentoring relationships experience hardships at a much greater and prolonged rate. Today, my mentoring relationships run the spectrum from leading, walking side-by-side, to desiring to be lead. What I have learned is that just as one requires different kinds of mentorship at different phases of development, it is also true that positionality in mentoring relationships changes based on the mentorship and experience of all parties involved.

**Researcher’s Connection to Mentor Coach**

In my experience, one of the things that make for an exceptional mentor is the ability to examine and own the good and bad of one’s past. We are all flawed,
made errors, and used poor judgment in our lives. It is in accepting these flawed pieces of ourselves that we can then begin to approach the mentoring relationship from an empathetic perspective. Coach utilizes past experiences to guide the mentorship experience. His empathy for the mistakes of the past allows him to place those mistakes in perspective as they relate to his mentee in the following passage:

*The good thing about being a mentor you don’t dwell on the past. You hope to present things to help them have a better future and that’s the project to me of being a mentor. Let’s correct what you did wrong...whatever you did wrong, let’s overlook that, but let’s not do it again and let’s prepare ourselves to do something better.*

The first time I met Coach, I was an 18 year-old college transfer to Hampton University. I transferred to Hampton to run track and play football. Coach sent my scholarship papers federal express to the school I was attending at the time and I signed and returned it right away. The rest, as they say, was history! He and my other mother were the catalysts in my life for these particular lessons as I transitioned to manhood. My decision to leave my previous school did not sit well with my father, whom I had great respect and affection for. However, there comes a time in a man’s life when he is challenged to stand his ground based on what he knows or feels is best for him.

Leaving for Hampton against my father’s wishes was one of them. Coach has never been a man of many words. He was not long on speeches. However, his presence and the few words of support or affirmation was all it took to keep you motivated to keep pushing ahead. It was under his guidance that I thought I wanted
to be a track coach in the future. He made me want to walk in his shoes. He garnered respect from his athletes and peers in ways that I wanted to garner respect and he was an exemplary model of how to achieve that. To gain a position at JAU in senior administration was a great opportunity to not only thank him for the impact he had had on my life 15 years earlier, but also by my achievements, show him how his leadership rubbed off on me. What is so amazing about coach is he remains the same after all of these years. He does what he does for the young men under his charge not for acknowledgement, but because he accepts his role as mentor, otherfather, and father to so many of us that has been fortunate to have been coached by him. I proudly tell his current athletes that he was my track coach when I was in college so that they know that what he is telling them can lead them down roads and paths they never thought were possible. However, if they buy into his program, there is no limit to where they may go. Even though Coach was my coach, this interview was the longest conversation we’ve shared in my life. In fact, when I sit in a room with him, I still feel like that 18 year old young man learning at his father’s knee all over again. Not out of fear, but out of respect. He is an amazing inspiration to me and to others. He is one of the most influential people I’ve had in my life and I didn’t get to tell him that until 15 years later. As I mentor young men and women, I want them to one day speak of me the way I speak of coach. I want to be the difference maker for them, the way he was for me. His voice, from his era, through his experiences, was imperative to this study. They honestly don’t make them like him anymore and because of the change in times, his guidance from his
perspective will live only through what he showed me and the hundreds of players that have played for him. I’m proud to be one of those that will be carrying forward the torch.

This is my connection to this case. I lean heavily upon my own experiences in life, both the good and the bad in providing guidance to my mentees. I feel that when I share some of my missteps with them, it lets them know that I was not always Professor Jackson. It lets them know that I too made errors in judgment and paid the price for my mistakes. However, the obstacles that rose from those errors I overcame in order to achieve personal and professional success. The emphasis is not on how many times I’ve fallen down, rather on the veracity by which I arose each time; stronger and more determined. I often tell my mentees, “I can’t take you some where I’ve never been.” I reiterate this at different times to remind them that I’ve travelled the road they are considering and successfully navigated the thorns and potholes that lay waste to the path. My job is to successfully guide them across. I cannot ask them to successfully press ahead, if I do not allow them to place their sometimes checkered pasts behind them. This too is the task of the mentor, to aid the mentee in forgiving themselves for the mistakes of their past, and helping them to see that they are worthy of all that lays just on the other side of the shore.

Researcher’s Connection to Mentee Allen

Allen’s experience with his mentor is very reminiscent of my experience with the omnipresent mentor that I was blessed to acquire during my master’s program in 1999. This time in my life was a time of immense change and uncertainty. It was
my first time away from home and my family. It was an exceptional distance (577 miles) to be away from family and friends for the first time in one’s life. I graduated May 3, 1998 and was in a U-Haul to Columbus, OH on July 31, 1998. I had a total of 4 people that I knew in Columbus prior to my arrival and had only spent significant time with 2 them prior to my arrival. I was a fish out of water and the new kid in town. After fighting for a year to get into graduate school at The Ohio State University, the first class I took as a graduate student was with my future advisor and mentor T.C.H. I was so excited to be sitting in this class with this super bright, young (29 years old), and cool Black professor! I mean, Billie Dee Williams cool! Never let them see you sweat cool! Hakuna Matata (no worries) the rest of my days cool! Ice...ice baby too cold cool (this is in reference to his fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. not the sampled song by Vanilla Ice)! Like the research suggests, there was so much comfort as I sat in this class with a professor that looked like me, sounded like me, and taught in a way that made me want to emulate his every word and movement. But, it wasn't just his color that made me want to be like him, it was his command of his subject matter and the confidence in which he delivered his lesson that made me want to be guided by him. The respect and adoration Allen has for his mentor spoke to his desire to be led by his mentor also. In the following passage Allen speaks to his appreciation for having his mentor to guide him, “It's a tough world that we live in, but I'm glad I had someone there to school me...” This statement was such a truism for me. I am the first to go to graduate school in my immediate family and was not used to reaching out for
guidance about what to expect, even from my previous mentors. As I observed T.C.H.’s demeanor, not only was he the sharpest knife in the kitchen, he showed a genuine interest in guiding me along the way. It was a tough world as I entered the Academy, but with T.C.H.’s covering, I feared nothing and no one.

Once he was assigned as my advisor, there was an immediate sense that I must do well, not only for myself, but also for T.C.H. I wanted to both make him proud and look good! So, I ran through my courses like the proverbial walls that Coach used to send me through. There was no task too big or small I would not and could not tackle at the behest of T.C.H. He was the general and I, his most apt pupil/soldier.

As with most master’s programs, the options were to finish my coursework and take an exam or to pursue a master’s thesis. I had not given much thought to which I would choose, but it certainly was going to be the path of least resistance. Or so I thought. T.C.H. had other plans for me, or at least ideas that he wanted me to carefully consider. I remember the day we had this particular, life-altering conversation. At the time, I was in the gym of the school that I was teaching in. I just turned off the lights in the gymnasium and was about to exit work for the day; headed to my second job at the Holiday Inn. T.C.H. and I were having a conversation that led him to inquire about my plans after I graduate. I do not recall my response that day, but I am sure it had something to do with obtaining my principal licensure. That is what brought me to graduate school in the first place. Then, T.C.H. asked the question that set me on this 12 year journey I’m on now. The question was, “Mike,
have you ever thought about getting your Ph.D.?” And like that, he planted the seed. Today, I am “the rose that grew from concrete.” The strength of this mentoring relationship was so powerful that if T.C.H. suggested it, than not only is it something I should consider, but something that is there for the taking for me. That day, I decided I would choose the thesis option to complete the requirements for my master’s degree and in December 2001, I received the e-mail I was hoping for congratulating me for being admitted in the Ph.D. program in the School of Teaching & Learning at The Ohio State University. Much like Allen, T.C.H. raised my personal expectations. Having T.C.H. as a mentor raised the possibilities for my future in ways far beyond what I had ever imagined. Even though I had much access to T.C.H. and wanted to be like him in every way, I did not fathom earning my terminal degree. It was not something I knew I should or could aspire to. T.C.H. made all the difference. Allen said it nicely, “Working with my mentor makes me want to do better. Right now my mentor has given me the motivation academically, to go to grad school, not on the Ph.D. level, but my mentor gives me the push that says, I can do it and that I’m capable of going above and beyond what my personal expectations are as a student.” T.C.H. gives me that push that says I can make it too. I have endured much success, loss, and failure over these past 12 years, but one thing that has never wavered, was my mentor’s calm, supportive voice. T.C.H. never wasted a word on chastising me for not finishing in what many would suggest is a reasonable time frame, or for continuing to work full-time in demanding positions that called for me to move several times prolonging my studies. No, he only continued to provide me
with the words of wisdom, guidance, and support that continue to sustain and push me towards the finish line. A good mentor understands what motivates his mentee. Just as Lazarus asserted in his interview, the mentorship relationship is so fragile that not everyone is capable or should be doing it. If not handled appropriately, a mentee can be crushed under the weight of the mentor. T.C.H. continues to be a motivational force in my life from more than 1000 miles away. When I speak to him, it is as if we spoke just yesterday and he knows the exact space that I am in and without hesitation, provides the precise amount of pressure and motivation to push me forward. Like all good things, my immediate access to T.C.H. came to an end soon after I graduated. He received an opportunity that he could not pass up shortly after I received news of my acceptance into the doctoral program. To me, it was if he was sent to serve as the catalyst and guide into this journey as a scholar. Although his time as my official advisor ended more than a decade ago, I still work as if he is still watching and is proud of the kind of student and professional I’ve become. I want him to be proud to say that Michael Jackson was his mentee as much as I am proud to say that I was mentored by T.C.H.

**Researcher’s Connection to Mentor Ellis**

In my opinion, the role of mentor is one that is bestowed rather than assigned. One cannot assign someone for you to respect, value, or aspire to be like that has not on some level earned it. Because this title is earned, it is either sought after deliberately or acquired through genuine relationship building that occurs over time between a mentor and mentee. My connection to Ellis’s case is grounded
in the gradual realization of my responsibility to reach back to light the path for as many that may follow me. Not many of my classmates at my undergraduate institution attended predominantly White institutions (PWIs) for their graduate degrees. In fact, I had no intentions of applying to one upon graduation. I applied and was accepted to attend another historically Black college and university (HBCU) in Washington, DC for my master’s degree. Whether the graduate school I attended was ranked in U.S. News & World Reports was the furthest thing from my mind when considering schools. I made no connections to where graduate schools were ranked in U.S. News & World Reports to how prestigious or how difficult it would be to get in or to graduate from them. My ignorance of this next phase in my life was bounteous.

However, after going through the mounting heartbreaks of being denied entrance into the only other school that I found that I really wanted to attend (OSU), other than that HBCU in Washington, DC, I began to fully understand the arduous task that lay ahead. Only after taking 9 hours of graduate non-degree courses and 4 failed application attempts to sway the graduate school that I was capable of doing the work and pleading my case to an advocate in the program, was I finally given my chance to prove my abilities. No matter how many times the door was shut and locked in my face, I was not taking no for an answer. I would have kept knocking until they let me in, even if it had taken 10 years! Attending Ohio State is what took me away from my family and friends. It was a sacrifice. Graduating from Ohio State was a dream that I would not allow to be deferred. As I began to successfully
acclimate myself to the rigors of my graduate program, I felt compelled to not let my ignorance and experiences in applying be in vain.

I was accepted in August and homecoming at my undergraduate alma mater Hampton University was in October. I called my former Chair/mentor and requested to speak to the exercise physiology class about my experiences both as a new teacher and graduate student at The Ohio State University. The crux of my message to the students was not so focused on my first year of teaching, rather about the importance of preparing for life after graduation today. The importance of identifying where you want to attend, application deadlines, required standardized tests that need to be taken, and lining up letters of recommendation in a timely manner were foremost in my discussion. Even more important than that, I wanted to impart the message that they are more than prepared and worthy of attending ranked, amazing institutions like Ohio State! I explained to those that said it was too big, that my piece of campus encompassed 3 buildings and the libraries. For those that said it cost too much, I told them that is why you have to commit to making the best grades and searching for funding today. For those that said it is too far, I reminded them that it was 577 miles from home for me and if I could do it, so could they. For those that said the classes were too large, I told them that the classes are small and intimate just like the ones on this campus, and they have amazing support systems to provide a home away from home feeling like the Black Graduate & Professional Student Caucus (BGPSC).
I give these talks each year. With each new position, degree, and accomplishment, I travel to my alma mater to speak life into future graduates. In interviewing Ellis, I now realize that what I was doing was building my legacy...leaving my mark on the future. Ellis said:

*I think that just in interacting with people like you (the interviewer), like myself that have gone to college and overcome things in high school and beyond high school. People who have made it through college who have made it through graduate school, people who have good jobs, who have good character, I think it gives them hope because of the fact that so many young men and young women grow up with that lack. They don’t see positive black male figures, so by them seeing that in us, I think it creates hope for them personally. I can do this. I get a lot of questions like, how did you get to where you are? What did you major in? What did you go to graduate school for? So, things like that speak to their sense of opportunity.*

That’s what I feel when I go back to speak with those students. It is my duty to go back and develop these students. To plant seeds and provide opportunities through my mistakes and ignorance so that they know that even from a smaller school like Hampton, they can go to the largest land-grant institutions in the country and excel. They can attend the Harvard’s and Yale’s because their college has prepared them for greatness beyond their comprehension. I stand before them as one of many that have taken the challenge and persevered. This is my duty...my legacy.

Since becoming a professor at JAU, 3 of my students successfully applied and received full-scholarships to attend The Ohio State University. As of August 2013, all three students earned their master’s degrees. All three have been accepted into doctoral programs at other ranked universities around the country. This is my legacy. My nephew and namesake graduated from an HBCU in May 2013. He now...
attends Vanderbilt University on a full academic scholarship; a school that was not on his list to apply to, but after hearing me laud their education program, he took his leap of faith and he has prospered. This is my legacy. Among other things, around JAU’s campus, students know that if they earn a 3.5 or higher, they may be selected to apply to the Graduate & Professional Student Visitation Day (GPVSD) weekend hosted by Ohio State each fall. They now seek me out in hopes of being recommended to attend not just the weekend, but Ohio State! This too is my legacy.

Like the mentor Thomas said:

_It's not about what they say about Thomas, it's about who TC helped along the way to be somebody else's mentor along the way. I don't care, you know, what they say about TC, but what TC did to help somebody else, to help somebody else; to help somebody else that's the legacy. Then I've done my just, you know, then I've taken it three-fold. And if you have that experience with a student and everything, it goes so many miles down the road, where you’re going to be able to have that student be a mentor to other students. To be a peer leader, or for that student to be able to touch back and touch my kids one day. You know, that’s the ground that I’m trying to touch basis with, if I can._

That is the ground that I want to touch also. I aspire to take it three-fold so that my children and my children's children can benefit from the legacy of mentoring that I have provided my students. What good is crossing barriers and blazing trails if one does not take as many as he can with him across the very threshold that was not even visible before he uncovered it?

**Researcher’s Connection to Mentee Jeron**

Reflecting on my mentoring experiences growing up, there are many events involving my father that consistently ring in my head day in and day out. My story aligns with Jeron’s in several ways. The first is the way his parents, not his mentor inform his
academic insights. When Jeron said, “I already have somebody for that. I personally don’t think I need anyone else for that. My academic insights are heavily informed by my parents.” This was very true for me also. As a young man, I knew that not performing well academically was not acceptable in my house. In fact, there was nothing else my siblings and I could engage in if our grades were not up to par. My father would often say, “I don’t send you to school to play games.” He meant every word of it. In fact, his obsession with good behavior and grades in school made him one of the least liked people in my life for many years. These were the feelings of an ignorant child, not yet versed in what truly matters as an African American…that which can never be taken away from you by any man…your mind. Dad understood this far too well. Joining the Navy out of high school to take care of his siblings and my mother provided him with a front row seat to the access one can be afforded with or without a college degree. He also bore witness to the racism Black men faced in the military in the 60’s and vowed not to let his children fall victim to underperforming in school.

Thankfully, while I wallowed in my ignorance and often times resistance of what my father demanded, I began to play sports. It was in playing sports that I found my first true mentors. My first sport, track & field, introduced me to a coach just the opposite of my father. He was soft-spoken, short like my father, but thoughtful, kind, supportive, and motivating. He was everything my father wasn’t in my eyes. All Dad cared about was my education. Coach R. cared about education too, but because it wasn’t constant drilling on the subject, I think I was better able to
receive what he shared with me. Consequently, I did perform better in school, but not for my Dad, for Coach R. Ultimately, it was always for Dad, because he had the authority to stop anything that I engaged in extracurricularly. Overall, I did not need Coach R. to inform my academics, my Dad cornered the market on that.

My first football coach, Coach M., was bigger than life to me. He was more like my father as a coach for the Aberdeen Raider intermediate football team. He was demanding, not unlike my father, but for me, each word he spoke was motivation. In my eyes he could do no wrong. He was the epitome of a motivator and it showed in our practices and the multiple city championships we brought home! During this era in Aberdeen Athletics, our teams were referred to as “The Dynasty Raiders for our multiple undefeated football seasons. It didn’t hurt that we had the eventual #1 NBA draft pick Allen Iverson at the helm as quarterback, kick-returner, punt returner, and cornerback. I was pretty good myself as an all-city offensive and defensive lineman wearing the intimidating #77. What made Coach M. even more significant, as Jeron asserts during his interview, was how accessible he was as a mentor. Shortly after my freshman year of high school, coach moved just around the corner. I could walk to his house in 2 minutes on a bad day. On many days, that’s just what I did. There was always a seat at the table on each holiday for me and on Christmas, there was always a gift. By the time I started high school, Dad had calmed down a bit and he and I were on the straight and narrow, but I still needed mentorship outside of the home and Coach M. was always there. He was the mentor that I needed at that stage in my life. Jeron understands this
need to have a mentor that provides for the mentee's needs at different stages in his life, “I think that when you get in different stages of your life, you need someone that has experience in something that you are getting ready to experience...”

Coach M. was essential during this phase not only because of his knowledge and experience in coaching football, but because of the consistent access and support he provided that never wavered. Like my father, he was at every pre-game, game, and post-game. He made sure to give me some encouraging words before every game and a smile and hug afterward. I revered him like my father. He was my first otherfather. Someone that had earned as much love and respect from me as my biological father. I would run through walls for Coach M. He was a difference maker. 28 years later he is still here motivating me and I am still grateful for his presence in my life.

Researcher’s Connection to Mentor Lazarus

As a mentor, I find that my mentoring style is heavily influenced by both the mentors I've experienced throughout my life and my father. It is often with a heavy heart that I am reminded that the one mentor I wish I still had access to, is my father whom I lost suddenly in December 2010. People say it is different between fathers and sons. This relationship definitely goes through several stages before hopefully ending in an endearing, loving relationship that cannot be replaced. Lazarus speaks passionately about the impact of his father on his mentoring approaches in the following passage:

He's a very powerful male figure and what I mean by that is he’s an awesome father...he’s an awesome uncle...he’s an awesome cousin...an awesome
relative...he’s just an guy, you know. And so, even though I don’t have any kids, when I deal with kids, you know, I just pretty much use my observations of him throughout the years... growing up with him has really shaped my thoughts on kids and how the relationship they should have with a male...and I’m talking about young guys because even my friends who didn’t have fathers in the home would always come over to the house just cause of how he engaged them. I don’t approach it like a father-figure or anything like that, I just approach it like a strong male that understands that younger males need that and I know they lack it a lot of times.

As I child, my father was the exact opposite of nurturing and loving. He was a Navy Chief Petty Officer and was all about academic excellence, respecting my mother, and operating at your highest level at all times. I could not appreciate this approach growing up. I did not understand why he was so heavy handed. As a man, educator, mentor, and role model, I understand his philosophy much clearer now. He knew that whether I knew or accepted it or not, someone was always watching and drawing conclusions about me based on the way I dressed, behaved, and spoke. He required my brother and I to wear collared shirts to school every day when in middle school. Of course, we had different shirts in our bags to change into once in the building, but he required it nonetheless. I often wondered why he never checked our bags to see if we had a change of clothes. In any event, the summer before I entered 9th grade, the only clothes I wanted to wear were dress slacks and collared shirts. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find a photo of me in high school without a collared shirt, dress slacks, and dress shoes. Somehow my father performed the ultimate “Jedi mind-trick” convincing me that collared shirts were cool and because I was my own man, my friends respected my choice in style too.

My Dad cared about more than just clothes, academics were first and
foremost. My approach to mentorship is laden with advice about all of the opportunities that become available through the attainment of an education. I constantly remind students and mentees about the sacrifices of their forefathers and ancestors that paved the way for them to enjoy the plethora of educational opportunities available at any institution in the country. I inform them that they must live a life that when written down, people will choose to select them because of the rich experiences they’ve engaged in and how those experiences will add value to whatever position they will apply for. Like my father, I remind them that they are who they aspire to be, everywhere they are. That includes in the mall, in the café, on Facebook, and at social functions. People are always watching. I implore my mentees to operate in a manner that will allow those they might ask for recommendations to be impressed with how they present themselves to the world both publicly and privately. These are the ways that my father has impacted my mentorship. These are the lessons passed from father to son. Lazarus sums of the sentiments of grateful and enamored sons like us in the following passage:

*I think...because I don’t have kids, but I had a really, really good father. You know, he was awesome. I was talking to my mom about him. I said, you know he’s really an awesome male. You know when I look at my dad he’s a very strong person, but he’s a very powerful male. He’s a very powerful male figure and what I mean by that is he’s an awesome father...he’s an awesome uncle...he’s an awesome cousin...an awesome relative...he’s just a guy, you know. And so, even though I don’t have any kids, when I deal with kids, you know, I just pretty much use my observations of him*
throughout the years growing up have really shaped my thoughts on kids and how the relationship they should have with a male...and I’m talking about young guys because even my friends who didn’t have fathers in the home would always come over to the house just cause of how he engaged them. I don’t approach it like a father-figure or anything like that, I just approach it like a strong male that understands that younger males need that and I know they lack it a lot of times. With each passing year, I understand more fully and appreciate far more what my father was trying to pass on to me. I’m confident that the man he raised me to be, is the kind of man he would be proud of.

Conclusion

In conclusion, each case presented in this chapter provided a portrait of the intricacies of mentorship from either the mentor or mentee perspectives. The unique backgrounds and experiences of the participants yielded different emphases in each portrait, but each offered a unique sample of the power of mentoring on the success and retention of African American males on the campus of HBCUs.

Each mentee case included positioning as a major theme. The mentee’s decision to lead, follow, or walk side-by-side in the mentoring relationship offers insight into approaches mentors can take to best support and maintain the relationship. The mentor’s ability to adjust to the mentee’s approach to the relationship speaks to the right “fit” of mentor and mentee. The academic success of these students is indicative of the right fit, nurturance, and support desired by the mentee.
Each mentor case included racial uplift as part of their reason for providing the mentorship to their mentees. One prominent sub-theme was the importance of leaving a legacy and that legacy being fulfilled by their mentee one day being a mentor to other African American males. The desire to replace themselves in the support cycle of future young men was the most consistent and passionate theme.

My connection to these cases and the reflections they inspired affirmed that mentorship is an experience that can span generations. Additionally, mentorship experiences are often as unique as a fingerprint. However, what they all include is a desire to create a legacy that is determined to leave the world better than it was when they entered it. Racial uplift is a large theme throughout my personal experiences, but the role of my father was a prevalent theme throughout my reflections also. The next chapter will discuss the conclusions, theoretical and practical implications for future research.
In Jacobi’s (1991) review article on mentoring she highlighted major concerns specific to mentoring and the academic success of undergraduate students. Specifically, she noted a lack of understanding of: a common definition and conceptualization of mentoring; the prevalence of both informal and formal mentoring relationships; the extent, and ways in which mentoring contributes to academic success; and the mentoring functions that are most important to the academic success of college students. According to Crisp and Cruz (2007) little progress has been made in identifying and implementing a consistent definition and conceptualization of mentoring. In their critical review of mentoring literature, Crisp and Cruz (2007) reviewed 42 studies. Of these 42 articles, only 2 sought to understand the literature from the lens from the mentor and one that studied mentoring relationships of African American students at predominantly White institutions through the lens of African American professors.

Although it is clear there is much work to be done, a marked improvement in the literature in recent years has been made to include attempts to examine the
impact of mentoring on different types of students including women, minorities, first generation college students and students considered “at risk” (Crisp & Cruz, 2007). More germane to this study, the mentoring literature has extended to include studies centered on examining the characteristics, roles, and outcomes of mentoring specific student populations such as athletic students (Pitney and Ehlers, 2004), and medical and nursing students (Lloyd and Bristol, 2006). By examining the context of these African American male mentorships on high achieving African American males at an HBCU, this study adds significantly to the existing literature. 23 years following Jacobi’s work, there is still a gap in a consistent definition of mentoring.

In this chapter I will provide the reader with an in depth analysis of the key findings, limitations, and implications for future research involving the impact of African American mentorship on high achieving African American males’ ability to persist and excel in an HBCU. I situate this work within the confines of existing literature, providing insight into the contributions it makes to the mentoring literature. I articulate how this research serves to extend the concept of Tinto’s (1993) like-person role modeling. I will also engage readers in a discussion of the implications of the findings for mentoring program development and the role of spirituality in the sustainability of successful mentoring programs on HBCU campuses. Lastly, I will provide a definition of mentoring that accounts for the information gleaned from the results of this study.
Findings

Six overarching questions served as the impetus for this study:

1. How do you define the role of a mentor?
2. How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor?
3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in the students’ lives?
4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s academic insights?
5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense of their opportunity to learn and excel?
6. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform the student’s identity as being a highly educated, African American male?

This section will provide results obtained from the participants as they pertain to the questions that drove this study.

How do you define the role of a mentor?

With no consistent definition of mentoring proffered by the field, I wanted to gain insight from high achieving African American male mentees in an effort to create a working definition of mentoring that was inclusive of their definition on a HBCU campus. Mentees provided multiple responses that ultimately provided the foundation for the definition of mentoring that I proffer. The following is an abbreviated list of some of the responses that served as that foundation:
1. Rodney – *A mentor to me is someone you can look up to or go to for advice or follow his or her lead over a course of time.*

2. Kevin – *To me a mentor means someone who provides direction, and someone who leads by example. Someone who guides.*

3. Jeron – *Someone you can look up to, who gives you advice and respect. Takes the relationship with the mentee to heart. An adult friend that is more like a confidant.*

4. Allen – *Someone who has particular knowledge in the craft or career that I choose to study and follow. Someone who gives me guidance based on past situations that might fit my present situation.*

5. Eric – *When I think of a mentor, basically, I think of someone who sees the full potential in someone else. Even when they do wrong, they see the potential in them for doing right.*

For some researchers the term mentoring has been used to describe a specific set of activities enacted by a mentor (Bowman and Bowman, 1990), while other researchers have defined mentoring in terms of a concept or process (Campbell & Campbell, 1997 and Roberts, 2000). Further, the literature includes definitions specific to, and reflective of the researcher’s discipline. It is not uncommon in qualitative studies that the definition of mentoring is “revealed by participants, allowing the definition to be reflective or representative of their own academic experience” (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, p. 528). Hence, the need to firmly define mentoring within the context of qualitative inquiry is subjective and the goal of the study should be considered when broaching this decision.
In line with the aforementioned approaches to defining mentoring, I offer the following definition:

*Mentoring is a formal or informal process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person seizes, engages, or accepts the responsibility of facilitating the growth of a less experienced or knowledgeable person by encouraging the development of the whole-person academically, socially, and spiritually through engagement, authentic reflection, and personal development activities.*

My definition encompasses the concepts brought to bear in this research, particularly the value of spirituality in African American male mentoring relationships on HBCU campuses. This definition extends the more than 50 definitions of mentoring (Crisp and Cruz, 2009) by including “informal” mentoring processes of which many mentoring relationships begin as and continue to be over time. Also, my definition encourages the development of the “whole-person” which includes the presence and/or acknowledgement of the shared faith and spirituality between the mentor and mentee that this study was able to highlight both in the dual cases and my researcher bias and reflections.

**How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor?**

The idea of “bestowment” was important to me as I entered into this research. I felt that if I could identify how or what factors mentees’ stated went into the decision to identify a staff or faculty member as a mentor, I could then articulate with a degree of certainty ways institutions can train their faculty and staff to approach their students. Additionally, by mentees identifying at what stage in their matriculation they sought or acquired a mentor, I could offer a more definitive time
that institutions should pool its resources to target students for mentorship opportunities.

The bestowing of the role of mentorship varied across the mentee cases, however there were several places where these cases intersected. The commonalities among the responses included the belief that this process occurs for everyone at a different time. These relationships were developed naturally and at their own pace. Most participants described a “feeling” that informs them when it is the right time to engage someone in this relationship, “You just feel like it’s the right time that you can trust someone” (Rodney). The developing of trusted relationships was key in the decision to pursue and engage in the mentoring relationship. Eric described the importance of trust this way: “I think it starts off with trust, because people just don’t let anyone help them. A lot of people don’t even want help or mentorship. They think they can do it themselves.” Mentees also described how they observed the traits, disposition, and current place in potential mentors lives as key factors in deciding to select a mentor. Kevin describes this process in the following quote:

To me you see different traits. You see some traits that you have, and you see some traits that you need. I consider how someone takes on different situations. This is the little stuff that I see. You see where they are and you see where you want to be. That’s how I believe you take on a mentor.

Lastly, each described the importance of feeling as if their mentor was “equally” engaged in the relationship with them. Jeron articulates this in the following quote, “I usually bestow the actual mentorship when I reach out to them and they equally reach out to me. So, it’s not like you are doing all of the work.”
Three participants discussed how in some cases, the mentoring relationship can be both formal and informal where either party may not be aware they are engaged in it. Kevin brings the value of this point to the surface in his quote:

To me, and this might sound crazy, but you have a mentor without even saying, "will you be my Mentor?" It’s just someone you look up to. It’s just someone I get advice from. I wasn’t like, “hey, I want you to be my mentor.” It was just like, that’s someone I admire, somebody who is going down the same path that I will... I didn't necessarily say hey, I want you to be my mentor. It was just something, like I see something in them that I want for myself. The mentorship is not as formal as one might perceive it to be. That relationship could exist and one not even know it.

These responses were pivotal in acknowledging both the formal and informal mentoring relationship in the definition I offered in the previous section.

**How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and or present obstacles in your life?**

In this question, I wanted to gain insight into the mentee’s perspective on past or present obstacles and the role of mentoring in grappling with these obstacles. Many students harbor unresolved issues that are difficult to manage and as a result, stifle their social, emotional, or academic development. Since these students are high-achieving, I wanted to see what issues they may harbor and how this relationship served as a support or catalyst for dealing with the issues that faced each mentee individually. Mentees reflected in this question on the importance of having access to their mentors’ past obstacles and mistakes as potential road maps of how to address future situations and pitfalls they may potentially face in their own lives. Eric explains this in the following quote:

_By him sharing the obstacles he went through growing up and me sharing the same with him, he is able to help me through what I am facing as an African_
American man. His sharing of his experiences has really helped me to avoid some things.

Spirituality became pronounced in this theme as the importance of having sound discernment when making decisions about what to do and whom to have in your circle surfaced both for the mentees and for me. Kevin asked if he could share one of his experiences with one of his spiritual mentors, his pastor and father, in the following quote:

*He said you have to be careful about what you put yourself around or who you put yourself around. He was saying how you only see the surface; you are going to start seeing people for who they really are, because the surface may look like they are for you, when deep down inside people may not mean you any good.*

Allen also speaks to spirituality and the importance of discernment in his quote:

*Mentors are kinda that angel on your shoulder and in your ear that’s like, “no, do that or yeah, go ahead and take advantage of that while you can.” Sometimes you have those that are jealous of you athletically that are there waiting to see you fall and then you have those that are there just because they know you are going to be good. The importance of understanding who is quote/unquote real in your life.*

For this question, the importance of using the mentors’ past experiences to guide their current and future choices in discerning whom the mentees should allow in their inner circle and how they will approach future decisions based on their mentor’s experiences were of note also.

**How and when do your mentoring experiences relate to your academic insights?**

With this question, I wanted to understand the role mentors played in students’ awareness of the importance of earning their higher education degree. What academic insights were most prevalent among these high-achieving African American males and what insights deserve more focus based on the responses of the
participants. This information will further assist potential mentors to areas of academic foci that may be currently underserved when it comes to these students. This question resulted in mentees pointing to their mentor motivating them to progress beyond their undergraduate degree because the mentor(s) had advanced degrees and identified the mentor’s ability to achieve that goal as a higher probability they could achieve the same goal on their own. Rodney asserts the following:

I think academically, all of my mentors have had master’s degrees or multiple degrees. So, I’ve always seen African-American males strive academically. So, I’ve tried to do the same in my academics. Professionally, all of my mentors are successful in their respective fields however they may have got there, so I kind of see it like there’s opportunities for Black males to be successful, you just have to take advantage of it.

Rodney’s response affirms the value of having like-person role models as defined by Tinto (1993). Rodney and other mentees share how their mentoring experiences relate to their academic insights by acknowledging the value in having successful and highly educated mentors. Allen describes it in the following quote:

I’m a big video game fan, so I look at it almost like a cheat code, because you have that extra little push that other people might not have. You have insight into a situation that is old to your mentor, but is very new to you. So, you get a lot of early warnings about certain situations. You get guidance that says, you’re going down this road and there’s going to be a bump in a couple of short steps, so watch it. Right now my mentor has given me the motivation academically, to go to grad school, not on the Ph.D. level, but my mentor gives me the push that says, I can do it and that I’m capable of going above and beyond what my personal expectations are as a student.

There was collective synergy among the mentees regarding their motivation to go further academically because their mentors led the way and pushed them to do so also. However, one mentee shared that his mentee did not inform his academic
ambitions; rather he viewed him through a more spiritual lens. Kevin explicates this in the following quote:

> Not to sound mean, but I look to him more as a spiritual/emotional/life mentor than academic mentor. Not school, because I have parents that be like, stay on top of your work. So, I already have somebody for that. I personally don’t think I need anyone else for that. My academic insights are heavily informed by my parents.

Kevin’s break from the other participants serves to illuminate the importance of faith and spirituality in African American males’ success. What was even more informative was that he was able to identify a mentor who was able to serve him spiritually, which in turn, opens the student up to other forms of mentoring, including academics.

> How and when do your mentoring experiences relate to your sense of opportunity to learn and excel?

In this question, I wanted to examine African American male students’ awareness of the multitude of opportunities that exist for them. I have worked with students with very high grade point averages in the past who were not aware of what that kind of grade average is worth in terms of earning advanced degrees. I did not get many direct responses to this question. Rodney provided the most direct response:

> Since they have already done it, it kind of shows you the door, so the groundwork is laid. You’re not going to follow their exact same path, but you kind of use the outline of what they did academically to get in their career fields and how they progressed along in their career path. By engaging with my mentors, it becomes more attainable and realistic to reach my goals. By seeing Black males make it academically and beyond just athletics or the hip-hop industry. You can see the role that academics play in your mentors. By just seeing that, depending on your mentor, it can show you that you can do it.
Rodney speaks to how realistic it is to consider earning advanced degrees because of the engagement with his mentor. It is also important to note how he makes a distinction between the stereotypic expectation of African American males aspiring to become professional athletes or hip-hop artists versus negating the stereotype to include higher education. This distinction is worthy of note as an outcome of engaging with African American male staff/faculty at an HBCU. Other less direct responses included the importance and role of hard work and dedication, overcoming self-doubt, and in the instance of Kevin meeting expectations of his mother to earn a doctorate degree. All of these qualities and relationships matter in the attainment of advanced degrees.

How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform your identity as being a highly educated African American male?

The last question was important for trying to understand how the presence of African American male mentors in the lives of these participants impacted their identity as highly educated. As discussed earlier in Stewart’s (2002) work, identity development is a deeply personal and important process for African American students on predominantly White campuses. I wanted to gain insight into the role of this identity development on an HBCU campus. The results of these questions revealed that these high-achieving males already had a positive view of themselves as highly educated African American males from early in their lives. Their mentors on campus were often identified as a backup if they were unable to reach their home support system as Kevin articulates in the following quote: “I already see myself as a
highly educated African-American male because that was ingrained in me from home. If I didn’t have the support from home, Prof. Ellis’s support definitely will help out.”

However, the positionality of the mentee (leading, parallel/side-by-side, or traditional mentoring at the mentor’s knee), the responses differed. For example, Allen attributes this identity development to his mentor from his freshman year.

Well, from my mentor, ever since my freshman year, it was instilled in me that I could excel to be this great person on and off campus, but at such a young age, coming straight out of high school, it was in my mind oh it’s just something he’s supposed to say. (Allen)

This distinction is important to note because potential mentors cannot assume that because students are high-achieving they have a personal identity that acknowledges themselves as highly educated African American males. What can be gleaned from these responses is that a mentor needs to engage with their mentee and position themselves to provide this insight to those that do not have it, and continue to nurture and support this positive self-identity in those that do.

Situating this work within existing literature

There has been considerable research on African American males in higher education in the past decade, but only a small portion examined mentoring and the need for mentoring. This is the first empirical study of mentors and mentees for African American male college students at an HBCU. With 105 HBCUs in the U.S. this study provides significant results that can be used to further research this traditionally marginalized population.

This research contributes to the existing literature by extending Stewart’s (2002), well-cited research regarding the impact of spirituality on perceptions of
multiple sociocultural identities and the development of an integrated whole sense of self for African American students at a predominantly White college. By focusing on high-achieving African American males at an HBCU, I was able to provide insight into the role that spirituality plays in the selection, maintenance of mentor-mentee relationships. This study also extends the perception of African American males as like-person role models to include the dimension of spirituality in the mentor-mentee relationship.

Also, this research contributes to the existing literature by extending Strayhorn’s (2008) study in which he examines the role of supportive relationships in supporting African American males’ success in college. His study examined the number of contacts his participants had with faculty and staff, but not the context of those relationships.

Further, this research contributes to the existing literature by extending Reddick’s (2006) study of mentoring relationships among African American students, men and women, at predominantly White institutions through the lens of four African American professors using a grounded theory approach. This research was constructed with a more focused contextualization for understanding African American mentor-mentee experiences, by closely studying five pairs of mentoring relationships of high-achieving African American males on the campus of a Christian based HBCU.

Lastly, this research contributes to the existing literature by extending Carlson and Single’s (2000) study which presented quantitative and qualitative
mentoring outcomes, as reported by both students and mentors. This study is a departure from their work because their study did not examine race and this study specifically sought to examine African American males. Also, this study engaged pairs of students and mentors allowing for an examination of the mentoring relationship through both the mentor’s and mentee’s lenses.

Methodology

In this research, I utilized case study analysis, transcribed the data and executed several close readings seeking to identify topics that emerged for further analysis as related data categories (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). I then reviewed larger categories to discern related sub-categories. This categorization process relied heavily upon the three-stage procedure described by Strauss and Corbin (1998): (1) identifying conceptual labels for each conversational turn; (2) grouping these conceptual labels into a manageable number of robust conceptual categories; and (3) relating these categories to one another to arrive at a formulation of the core category.

I also used portraiture which enabled me to explicate the complete “portraits” of the participants in the study. As a population whose stories are often mired in violence and failure, college age African American males have a multitude of stories of survival and success that often is not shared. Too many times these stories are “back page” instead of “front page” news. I also find that although these stories can be articulated through quantitative means (survey, questionnaire, etc.), there is too much room to lose the deeper stories held within the personal narrative
of the portrait. The personal relationships with the participants allowed for a level of depth in the presentation of this data that is required to tell the “whole story” not just “categories.” Instead of struggling with viewing my personal story as interference to the data set, I was able to treat it as additional useful data. This departure from traditional research can be useful in conducting future mentorship research.

However, in using portraiture the artist’s perspective can potentially overwhelm the data. I worked to create distance between my participants and myself across the interview process, data analysis and writing process. I often reflected on and captured my own story before trying to describe the participants’ perspectives. At several moments I felt myself becoming more present than appropriate. This is where the use of case study enabled me to create distance and return to the key perceptions and experiences described by the participants. Considering the texture my story adds to this research, there would have been much lost in the departure of my story from the whole.

I found that the combination of portraiture and case study provided me with the opportunity to both be close, yet respectfully distant from the participants in the study as a productive means of capturing the essence of the mentoring experience. To be able to have the voice of the researcher very prominently displayed and to be able to search for what is “good” in an otherwise negatively promoted population are two of the reasons to utilize these methods in unison. The reflective process and presentation of my experiences with mentoring allowed for further understanding
of me as a mentor, mentee, and as an African American male who currently serves in both of these roles. The field benefits from this data analysis because of the depth that the researcher is allowed to reach through the relationships built and sustained with the participants.

**Like-person Role Models**

Tinto (1993) posited that students of color represent a unique minority population that face distinct problems seeking to become infused into the life of what is viewed by many as foreign. To address this issue, special support programs and mentor programs were created and proved to be effective in increasing student retention (Tinto, 1993). In many instances, this was accomplished by providing students of color with faculty mentors or advisers that took it as a responsibility to informally advise them. In other instances, faculty, and on occasion upperclassmen of similar race were asked to guide newly arrived students of color through the institution or at least through the first year of college (Tinto, 1993). He also posited that access to like-person role models was limited for students for color.

“For them, more so than for the ‘typical’ college student, the availability of like-person role models who have successfully navigated the waters of majority institutions appears to be an especially important component to their own success on campus. But given the availability of faculty of color on most campuses, it is not surprising that there are rarely enough faculty mentors to go around” (p. 186).

Tinto’s study focused on students of color on the campuses of predominantly White institutions. He also narrowly defines “like-person” faculty mentors as being of “like” race. When I began this study, I also held this definition of like-person faculty as someone who is of the same race. However, through my analysis of the data, like-
person faculty took on different meanings. In the dual portrait, the term “like” means different things. During the multiple close readings of the transcripts, I recognized similarities or “likenesses” between the dual portraits that served to extend Tinto’s (1993) research.

When most people look for likenesses, they tend to focus on the sense of sight and what is visually similar (skin color, hair color, eye color, teeth, etc.). As a very visual society, what is often neglected when considering likeness is what cannot be visually identified. Those things include activities or beliefs that make us feel the same passion, focus, desire, aspiration, etc. The same is true of those things that have caused us pain, hurt, loss, or emptiness. For example, Rodney and Coach are a great mentor and mentee duo. Many would see Rodney and his coach and expect there to be a possible mentoring relationship there because both are African American, feeding into our need to visually justify the relationship. However, they share far more than the same race. Their likeness extends into multiple areas to include a desire to work beyond stated expectations, athletics, a passion for engaging in racial uplift by going back to mentor youth in their communities, and a belief that if a bright path is made available one can take it and avoid unnecessary pitfalls.

Ellis and Allen share commonalities that includes a belief that mentoring experiences should be guided by past experiences/mistakes, a strong sense of spirituality, and that the mentoring relationship is deeply personal. Lastly, Jeron and Lazarus share very high-esteem for their fathers who played integral roles in
their lives, the belief that the mentoring relationship is a “God-given responsibility,” and that access to the mentor is a key component to the relationship.

None of the likenesses displayed above speak to race. Perhaps racial likeness is taken for granted in the HBCU context. However, as I reflect on some of the mentoring relationships I have with my students, I find that even though we may not share the same race, we do share things like a desire to meet or exceed expectations, an appreciation for accountability, and a proclivity towards bowties or dressing for success. These attributes become the foundation for the negotiated likeness in the mentoring relationship. There must be an understanding of who we are and what we need out of the relationship and how we will go about creating and more importantly, sustaining this relationship. This observation of the data extends Tinto’s narrow view of “like-person” to account for a multitude of other levels that a mentor and mentee can connect and sustain a mentoring relationship. It is not just like-person; it is an agreement around sustaining the like-person relationship.

Sustaining Mentoring Relationships: Negotiating Positioning and Likeness

When considering the sustainability of the mentoring relationship, the theme of the fragility of mentorship became important to my reading and reflections. From this research, I was able to observe that the mentoring relationship can be both formal and informal. Meaning, the mentoring relationship can be present for one person and not the other or the relationship can exist, but it may not have a defined name. No matter how the relationship is derived, the lack of mindful mentorship that includes all forms of communication (verbal, written, e-mail, in
person) can serve to diminish and tear down or build and sustain the mentoring relationship. The faith and devotion that Allen shares with his mentor truly speaks to the power and fragility of mentorship. If Ellis were to turn on him, telling him how incapable he is to go on to graduate study and how inadequate he is compared to his counterparts (female, White, Black, etc.), this would be a devastating proposition for any mentee. This is why these relationships require a negotiation between the two parties in order to sustain its integrity.

Portraiture provided the canvas for recognizing and observing how delicate a relationship the mentoring relationship is. The most profound statement is made by Lazarus when he states, “It’s ok if they come to us broken brother, because what we do is mend.” One way of examining that statement is to assert that once broken, one can either heal stronger or can heal and at the point where the bone mended, it will forever be vulnerable. I believe that the possibilities of a sustained relationship are half and half depending on whether the mentee in affirmed or dismissed.

The mentoring relationship is a sacred union that relies heavily upon faith and trust. As the field continues to seek to define the mentor/mentee relationship, this research reveals a facet of this relationship that I term “the fragility of mentorship.” I first used this phrase in the presentation of the mentor Lazarus. He suggests that many mentees go to mentors broken, but that is okay, because what they do is mend. There is a devotion and commitment to each other that is essential for this relationship to be successful and long endure. This is not exclusive to the mentee. The fragility of this relationship flows both ways. Just as the mentee would
be devastated by any form of abandonment and dismissive behavior on the part of his mentor, the same is true of the mentee towards his mentor. This is why mentors and mentees must choose mentorship partners that align with the temperament and expectations of the other.

Positioning and the Mentoring Relationship (beside, leading, following)

Across my analyses I began to see three distinct characteristics regarding mentee positioning: 1) leading the mentor/mentee relationship; 2) being led in the mentor/mentee relationship; and 3) being an equal contributor in the mentoring and advisement process. The first type of mentee, as the name suggests, leads or drives the mentoring relationship. In other words, a mentee approaches the relationship from the perspective that he knows what his needs are from his mentor and is confident in leaving anything else that may be offered. The second type of mentee acknowledges that there are limitations to his overall understanding and experiences because of his age or lack of experience. He looks early and often to his mentor to drive the advisement and overall course of the mentor/mentee relationship. This mentee does not take for granted anything the mentor might suggest or advise. The last mentee uses a more democratic approach to the relationship. He knows that he is limited in some areas, but acknowledges that he is smarter and savvy than average and would much rather co-pilot the course of the mentorship than be dictated to. He will not disregard advice or suggestions from his mentor, but he would potentially offer up alternatives or ask why the recommended course was selected over another viable alternative.
Fragility and Positioning in Mentoring Relationships

Throughout my analysis I have been able to observe the important dynamics between the fragility of mentorship and the ways mentees and mentors negotiate the positioning of mentees. Here, I explicate what contributes to the fragile nature of each form of negotiated positionality (leading, beside, and following).

In the relationship where the mentee desires to lead and set the agenda in the relationship, they have a clear goal for what they would like to achieve in the mentoring relationship. That goal could be singular which could include preparation for graduate school or multiple which could include interview preparation for a job, graduate school preparation, and becoming more fiscally responsible. Whatever focuses the mentee requires, it is important that in this relationship, the mentor be mindful not to offer “too much” or “too little” insight and guidance. Too little guidance and the mentor is of little or no use to the mentee. Too much guidance and the mentee grows weary of the additional information that they more than likely have already secured from other sources and mentors.

In the beside/parallel mentoring relationship, the mentee approaches the relationship with a level of confidence and knowledge. These traits display themselves during interactions with their mentor and they are discussing potential future plans or ideas for current concerns. The mentee desires to gain the insight of their mentor in this relationship, but also desires to be acknowledged for the insight that he brings to the relationship also. Mentors must be careful not to become dismissive of the knowledge the mentee brings to bear during their discussions.
Doing so could signal to the mentee that what they bring to the table is not valued in this relationship. In turn, the mentee may seek guidance and support elsewhere.

Lastly, in the following/traditional relationship, the mentee is positioned as a very apt pupil who has entrusted considerable faith and trust in the mentor as the source of their preparatory needs for their immediate future. Once a mentor identifies that these are the needs of this mentee, he needs to do a full inventory of his wisdom, education, skill sets, and specialties. This is critical because this mentee has placed his full trust in this mentor’s ability to deliver him to where he aspires to go. Mentors with these mentees must be mindful of what the mentor Terry said during his interview:

> It's helping them to connect to that next place. So, it’s kind of binding all of the connections and the networks that you have for the good of the student. The “Standing on the shoulders of giant’s comment really means that that giant may not be in your forest. That it may be in another forest that you have to share with those students.

This requires that mentors not allow their desire to be the primary in the mentoring relationship to interfere with the needs of the student. Mentors must be willing to put whatever pride they have aside in order to provide the most suitable mentor based on the goals and aspirations of the mentee.

These three examples are suggestive of the range of concerns that should be considered in forming mentoring relationships; at the same time, they provide a basis for understanding how to avoid fracturing this important relationship at this critical juncture in the development of the identities of these students.
Connection of Major Themes in the Study to the Participants

Racial Uplift

Mentees

The spirit of sowing seeds is a prevalent theme throughout this study. What is clear is that these young men, and others like them, are paying attention to those they have bestowed the role of mentor to. The young men in this study are eager and ready to step into the roles of the mentors that serve them. They are aware that as members of their mentors’ networks, they have an obligation to protect, cultivate, and extend that network. Mentee after mentee spoke about going back home and doing what their mentors did, stretching back their hands “to let younger youth know that no matter your situation, race, or color, you can also be successful.”

Rodney identified legacy as the primary sub-theme associated with racial uplift. He described going back home and speaking to youth in his home community as an opportunity to create a legacy for himself, by providing insight to kids that are much like himself.

Allen spoke to a passion for racial uplift through leaving a legacy and looking back to make sure he does not leave anyone behind. He asserted that it was through his interactions with his advisor that he is compelled to “stretch his hand back to let younger youth know that no matter what your situation, race, or color, you can also be successful.” Allen also discussed not forgetting anyone that may be coming up behind him. It was very important to him to not be perceived that he left and did
not come back to share what he had learned along the way. Jeron did not have a statement that I categorically described as racial uplift.

Mentors

One of the most compelling arguments made in this research is the value placed on legacy. The selfless sowing of seeds in future scholars that as mentors, some may never see grow to reach their full potential. It is in this moment of clarity and purity that one is secure in the notion that the nourishment provided during mentorship requires equal effort. This notion of reciprocity is evidenced in the examination of both the mentor and mentee transcripts. Legacy in this sense is not secured through the birth of a child in the literal sense, but an awakening and conception do occur. This was especially true for Thomas in the study. He was the most passionate and clear on why it is necessary for him to seek out students, male or female, and sow seeds of hopeful success through mentorship. He and I spoke at length on this subject during his interview. As an African American man and a father, Thomas said it most eloquently; “I look at it from this perspective, if I don’t help some of the men and women that are out there who’s going to help my children?” Helping children avoid the potholes and detours he has had to endure is central to who Thomas is. It is a trait that is shared among many of his colleagues in this study. He further asserts his selflessness in the following passage:

*It’s not about what they say about Thomas, it’s about who Thomas helped along the way to be somebody else’s mentor along the way. I don’t care, you know, what they say about Thomas, but what Thomas did to help somebody else, to help somebody else; to help somebody else that’s the legacy. Then I’ve done my just you know, then I’ve taken it three-fold.*
For Lazarus, racial uplift was about providing hope to Black males, making needed connections, leaving a legacy, and reaching out to students. Legacy was especially pronounced for Lazarus when he asserted that, “The ultimate result is to see someone that you mentored do the same thing for somebody else.”

Terry identified making needed connections as his key connection to racial uplift. He does not see his presence in students’ lives as temporary; rather he envisions them as long-term relationships that if possible, will begin their freshman year. He profoundly asserts the following regarding extending networks to mentees:

So, it’s kind of binding all of the connections and the networks that you have and the “Standing on the Shoulders of Giants” comment really means that that giant may not be in your forest. That it may be in another forest that you have to share with those students. So, I think that that’s the place where it goes next level. It’s by your role and your movement as the mentor.

It is a powerful sentiment Terry makes regarding the tree not being in his forest. Networking is about extending one’s own network or the network of others for personal or altruistic gain. To grant access to a tree in his forest speaks to the level of trust Terry has for his mentor to understand and accept the rules for respecting the networking relationship. Also, to have an awareness and willingness to accept that he is not the most qualified to assist his mentee in a particular instance or no longer; and to direct him elsewhere shows the importance of putting potential pride aside to do what is ultimately best for the mentee. Terry was not one of the selected cases to be presented, but his take on extending his network was important to infuse here because of the regard for the well-being of his mentee.
beyond himself. Ellis did not have a statement that I categorically described as racial uplift.

Some of the key sub-themes that emerged under the heading legacy for the mentor participants are the importance of providing hope to Black males, mentors making needed connections, reaching out to students, and the reality that everyone is not meant to be a mentor.

Mending

Mentees

Mending is another major theme that was identified in the study. Mending infers that there has been an injury that requires healing. The sub-themes that make-up this category either speak to actions that cause one to hurt or to mend. Rodney identified trust and absent-father as the sub-themes that were most associated with mending for him. He described the process of trusting someone as a process that feels right over time. This suggests that there is a trial period where a mentee shows his ability to either be worthy of his trust or not. Rodney having an absent-father would be a reasonable reason why he would not easily trust male figures. However, even though he did not have a father in his life, he did understand and appreciate over time the need to have one in his life.

_A lot of kids don’t know their fathers or didn’t grow up with their fathers around. I’m one of those; I grew up in a single parent home. So, it was just my mom and me. Then, once I got older and started going out, I had male mentors that kind of led me in the right way and along the right path._
Even though he had an absent-father in his life, which was part of the reason for not trusting men easily, Rodney still was able to benefit from a positive mentoring relationship.

Allen, like Rodney, placed high value on trust. Allen also infers that there is a trial period where the potential mentor has to make him feel comfortable enough to express or to ask for guidance. The potential mentor must show “how loyal they are to you” in order to allow them to become a part of their lives in a mentoring capacity. The building of trust allows healing to occur. Jeron did not identify a connection with the theme mending.

Mentors

For Coach, mending took the form of serving as a role-model. Young men that grew up with a lack of strong models of male excellence, in some ways, are a bit fractured. By carrying himself in a manner that will cause a young man desire to be like him was part of his effort to mend the absence of an example of how to carry themselves as a man.

They see you are successful and how you carry yourself...how you do things a certain way and a lot of people buy into it and that's what we try to exhibit. They can decide whether they want to emulate you...be like you or don't want to be like you and I think it's all about how you carry yourself and how you present yourself.

Ellis attempts to assist in the mending process by being honest/real with his mentees, whether it is something they want to hear or not. He finds that if he can get his students to operate in an honest space with themselves, they will have a
realistic opportunity in the future to reach attainable goals. He provides an example here:

*This is me being very real with them... I don’t hold any punches and I try to tell it like it is with them. So, a 1.8 GPA is not quite consistent with you wanting to be a neurosurgeon. So, helping to make that clear, I think you always have to make the conversation come back to academics at some point in the conversation. We can talk about the personal, we can talk about the sports, we can talk about all of that. You know, Kobe’s 42 points last night means absolutely nothing to me if you have a 1.8.*

For some, the blatantly honest approach is not a road a mentor is most comfortable with travelling, especially when one considers how fragile this relationship is. However, the ability to be honest speaks to a level of communication that allows for mentorship without the façade that everything is always going well. Honesty opens the door to accountability. Ellis also uses the importance of providing hope to Black males as a means for mending. This balance between mending and hope keeps the fragile relationship open to change and renewal.

Lazarus also takes an approach to mending that is focused on being honest with his mentees. He too feels that his honesty promotes a confrontation with reality that is good for students’ own personal awareness. He describes his thoughts in the following passage:

*You know, don’t tell them things just because they want to hear it, but you tell them the truth and you tell them about the world and what’s waiting for them and how much harder they’re going to have to try because of where they’re from, what they have, how they look, who their family members are, who their parents are, all of those things play a part. And that’s sad, but it’s true.*

What is even more sad is the reality that African American and other people
still have to be raised in a world where they are told that equal is not necessarily equal for people of their complexion. However, this reality check still allows the wound of ignorance to heal, hopefully before they fall victim to it. Lazarus also uses trust as a mechanism to heal.

*It’s all in the trust. The key thing is the trust. I just think when students realize that they can trust you and that you’re sincere and students begin to identify not really with who you are, but what you represent. And that’s a place they want to be.*

Lazarus also uses spirituality as a means for mending his mentees, asserting:

*I always use these analogies. I always tell gentlemen, technology changes from decade to decade…we have iPads and cell phones, but the one thing that never changes is the word of God. The word of God is just like hard work. Hard work never changes. It never changes. You always have to work hard to get what you want. That’s never going to change. So, I tell them that’s how they need to approach their goals.*

Spirituality has consistently been used as a means to heal in the African American community. Lazarus employs his spirituality here to motivate his students to achieve their goals.

Nurturance

*Mentees*

Another dimension of this research was the theme of nurturance. While examining the data, this theme was prevalent both for the mentors and mentees. This was not a surprise to me. To be able to effectively identify, accept, and extend sympathy and support to students is a key trait in successfully retaining students.
Rodney connects with nurturance under the sub-theme self-confidence. He describes how seeing his mentor accomplish the professional heights gives him motivation to achieve similar goals himself.

*Since they have already done it, it kind of shows you the door...so the groundwork is laid. By just seeing that, depending on your mentor, it can show you that you can do it. Everyone has self-doubt at some point in their life, so seeing someone actually accomplish those things kind of gives you the freedom to relax a little bit and know that you can do it with the right amount of work.*

Rodney also identified advice and looking up to his mentor like a father as ways that his mentor serves to nurture him.

Allen identified the sub-theme of going above and beyond as the way that his mentor provides nurturance to him. He qualifies his relationship by extending the reach of the mentorship well-beyond the walls of the institution:

*For me, my relationship with my mentor goes far beyond my career choices and questions, academics questions, etc. I can ask my mentor, I’m seeing this girl, and I think she’s pretty cool, what do you think I should do? Should I say this? So, I think it’s the job description of a mentor goes far beyond career and academics.*

It is not difficult to sense the level of security Allen feels when he reflects on the relationship between himself and his mentor. “For me personally, it is someone far past the relationship I have with my mother and father.” Because of my relationship with Allen, I know his statement is not to be mistaken for a slight or relegation of his parents’ role in his life. He does however have strong feelings about the role his mentor plays in his life and chooses to honor him by the previous quote. His description of his relationship with his advisor shows how encompassing
the role of mentor can be. It requires investment of time and energy to appropriately support the mentee.

Jeron is very different from Rodney and Allen in that his first connection with nurturance is his acknowledgement of his mentor as “just someone I get advice from.” Like Allen, his statement is not meant to diminish the role of the mentor, but because he likes to lead or walk side-by-side in the relationship with his advisor, he tends to compartmentalize his relationship with his advisor which may make his response seem less caring in many respects.

Mentors

The mentors in this study show an exceptional awareness of the social and emotional needs of their mentees. This display of affection by men often goes unrecognized or looked pass as the exception rather than the rule. Coach connects with nurturance because of his belief in the importance of building relationships beyond the classroom asserting, “You have to know their background. You have to know everything about them. And you have to follow through on everything that they do. So, you’re constantly in touch with them.” Coach is adamant about the importance of engaging his mentee to a degree that he is informed by the in depth background of the mentee rather than surface level information.

Ellis connects with nurturance through the importance of building relationships beyond the classroom. He boldly asserts:

One of the things that I actually try to do as an instructor is, I have the mindset that if all I do in class is teach, then I don’t do my job. So, one of the things I consider to be very impactful is when somebody is able to build a relationship.
with the students outside of class as well as in class. For me that relationship outside of class allows me to be more effective in the class.

Ellis is particularly passionate about building and nurturing the kind of relationship that does not cease to exist between class schedules.

However, Lazarus and his colleagues’ insights into sustaining comprehensive relationships with Black males might suggest an acknowledgement of men as not only mentors and role models, but “otherfathers” also. While describing the fragility of the mentor/mentee relationship, Lazarus asserted the following:

You become very influential…and students in those relationships want to be like their mentor. They really do. So, if you speak a certain way, if you say something to a young lady a certain way, then they think its ok, because one they want to try to impress you as a mentee so that’s what they’re going to do…you really have to be careful in how you shape young people. They’re fragile. They are very fragile and I love it when they come like that. I really love it when they come like that. I mean there’s nothing wrong with coming broken, because what we do, we mend those breaks brother and we come back with something much stronger. I’m very proud of the students we’ve graduated out of here…very proud of them. Because, they came one way and they left a certain way.

Lazarus’s willingness to accept his students whether they arrive broken or whole opens the dialogue for further examination of the act of mentoring as nurturing.

Timelines/Relevance of Time
Mentees
The roles of time and experience were prevalent across both the mentees and the mentors. This theme served to provide context for key variances in this study which led to the selection of the cases for the study.

Rodney connected with the role of time and experience through taking advance of opportunities. He spoke about the value and importance of taking
advantage of opportunities as they arise no matter the challenge they may present.

“As situations arise, I just take them on headfirst. You don’t shy from a challenge. You just walk into it with the tools you were given and make it happen.”

Allen connects with this theme through mentors evolving as mentee moves through stages of life; timing of bestowment of mentorship; past not determining future; maturity level of mentee determines mentee’s ability to acquire a mentor; the younger you are when you receive a mentor the better; and it’s like the mentor has seen the future. In the transcript, he describes the relationship between himself and his mentor beginning in his freshman year and the experiences and predictions he had and witnessed over those years:

_Ever since my freshman year, it was instilled in me that I could excel to be this great person on and off campus… it actually hit me most recently when I saw a picture of us on Facebook and the caption was, “This brother is going to do great things!” And so, you look at it now and you’re like, wow, he saw it before I did. So, that gives you even more motivation to excel and it builds and in a sense adds extra points to your relationship with your mentor because it’s like alright, he’s seen the future once he can do it again._

By having a four-year experience with his mentor, Allen shows us the kind of reflection that can occur when the mentoring process begins as early as freshman year. The fullness of the mentoring experiences is readily seen in this long-term relationship and exemplifies the kind of caring relationship that can be developed when it is established early.

Jeron connects to this theme as he believes mentors evolve as mentee moves through stages of life. This sub-theme is important because it accounts for the
growth and development of the members in the mentoring relationship, namely the mentees.

...At different stages of your life you experience different mentors. For instance, in high school I had a mentor. Before high school I had a mentor. Now in college I have a mentor. I think that when you get in different stages of your life, you need someone that has experience in something that I’m getting ready to experience...

Jeron was very direct in describing his acquisition of a new mentor at different stages of his life. Once he became aware of his development and need for more specialized mentorship, he became accustomed to shedding one mentor for a new one that was more suited for the level of success he was seeking to acquire at that stage.

Mentors

Coach is connected to this theme through the process of development in a mentoring relationship and using past experiences as a guide for mentorship. He does acknowledges that everyone has made mistakes and that good mentors do not dwell on the past but rather focus on the present and future. The past is complete. It cannot be rewritten, but the present and future serve as opportunities to turn your situation around. “Let’s correct what you did wrong...whatever you did wrong, let’s overlook that but let’s not do it again and let’s prepare ourselves to do something better.”

Ellis is connected to this theme through the process of development in a mentoring relationship; using past experiences as a guide for mentorship; taking advantage of opportunities; the importance/value of timing of the mentoring
experience; and a sense of timing in a student’s awareness as highly educated African American males. In my view, the most profound statement Ellis shared was in regards to the importance/value of timing of the mentoring experience. When articulating how soon a mentoring relationship should be initiated, he stated:

...The earlier the better. If I can get a kid out the womb that would be perfect. I think mentoring is highly important in the elementary years, but in the college setting, I think as soon as we can get them, freshmen week and all of those things that happen that first week of class.

Like the mentee Allen, Ellis believes in the idea that the earlier the mentoring relationship can begin, the more likely the long-term success of not only the mentee, but of the relationship.

Lazarus’s connection to this theme is the process of development in a mentoring relationship; using past experiences as a guide for mentorship; and the importance/value of timing of mentoring experience. In examining Lazarus’s transcript, his comments around his approach to using past experiences is what made his connection to this theme stick out. He spoke about the influence of his father on his mentoring and how he approached his mentoring relationships as informed by but not reproducing his experiences with his father: “I don't approach it like a father-figure or anything like that, I just approach it like a strong male that understands that younger males need that and I know they lack it a lot of times.”

Lazarus made very clear distinctions between his father as his father, and yet his perception of him as a strong male. He chose to mirror the example of his father as a strong male not a slight on his father, but rather to indicate his respect for his perception of his father as a strong male.
Mirroring/Seeing/Perceiving

Mentees

The role of mirroring/seeing/perceiving was a very prevalent theme across the mentees. Leading by example was a statement that was shared across all of the transcriptions. Also, the value and need in sharing the mentor’s experiences provided the perception that the information that was being imparted on the protégés was not theoretical; rather the information being shared was via first-hand experience. This was highly valued across the realm of mentees.

Mentors

Much like the mentees, this was a very important theme for the mentors. They wanted to provide the mentees with personal accounts of experiences they had in hopes of replicating their success and/or avoiding their mistakes and downfalls. Mentors were consistent in not focusing upon the mistakes that they made throughout their lives, rather what they did after making them as a defining factor in being successful.

Path

Mentees

The theme of path was the most prevalent theme across both the mentors and mentees. Path was used to describe raising the mentees personal expectations of success. The mentors laying the groundwork were heavily cited across interviews for aspiring to be more successful than previously thought. Guidance was another sub-theme in this category that was cited across participants as
reasons for aspiring to go beyond previous goals and aspirations. Again, that this path was walk previously by the mentors was critical in the mentees buying into the mentor’s ability to guide them successfully.

Mentor’s

Like the mentees, this theme was very prevalent in their approach to the mentoring relationships. Getting students to see the path was a common thread amongst the mentor interviews.

Differentiations and Intersections of Thematic Categories

In the aforementioned description of the thematic categories of the mentees and mentors, there were some themes where there was a great deal of overlap and in some spaces, not all participants were listed in a particular category. These differences accounted for the variances that I was seeking when selecting them to present a collection of cases that would provide the greatest diversity across cases. The theme of positioning was only attributed to the mentees because their positioning was of primary interest in this study.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations of this study that I intend to turn into opportunities for future scholarship and research. The first limitation of this study was that there were only two interviews conducted with each participant. However, I was able to obtain substantial data appropriate to the range of questions I asked in this research. Future research might include focus group interviews; however, the researcher should recognize that more quiet participants may not be heard in these
settings. On the other hand, a focus group could enable the researcher to gain further insight into the mentoring relationships as each group of mentors and mentors builds on the perceptions of one another’s experiences. Due to the sample size, this study is not generalizable to large populations. However, the goal of this study was to engage in an intimate portrait of mentoring, not meant to be large scale in number. Although the research is specifically focused on African American male mentors and mentees on a historically Black campus, these findings are not meant to suggest generalizability to the entire population of African American males and African American mentors on historically Black campuses. However, the findings do suggest some important and intriguing new ways to consider the mentor and mentee relationship and the traditional ways this bond has been examined.

Discussion and Implications for Future Research

There is confusion and lack of guidance right now about what in the mentoring relationship is important, who is important, and for what reasons. This study has implications for those with aspirations of running mentoring programs. Findings from this study identify at least 3 key components of an effective mentoring program: 1) understanding the fragility of mentorship and the role positionality plays in these relationships; 2) re-conceptualizing “like-person” role-models to include characteristics and interests that are shared rather than just race; and 3). including the role of faith and spirituality in an analysis of their potential role in the development and sustainability of successful mentoring practices at Christian-based HBCUS. Should mentoring programs at HBCUs have a spirituality
component? What would be the role of spirituality? Findings from this study allow me to think more vividly about the possibilities of what is and what could be the norms in who runs mentoring programs on college campuses. Mentoring programs have traditionally been run by faculty and students. What might faith-based organizations do as partners with HBCUs to facilitate a re-envisioned mentoring process? Tending to the idea of multiple mentors over time, what is the importance of multiple mentors over a lifespan and what is the success of mentees who have access to multiple mentors. Cultivating mentorship and ‘menteeship’ over a lifespan seems valuable and worthy of future research.

Conclusion

Mentoring is a tool of guidance and support that can serve as the catalyst for untold greatness. It is personal, emotional, spiritual, and present both in the formal and informal sense. It matters that students of all races have access to a caring invested “other” whether that other is an “othermother” or “otherfather.” The presence of knowledgeable and invested mentors makes a substantive difference in the lives of students. This study is the first of many that should continue to examine the role of African American mentorship through the lens of mentors and mentees on the historically Black college and university campuses. Students on these campuses are deserving of our full attention.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A:

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent Document
The School of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Patricia E. Enciso, Principal Investigator
Michael P. Jackson, Student Investigator
A Case Study on Mentorship-Influenced Practices that impact African American Male Persistence and Academic Excellence in an HBCU:

You are invited to participate in a study examining “Mentorship-Influenced Practices that impact African American Male Persistence and Academic Excellence in an HBCU.” Michael P. Jackson, Chair of Liberal Studies at Saint Augustine’s University, and a doctoral student in the School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University, under the supervision of Dr. Patricia E. Enciso, his dissertation committee chair, is conducting this study.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in this study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with the researchers or The Ohio State University.

The purpose of this study is to examine how and when the mentoring relationship, created between African American male scholars/administrators and African American male students impact the willingness of students to persist and excel in an HBCU. If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting between 45-60 minutes with a possible follow-up interview if needed for clarification. To help in your preparation, you will be given four questions for you to reflect upon prior to the interview. These interviews will be audio/video recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information and all interviews will be transcribed into transcripts that you will be able to review and edit. You will be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio/video recording equipment at anytime during the interview. Only non-sensitive information will be obtained during the interview. Do not reveal any sensitive information during the interview. If any sensitive information is revealed during the collection/recording of data, recording will be stopped and any potentially sensitive information obtained will be erased. Educational records will be accessed at the
completion of the study for analysis of cumulative grade point averages prior to and after mentor selection by students. These dates will include from matriculation to present. This data will be accessed at the conclusion of the study to avoid researcher bias.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or while the research is taking place. I will be happy to share the results with you at the completion of the study. Ensuring the confidentiality of data is paramount in research. Your name or will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process; rather it will only be known to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used for participants (i.e. Student 1, Student 2, and so on) and general terms will be used in reporting results (i.e. “Five of the students commented…;” “Two students reported that…;” etc.).

Written transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher upon each completed interview and for one year following the completion of the study. The transcripts will be retained and stored in a locked filing cabinet for at least three years.

The audio transcripts will be destroyed once the transcription process has been completed and a written record is produced and you are confident that the written transcript accurately reflects your comments during the interview. There are no other known risks/discomforts associated with participating in this study.

There are several expected benefits from participating in this study. The results of this study can serve to further the understanding of the role that mentorship plays in the persistence and academic excellence of African American college males. It will also provide scholars/administrators of both Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominantly White Institutions with insights into the influence of holistic support services for a population of students that historically have not fared well in regards to graduation rates. Furthermore, because some of the mentorship practices are relevant across gender and racial lines, there is a high possibility of successful transfer to multiple populations.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, please contact Michael P. Jackson, the student investigator at (919) 516-4612 (office) or (614) 937-8039 (cell) or via email at mpjackson@st-aug.edu. You may also contact Dr. Patricia E. Enciso, principal investigator via e-mail at enciso.4@osu.edu or (614) 292-4288 (office). For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. There will be no incentives, monetary or otherwise offered for your participation in this study.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.
APPENDIX B:

Requesting Participation Letter - Student

Dear Student,

My name is Michael P. Jackson and I am the Chair of Liberal Studies at Saint Augustine’s University. I am writing to ask if you are interested in learning more about participating in a qualitative research study on how and when the mentoring relationship, created between African American male students impact the willingness of students to persist and excel in an HBCU. In addition to my faculty and administrative duties, I am also a doctoral student at The Ohio State University. This is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Teaching and Learning.

Participating in this study will include:

Two individual interview conversations that should last approximately 45-60 minutes and one focus group interview that will be conducted at mutually agreed upon times on campus in a private location. Prior to this conversation, I will submit the interview questions to you and request your responses in advance that I might review them. An audio/video recorder will record this conversation, and I will also be taking written notes. If needed, a follow up meeting may occur which will allow me to check for the accuracy of my notes and to ask any follow up questions I had after reviewing the transcripts of our meetings.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in the researcher’s home.

If you are interested in learning more about participating, please contact me by replying by email to mpjackson@st-aug.edu or you may feel free to contact me by cell phone at (614) 937-8039 or in the office at (919) 516-4612. On January 31, 2013 at 11:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. you will have the opportunity to learn more about the study and review the consent document before deciding whether or not to be interviewed. The courtesy of notice to participate in the study is requested by January 30, 2013 via e-mail or submission of Informed Consent document.

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APPENDIX C:

Requesting Participation Letter – Colleague

Dear Colleague,

My name is Michael P. Jackson and I am the Chair of Liberal Studies at Saint Augustine’s University. I am writing to ask if you are interested in learning more about participating in a qualitative research study on how and when the mentoring relationship, created between African American male students impact the willingness of students to persist and excel in an HBCU. You are receiving this request because a student participant in this study has identified you as his mentor. In addition to my faculty and administrative duties, I am also a doctoral student at The Ohio State University. This is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Teaching and Learning.

Participating in this study will include:

An interview conversation that should last approximately 45-60 minutes that will be conducted at mutually agreed upon time on campus in a private location. Prior to this conversation, I will submit the interview questions to you and request your responses in advance that I might review them. An audio/video recorder will record this conversation, and I will also be taking written notes. If needed, a follow up meeting may occur which will allow me to check for the accuracy of my notes and to ask any follow up questions I had after reviewing the transcripts of our meetings.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in the researcher’s home.

If you are interested in learning more about participating, please contact me by replying by email to mpjackson@st-aug.edu or you may feel free to contact me by cell phone at (614) 937-8039 or in the office at (919) 516-4612. On January 31, 2013 at 11:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. you will have the opportunity to learn more about the study and review the consent document before deciding whether or not to be interviewed. The courtesy of
notice to participate in the study is requested by January 30, 2013 via e-mail or submission of Informed Consent document.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Jackson
APPENDIX D:

Student Interview Protocol

Project: A Case Study on Mentorship-Influenced Practices that impact African American Male Persistence and Academic Excellence in an HBCU

Time of interview: __________________________

Date of interview: __________________________

Location: __________________________

Interviewer: __________________________

Interviewee: __________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. Only non-sensitive information will be obtained during this interview. Do not reveal any sensitive information during the interview. If any sensitive information is revealed during the collection/recording of data, recording will be stopped and any potentially sensitive information obtained will be erased.

Questions that the subjects will be asked include:

1. How do you define a mentor/what is a mentor to you?

2. How and when do you assign or bestow the role of mentor to someone?

3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in your life?

4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to your academic insights?
5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense opportunity to learn and excel?

6. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform your identity as being a highly educated, African American, male?

Thank you for participating in this interview. If necessary, may I contact you for a follow up interview or to clarify some of your responses?
APPENDIX: E

Faculty/Administrator Interview Protocol

Project: A Case Study on Mentorship-Influenced Practices that impact African American Male Persistence and Academic Excellence in an HBCU

Time of interview: ______________________________

Date of interview: ______________________________

Location: ______________________________

Interviewer: ______________________________

Interviewee: ______________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. Only non-sensitive information will be obtained during this interview. Do not reveal any sensitive information during the interview. If any sensitive information is revealed during the collection/recording of data, recording will be stopped and any potentially sensitive information obtained will be erased.

Questions that the subjects will be asked include:

1. How and when do students assign or bestow the role of mentor to you?

2. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in the students’ lives?

3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to students’ academic insights?
4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense of their opportunity to learn and excel?

5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform students’ identity as being highly educated, African American males?

Thank you for participating in this interview. If necessary, may I contact you for a follow up interview or to clarify some of your responses?
APPENDIX: F

Student Focus Group Interview Protocol

Project: A Case Study on Mentorship-Influenced Practices that impact African American Male Persistence and Academic Excellence in an HBCU

Time of interview: ________________________________

Date of interview: ________________________________

Location: ________________________________________

Interviewer: _____________________________________

Interviewee: _____________________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. You have all had the opportunity to share with me one-on-one your responses to the six questions that I will be asking you today. This afternoon, I will ask those questions again in this group in hopes that in this discussion, some may be reminded of an experience from your past or present that you may have omitted during your first interview. Do not feel obligated to respond in this setting. I have provided you with note pads to jot down thoughts that you may decide to share in your third and last interview based on what may come to mind during this interview today. Again, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during this interview. Only non-sensitive information will be obtained during this interview. Do not reveal any sensitive information during the interview. If any sensitive information is revealed during the collection/recording of data, recording will be stopped and any potentially sensitive information obtained will be erased.

Questions that the subjects will be asked include:

1. How do you define a mentor/what is a mentor to you?

2. How and when do you assign or bestow the role of mentor to someone?
3. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to past and/or present obstacles in your life?

4. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to your academic insights?

5. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to a student’s sense opportunity to learn and excel?

6. How and when do mentoring experiences relate to or inform your identity as being a highly educated, African American, male?

Thank you for participating in this interview. If necessary, may I contact you for a follow up interview or to clarify some of your responses?