

“I AM MY BROTHER’S KEEPER: A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF BLACK MEN PROFESSIONALS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS WHO
MENTOR UNDERGRADUATE BLACK MEN DURING THE BLACK LIVES MATTER
ERA”

by

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(Under the Direction of Chris Linder)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to share the lived experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. This study analyzed the understanding of Black men providing this level of mentorship during the Black Lives Matter era. Very few academic scholars have researched the lived experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs. This research study provides some answers and increases the knowledge for the field of higher education and student affairs when it comes to the perception of Black men professionals working in student affairs. In this study, the intent was to be as vivid as possible in describing the daily experience of these Black men and provide platform for them. The goal of this study explores the stories of Black men and provides an opportunity for them to be unapologetically honest about their experiences.

Six Black men professionals in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men shared their stories of their overall experience inside and outside of the workplace. The participants described their experiences of mentoring undergraduate Black men in a society

where Black Lives Matter is an unavoidable topic. The participants in this research study describe their experiences of enduring microaggressions in the workplace, police brutality encounters, and providing support for undergraduate Black men during the BLM era.

Participants answered semi- structured interview questions developed to obtain authentic and personal details of the participants' lives. Conducting photo elicitation provided participants an opportunity to use their creativity to describe their experiences as well.

Several themes developed after conducting research for the study. After completing this study, the field of higher education has a better understanding of the lived experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs. During this Black Lives Matter era, Black men endure a lot of challenges inside and outside of the workplace. In a world where it seems as if society does not value Black lives, participants in this provide detailed perspectives on their experiences when it comes to police brutality to workplace discrimination. Higher education and student affairs has a long way to go when it comes to ensuring a true sense of belonging for Black men professionals in student affairs. This study is a concerted effort to bring awareness, create dialog, develop action plans, and eventual change in the field of higher education.

INDEX WORDS: African American men, Black, police brutality, Black Lives Matter, Law enforcement, Black men in student affairs, Black Men in Education, Black Men in higher education, Mentoring, Advising, Support, Black women supporting black men

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M.Ed., Georgia Southern University, 2011

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DEDICATION

Thank you to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for having the vision and giving me the strength to finish this journey. I am only a vessel for God's vision of my life and I do not take my responsibility or gifts for granted. When I doubted if I could complete this journey and when extreme imposter syndrome set in, you provided me with the confidence needed to continue.

To my Aunts Carolyn and Francine; Uncles Frank and Ernest; my cousins Atonzo and Shaneka (Lucy); my close friend Charles Parker and other friends and family members that left this earthly place and now reside in heaven, thank you for your support over the years and I will do my best to continue your legacy and make our family proud.

To the Black men and women in higher education who play a vital role in the success of our students. Representation is so important and because of us, we are changing the narrative for Black people in higher education.

Thank you to Alicia Garza, Opal Tometie, and Patrisse Cullors for starting the Black Lives Matter hashtag and saying. Your hashtag is now a unified war cry for change and a respected movement.

To the countless victims of police brutality, I pray daily that one day our world will be in a better place. Through my work and the tireless work of others, I am confident that our country and our world will be in a much better place when it comes to police brutality and the murders of Black people.

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Dunn took time out of class to discuss this issue and she showed me that she truly cared and I am forever grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On July 13, 2013, I sat with friends on a Saturday night. I was surrounded by high school and college friends, gathered together to celebrate birthdays and professional accomplishments. As we were sharing laughs, joking, and just catching up with one another, someone announced the Trayvon Martin verdict was in and it would be live on air. Trayvon Martin was a 17-year old Black teenager from Miami Gardens, Florida. George Zimmerman killed Trayvon while the teen visited his father in Sanford, Florida. George Zimmerman claimed that he was scared and shot Trayvon. His lawyers used the Stand your Ground law, which is a law that allows citizens to defend themselves in harmful situations in which they feel threatened. We were all pretty excited after hearing that the verdict would be in, some even saying that the night just got that much better and we could celebrate. The Trayvon Martin case was a highly discussed topic in our circles, as it was for many other people. In our group, we shared articles and new information about the case and wondered how long it would take until trial came to a verdict.

We all gathered in the living room anxiously waiting to hear the verdict. I was very relaxed because I was confident in the judicial system. All of the evidence was there, in my eyes. The decision came in and it felt like a terrible dream. The moment felt so surreal, the entire room was quiet for what felt like an eternity as we began to try to process the decision. George Zimmerman was found not guilty of all charges.

I have always heard the phrase, "You could hear a pin drop" but I never experienced it until this moment. The night of the verdict remains one of the hardest days of my life. This is the

first time I actually felt helpless and that my life did not matter in this country. We all had plans to go out to a bar or a lounge and have a great time; but after the verdict, going out was the furthest thing from any of our minds. We sat around questioning the decision, extremely angry about the verdict, and feeling scared and helpless. All of the men were professional Black men in student affairs. We are all mentors and role models to Black men students at our institutions but here we were, scared ourselves.

The second hardest day of my life was Monday, July 15, 2013 after the George Zimmerman verdict. I woke up, not wanting to go to work because I was still feeling the aftermath of the verdict. I am driving to work, trying to keep my mind off being so angry, so hurt inside, and so scared for my life. I get to the stoplight before I turn into my job and see a police car pulling over a Black family and I just begin to feel overwhelmed with so much emotion. Seeing that family reminded me of where we are in this country when it comes to minorities and law enforcement. I pulled over to the corner gas station right around the corner from my job and I began to cry. That morning before work, I cried for Trayvon Martin, I cried for his parents, I cried for all Black men in The United States, and I cried for my future Black sons.

It was a scary feeling to be so angry and fearful for my life. I knew that I had to go into work where no one understood my hurt or even cared enough to ask how I was doing. I knew that I had to put on my workplace mask where I have to present this unbothered façade. On the inside, I am a broken man but on the outside, I am just another employee trying to defy stereotypes and compete with my White counterparts, while I mentor Black men on my campus. I found some tissue in my car, wiped my face, and walked into the office.

Students of color look at me as a strong leader, so wise and full of answers, but on the widespread murders of unarmed Black men, I am just as confused and scared as they are. They expect me to be strong and to be a leader. So I put up a front so that they will somehow gain strength from my portrayal of strength. In all reality, I am as afraid, if not more, than they are. The stunning truth is that I work with police officers on campus every single day who I do not trust and that I am deathly afraid of. Black men students on my campus have me to turn to, who do I have?

Shortly after the Trayvon Martin verdict, I had a few students come to me after they were pulled over by law enforcement and profiled. They came to me for answers and tips on how to respond. I struggled to find the correct response that would ease their anger and frustration. I shared with them a story of how I was pulled over while I was on my way to class for my doctoral program. The officer held me for almost an hour because I “fit the description” of someone that recently stole gas from a local gas station. Here I am, a black man dressed in business attire, headed to class for a doctoral program. When I told the officer that I was running late for class, he did not believe me. Even after pulling up my schedule and showing him the date and times of my class, he was still skeptical. After being let go, I was just happy to be alive. I was still very much so angry for being pulled over, but I escaped with my life.

Fearing for our lives is a sad reality for Black men when being pulled over by the police. I explained to the young men of color that I mentor that I am scared also. I tell them to make sure they are following the rules of the road and that all of their identification and registration is up to date. This is in no way saying that officers will treat them fairly, but it eliminates any ounce of evidence for people to say “See if you don’t break the law, they can’t do anything.” For my students, I just try to be there for them as much as I can. As a Black man, I can relate to

their frustration and fear. Working in student affairs, students of color reach out to me daily for assistance. There is so much physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue being a black man in the workplace in the United States of America. Racial battle fatigue exists and it is more prominent than ever.

Racial Battle Fatigue

As a Black man professional, experiencing racial battle fatigue is extremely common (Iverson & Jagers, 2015). It is something that far too many of us endure and try to overcome while being a professional in the workplace. Racial battle fatigue results from constant physiological, cultural, and emotional coping with racial microaggressions in racially hostile or environments that are unsupportive of minorities (Smith, 2008). Empirical research has shown evidence that racism is experienced as a stressor which has a negative influence on mental, emotional, and physical health of Black Americans (Husband, 2016).

Unlike our White colleagues, Black men have more to deal with than adjusting to a new position and learning specific job duties (Hasford, 2016). Black men must account for a number of factors in the workplace: a) invisibility; b) a colleagues' refusal to make eye contact with us; c) repeated instances of exclusion; d) overuse of adjectives such as scary, aggressive, threatening to describe us; and e) inappropriate jokes and offensive language (Alleyne, 2004).

Racial battle fatigue is the daily struggle endured by people of color in the workplace, classroom, and society in general (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). For Black men in student affairs, racial battle fatigue exists as well. As Black men climb the ladder in their profession and attain high levels of education, we still experience the same level of racism, blocked opportunities, and overall stress (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011).

Currently, in the era of the Black Lives Matter movement, the continuous killing of unarmed Black men has added to the emotional wearing in the workplace. This is the same workplace where Black men must prove themselves constantly that we belong while also fighting stereotypes. The story that I provided in the beginning can be told by thousands of Black men around the country. It became normal to hear of an unarmed Black man shot and killed by law enforcement. It also is common to go to work the next day with these thoughts of the shooting, fresh on my mind and deal with microaggressions and subtle racism in the workplace. It is a lot to deal with and stress is at an all-time high.

Activism

The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has fueled protests and activism on college campuses across the world (Sidner, 2015). The emphasis on racial inequality helps explain why Black Lives Matter's agendas are spreading to college campuses (TIME, 2016). People around the world are speaking out against the alarming number of deaths of unarmed Black people, especially men (Chokschi, 2016; Sidner, 2015). On college campuses, the number of Black students showing their disdain with the current climate of race relations in The United States has increased dramatically (Sidner, 2015). Along with the systemic racism that constantly exists, students now have these constant reminders in the news about the state of this country when it comes to injustices of Black people. Students publicly display their emotions through demonstrations on campus (Chokschi, 2016). The voice of Black men on college campuses has gone unheard for too long.

With the recent events of Black men being killed by law enforcement, there has been an outcry for justice on college campuses (Altman, 2015). What began as a social media movement, Black Lives Matter has spread across college campuses everywhere (Sidner, 2015).

Black men professionals in student affairs understand the importance of protesting, for some they participate in the demonstration. It is always a risk when protesting certain issues, because of the possible backlash in the workplace that comes with it. For Black professionals, this is an added stressor when dealing with racial battle fatigue. Supporting student groups during activism through their right to protest, we risk even more microaggressions in the workplace.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight the voices and experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs. With the multitude of tasks and obstacles that Black men experience in student affairs that include mentoring expectations, microaggressions, and daily reminders of how people in the U.S. look at Black lives, it is important to hear our stories and experiences. Black men are asked to do activities related to our racial identities that our White colleagues are not. Speaking on various panels, leading race discussions, and advising/mentoring students of color are all extra job duties that Black men are asked to do or feel an obligation to perform (Hasford, 2016). We look at these extra roles as a responsibility because as a Black men, we understand the importance of having the support from faculty and staff on campus. It is important for students of color to receive mentorship from a professional staff member of color because it provides the support needed for overall success (Bridges, 2011).

When I received my first position in higher education, being a mentor was not listed as one of the job responsibilities. I quickly learned that mentoring is a huge part of what I do on a daily basis. Students of color, mostly Black men, come by my office daily to just talk or ask advice. Familiarity exists between Black men and students of color on campus (Brooms, Goodman & Clark, 2015). The familiarity between the two comes from an understanding of

shared experiences and similar perspective in enduring racial profiling, such unfairly being questioned by law enforcement for being Black.

At first, I was confused by the onslaught of students coming by my office, but after speaking with other Black men colleagues at other institutions, I noticed that this was very common. For students of color, mentorship performed by a professional staff member on campus is invaluable (Iverson & Jagers, 2015). Bringing together students and role models creates a community that offers positive images of what it means to be a Black men and provides a safe place for self-expression (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012). There is a comfort in knowing that when these students share information with us, we can relate (Bridges, 2011). For Black men professionals in student affairs, I want to share the story of how they are mentors to students of color during this terrible time in our country. I want to share their story of self-care and dealing with the daily struggle in the workplace.

My study looking into the perspective of Black men professionals in higher education is grounded in Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory. This theory places race at the center of research and makes the assumption that race is omnipresent (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical Race theory examines the stories of underrepresented groups to attempt to make meaning out of the experiences. With this study, the goal is to make meaning of the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs.

Through Critical Race Theory, I will explore the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs. The purpose of Critical Race Theory is to focus on both the evidence and the origins of racism with the goal to eradicate it at its roots (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). An important component of Critical Race Theory is that it offers a way to understand how race interacts with other identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Through this study, I hope to look

into masculinity and how that interacts with the Black men experience. This study will also be examined through racial battle fatigue. This is a theory that looks into the psychological effect people of color experience on a daily basis due to stereotypes and discrimination (Smith, 2008).

This research study on Black men professionals in student affairs will be examined through the transformative worldview. Transformative paradigm places importance on the lives and individual experiences of diverse groups (Mertens, 2010). The purpose of this paradigm is to gain understanding for the people who experience any variation of discrimination and oppression (Creswell, 2009). These acts of discrimination are based on religion, race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and age (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2010). In looking at the literature, I must look from the beginning and examine the journey of Black men in student affairs. In order to do this, I will examine literature based on the history of Black men in education.

In today's climate, where Black Lives Matter is at the center of many debates, it is important to realize the larger implications. The issue of shooting unarmed Black men seems to be an easy fix: do not shoot. The larger implication is the extreme racial battle fatigue these shootings are doing to all Black men and for this study, Black men that are professionals in student affairs who are looked to as mentors to Black men students. The purpose of this study is to share experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs and to find out their story about how they cope with racial battle fatigue.

Black men professionals in student affairs have the responsibility of juggling several important tasks (Wood, 2015). First, there is the job in itself within student affairs, whether that is in Residence Life, Student Conduct, Greek life, or a high-ranking position within student affairs. The job in student affairs is student driven and the priority of the students is very

important. These jobs, although rewarding, can all be very demanding and stressful. Added on to that includes the mentorship of students of color. Although, this is not a burden, it is an extra job responsibility that our White colleagues do not feel obligated to take on. Black men professionals understand the importance of mentorship and the success rate it has on students of color. Mentoring programs for students of color can be a useful strategy for facilitating student success (Wood, 2015).

On college campuses, Black men professionals are often the listening ears and supporters to underrepresented groups while also being an advocate for the students' issues on campus. While expressing the concerns of the students on campus about racial profiling and police brutality, are the needs for Black men professionals being met? Are Black men professionals internalizing their frustrations with societal issues with police brutality and discrimination without a healthy outlet to release their concerns, anger, and frustration? The questions remain, where is the support for Black men professionals?

Significance of the Study

Some scholarship examines the experiences of undergraduate and graduate Black men students (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Jackson, 2001; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015); however, little to no information examines the perspective of Black men professionals in student affairs. Through this study, the student affairs educators can gain insight into the stories and experiences of Black men professionals. Black men can begin the dialogue process during these difficult times in society. I want to share their journeys of working in the field and enduring racial battle fatigue during the Black Lives Matter movement. Black men professionals provide the listening ear and support for students while also performing their institutional job duties. Racial battle fatigue is very apparent amongst people of color and this is no different in Black men

professionals in student affairs (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Black men lack the support on campus that helps to suppress racial battle fatigue while dealing with these racist situations in the United States.

Black men in student affairs are a huge part of the success for institutions and their student affairs, student life, overall student development (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). Studies suggest that students of color perform better in higher education when there are professionals of color that they can relate to (Lynn, 2006; Kelly, 2012). While these students have the professionals on campus to relate to, are higher education institutions providing these professionals with the support needed for their mental health when it comes to racist issues? Higher education institutions must do a better job of retaining Black men as professionals in student affairs. Research provides evidence that having Black men as professionals in students increases the performance of students of color (Husband; 2016; Jackson, 2001; Wolfe, 2015). Understanding this, institutional leaders must do a better job of educating, recruiting, and retaining Black men as student affairs professionals.

Black men professionals in student affairs struggle with questions daily. Is it all worth it? Should I just give up? What am I supposed to tell the students counting on me for support? Why don't my White colleagues, staff, and supervisors care about what is going on? Do they not understand I might be hurting inside? These are daily reminders and they all contribute to the racial battle fatigue experienced by Black men professionals in student affairs. Black men professionals have to put on a face for coworkers, be strong for the students on campus that look up to them, and find time (if any) in between for self-care and mental health. It is time for our story to be told and light to be shed on a longtime issue in the field.

Research Questions

In order to gain insight into the perspective of Black men professionals in student affairs, I will guide my study to answer the following research question:

1. What are the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs on college campuses? What are the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs positions who mentor students who are Black men, in finding support on campus when it comes to issues of race?
2. How are institutions supporting Black men who are student affairs professionals when it comes to issues of racism, discrimination, and police brutality situations during the Black Lives Matter era?

Chapter Summary

In the field of higher education, racial battle fatigue should be more of a focus and an area of concern. Research examining the racial battle fatigue of Black men in higher education who serve as mentors to students of color has yet to be completed. For years, Black men professionals in higher education have served as mentors to students of colors during tumultuous times in the United States (Altman, 2015). From the Jim Crow era to the current Black Lives Matter era, Black men professionals have been there providing support to students of color. There has been a lack of evidence showing that there are programs in place to support Black men professionals that provide support to students of color. Just as Black men professionals provide support to students of color, there should be programs in place to provide support for these employees.

In the following chapters, I provide evidence as to why more focus should be directed towards the racial battle fatigue and overall well-being of Black men professionals in higher

education, more specifically student affairs. I believe if leaders in higher education institutions fail to perform the research necessary to assist Black men, higher education may begin to lose more of the already dismal numbers the field already has.

CHAPTER II

LITERATUR REVIEW

In this review of the literature, I will examine the murders of Black men in the United States and how this impacts Black men in student affairs who support and mentor students of color, specifically undergraduate Black men. I will begin with a review of the literature about police brutality and the long lasting conflict between law enforcement and Black men. Black men have been abused physically and emotionally from the police since the creation of the law enforcement system (Cooper, 2015). A historical perspective of the relationship between Black people and law enforcement provides context to the current climate of systemic racism that America is witnessing today. Next, I will explore the activism and resistance that has arisen in recent years in response to police brutality. I will then transition to examining the literature about Black men in higher education, including administrators, faculty, and students. Finally, I conclude this chapter with an examination of the literature on racial battle fatigue, a theoretical framework for this study.

Police Brutality

The relationship between Black people and law enforcement historically has never been a good one (Baez, 2017; Warde, 2012; Wing, 2015). From the initial implementation of law enforcement, through the Jim Crow/Civil Rights movement to the more current War on Drugs and Black Lives Matter movement, law enforcement's abuse of power on Black people has been widespread. The establishment of policing, especially in the southern states of the US, was integral to the formation of racial hierarchies (Bass, 2001; Bell, 2000; Eitle & Monohan, 2009;

Kelley, 2000; Nunn, 2002). This policing system made it so that Black people would understand “their place” in society and always understand that the White man is in control and should be listened to (Bass et. al., 2001).

In the 1800s, post slavery, laws were established to keep Black people in trouble with the law (Cooper, 2015). An example of this included the 1865 Black Codes which were a set of laws that placed restrictions on Blacks being able to work, marry, purchase lands, and own businesses after formal and legal slavery was abolished (Britannica, 2015). The point of the Black Codes was to continue the unbalanced treatment between Blacks and Whites. Violation of these laws would result in arrest, beating, and forced labor. Police would arrest Blacks for violation of these laws and administer the punishment. From the early stages of policing, Black people have always lacked trust in law enforcement and the legal system in general. Blacks would witness Whites get away with committing the same crimes as some of their Black peers, but they would get jailed, beaten, or killed for it (Cooper, 2015).

Black men being shot and killed by police officers has been occurring for hundreds of years. The only difference now is that the more recent killings of Black men have been recorded on video and broadcasted for the world to see. According to the Department of Justice, Black people are three times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than Whites (Nuwer, 2015). Law enforcement experts and scientists believe the issue is far larger than simply cops shooting and killing Black men; a psychological origin exists (Brunson, 2007; Mbuba, 2010; Nuwer, 2015).

Police officers view young Black men as the ultimate threat, which is a psychological and systemic issue (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culott, DiTomasso, n.d.). Police officers and people in society in general view young Black boys as less innocent than white boys (Barry & Jones, 2014;

Markman, 2015). The actions that young White boys get away with because of age and innocence, young black boys do not receive this benefit (Cops tend to view, 2014; Wada, Patten, & Candela, 2010; Warde, 2012). In their perception, these young men are fully-grown adults that present a threat. (Goff et. al., n.d.)

During the civil rights era, Black people struggled to receive fair treatment from law enforcement. Blacks were sprayed with fire hoses, beaten with batons and other blunt objects, and police officers would unleash their police dogs to attack (Chaney & Robertson, 2014; Miles-Johnson, 2013; Nuwer, 2015). For Blacks, it was a huge risk to protest the racism faced during the Civil Rights Era (Biography, 2015; Miller & Davis, 2008). Black men and women understood that protesting and speaking out against injustice could result in their death (Cooper, 2015).

High Profile Police Brutality Cases

Los Angeles police officers pulled over Rodney King, a Black man, after a high-speed chase on March 3, 1991 (Biography, 2015). The police officers brutally beat Rodney King with their batons. George Holliday, an amateur cameraman, filmed the entire ordeal and later, this footage was broadcasted around the world (Biography, 2015). The police officers, Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, Theodore Briseno, and Stacey Koon, were charged with assault with a deadly weapon (Adams, 2016).

In April 1992, after hearing from the prosecution and the defense attorneys, the jury deliberated and acquitted the police officers of all charges (Adams, 2016). The evidence was taped and many of the Americans who saw the video tape of the beating were outraged. Immediately following this verdict, the Rodney King Riots began in the streets of South Central Los Angeles California (Adams, 2016). During these riots, 53 people died and more than 2,000

were injured (Adams, 2016; Biography, 2015). In August 1992, The United States Department of Justice filed civil rights charges against the officers and Rodney King was awarded \$3.8 million for his injuries (Biography, 2015).

The Rodney King beating by police officers shocked and angered many. Nearly 25 years later, a similar case involving a young black teen would provide many with the same feeling as the King incident. Trayvon Martin was a 17- year old black teen walking home after a trip to the local convenience store. He walked with his skittles and can of iced tea through the neighborhood back to his father's house. As he was walking, George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch coordinator, saw Martin as a threat and proceeded to call the police, stating that Martin looked like a threat (Barry, Kovalski, Robertson, & Alvarez, 2012). After the dispatcher told Zimmerman not to confront Martin, he approached the teen and a scuffle began. Soon after, Zimmerman fired shots from his handgun killing Martin.

The murder of Trayvon Martin picked up media attention as more people became outraged with the incident. The case resulted in the discussion of United States race relations and the perception of Black men in America (Bell, Joshi, & Zuniga, 2007). Pearson & Botelho, 2013). The perception stems from White law enforcement viewing unarmed young Black men as a threat. After a 16-hour deliberation, the jury found George Zimmerman not guilty of all charges. People around the world were outraged and displayed their frustration, anger, and hurt through protests and some rioting.

The pivotal law surrounding this case was the Stand your Ground law (Andersen & Collins, 2013; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004; Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009). The Stand your Ground law gives citizens the right to protect themselves if the citizen reasonably believes they face death, bodily injury, kidnapping, rape, or any other forms of physical harm (Andersen & Collins, 2013;

Benjamins & Whitman, 2014; Volokh, 2014). Stand your Ground law allows citizens to use deadly force in protecting themselves even if the citizen has an avenue to retreat (Volokh, 2014). This law led Black people to believe that many would use this law to hide behind their racism and be able to openly harm and kill Blacks without penalty (Volokh, 2014).

On July 17, 2014, Eric Garner a 43-year-old Black man was out on the streets of New York City when New York Police Department officers approached him (Bloom & Imam, 2014). They alleged that Garner was selling single cigarettes to patrons, which is illegal (Baker, Goodman, and Mueller, 2015). When confronted by police, he resisted. The police officers went on to place Garner in a chokehold and tackle him to the ground. A citizen pulled out their camera phone and began recording the entire ordeal (Bloom & Imam, 2014; Vorhees, 2014). For 15-19 seconds, Garner was on the ground held in a chokehold by NYPD officer and on the video; you can hear Garner say, “I can’t breathe.” This would be Eric Garner’s final words as he died on the streets of New York in a chokehold (Bloom & Imam, 2014).

“I can’t breathe” became the protest movement that was very popular around the world (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015). Celebrities, athletes, and important political figures recognized the movement and made public statements against the tragic killing of Garner. The video went viral and forced many Americans to witness the reality of minorities when interacting with law enforcement (Voorhees, 2014). The most important issue that arose from the videos release was the brutal force that police officers use to detain certain individuals (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015).

In the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, an 18-year-old Black male was walking home to his grandmothers’ house when a police officer, Darren Wilson, shot and killed the teenager. (McLaughlin, 2014). Michael Brown was a recent high school graduate who was scheduled to

begin college the following Monday (Bouie, 2014). There are conflicting reports about what caused the killing of Brown. According to some witnesses, Brown had his hands in the air showing the police that he was unarmed when Darren Wilson began firing shots (Bouie, 2014; McLaughlin, 2014). Other reports state that Brown attacked the police officer and the shooting was self-defense (Bouie, 2014; McLaughlin, 2014). After statements of Wilson's portrayal of the incident were released, he described Brown as a "superhuman" as he tried to detain the teenager (Bouie, 2014).

These are only a few of the high profile cases that dominated the news channels across the country. The Black Lives Matter movement developed because of the constant killing of unarmed Black people. For a while, every week there was a different hash tag honoring another Black person murdered by law enforcement. The murders were captured on film for the world to see. Much like the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Lives Matter movement developed because of anger, fear, and the need for equality and police reform (Altman, Rhodan, & Frizell, 2015).

Black Lives Matter

Historical Perspective: Civil Rights Movement

The Black Lives Matter movement is comparable to the Civil Rights Movement which started in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States (Civil Rights, n.d.). There are many similarities between the two movements. The Civil Rights Movement started when Black people began protesting and standing up against the cruel and unfair treatment received by Whites in United States (Civil Rights, n.d.). One of the pivotal cases that began the movement occurred during the 1954 court case, *Brown v. The Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* (Kelly, 2016; US Courts, n.d.). The landmark case stated that the segregation of Blacks and Whites in public

schools was unconstitutional. This case would be monumental in overturning the Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) separate but equal doctrine (Kelly, 2016; US Courts, n.d.). The Brown vs. The Board of Education case ruling meant that segregation is unconstitutional and integration and equality of education must exist for Blacks and Whites. Chief Justice Earl Warren stated that “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal...” (U.S. Courts, n.d.).

Injustice is the parallel that links the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Lives Matter movement. In both movements, underrepresented groups came together to voice their frustration with the treatment of Black people in this country (Altman, Rhodan, & Frizell, 2015; Cobb, 2016; McClain, 2016). Both movements also received backlash for being a “terrorist organization” (Civil Rights, n.d.; Cobb; 2016; McClain, 2016). The Civil Rights Movement as well as the Black Lives Matter movement received criticism from many stating that the groups were inciting violence and attempting to frighten a country to create chaos (Altman et. al). The messages in both movements remain consistent, obtaining equal rights and fair treatment for all regardless of race. (Civil Rights, n.d.; Cobb; 2016; McClain, 2016).

There are differences between the movements also. Several famous activists who became the face of the movement led the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Marcus Garvey all stood up against the mistreatment of Black people during this movement and many people followed their lead and attended their marches, rallies, and speaking engagements. The Black Lives Matter Movement currently does not have the notable leaders at the forefront leading the way on issues for Black people (Cobb, 2016). Another noticeable difference is the use of social media today. Social media activism is very popular today as opposed to back in the Civil Rights Movement. Activists today can find other Black Lives Matter activists that live near them or across the world in another continent by going online.

Technology has brought people closer together to take a stand against the same issues the activists in the Civil Rights Movement fought for during their time.

The Formation of Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement began as a hashtag on social media and spread across the world. Black Lives Matter started because of the Trayvon Martin verdict in which George Zimmerman was found not guilty of murdering the 17- year old (Cobb, 2016). Started by Alicia Garza, Opal Tometie, and Patrisse Cullors, the movement began because Black Lives Matter is a declaration to the world to acknowledge and respect the lives of Black people (Altman, 2015; Cobb, 2016; Snider, 2015). The phrase comes from a post on social media written by Alicia Garza where she ended her statement by saying “I love us. Our lives matter.” Patrisse Cullors revamped the last few words to create the hash tag #BlackLivesMatter (Altman, 2015; Cobb, 2016).

Garza and Cullors began promoting the Black Lives Matter hashtag at different social justice events, attempting to generate some attention and make a statement in communities across the country (Snider, 2015). Garza and Cullors met Opal Tometi at a conference and she offered to build a social media platform so that more activists would be able to connect and spread the phrase to various circles (Cobb, 2016). The goal was to take the hashtag from a statement to a movement.

The Black Lives Matter movement did not generate national attention until summer 2014 after police officer Darren Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Cobb, 2016). After this killing received national headlines, people of all races began marching in the streets across the country (Baez, 2017; Bernasconi, 2014; Cobb, 2016). Protests began in Ferguson, Missouri but spread across to other cities like New York City, Los Angeles, Miami,

and Atlanta (McLaughlin, 2014). People began to chant “Black Lives Matter” and carry signs that read the phrase as well (Flatow, 2014).

Black Lives Matter has received some backlash from political representatives, media, and the general public since its become known by many nationwide. Several people view the movement as dividing the country by race (Altman, 2015; Snider, 2015). Others view the movement as a hate group that wants to see harm done to law enforcement and White people (Altman, 2015). Others have since adopted the “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” phrases to combat the popular Black Lives Matter movement (Stubblefield, 2016). There has also been criticism to the lack of a “leader” in the Black Lives Matter movement. The Civil Rights Movement had key leaders like Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and many others. Critics of The Black Lives Matter movement state that without a clear leader or leaders, there is a lack of a vision and order for others to follow (Altman, 2015). The Black Lives Matter movement is spread across the world, but like the Civil Rights Movement, a large protest movement is happening on college campuses across the United States.

Black Men in Education

The number of Black men professionals in higher education has been statistically lower than White men and women and as well as Black women for years (Kelly, 2012). The scrutiny and oppression Black men in higher education have received has been an occurrence for several years. Black men suffer racism when trying to work for universities and colleges (Vega, 2015). Black men oftentimes feel secluded and as if they were not good enough to perform the job responsibilities (Vega, 2015). Like professionals in higher education, undergraduate Black men students feel secluded and isolated on campuses across the country. Loneliness and depression is a widespread feeling of Black men students. Too add on to the isolated feelings, witnessing on

the news the countless Black men who were killed by police officers brings even more emotions of anger and sadness.

Black Professionals in Collegiate Administrative Roles

In high administrative level positions, White professionals are over represented compared to Black professionals (Jackson, 2001). On college campuses, higher-level administrative positions include Presidents, Vice Presidents, and other executive leadership members that are key decision makers on their campuses. To increase the number of Black professionals that serve as higher-level administrative roles, researchers have recommended that institutions begin making diversity of staff members a priority (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Actively recruiting Black professionals to work at an institution is the first step that decision makers on college campuses can implement in order to develop a diverse staff (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). Researchers found that the recruitment of Black professionals does in fact happen at institutions; the problem exists when the retaining of Black professionals fails (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Jackson, 2001). Institutions need to develop their staff members and make them feel wanted on their campuses (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). Professional development for Black professionals should begin earlier in the process to effectively prepare employees for higher-level administrative roles (Jackson, 2001).

Having a diverse senior administration staff provides major benefits to students (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Jackson, 2001). Students benefit when student affairs staff are composed of various backgrounds to serve as role models (Freeman, Nuss, & Barr, 1993; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008). One of the major benefits for students includes a familiar face to develop mentoring relationships (Gardner, Barrett & Pearson, 2014). Students of color are more likely to look for mentors that have similar racial backgrounds because they feel

safe and secure (Jackson, 2001). White students benefit because they experience a diverse background. Diversity creates an understanding of a person or race that does not look like you or come from a similar background.

Black professionals on predominantly White campuses have feelings of loneliness and isolation (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014; Payne, & Suddler, 2014). Oftentimes, cabinet members have one or two professionals of color on staff. Being the only senior level administrative staff member who is a Black professional can be draining psychologically and emotionally (Gardner et. al., 2014; Jackson, 2001; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). The constant fatigue, inhospitable campus environments, alienation, marginalization, and limited advancement opportunities felt by professionals of color lead to resignations (Jackson, 2001; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Once a Black professional obtains a position at a higher education institution, issues of oppression exist even after securing a higher-level administrative job (Payne & Suddler, 2014). Several barriers to success exist for Black men professionals that their White counterparts do not have to endure (Jackson, 2001). Institutional biases, prejudice, and discrimination exist for Black professionals that accept roles as administrators on college campus (Guillory, 2001). Institutional barriers include receiving a lower salary than White colleagues with similar experience levels and qualifications (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). Prejudice and discrimination while working in higher education as a Black person is shown through covert and overt ways (Garner et al., 2014; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Researchers state that these issues will remain as long as institutions continue with their “color blind practices” to address racial and diversity issues on campus (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015, pg. 682). Instead of challenging the norms on college campuses, several institutional leaders develop policies that revolve around

race not being an issue. Institutions plan programs about diversity at times to make it seem like they care about the topic. Intentional programming and educating students, staff, and faculty on subjects of race and diversity should be a normal part of the institutions daily operations and not just completed to satisfy the minimum requirements (Gardner et al., 2014).

Providing supportive environments for Black administrators to succeed in their jobs is one of the steps used that prove to retain Black men professionals in higher-level administrative positions (Jackson, 2001). It is important to have support from supervisors and colleagues and to have the freedom to perform and complete tasks effectively (Gardner et al., 2014). Professionals of color need the support and resources to be retained in higher education professions (Jackson, 2001). Like in any position, if an employee does not feel wanted or supported, they begin to question if the position is a good fit (Vega, 2015). Because of the lack of care and overall support, feelings of isolation, alienation in the workplace and resentment towards supervisors, department, and institution follows which eventually leads to resignation or termination (Husband, 2016).

Black professionals that serve as administrative roles suffer alienation and isolation while also serving as mentors to the Black men on the campuses they serve (Arnett, 2015). Multitudes of factors contribute to the success of Black men professionals in administration. Healthy self-image, family support, and institutional support factor into the support efforts that help to retain Black men professionals (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). While enduring isolation and underrepresentation on college campuses, workplace racism is an unfortunate occurrence for many Black professionals in higher education (Navarro, 2016).

Workplace Racism and Discrimination

Workplace racism is an unfortunate occurrence that exists for employees of color around the world (Vega, 2015). Americans Experiencing unfair treatment in the workplace contributes to high stress levels and poor health (Navarro, 2016). Usually, the stress comes in when the employee experiencing the racism has to make a decision whether to speak up about the situation or not (Tahmincioglu, 2008). This puts the employee between a rock and a hard place. Do we risk alienation in the workplace, being called a liar, or even worse fired? These are the thoughts that run through the minds of employees that experience racism in the workplace.

Racism and discrimination in the workplace can be as overt as removing a person of color off a key assignment (Vega, 2015). These situations occur often to people of color and contribute to overall stress and racial battle fatigue (Navarro, 2016). Research shows that 26% of Blacks and 15% of Hispanics said they felt they have been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity at their place of work (Vega, 2015). When Black men experience unfair treatment, it can contribute to increased stress and poor health (Tahmincioglu, 2008).

Workplace discrimination and racism can be the cause of Black men becoming less productive at work (Navarro, 2016). The added stress of being the target of racism and discrimination weighs on Black men. The stress endured has shown to cause several serious health risks. Racism received in the workplace is shown to cause mental and health issues (Vega, 2015). These issues along with other stressors can be the reason for a Black man to feel overwhelmed with stress and eventually not perform as well in his role, quit his job, or get terminated from his position (Vega, 2015).

Black Men as Faculty in Higher Education

Historically, Black faculty members are not presented as being an important asset to the educational system in The United States (Kelly, 2012). When it comes to the field of education and breaking barriers, scholars are more likely to discuss the contributions of undergraduate Black students while often leaving out Black faculty and their contribution and work for the field (Kelly, 2012; Patton & Catching, 2009). In the early 20th century, the existence of Black faculty was so rare that they were able to be individually identified at predominantly White institutions (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Black men had to work harder to receive the respect and recognition that their White colleagues inherently received.

Once in the classroom, Black men who served as faculty members would be challenged and critiqued by their White students (Patton & Catching, 2009). These White students would not only question the information they were receiving from a Black faculty member, but also question their authority by being disrespectful and challenging every piece of information being presented (Emdin, 2016; Kelly, 2012; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Black men were treated poorly and lesser than White faculty, staff, and students when trying to work for the predominantly White institutions during the late 1800's- early 1900's (Lynn, 2006). It was because of the unfair treatment that Black people opened their own higher education institutions now referred to as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Kelly, 2012; Tomar, n.d.). The first higher education institution for Blacks opened in 1837 in Cheyney, Pennsylvania called The Institute for Colored Youth (Historically Black Colleges, 1991; Tomar, n.d.). The initial objective of these early institutions, was to provide Black people the opportunity to receive elementary and secondary schooling- most of which they were unable to

receive due to slavery (Historically Black Colleges, 1991). These students also received some post-secondary education, but not much.

Later into the late 1800s and early 1900s, Black educators began to establish HBCU's across the country. Famous institutions like Hampton University, Spellman College, Lincoln University, and Howard University provided education for Black students as well as an institution for Black faculty to provide instruction (Freemark, 2015). Black men who are Faculty members at HBCU's would not have to worry about oppression and overt racism from White colleagues and students. There would be issues of lack of funding to provide adequate instruction but ultimately, faculty members were allowed to provide instruction without being subjected to racism (Freemark, 2015; Tomar, n.d.).

At predominantly white institutions, the mentorship that Black faculty members provide to Black undergraduate students is one of the biggest contributions in higher education (Woodson & Pabon, 2016). There is a strong connection between Black men teachers and Black men students (Kelly, 2012). The connection comes in understanding and being able to relate. When Black men students struggled to be accepted in at higher education institutions, one of the most important factors that aided in their retention would be the mentorship received from Black men faculty members (Kelly, 2012; Patton & Catching, 2009). Black faculty members have the ability to relate to the perspectives of Black men students and usually become a mentor for them in grade school with relationships lasting to the higher education level (Newton, 2013). Black men students can look to Black men teachers as a familiar face and through conversations, they realize that these teachers understand their perspective and experiences (Newton, 2013).

Students require levels of mentorship that involve a trusting relationship with their mentor (Pabon, Anderson, & Kharem, 2011). For Black men, this is even more apparent. Black

students perform better scholastically when the teacher is a Black man or authority figure providing instruction in the classroom (Brown, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Black Men Undergraduate Students in Higher Education

Entering college campuses, Black students encounter roadblocks that can prevent them from progressing towards graduation (Arnett, 2015; Harper, 2006; Jackson, 2001; Lewis, 2016). One of the biggest challenges is ensuring that Black men are provided the resources necessary to succeed in college (Harper, 2006). At predominantly white institutions, scholars found that Black men perceive these institutions as unwelcoming and hostile (Factors critical, 2014). Alienation and isolation remains a strong factor that prevents Black men from succeeding in higher education institutions also (Factors critical, 2014; Harper, 2006; Harper & Griffin, 2010).

The low numbers for Black men retention and graduation rates have remained the same for decades. Black men come in last in enrollment numbers as well as graduation (Harper, 2006). Being underprepared for college success, failing to attend mentoring opportunities available, unwelcoming institutions, institutions' lack of resources for Black male success, and a lack of a plan to address the challenges of success are some of the reasons why Black men have low retention and graduation rates in colleges in the United States (Parker, Puig, Johnson, & Anthony, 2016; Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013; Wood, 2013). Mentorship efforts and other programming are ways in which institutions can assist in overall retention and graduation for Black men (Harper, 2006).

Retention. Retention is a consistently discussed topic among higher education officials across the country (Black Student College, n.d.; Factors Critical to, 2014; Harper, 2006; Wood, 2013). Black men's level of preparation for college goes further than qualified or unqualified. Research shows that 80% of Black students leave high school minimally prepared for higher

education course work (Greene & Foster, 2003). College readiness programs have played a major role in creating access for Black students (Factors critical, 2014). College readiness programs are higher education designed programs to assist students by enhancing academic deficiencies through academic support (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007; Carter, 2007). Factors critical, 2014). These programs exist to assist with the overall success of Black students. The issue is that many institutions fail to implement college readiness programs or design retention intentional programming to assist with the dismal retention numbers (Factors critical to, 2014; Harper, 2006).

The issue of retaining Black men begins before students enroll in their first college course. Black men students typically have less access to college preparatory courses and other support services (Shwartz & Washington, 2002). Although this may be true, higher education officials must be accountable for the programming efforts set into place to help develop their students and increase retention (Harper, 2006; Scott et al., 2013). By focusing more on widespread processes to address the retention efforts, institutions can create shared responsibility for educational quality and productivity (Schroeder, 2013).

Black men and the troubled status in higher education has garnered tremendous attention at national conferences, in the media, and in published scholarship over the past 20 years (Robinson, 2014). Scholars have documented the academic and social challenges that black men face in higher education, at least three of which focus on issues related to sense of belonging in college (Strayhorn, 2012). Higher education research largely categorizes the challenges for African American men's retention in the following ways: financial pressures and liabilities, racism, collegiate maladjustment in historically White institutions, and collegiate dissatisfaction (Dancy, 2010).

The disparities in retention numbers of Black men are even lower than that of black women (Black Student College, n.d.). Young black men are not attending, or graduating from, college at the same rate as black women (Black Student College, n.d.). Although their absence is more apparent at historically black colleges and universities, or HBCUs, black men students are scarce at colleges everywhere (Valbrun, n. d.).

Application of mentoring proves to be an effective tool in providing support necessary to overcome barriers that prevent many African American men from successfully completing college. Mentoring is vital in contributing to the survival and empowerment of African American men, and it also enhances their ability to make plausible gains in higher education (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

Mentorship

Mentoring undergraduate Black men oftentimes is charged to Black faculty and staff members. Black men on college campuses are highly visible because underrepresented groups are easy to spot on predominantly white institutions (Brittian & Gray, 2014; Lederman, 2012; Whitaker, 2017). Mentoring usually just happens to Black professionals in higher education. Mentoring is not formally assigned by a supervisor or written in a job description, it just happens. Mentoring at times feels like an unwritten job description for Black faculty and staff members (Whitaker, 2017). Students will seek out faculty or staff members and open up to them because they offer a sense of security and familiarity (Watson, Washington, & Stepteau-Watson, 2015; Whitaker, 2017).

When it comes to Black men in colleges and universities, there is a direct positive correlation between mentoring participation to overall retention and progression (Harper, 2012; Jaschik, 2007; Lederman, 2012). Understanding the factors that influence the academic

achievement and persistence of African American men in college is an important and timely research focus (Strayhorn, 2008). Significant involvement in campus activities might include sports, fraternity or sorority organizations, and leadership activities (Astin, 1984). Participating in activities designed to increase engagement and ease transition to college increase a student's likelihood of persisting and graduating (Harper, 2012; Lederman, 2012; Morgan, 2007; Renn & Reason, 2013). A multifaceted institutional response that brings together professionals from academic and student affairs represents the optimal condition for effective intervention from black men students (Strayhorn, 2008).

Numerous examples exist of viable and successful college and university mentoring programs for Black men students. All students, especially Black men students benefit from having a program on campus in place that is able to better prepare them for the college experience (Harper, 2012; Jaschik, 2007; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Nealy, 2009). Many campuses do not offer mentoring programs exclusively for Black men. It is imperative to search for and mimic established programs at other institutions in which Black men are known to benefit (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

One successful mentoring program was founded at the University of Cincinnati and it is entitled the Black Man's Think Tank (Morgan, 2007). The Think Tank was founded in 1983 by Dr. Eric Abercrombie and provides an arena and forum for black men academicians to discuss issues and concerns that confront black men students in higher education (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Morgan, 2007). The program has received great success and other institutions have followed their model of improving the presence, retention rates, and graduation rates of Black men students. The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAAB) was founded on the campus of Georgia Southwestern University (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). This

organization established to provide student development intervention and support to Black men enrolled in college. There have been several programs designed after the Student African American Brotherhood programming model to assist in development (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

Understanding the need for a sense of belonging and being accepted, Black men on college campuses need to feel as if they indeed matter or that they can relate to an aspect on college (faculty, staff, organization, etc.). Individual student experiences, whether inside or outside the classroom, are the most powerful influences on persistence (Harper, 2007; Morgan, 2007; Renn & Reason, 2013). Student success is determined by their overall sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2008).

Institutions are retaining Black men on college campuses at lower rates than their white peers and black women peers (Harper, 2012). It would seem very feasible for institutions to implement programming to engage in the overall sense of belonging to help in the overall retention rates. Participating in activities designed to increase engagement and ease transition to college increase a student's likelihood of persisting and graduating (Jaschik, 2007; Nealy, 2009; Renn & Reason, 2013). When Black students do not receive specialized mentorship or other interaction, isolation and seclusion may occur.

Isolation. Black men often experience a feeling of isolation and loneliness at predominantly White higher education institutions (Fries-Britt, 1998). This feeling of isolation exists for Black faculty and staff members as well as the students on campus. Isolation and loneliness occur whenever Black men do not experience a sense of belonging on their college campuses (Strayhorn, 2012). Wanting to be a part of the group and included is a characteristic that exists for all students. As student progress through college, they often find students that

have similar interest or backgrounds to associate and travel the journey of college together. For Black men, this isn't always the case. At times, it is difficult for a Black man to find other Black men on campus that he can identify with.

Isolation exists with Black men because there are very low numbers of Black men on college campuses (Lynn, 2006). Black men rarely have a support system on college campuses of other Black men to relate to and understand the daily struggle that a Black man endures in society. For Black men students, having a faculty member on campus that is a Black man can help with isolation (Parker, Puig, Johnson, Anthony, 2016). Black men students often note the ability to relate and the overall comfort that they feel from having a Black man on campus (Fries-Britt, 1998).

Not only do these students experience isolation from White students and faculty on campuses, they experience isolation from community members (Fries-Britt, 1998). This isolation from the community members exist because of the disconnect between college students and family and friends who support the student back home that did not attend college. Many Black men college students are first generation college students (Delano-Oriaran, O, & Parks, 2015). It is difficult for these students to look for support back home in their communities when several of their family members and other supporters did not attend college and are unable to relate to the experience.

For Black men professionals in higher education, isolation exists as well. The numbers of Black men professionals in higher education are very low (Schroeder, 2013).). Like Black men students, Black men who serve professional roles on college campuses rarely have other Black men to look to for support or empathy (Jackson, 2001). With the numbers being so low for Black men professionals and the inability for some White colleagues to understand the

frustration that exists with this, Black men experience overall isolation (Jackson, 2001; Schroeder, 2013).

The isolation faced by undergraduate Black men and Black men professionals who work in student affairs and having to constantly speak for an entire race begins to impact their overall well being (Smith, 2008). Along with this, Black men have to endure the backhanded compliments masked by microaggressions that can eventually cause Racial Battle Fatigue (Smith, 2008).

Racial Battle Fatigue & Microaggressions

Racial battle fatigue is an internal struggle endured by people of color with their fight against overt and clear racism (Smith, 2008). Racial battle fatigue is the cumulative effect of being on guard and having to develop responses to insults, both subtle and unsubtle (Hernandez, 2013). Over time, people of color become tired and fatigued with the fight for equality and simply going to work and school daily with the burden of enduring microaggressions. Racial battle fatigue includes frustration, sadness, shock, anger, defensiveness, apathy, anxiety, and a multitude of other emotions (Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016). Mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES) also exists within in Black men because of several factors, one being racial battle fatigue in working in higher education (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011).

Racial battle fatigue shows up in many ways (Penn State, 2011). One of the ways that racial battle fatigue appears is psychologically through constant worrying and intrusive thoughts. For many Black men, this includes watching the news and looking at another Black man killed by police then driving to work the next day hoping the police do not pull them over. Enduring this on several occasions can have long lasting effects. With so much anger and sadness going on, Black men attempt to go to work and remain professional and complete tasks all while

battling internally with societal issues (Husband, 2016). Difficulty concentrating is another example of how racial battle fatigue shows up psychologically (Penn State, 2011). Over time, some professionals of color develop a strained relationship with their White colleagues. The strained relationship occurs when White colleagues ignore issues in society and refuse to offer support as an ally. The constant appearance of microaggressions through questioning overall abilities and the complete disregard for racial societal issues can result in a disdain for White colleagues (Vega, 2015).

Along with psychological signs, racial battle fatigue also appears through physical ways (Arnold, Crawford, & Khalifa, 2016). Researchers show that chronic tension headaches are a result of enduring racial battle fatigue for many minorities (Arnold et al., 2016; Penn State, 2011). Having a weakened immunity and increased sickness is a result of racial battle fatigue as well (Arnold et al., 2016). Racial battle fatigue is a reality for many Black professionals in student affairs. One of the causes of racial battle fatigue is through microaggressions.

Microaggressions are the subtle, stunning, verbal, and nonverbal insults layered in sexism, racism, elitism, and other insults due to privilege (Pierce, 1995). People of color work in environments where subtle microaggression is released daily in the workplace. This happens in all professions and higher education/ student affairs are no exception. Racial microaggressions are part of the psychological warfare endured by People of Color in environments with mostly white peers (Hernandez, 2013).

When experiencing microaggressions, people of color tend to internalize the event and question whether they imagined or misinterpreted what happened during the event (New, 2015). Sadly, the first response is to question themselves and to see whether or not it is somehow their own fault. While internalizing the incident, the receiver of the microaggression believes that

they will be called overly sensitive or making a big deal out of nothing if they voice their concern or anger over the incident (New, 2015). Many people of color battle this struggle internally. Whether or not to speak up about an incident, would the incident be taken seriously if spoken about, or if giver of the microaggression would empathize with the receiver of the microaggression (New, 2015; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016).

Chapter Summary

Based on the above literature, in this study I will seek to gain perspective about Black men professionals in student affairs that mentor Black men students during the Black Lives Matter movement. By looking into previous research on Black men as professionals in higher education as well as undergraduate Black men, I have a foundation to perform research on my selected topic. Understanding racial battle fatigue and microaggressions helps to understand the significance of what Black men can endure while in the workplace as well. By looking at the research of Black men in the past, further research can be completed moving forward that can benefit Black men professionals in student affairs, Black men students, higher education institutions and the world.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this dissertation, I used transformative paradigm to conduct a qualitative research study on the perspectives of Black men in Student affairs that undergraduate Black men. Through narrative inquiry, I gained firsthand accounts and perspectives from Black men in student affairs and provided an opportunity to hear their story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is important in this study because it provides the storytelling aspect of the experiences of Black men in student affairs professional roles in their own voice.

Narrative inquiry attempts to receive the first-person accounts of the feelings and thoughts of the participants that are being studied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). With this research, I was able to understand the common factors and stories that the participants are enduring being an underrepresented population in the field of student affairs as well as mentoring young men of color at their institutions. Black men professionals have so many roles at work while also serving as a mentor to young Black men, during one of the country's biggest activism movements, the Black Lives Matter movement. In this research, I shared the experiences of Black men who are going through these experiences.

In this section, I provided the research questions that I explored during this study. I will also cover the theoretical framework as well as the research paradigm that will guide my research. During this section, I will provide an explanation for the selection of method chosen. I will also provide an explanation for how I collected data in this study. Finally, I will explain

how using trustworthiness protected the integrity of the research and the participants of the data collection.

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs positions who mentor students who are Black men, in finding support on campus when it comes to issues of race?
2. How are institutions supporting Black men who are student affairs professionals when it comes to issues of racism and discrimination?

Research Paradigm

The transformative paradigm or worldview examines how research intertwines with politics and confronts social oppression (Mertens, 2009). Transformative paradigm arose during the 1980s and 1990s from people who felt that the postpositivist paradigm failed to address issues of discrimination, oppression, and the theories did not fit the marginalized people in society (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2009). The research objectives in transformative paradigm include an action agenda for the participants involved in the study to hopefully bring about change (Creswell, 2014). With the study that I conducted, I wanted to bring about change for Black men in student affairs who mentor Black men. Through this study, and using this paradigm, I hope to bring notice to a topic that is important to a marginalized group of people. With the completion of this research, I hope to bring awareness by providing the perspective of Black men to benefit the field of student affairs as a whole.

Transformative paradigm applies to people who experience oppression and discrimination due to race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, poverty, gender, immigrant status, gender, and age (Mertens, 2009). Through the transformative paradigm, using the critical race

theory as a theoretical framework provided a framework that will help to explore issues of discrimination for the participants in the study. I provided an opportunity to share the perspective of Black men in student affairs and their experiences in the higher education field.

Theoretical Framework

A collection of activists interested in studying the relationship among race, racism, and power developed Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Yosso, 2005). I used this lens for my research as an additional way to explore the perspective of Black men who serve as professional staff members in student affairs while also mentoring young Black men on their campuses. Through the lens of CRT, I examined racism, power, and privilege when it comes to the perspective of the Black men professionals in student affairs (Barlow, 2016; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). In this study, I shared their stories while also understanding the history of racism in the U.S. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

Critical Race Theory is broken up into five tenets (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The first tenet states that race and racism are ordinary experiences for people of color (Solorzano et. al, 2000). Racism is a common every day experience that citizens of the United States endure. With CRT, race does not receive acknowledgement and usually goes unnoticed by many. An example of this is a Black woman always being aware of her race in all situations. Whenever this Black woman experiences any form of discrimination because of race, rarely is there surprise or shock. She is constantly aware that she is a Black woman in all situations that she encounters.

The second tenet states that Whiteness is a dominant form of segregation that benefits millions of people throughout the United States (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Solorzano et. al,

2000). When White people are dominant in society through political, economic, cultural situations, it does not benefit the majority (White) to end racism and segregation (Solorzano et. al, 2000). There is little incentive to eradicate racism.

The third tenet states that race is a social construct. This tenet shows that race has no “biological or genetic reality” and is a social construction to cause division and hierarchy (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p. 8). Although, people of the same origins share some of the same facial features and skin color, that is a small portion in the genetic makeup (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

The fourth tenet describes differential racialization. This tenet describes how the oppressor changes the perception of a particular race over a period from one stereotype to a completely different stereotype. For example, in newspapers and movie screens, Hollywood depicted Black people as “happy go lucky, simpleminded, and content serving White folks” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p. 9). A decade or two later, these same Black people were seen as menacing and dangerous (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

The fifth tenet details intersectionality and the role that it plays in critical race theory. No person has a single identity (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). A Black person can be a republican and Jewish and a Latino woman can be a Black Lives Matter activist and identify as gay. People may have multiple salient identities and recognizing these and being cognizant of how they intersect is important (Solorzano et. al, 2000).

The sixth tenet is Counterstorytelling (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Through counter storytelling, people of color are able to express their story and share their experiences. In this study, I want the participants to be unapologetically honest and fearless in their responses to their

experiences. Critical race theorists have built on experiences and viewpoints to help tell the stories of oppressed people to understand how individuals see race (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

Methodology

With the transformative paradigm research, the intent was to explore the meaning of personal experiences and how the participants make meaning of those experiences (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to examine the stories of the lived experiences of the participants and share their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In order to share the lived experiences of the participants for this study, I decided to best present the information through narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry examines the stories of the lived experiences and shares those stories (Creswell, 2014). While using narrative inquiry, the goal was to provide the participants a platform to share their experiences through a comfortable environment where they do not feel pressure to provide answers, only to share their personal stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). That is the full intent of this research study, I was able to provide Black men the opportunity to share their stories of being a mentor to Black undergraduate men on campus and what that looks like.

Storytelling involves trying to make sense of experiences and learning about a topic through the lens of the storyteller (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Every day we watch the news, read blog articles, talk to friends, coworkers, and families all hearing stories and their perspectives of what happened (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Storytelling has become the norm in society that it is a part of our everyday lives. Narrative inquiry is the sharing of life experiences through narration (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this research study, I utilized the “oldest and most natural” way in which humans communicate and make meaning of life experiences (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002, p. 66). In society, we make

meaning and understand one another through storytelling and narration (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through this study, the goal was to come to an understanding and educate many on the lived experiences of Black men in student affairs.

Narrative inquiry is broken down into a three-dimensional space called temporality, personal and social, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). All three dimensions of narrative inquiry examine how a variable affects overall lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality (forward and backward) examines how shared narrative incorporates the storytellers' events that happened in their past. Participants share stories of events that led up to and followed their story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The stories shared encompass all events before, during, and after the event. Personal and social describes how there must be an understanding of the personal meaning of the story and the social context associated with the story being told. Internal conditions are involved in the narration, such as "feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Finally, place describes how each story occurs in a specific place or sequence of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Providing first-hand accounts of specific events is one of the best ways to gain information. Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to share an experience from a first-hand account that is unique to only that participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Everyone has a different story and perspective and through these stories, we can learn more about one another and come to an understanding. Through narrative inquiry and the lived experience told from the participants in this study, I hope these stories lead to a better understanding of Black men professionals in student affairs.

Setting & Participants

I collected research nationwide at various types of institutions. Several types of institutions including, Public 4- year, Private 4- year, and community colleges employ participants in this study. In order to participate in the study, I made sure that all participants met the following criteria. I asked staff members first, if they identify as a Black man, the second question asked if the staff member is a student affairs professional. Lastly, I asked if the staff member mentors students on their campuses that are Black men.

I created a post on Facebook and sent e-mails to solicit six to eight participants for this research study. I obtained participants by making a post in Facebook groups BLKSAP (Black Student Affairs Professionals), Black men in Housing, and Housing while Black inquiring if any Black men professionals in student affairs would be interested in participating in a research study. Once participants expressed interest in being a participant, I sent an e-mail to the interested potential participants explaining what is required of them during the research study in order to complete the data collection. The e-mail asked the participants if they meet the following criteria:

1. Do you identify yourself as a Black man?
2. Do you currently serve in a role under the Student Affairs division at a college or university?
3. Do you mentor undergraduate Black men officially (through an organization) or unofficially (through independent relationships) on your campus?

I defined “mentors” in this study as a professional who provides guidance, tutoring support, advice, etc. to undergraduate Black men on campus in an official or unofficial capacity.

Data Collection Methods

I selected narrative inquiry as my method in collecting data for this research. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection (Merriam, 2009). The researcher collects data from the participants and proceeds to make interpretations and meaning out of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). With the first source of data collection, I used interviewing. There are variations of interviewing that a researcher conducts and they include; face to face interviews, telephone interviews, focus group, or through technology (Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.). There are three types of interview types: 1) the informal interview that is more conversational 2) the interview with a topical approach with an interview guide 3) the standardized, open-ended interview (Patton, 2002). The informal interview occurs on the spot and is just a casual conversation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The interview guide type of interview is more structured and ensures that the conversation has a guided path (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Lastly, the standardized open-ended interview has a script and more structure than the other types of interview styles. Each question has a place and follows a specific order (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

In order to obtain the perspective of Black men in student affairs and receive their stories, I conducted face-to-face in depth interviews with each participant. The interview questions followed a general guide that kept the conversation flowing so that I was able to gain the perspective of the participant. The interview questions included six to eight open-ended questions focusing on getting the participant to share their experiences. One of the most important parts of interviewing is to make the participant feel comfortable enough to share their story through conversation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Before beginning the process of interviewing, I met with each participant to go over details of the interview process. I explained

that confidentiality is a crucial part of this data collection. I asked each participant for a pseudonym to use that they will be identified with (Creswell, 2014). Allowing participants to provide a pseudonym gives the participant the extra layer of security and the benefit of knowing their identity will be protected (Creswell, 2014).

The interviews focused on each participant's perspective of what it is like to be a Black man working in student affairs while mentoring undergraduate Black men on their campus. I recorded and transcribed each interview for data analysis purposes. From the transcriptions, I developed notes and analyzed the data received from the notes. While I analyzed the data, the coding process began.

I selected photo elicitation as a secondary data collection method. In photo elicitation, participants answer prompts provided to them by the researcher and they use photographs to answer how they feel about the given prompt. Before each interview, I explained the photo elicitation process to each participant and the role that it plays in the data collection process. Photo elicitation interviews complement other methods of research, particularly when the participants have had "painful or sensitive life experiences that are difficult to verbalize" (Padgett, Smith, Derejko, Henwood, & Tiderington, 2013 p. 10). In 1957, John Collier was the first to use photo elicitation because his goal was to understand the effect of environmental factors on neighborhoods and families (Padgett et al., 2013). With photo elicitation, researchers are able to take verbal only interviewing techniques and allow the participant to have another form of expressing their experiences (Padgett et al., 2013; Torre & Murphy, 2015).

With photo elicitation, this data collection method allows the participant to use another form of expression and creativity in answering prompts. Photo elicitation also offers an opportunity for the participant to express themselves with topics that could be hurtful or

emotional when trying to verbally communicate their perspective (Sandhu, Ives, Birchwood, & Upthegrove, 2013). Photo elicitation relates to Critical Race Theory in the fact that it allows participants the ability to change the narrative and provide the storytelling aspect needed to provide perspective in issues of race.

The participants received three prompts, and I asked them to provide five to seven sentences explaining how the photograph makes them feel or any experiences they have related to it. The three prompts were:

1. Provide a photograph that describes how you feel about race in student affairs.
2. Provide a photograph/meme/ drawing that describes how you feel being a mentor to Black undergraduate men on your campus.
3. Provide a photograph/meme/drawing that describes how you feel your campus supports you when it comes to issues of race.

I e-mailed all three prompts to the participants and asked them to e-mail me with their photographs as well as the descriptions to each photograph before the photo-elicitation interviews. During each photo-elicitation interview, discussed the photo elicitation process and the reactions they had during and after completing each prompt.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important part of the research process (Merriam, 2009). During the data analysis process, researchers are able to piece together important points gathered to make meaning of the collected data (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2011). In order to complete the data analysis for this qualitative study, I transcribed the experiences that the participants provided through their interviews and written in journals (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). In order to analyze the data,

transcription will be imperative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Understanding this, I recorded all interviews as well as took descriptive notes during the interviewing process in order to provide the most accurate transcription (Clandinin & Connelly; Merriam, 2009). Using a Critical Race Theory theoretical framework, I worked to make sure that there remained an accurate depiction of the voices of all Black men involved (Clandinin & Connelly; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

To analyze the data, I used open and affective coding methods to guide the coding process in this study. I also used a software program to help with additional data analysis of coding and tracking themes as well. Open coding method breaks down the qualitative data into discrete parts and examines them closely (Saldana, 2016). Affective coding method examines the subjective qualities of a human experience by recognizing and naming those experiences and feelings (Saldana, 2016). I reviewed the interview transcripts line by line several times as well as reviewed the notes taken during each interview to become very familiar with the participants answers and their perspectives (Merriam, 2009; Wertz et. al., 2011). In doing this, I was able to notice important phrases and sentences that will begin the coding process (Saldana, 2016).

Transcribing the interviews myself allowed me to understand the participants' story and their overall perspectives. In CRT, one of the tenets is storytelling and through transcribing the interviews myself, I as able to present the perspectives of the Black men so their voices can be heard (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Through open coding, I was able to obtain the overall summary of the passage and through affective coding, I was able to code the emotion, values and judgments associated with the passage (Saldana, 2016).

While reviewing the interview transcripts, I made notes next to the replies of the participants that indicated a salient point or an important connection (Merriam, 2009). During

this part of the process, the goal was to piece the data together and determine what is significant and important to the study (Wertz et. al., 2011). Open coding is the part of the analysis process, where researchers make notes in the margins of transcripts that can answer research questions and become a possible theme (Merriam, 2009). After completing the open coding portion, I began the affective coding methods process. Completing the affective coding method allowed me to review and analyze the human experiences and emotions associated with the qualitative data (Saldana, 2016). I went line by line throughout the data and noted the human experience (ex. anger, happiness, confusion, pain). Through narrative inquiry and CRT, the goal was to obtain the perspective of the participants and present the story in the participants' voice through storytelling (Clandinin & Connelly; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Merriam, 2009). To maintain organization, I placed the codes into a chart and added columns to represent the quote from the participant, the code associated with the quote, and a section for notes to provide an explanation of the code.

After coding the interviews, I synthesized the codes and transitioned them into overall themes (Merriam, 2009). The themes that created helped to create a more concise picture of the perspectives of Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. The themes also showed how the participants are juggling their roles during the Black Lives Matter movement where there are several cases of police brutality occur. With the larger themes created, I was able to link them back to answer the research questions and present these findings in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is extremely important when it comes to credibility to the research study (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research focuses more on

trustworthiness where quantitative research focuses more on reliability and validity (DeVault, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This is because quantitative research focuses more on capturing truth through objectivity (Meriam, 2009). Trustworthiness consists of the following components: (a) credibility; (b) transferability; (c); dependability; and (d) confirmability (DeVault, 2017). To ensure trustworthiness of this research study, I used the following strategies: data triangulation, member checking, journaling, and catalytic validity.

Data triangulation is the best-known strategy to develop internal validity of a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ensuring the use of multiple methods of data collection provides the extra understanding of the findings (Creswell, 2014). In this study, I utilized triangulation through two separate data collection methods which included semi structured interviews and photo elicitation. By using these two data collection methods, I did my due diligence in ensuring the internal validity of this study.

Member checking allows participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). With member checking, the researcher is able to verify with the participant whether the overall transcripts and themes developed from the interviews are accurate. Sometimes, participants may express themselves one way but mean something completely different. Allowing member checking provides the participant with the extra comfort in knowing that the researcher will not misinterpret their lived experiences and that they will have a part in the presentation of the research. The participants in this research were able to check the transcripts from the interview about their lived experiences of being a Black man in student affairs who mentor Black undergraduate men. After interviewing participants, I e-mailed their interview transcripts to each of them for review in accuracy. I allowed two weeks to review and provide any concerns through feedback.

Catalytic validity is a form of trustworthiness, which focuses in on understanding reality in order to transform it (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Lather, 1986; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). With catalytic validity, the results from the research act as a catalyst for change (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). Through this research of providing the lived experience of Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men during the Black Lives Matter movement, the purpose was to obtain their stories to help others in the field of student affairs and higher education. The purpose was to provide resources to other Black people who share similar stories of the participants to show them that they are not alone and can receive support. After interviewing the participants when they completed their photo elicitation submission, they were asked how the photographs could be used to educate others in the field. I asked the participants what do they feel can be done to make any changes in the field of student affairs when it comes to issues of race and supporting Black people.

Positionality

As a Black man, it is impossible to ignore the police brutality and racism that is happening in the United States. There have been several incidents of police killing unarmed Black men, many of which have been on video. I am very aware of my identities and I constantly am aware that I am a Black man in America and that is the first thing people notice when they see me. I have been the victim of “driving while black” as well as having dogs called to smell my car for a routine traffic stop.

This research is important to me because working in student affairs and mentoring undergraduate Black men, I understand the emotional fatigue that I go through when having to be the support system for these students whenever a judge finds a police officer not guilty for killing an unarmed Black man. I know the pain I go through when I have to put my emotions to

the side and be there for my students during a high profiled case of police brutality. As I am writing this, I have had students call to voice their frustration over the recent case of a judge finding an officer not guilty for killing a black man. So as I am writing a dissertation trying to help Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men, I still have the reality of putting my emotions to the side to be there for my students.

It is difficult to endure, but it is something that I feel I have to do in order to bring about change. I am using my platform and privilege, through education, to help others in need. Racism is continuing to divide the country and Black people are fearful of their lives with the constant killing of unarmed Black men. I hope that this research study is able to provide understanding, create dialog, and help those in need.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this section, I present the findings from my study in analyzing the data collected. In this section, the participants shared their experiences of being a Black man, mentoring undergraduate Black men in society during the Black Lives Matter movement. The participants detailed their experiences of being on their college campus and the level of institutional support received, and how this all affects their role mentoring undergraduate Black men. The first theme is Societal Issues and discusses how they affect the lives of Black men personally and professionally. The second theme is the Role of Mentoring and how this shapes Black men professionals and the undergraduate men that they mentor. The final theme is Campus Life and this section provides a look into the perception of how leaders at institutions support Black men on their campuses. The participants and their voluntary demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Black men professionals in student affairs

Black Men Professionals

Participant Name	Age	Years in Student Affairs	Institution Type
Henry	51	20	Private- 4 year
Bruce	60	38	Public 4 year
Lawrence	24	1	Public- 4 year
Jerome	32	3	Public 2 year
Charles	40	20	Public 4 year
Ronnie	30	5	Private- 4 year

Societal Issues

Societal issues affect Black men professionals in higher education just like any other person. The only difference is that many of the mainstream issues as of late have directly affected Black men. The Black Lives Matter era has deeply impacted Black men across the world. In this study, I share insight about how these issues affect the participants' daily lives when it comes to working, mentoring undergraduate Black men, and their ability to cope in society.

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement causes many emotions, protests, and discussions especially on college campuses. Across the nation, there have been forums, panel discussions, and debates about the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants in this study indicate that their primary concern was to ensure support for their students during this difficult time for Black men in society. Unfortunately, Black men received some resistance on campus from coworkers and other institution employees while doing so. Charles detailed a time where he received a threat on campus for his involvement in educating his students on their rights when it comes to the law:

We were gathering to have our monthly discussions on campus entitled "Know your rights." We were joined by other student organizations that were completely against our stance on protesting and police brutality. Their advisor also came, who was a local community member. He was disrespectful throughout the meeting and told me that he was very powerful at the institution and could get me fired.

Like Charles, other participants mentioned that community members and other campus employees treated them differently after learning of their participation in the Black Lives Matter movement. The participants stated that they understand they are doing the right thing, but it does

still hurt to experience discrimination because of their stance. What is discouraging and hurtful is to have people on campus and around the community act differently because of a stance taken against police brutality. The ignorance shown by people is infuriating because they refuse to attempt to understand and hear another perspective. It is more of a disappointment to find out that people can change and show who they really are after Black men attempt to educate on issues in society. Bruce shared stories of losing people that he thought were close to him over BLM:

To be honest, it does hurt at times. Because of the division of the country, I've lost people I thought were friends. I make my position known on campus and I believe this has caused me to miss out on opportunities in the community and on campus. That's something I have to live with. I understand that standing up for what I believe is right, I will lose a lot of people that I thought were friends and lose potential jobs in the field.

Standing up for what he believes in is a stance that Bruce details. Many participants shared in this stance. Because of the Black Lives Matter movement, many participants have become very introspective. Participants began to reflect on their lives as Black men and what this means in society. The participants reflected on their role at their institutions and their role on campus, as Jerome details:

I've had to perform a lot of self-reflection since Black Lives Matter movement has started. I was completely in my own world before the movement began. I used to be of the belief if you treat people right, good things happen to you. After the many unarmed murders of Black men, I am doubtful. Now I am questioning everything and looking at ways that I can use my position to bring change.

During the current climate of society, many Black men have begun the process of reflecting on the state of our country. During this reflection process, Black men think about how law enforcement views their lives. Black men reflect on their lives and realize that a routine traffic stop by a law enforcement officer could result in their murder. Echoing Jerome's statement on self-reflection, Ronnie detailed his thought process during the Black Lives Matter movement:

I was really at a loss for words and had to reevaluate myself as a Black man in America.

It was painful for a long time even coming to work and trying to be a mentor for my students. I had to get myself together mentally, spiritually, and emotionally first before I could be of any service to the guys.

Lawrence provides a photograph of how he feels during the Black Lives Matter movement at his institution:



Lawrence shared his feelings on the selection of the photograph. He also shared how the photograph relates to his thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement on his campus:

Working at PWIs during the time of BLM has been lonely. Consistently being the sole professional that's doing the work. Being the go to when Black kids are in trouble

despite the colleges' mission to value diversity. It's very draining but becomes worth it when students are thriving despite obstacles.

The participants always made it clear that no matter their feelings when it comes to BLM, they always have their mentees in mind. Feelings of loneliness and sadness take a backseat because the participants' focus is on how their mentees are enduring during the BLM movement.

BLM Influence on Mentoring

The participants in this study all mentor undergraduate Black men so their experiences are first hand while also putting their emotions about police brutality to the side at times to be there for their students. The participants endured a lot of pain with the killing of unarmed Black men and the students they mentor experience the same as Henry explained:

My student organization members were upset after Mike Brown was killed in the middle of the street. I opened up my office on a Sunday just to let them come in and vent, cry, curse, etc. Whatever they wanted to do in order to grieve properly. I could tell that this hurt them deeply.

After expressing themselves, Henry explained that it is important to vent, but there must be a time to plan and mobilize. Black men during the Civil Rights Movement set the example on how to combat discrimination and racism. One of the biggest aspects of the movement was planning and mobilizing which entails taking action and attempting to actually do something about an issue as Charles explained:

While the young men were sitting around and we are all visibly upset, I asked them one simple question, What can we do? The guys began to develop a plan to have a protest on campus. They also developed a proposal to submit to the VP of Students affairs that would allow safe spaces on campus where students can express themselves.

Being a safe support system and an advocate for students during a social justice movement is an area that participants stated they fill in their roles as mentors. Throughout this study, Black men have proved that mentoring is more than providing advice on classes and techniques for studying. Mentoring Black men goes beyond that and taps into social justice. It is difficult to focus on classes when police officers are murdering Black men. Mentoring has a different look for these Black men, where social justice through protesting is a primary responsibility. Mentors must provide guidance and support for that as well, as Jerome detailed:

My mentees were integral parts of protests on my campus. I supported them throughout and allowed them to use my office to make their signs. Social justice is very rare on our campus so the students received some backlash but I was very proud of them and made sure they understood the significance of their protest.

Supporting students during social justice protests can cause some friction with supervisors, coworkers, or other students on campus. Being on a college campus, there are many employees with differing views on social justice issues. The participants state that working in rural areas is tough because not only are they outnumbered being a Black man on campus, but they are outnumbered when it comes to supporting the BLM movement and making a stand by demanding police reform. Jerome explained how this impacted his work life:

During the height of the murders of Black men, my students began to hold weekly discussions in the main auditorium on campus. Their discussions garnered attention around the city and several staff and faculty members began to express their opposing viewpoints. Some of the staff members stopped speaking to me because of my ties to the students. Other faculty members said I was deliberately supporting the creation of race riots on campus.

The participants realize at times, they will be the only professional on campus that actually cares about the well-being of students during a hypersensitivity time such as BLM. In turbulent situations, Black men continue to work towards the goal of helping students succeed. Charles explained how he helps his students during the Black Lives Matter movement:

The day after Trayvon Martin verdict students were in my office full of emotions. Some cried, some yelled, and others were just silent. I hadn't had an opportunity to fully process my own feelings yet. I just wanted to make sure they were given the chance to talk through their emotions. I just wanted to be there for them. In a way, this helped me deal with my emotions, I think.

Charles goes on to explain how he deals with his emotions during the BLM:

I don't think you can ever fully deal with the emotions of police murdering unarmed Black men. I just get to work. By that, I mean I empower my students and make sure I'm mentoring Black men on campus.

For many of the participants, self-care takes a back seat during the Black Lives Matter Movement. This can be due to a multitude of reasons. As Charles stated, he wants to educate his students to mobilize and mentor them properly. Jerome explained that his priority was to be there for his students as they tried to find meaning and make sense out of the unfortunate events. Oftentimes, Black men fail to properly deal with their emotions because there is always work to be done in the communities and on campuses. Some of that work includes educating students on proper ways to interact with the police by knowing their rights and having important conversations about police brutality.

Police Brutality

Black men professionals in student affairs are in a unique position where being directly impacted by issues of police brutality and racism while they also provide mentorship to undergraduate Black men experiencing the same issues as them. The participants stated that during the BLM era, their emotions and feelings about police brutality take a back seat to their mentees emotions. The participants explained that they are older and have an understanding of how police officers historically treat Black men. The participants' mentees first experience with police brutality happened during these instances of BLM. The relationship between law enforcement and Black men needs a lot of work and repair. There are countless incidents of abuse by police officers applied to Black men. The awareness of these incidents has increased during this social media era. Bruce explained his thoughts on police brutality:

When the Trayvon Martin killing happened, we held a candlelight vigil on campus. It was very emotional. One of our students knew the family and spoke during the ceremony. It was hard to hold back emotions. My mentees were really hurting so I had to be there for them.

Setting aside their own emotions when others need them was a common reaction among the participants. As Bruce stated, he was hurting due to the murders of Black men by law enforcement, but he put his emotions to the side to be there for his students. It was important for Bruce that his students understood that he was there for them. Like other Black men, Bruce is older so, unfortunately, he has witnessed police brutality in society before. For undergraduate Black men, this is their first time witnessing someone, that looks like them experience cruel punishment by law enforcement. The relationship that Black men have with law enforcement has always been a rocky one, as Charles detailed:

Growing up, we never liked the police. In our neighborhood, they always harassed us and when we were driving, they would pull us over for no reason. I remember playing in the neighborhood with friends and police coming up to us and having us face the wall to be searched. I was ten years old.

The details of Charles' relationship with police goes as far back as him being ten years old. At that age, Charles developed his perception of how police treat Black people from how he was treated. This is very similar to how many Black men feel about police officers. Lawrence explained his relationship with police:

When I was younger, I witnessed the police brutally beat Rodney King on television. I remember looking at my dad and he just shook his head. What stood out to me was that he wasn't surprised by it; meanwhile I was in complete disbelief. Later, I found out that my dad was very familiar with how the police treat Black men. He was a victim of police brutality decades before the Rodney King beating.

Lawrence, like other participants had family members who unfortunately experienced police brutality. Their perception of police officers stems from a personal account where police officers failed them by not upholding the law and abusing their power. Unfortunately, this is common for too many Black men. Swapping stories of police brutality or discrimination by law enforcement is a common occurrence in the Black community. Black men know of someone that has experienced police brutality or discrimination, even if they have not themselves. This is where the dislike and inability to trust law enforcement stem from. Lawrence goes on to state:

When I was a teenager, we just didn't interact or talk to police. It was a learned behavior in my neighborhood. Basically, they only showed up in our neighborhood when there was

an issue. They would sit in their cars and just look at us some days. I was profiled throughout my teenage years and early adulthood. I had a strong disdain for police.

The participants shared stories of being harassed by police officers and never having a fond memory of them. Many Black men learn at a young age the relationship between Black men and police officers. Witnessing Black men thrown on the ground by police officers as a child is a traumatic experience and one that many Black men share. For other Black men, their lack of trust for the police comes at a later age, as Jerome detailed a story of trusting police officers growing up but this changing in college:

My uncles are all law enforcement officers. They always taught me the law growing up and how to respect authority. When I went to college, I was pulled over by campus police and accused of stealing my car. I repeatedly told them it was my mom's car, but to no avail. I was treated like a criminal and less than a man. After this, I had a few more incidents with the police and this completely changed my mindset. I was really naïve.

As many Black men learn, complying with officers demands does not matter; some police officers will still abuse their power. Many participants understand how the police are, so their objective is to educate and inform their mentees and campuses about their rights. In Black communities, taking care of one another is a part of survival. These communities understand that oftentimes, they can only trust their neighbors. Black men learn this at a very early age. Educating the youth is the primary goal of many, as Henry explained:

I'm very familiar with how some officers are. My job is to make sure Black men are aware of the law. I make sure that we input learning programs to our undergraduate Black men about laws, especially when it comes to being pulled over by police. For

many of my students, this is their main interaction with police so it's important they understand what to do.

Because of the murders of unarmed Black men, many of the participants began to educate and inform their campuses. Many used these teachable moments as a chance to try to educate undergraduate Black men as well as law enforcement, as Ronnie explained:

While speaking with some of my mentees, I learned that there is a communication issue between police officers and Black men. I decided to have a panel discussion where a lawyer and other public officials would speak to the guys about laws and how to respond when being pulled over. I invited police officers to come and have a conversation with undergrad Black men. I believe we need these conversations so that we can move to a better place.

In order to gain understanding, both sides of the BLM argument need to conduct critical conversations. These conversations are imperative for both sides to improve the relationship and move forward in a positive direction. For Black a man, feeling safe is the ultimate objective. For years, Black men do not feel safe in their communities and are genuinely frightened when pulled over by police officers. This is a huge concern and conversations about how to improve this must happen. Through these conversations, healing can begin and both sides can have a mutual understanding.

Critical Conversations

Developing spaces on campus to discuss race is very important for change to occur. The participants stated that this is the primary goal on their campuses when it comes to law enforcement and police brutality issues. Uncomfortable moments bring change, and the critical conversations allow these changes to happen. The participants share stories of how they mentor

their students during this social justice era by having critical conversations on campus. Henry shared a story of pleading with his institution the importance of dialogue and having conversations about the climate in society:

It was important for me to be the voice for my mentees who are all undergraduate Black men. I went to the executive leadership at my institution and explained to them that my students were hurting. I explained that we needed to have conversations about this on campus and stop acting like everything is okay in the world.

At times, professionals take the initiative to ensure that their institutions have programs on campus where students could express themselves about race. Students and professionals need those spaces on campus where undergraduate Black men can discuss the murders of unarmed Black men in America. The participants reiterated the importance for these conversations on campus for healing. Henry further explained that:

Having these conversations on my campus has helped a lot. Our students are more educated on ways to address police officers and understanding the law. Police officers are more connected to the community and are able to have conversations with Black men to smooth over the tension.

Critical conversations are uncomfortable, awkward, and hurtful at times. These conversations are necessary in order to improve the conditions in society. Having honest conversations about race is important in everyone gaining an understanding as Ronnie shared the following photograph describing his frustration with race conversations on campus:



When describing the photograph and his frustration with the lack of conversation on his campus, Ronnie stated:

There are so many times that I wish we could finally have an honest conversation in student affairs and trust that the people who don't look like me get it. Sadly, very rarely is that the case and you end up frustrated for having to be the expert on everything Black and the champion of the downtrodden.

Ronnie's story is similar to other Black men on college campuses. It is frustrating to want to have conversations on campus but the campus wants to act as if everything is fine. Ignoring the problem is just as damaging. Similarly, Lawrence provided the following photograph describing his thoughts of being alone when trying to have critical conversations on campus:



The lack of attention to programming efforts is an issue for Lawrence, as he shared:

My institution has done very little when it comes to issues of race. We have committees filled with white faces in charge of diversity related initiatives. We have had very few programs that really tackle issues of race, equity, and equality. I am waiting for them to step up to the plate.

Through critical conversations, the participants stated that there are two primary goals. The first goal was to bring healing to the Black men hurting. As Bruce shared, “As Black men, we rarely deal with issues when we’re hurting. We just ignore it or try to get over it.” The second goal was to have these conversations with law enforcement officers to come to some understanding, as Jerome explained:

The biggest part about having these programs where Black men and officers converse is to show Black men that all police officers aren’t bad, and to show police officers that all Black men aren’t bad.

In our communities, there is a terrible communication issue between Black men and law enforcement. Police officers are supposed to protect and serve, but growing up, most Black men did not see that. Through these critical conversations on campus, Black men have to begin to trust police officers again. Jerome speaks on the importance of trust:

We witnessed with our own eyes, Black men murdered by law enforcement. We also witnessed a judicial system rule in favor of these police officers. Of course, there is a loss of trust in police and the system. This will take time and meaningful conversations to repair.

Jerome makes a great point in saying that gaining trust back into the system will take time and effort on both sides. Henry speaks on the responsibility of law enforcement in critical conversations:

More responsibility is on the police officers for these conversations. One police officer does not represent all but citizens are supposed to be protected by the law. It is up to the police officers to prove themselves worthy to be trusted by citizens again.

Jerome further detailed:

These officers have to do what it takes to regain their trust. Whether this means going to community meetings, meeting with neighborhood officials or participating in forums and panel discussions. They have to go the extra mile to repair the relationship.

There is work to do in order to repair the relationship between Black men and law enforcement. It will take time, empathy, and a lot of understanding on both sides. The police have an uphill battle in order to restore trust within Black men. It will take time and a lot of healing in order for our communities to fully trust law enforcement again.

For Black men professionals in student affairs, the heavy burden of dealing with police brutality and societal issues is a heavy one. These Black men also mentor undergraduate Black men in a society that does not value their lives. Being a mentor is a huge responsibility within itself. Black men put their emotions aside in order to be a support system for undergraduate Black men. The role of mentoring has several layers that go beyond sitting down and having a conversation. In the next section, the participants shared their experience of being a mentor and shaping the next generation during these troubling times in our society.

Role of Mentoring

Mentoring is an important role in the success of many students. For Black men professionals in higher education, the role of mentoring feels like a responsibility rather than an optional activity on campus to assist students. Many participants expressed how important it is to be a mentor to undergraduate Black men. For some, it is because they experienced a Black man mentor during their undergraduate tenure. For others, it is because they did not have that experience, but want to provide students with that opportunity.

Internal Sense of Responsibility

Many participants expressed that university officials, other coworkers, and undergraduate Black students have an expectation of them to mentor. This expectation is internal at times because Black men feel as if they have a responsibility to mentor undergraduate Black men. This sense of responsibility comes from understanding that Black men can relate to our own experiences like no other group. Ronnie shared his experience of meeting students that he eventually started to mentor:

After my institution hired me out of college, I ate lunch with a group of Black students during my first week. It was not planned or anything, it just happened. I was sitting at the lunch table and a student that I advised earlier that day sat down with me and we began to chat. During the lunch, I was asked about advising, graduate school and also asked to become an advisor of their student organization. I understood their eagerness. I was the only staff member who was a Black man on campus.

Undergraduate Black men look to professional Black men with an ability to relate because there is a mutual understanding between the two. This also brings about a level of comfort for the undergraduate Black men to open up more. When taking a job on a campus,

Black men seem to take on this, “all for one, one for all” mantra to help cope with the difficulties of maneuvering on campus as a person of color. Bruce explained:

Graduating from a predominantly white institution and now working as a professional at one, I know the importance of seeing faces that looks like mine. I know the unspoken bond that Black men share when there is a mentorship relationship. Being around White people all day can become a lot. Having someone that understands you is priceless.

When sharing his thoughts on how he felt being a mentor on campus, Henry provided this photograph:



When asked why he selected the photograph, Henry responded:

Being the only Black man in the upper level administration at my institution, I understand my responsibility. Black male undergraduate students look up to me and I have a duty to mentor them, officially and unofficially. When I was a younger professional, I didn't understand this but as a seasoned professional, I understand my role and I take pride in it.

Charles stated that he had a mentor that was very adamant about mentoring. “My mentor told me that he would drive down here if I wasn't being a mentor at my first job (laughs). He takes mentoring seriously.” Charles' mentor explained to him the importance of mentoring and

the significance that it has in the success of undergraduate Black men. Over time, mentors begin to develop a strong bond with their mentees as Lawrence stated:

I feel really guilty when I can't do something for my mentees. It really bothers me and I get upset. I want to be there for them. I do not get paid for mentoring or any special recognition. But we've developed a rapport over the years and I just want them to always know that I will be there for them. Those few instances where I can't do something eat at me.

The feeling of guilt is common among the Black men in this study. The stigma surrounding Black men not being able to finish college is evident. Working in education, Black men sometimes feel as if they have a true obligation to fight the stereotypes and help undergraduate Black men. Jerome explained:

I used to have the mindset that someone else can mentor these guys. Or someone else can be their role model. It was very selfish of me to feel that way. If I don't do it, who will? That is the question I asked myself during the summer of 2004 and it changed my life. I love being a mentor and I would not have it any other way.

Black men realize that they have an unspoken responsibility at times to help undergraduate Black men matriculate and graduate from college. Black men explain the importance of mentoring to supervisors, but oftentimes they fail to grasp how significant this role is. Most supervisors have the mindset that mentoring takes away from the professional Black men primary responsibility in the department. With this mindset, supervisors miss the bigger picture that mentoring helps with the graduation rates for undergraduate Black men. Ronnie detailed a situation with his supervisor:

Students slowly started to come by my office throughout the day. I transformed a few desks in the corner into study tables so that they can be efficient while they came to my office. My supervisor was not too pleased in the beginning but I had to have a meeting with her to explain the importance of what I was doing and how that translated to the success of these students.

Luckily, Ronnie had a conversation with his supervisor and she eventually understood how meaningful it was to have the students come by. This is not always the case for Black men and their supervisors. Oftentimes, supervisors refuse to be understanding of the mentorship process. These supervisors fail to understand how something as small as an office visit a few times a few times a week to talk can tremendously help an undergraduate Black man. Henry shared a story of a conversation with his supervisor:

At the beginning of the school year, students began coming by my office maybe once or twice a week. As the semester went on, students started to come by more frequently. Before I knew it, they were coming by daily and staying for thirty minutes to an hour. My supervisor discussed this during my performance review. He wasn't thrilled with the frequency of their visits.

Henry's situation adds to the long list of frustrating moments that Black men professionals deal with. When trying to mentor students, supervisors should be more understanding and accommodating. Mentoring is a huge commitment that all members of the university should understand and be on board with. Along with students coming by during office hours, participants shared moments of mentoring after work hours. Sometimes going home after an eight-plus hour workday simply does not happen. Henry stated:

Of course, there are moments when I just want to go home after work. But immediately after work is when students want to come by my office to talk or receive advisement.

That is a huge bonding time for us. I suck it up and just stay after work most days.

Mentoring involves a lot of sacrifice and flexibility on the part of the mentor. Being a mentor is a true test to determine whether a person is passionate about the role. Staying late after work and consistently sacrificing to see Black men succeed is a common reason for why the participants are mentors. Bruce shared a story of sacrificing for mentorship:

There are times when I get off work, walk to my car, leave the faculty/staff parking area, and see students walking to my building and I have an internal struggle. Do I continue driving home or do I go back and be with my students. Ninety-nine percent of the time, I park my car and go back inside.

Mentoring responsibilities come with responsibilities outside of what is on a regular job description. As Bruce stated, he feels a struggle internally to be there for his mentees. Bruce, like the other participants, works a full day and receives these calls or text messages when students need assistance. Internal pressure stems from a desire to see students succeed. At times, external pressures exist for mentors when it comes to mentoring students as well.

External Pressures to Mentor

Many of the participants stated that being a mentor comes from an internal place, a few stated that there were external forces in play pushing them to mentor students as well. These external pressures can come from a superior who pushes one to mentor or from students who urge a professional to be a mentor. Jerome shared how he became a mentor:

There were a few students that kind of accidentally became my mentees. It's weird.

They just started coming by my office and next thing I know they came back every day

after. I don't mind it at all though. Anything to keep a young Black man motivated, I'm behind.

Students have the ability to notice role models on campus. They may observe these professionals from afar or try to engage with them and gain some type of relationship that can blossom into a mentorship. Bruce has a similar story of students encouraging him to mentor:

I was walking to the post office on campus and a group of young Black men stopped me to ask if I was a professor at the institution. I said no, and they were intrigued with what I did there. After a brief conversation, one of the guys explained that they were a part of a student organization and their advisor recently left. They've been seeing me around campus and wanted to ask if I could take over. They also added that if I didn't, the organization would end. A complete guilt trip.

Bruce's story is similar to how many mentors accept their role. Students need an advisor for a student organization and seek out a suitable candidate on campus. Students are very observant of the Black men on campus. With the low number of Black men on campuses, it is easy to follow them on campus and observe their actions. Oftentimes, these fill in mentor roles turn into lifelong mentorship relationships. Lawrence shared how a substitute role turned into him being a full mentor:

The original director of the mentorship program left for a study abroad trip in Greece. There was an opening for the lead mentorship director so I was essentially volunteered by my supervisor to step in. I was unaware that the director of the mentorship program was also a mentor. So I began performing the role and fell in love with it. I am still serving in this role two years later.

Oftentimes, being voluntold to mentor is an honor. It means that the supervisor or professional in a leadership position sees potential and characteristics that would be great for a mentor. Some leaders at institutions are visionaries when it comes to seeing potential in a professional. For some of the participants, they would have never become a mentor if it were not for the vision of their supervisor. Henry shared how his supervisor pushed him to be a part of a mentorship program:

Right after graduating from graduate school, my mentor hired me. I was progressing very well and learning a lot in the role. After about a year in the position, I had a meeting with my mentor/supervisor and he informed me that I needed to do more. I was so confused because I was excelling in my position. He explained further and said I needed to become a mentor on campus for undergraduate Black men. So I started the following Monday.

Whether it is being told to mentor or being guilt tripped to mentor, as long as the end result is Black men succeeding in college, it is a win for everyone involved. These participants shared that they are benefiting from being “volun-told” or encouraged to mentor. What started as a task, turned into a meaningful experience, which helps the participant as well as the undergraduate Black men.

My brother’s keeper

My brother’s keeper is a phrase used in communities that mean one holds himself responsible for the well-being of other men. It signifies unity and support for another man. In Black communities, helping one another succeed is something learned at an early age. It is expected for a Black man, who is capable, to do his part to help another Black man succeed. My brother’s keeper simply means that a Black man will do what it takes to help another Black man

if he is able. The phrase “My brother’s keeper” goes back several years and resonates with the participants of this study. The participants expressed their unwritten allegiance to this ideology and they understand the importance of taking care of one another as Ronnie stated:

I overheard a White professor talk down on a group of undergraduate Black men for underperforming in the classroom. He went on and on about them not understanding the material and failing quizzes. This angered me. Instead of helping them understand, he chose to vent about them and mock their underperformance over lunch. That is when I started the study hall tutorials targeting undergraduate Black men.

Ronnie took offense to the professor’s comments. Although Ronnie did not have any ties to the undergraduate Black men, the comments by the professor upset him and he took action. There was not a direct relationship with the students but Ronnie felt a connection to these undergraduate Black men because he could see himself as one of them. Like other Black men, Ronnie understood his responsibility to step up and do what it takes to help these students. Ronnie further explained:

With my mentorship organization at my institution, we implement a phrase or a quote every year. My goal with the creation of the quote/ phrase is motivation and to be the vision for the year. During my second year over the program, the vision for the year was, “My brother’s keeper.” I explained to the guys that we must look out for one another and hold each other. My goal was to get the guys to look at the organization like a family more than a student organization, and it worked.

The family aspect is the perspective in which Black men look at mentoring. Black men look at mentoring as a community effort where everyone involved looks out for one another. This explains why so many Black men take their mentorship roles so seriously. It’s more than

mentoring, the fate of the community is at stake. Instilling the importance of community lasts for Black men, and Henry shared a story of how this impacted his outlook:

In my church, my pastor always preached community and taking care of one another.

That's how I grew up. If I did poorly in school, community members would scold me. If I did well, they would celebrate my accomplishments. That's how I treat my mentees. I teach accountability and family. We have to look out for one another and that will, in turn help everyone succeed.

Henry learned at a young age the significance of having a community that looks out for one another. This mentoring style of viewing it as a community holds everyone accountable for their role. Mentors have the responsibility of being the role model and supporter. Mentees have the responsibility to listen and understand that mentorship comes from a place of love. The participants mentioned that when mentors and mentees follow the community style of mentoring that both sides benefit from the relationship. Similarly, Lawrence provided this photograph that describes his thoughts on mentoring:



Lawrence provided an explanation on his choice in the photograph:

It is important that we reach back and assist those who look like us. I was fortunate enough to have mentors who pushed me forward and i want to do the same. When we reach back & uplift we create a chain reaction of positivity

Unity, accountability, and support are the commonalities between all participants when discussing mentoring relationships. The idea of family is similar throughout the participants as well. Participants view their mentees as a part of a community instead of just an average student. With the mindset of the participants, they have the best interest of their mentees in mind. Their goal is to have an open and honest relationship with their mentees. Many see the act of mentorship as a completely selfless act; one in which the participant is constantly giving to the responsibility of mentoring.

Consistent Acts of Selflessness

Mentorship is the ultimate form of selflessness. Black men understand this when signing up to be a mentor for undergraduate Black men. As Lawrence stated, “Mentoring is all about giving my mentees everything I wished that I had when I was a student.” Lawrence sums up the thought process many Black men feel about mentoring. It is a selfless act to provide students every opportunity of success. When describing the selflessness associated with mentoring, Jerome shared a story from his mentee:

One of my students explained it best to me in a lengthy letter at his graduation. He said that there is no way that he could ever repay me for everything I’ve done for him. I showed him the true representation of a selfless mentor and a servant leader.

Jerome shared this story about receiving a letter from one of his mentees that he helped through college. Consistent acts of selflessness is a constant reminder that Black men professionals that serve as mentors are selfless and are constantly giving their time, energy, and

oftentimes money to make sure students are provided every opportunity to succeed in higher education. Henry shared his experiences of giving to his mentees:

I have purchased bus tickets for my mentees to get home for Christmas break. I have paid for meals from local restaurants. I have also allowed a student to live in my basement when he was homeless for a summer. I just have an obligation to give. I know their struggle and I know the significance of being a college graduate as a Black man. If I can do anything to assist, I will.

For several Black men professionals in the field of higher education, they wear many hats. First, there is the paid position in the department that the Black man works in. In addition, there are the countless hours spent being a mentor to students on campus. In the job description of Mentor, nothing states out of pocket expenses as a requirement for the position. However, all participants stated that they came out of pocket on several different occasions to ensure their mentees had what they needed in order to perform well on campus. When discussing the act of paying out of pocket for mentees, Charles detailed:

I cannot remember all of the times that I purchased pizza, wings, and other food for my mentees. We will be sitting around the table studying and the guys will say they are hungry. I look at my watch and it is after 8:00pm (When the campus diner closes). So I order some pizzas for them.

The participants stated that giving students time, energy, and money is a huge part of the mentoring process. The participants explained that their mentees become more like little brothers. Oftentimes, the mentor relationship begins as providing advice to the undergraduate student. As many of the participants stated, over time, the role of simply giving advice transitions

to a “big brother, little brother” type of relationship where the mentor feels compelled to consistently give to their mentee. Bruce shared details of a story where he helped a mentee:

During the career fair, one of my students was very nervous because he really needed a job after graduation. So I’m talking to him before his set of interviews and I see that he forgot his tie. He was so nervous and anxious that he forgot his tie (laughs). His face turned white as he looked down and noticed he didn’t have a tie on. I had meetings that afternoon as well, so I take off my tie and give it to him.

Bruce provided this example and it shows the selflessness that professional Black men have when it comes to being a mentor. Although he had a meeting, it was more important to be the safety net for his mentee. This was another common theme among the participants; many stated that they often went above and beyond to ensure the success of their mentee. Ronnie explained, “They are a representation of me, in a sense. If my mentee needs ten bucks for a haircut for an interview, I give that to him. No questions asked.”

When asked to describe his relationship with his mentees, Jerome provided the following photograph:



Jerome provided the following explanation:

This is a picture of how I feel. The guy at the top of the mountain looks tired but he is still willing to give a helping hand. When I'm tired and feeling drained from my work day, I still have an obligation to be a mentor to Black men on my campus. They look up to me and expect me to be there for them. I cannot let them down. I would feel like I let my community down if I did.

Constantly working more than the typical eight-hour workday, was a common trend among the participants. Majority of the participants spoke about how they routinely performed mentorship type activities well after getting off from work. The participants' mentees have classes throughout the day and mentoring happens after working hours, as Ronnie explained:

After work is when a lot of my student organizations have their meetings. As an advisor, I have to be there and we are in meetings until maybe 8pm or 9pm depending on what we have to cover. Also, during midterms or finals, I am usually on campus until 11pm so that students can study in my office because the library closes at 9pm.

Participants explained that they all get to work around 8am or 9am on most days. Mentoring results in the participants staying on campus until 8pm or 9pm that evening, many times even later. Lawrence shared that:

I haven't worked a typical eight hour work day in a while. My mentees usually want to use my office to study because it's so quiet in our building. I don't mind though because I usually get a lot of work done after hours too.

Being a mentor is a very selfless act. Mentoring is giving your time and energy to someone in hopes to help them succeed. Black men mentoring undergraduate Black men experience issues outside of the typical mentorship relationship. During the BLM era, mentorship plays a vital role in the success of undergraduate Black men. There are costs

associated with being a mentor as well. The role can be very draining and tiresome. The role of a mentor has a few downfalls that many are unaware exist.

Downfalls to Mentoring

Mentoring is beneficial and extremely helpful to both mentors and mentees. Black men benefit tremendously from mentorship opportunities, but there are some downfalls to mentoring. Constantly being a servant leader and working late hours does not always please everyone. Black men professionals that are mentors receive criticism from loved ones that have the opinion that the constant selfless giving will eventually take a toll on their career, finances, or even their overall health. The act of giving too much is a discussion many Black professionals who mentor engage in with loved ones as Lawrence stated that:

I have family members, friends, and coworkers that think me giving so much of myself to my mentees is damaging and that I should pull back some from being so invested. I definitely understand their concerns but I am a public servant. That's the field that I chose, or the field that chose me rather. I love what I do and I love helping Black men reach their full potential.

People rarely notice or discuss the sacrifices made for mentoring. For most Black men, they give their full energy and attention to their mentees and ensuring their success, but this usually results in failing to give their time and energy to something else, as Henry shared similar experiences as he details:

Before I started working in this current position, I had a vibrant social life. I would hang with friends all the time and travel the world. Now that I'm more passionate in mentorship and student affairs, my friends and my social life have taken a back seat. My friends often make passive aggressive remarks about it.

When giving mentoring majority of the attention, something will take a backseat. As Henry shared, his social life experienced a huge change. For Black men professionals, these sacrifices are hurtful but it is understand that they are worth it. Jerome detailed a personal story about trying to balance mentorship and home life,

For some reason I had my dates mixed up, which is not like me at all. I had my daughters' recital at 1 p.m. and a few of my mentees Presidents Honor Club recognition ceremony at 3p.m. I mixed up the two and thought they were at different times.

Needless to say, my wife called me with a few choice words to make it to the recital.

Having loved ones doubt the profession that you love to do can be hurtful for many. Especially when you truly believe that you are making a difference. For Black men, they are doing something selfless by giving so much to mentor undergraduate Black men. While doing this, others see this as a waste and that being selfless is doing more harm than good. Charles explained:

My wife believes that I should cut back on my mentoring. I'm usually in the office a couple of hours after I get off with some of my guys. I would be lying if I said my mentoring hasn't caused a few disagreements in my household. I have definitely had to cut back some, not much.

From the conversations conducted, being selfless is something all participants have in common. With so many selfish people in the world, the consistent act of selflessness by Black professional men in higher education when it comes to mentoring undergraduate Black men is a much needed characteristic. However, this takes a major toll on family members that receive less attention because of this. With the participants, this seems to be a tireless effort to find balance between mentorship and personal life with family and friends.

Emotional Rollercoaster

When having a close mentor relationship with students, mentors experience a range of emotions. Mentors experience the happiest of days, to the traumatic lowest of low emotions. When having a close relationship with a mentee, mentors invest so much in their mentees lives that when situations arise, it deeply affects by them. Jerome shared an experience of helping one of his mentees who was struggling academically:

The biggest success story that I have is when I helped one of my students write his appeal letter to get back into school after falling below a 2.0 GPA and sitting out a semester. Fast-forward four years, he was thanking me as he was the speaker at his graduation commencement ceremony as the SGA president. That was one of my proudest moments as a mentor.

These experiences can be extremely rewarding for a mentor. During moments like these is when mentors understand the importance of their role. In addition, mentors learn how mentorship can genuinely change people's lives. Lawrence shared a personal story about repairing a relationship through mentoring:

I never had a close relationship with my dad. He died 10 years ago and I always regret not having that. I had a mentee that reminded me so much of myself. He really hated his dad when we first met. I met with him almost daily explaining to him the importance of repairing that relationship. I was so happy to find out that all my time pleading worked. He finally forgave his dad and they talk regularly.

Lawrence was very open with his story about his mentee and his father. Lawrence regretted the fact that he could not fix the relationship with his father so he worked hard to ensure that his mentee did not make the same mistakes as him. The success experienced by

students goes a long way in helping mentors understand their purpose. Bruce shared that, “I make sure to take pictures with all of my mentees at their graduation ceremony. I’m starting to gain a huge collection of photographs.” Ronnie’s experiences were similar:

The single most rewarding experience about mentoring is helping a student build their confidence, establish a plan to reach a goal, watch them work hard for that goal, and succeed in obtaining that goal. That is what makes mentoring worth it all.

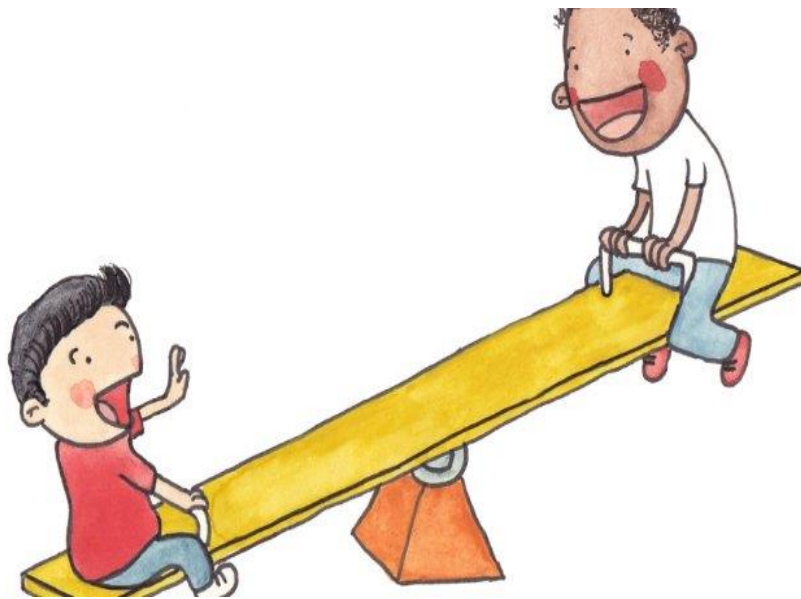
Along with the emotional highs of mentoring and watching the success of students come to fruition, there are lows experienced in mentoring as well. Mentors work with students over time and there are instances where a student does not respond well to the structure of mentoring or they are unable to understand the purpose of a mentorship relationship. These students do not keep communication going with their mentor and during meetings, they fail to be engaged in the relationship. Bruce shared his story of being unable to reach a student:

I think you always remember the students you cannot reach. The ones that you see potential in and they do not see that potential in themselves. I had a student I tried to mentor. I went to college with his mother. He was a good kid but got caught up in the wrong crowd and dropped out. Those are the students that keep me up at night at times.

For many mentors, they vividly remember the emotional lows of mentoring. The students who make poor decisions always resonate with the mentors. These students can stand out more to mentors than the successful mentorship stories. Charles stated:

I absolutely recall the students that went down the wrong path. Those really hurt. I just had a student this past semester drop out of school and was shot a month later. He is recovering, but I just think if I could have met with him one more time and try to help him, he would not have had to go through that.

Charles story shares a personal account of one of his mentees. He was very hurt by the fact that his mentee went down the wrong path and later suffered a near death experience. He blames himself for the mentee not staying in school and receiving a gunshot wound. This resonates with all Black men because there are moments like this where there is an overwhelming sense of responsibility and accountability. The uniqueness of Black men professionals mentoring undergraduate Black men is that the relationship goes beyond a regular mentorship. The relationship is more of a community type relationship where the Black man professional looks out for the wellbeing of the mentee, which goes beyond academics. Henry provided this graphic that describes his relationship with his mentees:



Henry shared:

My relationship with my mentees has its ups and its downs. The ups are always great; witnessing a college graduation, working hard and earning a B in a class, and joining a campus organization. The lows include losing those students to drop out or witnessing a student getting hooked on drugs/ alcohol.

The downside of mentoring seems to be watching students with so much potential, make bad decisions. As stated before, these moments resonate with mentors the most. Oftentimes these negative moments resonate more than the positive ones. Ronnie detailed:

I have seen hundreds of my students graduate over the years, it's always a great experience. We laugh and cry at the ceremony, then take a thousand pictures. I always seem to remember the handful of mentees that made poor decisions. The number of those students has to be about 8-10 but I remember each one of them. I go over areas where I could have done more in my head all the time.

The consistent act of selflessness is apparent of Black men that serve as mentors. When having those students that go down the wrong path in life or those students that fail to respond well to mentoring, Black men begin to question themselves and their role as mentors. Lawrence explained:

Mentoring can be tough at times. I still try to reach that one student with so much potential but just needs a little guidance. It is so frustrating to realize their great attributes but they don't see it yet. Sometimes you just want to shake them into doing the right thing! I start to question if I'm even fit to be a mentor or if my ways of mentoring are outdated.

Oftentimes, after failing to reach those students and contact is lost, mentors never give up on reaching those students. Bruce shared:

I think about where my former mentees are in their lives often. Especially the ones who were removed from school or decided not to come back to school. I try to keep up with them on social networking apps, but we lose contact a lot. I always try to find them.

From the stories shared, mentors seem to internalize a lot of pain when dealing with their mentees who did not do so well in school and life in general. They seem to blame themselves for part, if not all of the negative things that occurred in their mentees lives.



Jerome shared this photograph that describes how he views mentoring:

This photograph is of the famous happy clown, and sad clown. As a mentor, I experience extremely joyful times, which bring me so much fulfillment as a professional in student affairs. There are also instances where I am very sad and get emotional when mentees are hurting or make bad decisions.

The consensus from the participants showed that the unfortunate moments of mentoring seem to resonate more than the joyful ones. The participants internalize many of those mistakes that students make when it comes to their success and failures in life. These moments deeply impact Black men to where they feel as if they let down the entire community. The community consists of Black men who all have an unwritten rule to help one another as much as possible. The participants' emotional rollercoaster of having these mentorship relationships further ensure the importance of mentoring in their mind.

Mentors Mentor

As a mentor, it is important to understand the role and importance of serving in this capacity. For many mentors, they did not have someone to mentor them and for others, they were able to learn how to be a mentor to others from the example of their personal mentor.

Charles shared a story about how he was as an undergraduate student:

During my sophomore year, I was struggling. I was struggling in the classroom and I was struggling socially. And I had a lot of issues going on back home. I had a History professor that suggested that I join this mentorship program that he started. I went to an interest meeting and that History professor soon became my mentor and is still mentoring me today.

Participants in this study understand that through the encouragement of a mentor by pushing a student to reach their potential, students can benefit tremendously. There are instances where mentors did not have an example of mentorship as an undergrad. Bruce shares his example of wanting a mentor:

My older brother had a mentor while he was in school. I expected the exact same when I enrolled. I was surprised to see the dismal number of Black men working on campus. The ones who were employed by the university didn't really reach out to us (Black students). I tried to develop a connection with those faculty members but it never worked out. When I realized my passion for student affairs, I knew that I would be a mentor.

Bruce provided a story of the undergraduate Black men that institutions miss who are actively seeking mentorship opportunities. This area still needs improvement. Institutions stress diversity and inclusion but oftentimes miss the opportunities to develop engagement opportunities for undergraduate Black men. A huge part of being a mentor comes from

providing students opportunities that they never experienced as a mentor. Jerome detailed how not having a mentor while as an undergrad fueled his desire to be a mentor.

I didn't have a mentor in undergrad or graduate school. I still don't have a mentor currently. I learned about the importance of mentorship relationships, especially for Black men, while I was in graduate school. I made it a point to make myself available and provide resources to Black men on my campus.

Furthermore, he did some reflection on the importance of mentorship to success,

Being that I didn't have a mentor, I feel like that held me back as an undergrad. As a first generation college student, I couldn't go to my mom or dad about issues I was having in college. I needed that support system that could relate to things that I was going through. To this day, I think that if I had a mentor, I would not have gone through a lot of the struggles I experienced and I would have graduated on time.

Jerome, along with other participants shared the same experience of how helpful it would be having a mentor on campus and how it would have helped them tremendously. Having a professional on campus that looks like you and understands is crucial in retention and progression. Lawrence explained his struggles with finding a mentor.

I didn't have a mentor in college. I did have virtual mentor in graduate school that one of my professional organizations set up. It was cool. He was supportive and checked on me. But over time, we lost contact due to our schedules. I've tried to reach out to some guys to potentially become a mentor for me, but nothing has been successful yet.

Lawrence, like most of the participants' in this study struggle to find a mentor of their own. Because of this, they are more willing to be a mentor to undergraduate Black men on their

campuses. When detailing if he feels he missed the mentorship experience as an undergrad, Lawrence further explains:

I absolutely feel like I missed out. My mentees now are spoiled (laughs). We do a lot of fun activities and I make sure there is a learning objective attached to everything we do. I wish I had a mentor like that in undergrad. I would have benefited tremendously.

Both Lawrence and Jerome feel as if they both could have gained a lot from having a mentor in college. This drives them in their relationship as a mentor currently. Both participants also make statements about not having a mentor as a professional now and that seems to be an area in which they believe they could benefit from currently. Having a mentor is important, but having a mentor available on the same campus is very helpful. Campus life has its own challenges for Black men. Many of which are hard to endure alone. Black men want to feel as if their campus supports them when it comes to mentorship, professional development, overall perspective and several other key concerns. In the BLM movement, it is important for institutions to provide areas of support for Black men when society fails to.

Campus Life

Being a member of an underrepresented group as a higher education professional, has its own challenges. The number of Black men professionals on college campuses is consistently a low number compared to other groups. The issues faced by Black men professionals range from isolation, code switching, to microaggression. The climate on college campuses has improved according to the participants but there are some issues that higher education communities are a long way from correcting. One of the first major components of being a Black man on a college campus is institutional support. Institutional support is imperative for overall morale for an employee. For Black men, it is important to feel supported by the institution because of so many

issues in society. As the participants state, having support from the institution is the determining factor in staying at an institution or eventually leaving.

Institutional Support

Institutional support is important for a professional Black man that serve in the field of student affairs. The students that Black men serve on a daily basis rely heavily on the support provided by these Black men. It is imperative that Black men professionals receive the same support by their institutions. Institutional support exists in several ways, some include: allocating funding to support causes like mentoring that Black men professionals are passionate about, encouraging professional development, offering raises and educational opportunities are all important and show that an institution is supportive of their faculty and staff members. When Black men begin to feel the lack of supported on campus, isolation sets in. Black men begin to feel like they are not wanted on campus and that their voice, creativity, and point of view does not matter. The participants stated that having reassurance from supervisors, vice presidents, and professionals that are in key decision maker roles helps with confidence and overall office morale. Jerome shared a story about his first contact with his current institution:

My previous institution was not a place for growth or opportunity. That's one of the main reasons that I left. My new institution is very supportive. During my on campus interviews, I spoke with several people about being able to get my master's degree and they all were very encouraging and extremely helpful.

It is important to have an institution that supports an employee and encourages their progression. The participants all shared stories of longing for support from their institutions. Small things such as an encouraging word or a congratulatory e-mail all go a long way when showing appreciation and support for Black men professionals. Similarly, Bruce shared:

Whenever we have someone in my department graduate with their Bachelors, Master's or Doctoral degree, we have a celebration. Celebrating milestones is something encouraged at my institution. It's something that separates my supervisors from others.

Having the support of supervisors is huge for loyalty and morale. Lawrence shared a story of a deciding factor in picking between job opportunities:

After I completed my Master's degree, I was up for a raise. I also received an offer letter from another institution that I applied for that semester. I did my research and although the institution that offered me a new position was paying more, my current institution had a lot of the intrinsic qualities that I need as a young professional. Like encouraging me to even pursue my master's degree and then paying the tuition.

Money is important but not a deciding factor when it comes to a higher education position for most of the participants. As Lawrence shared, it was more important that his institution and his supervisors encouraged him and supported him financially to better himself educationally.

Support received from Black Women

Majority of the participants mentioned receiving some aid and support from Black women along the way during their academic journey. While working at their universities, the participants explained how Black women were a huge part of the success for the Black men and the mentorship program. Black men in this study also explained how Black women at their institutions were there for them during several police brutality occurrences, as Ronnie details:

After the murder of Mike Brown, I was really hurt and didn't feel like coming to work or working with my students. A professor on campus who I'm close with had lunch with

me and explained how important my job was and how important it was for me to be there for my students.

These traumatic experiences of police brutality have a huge impact on everyone.

Receiving support from coworkers or individuals at work helps tremendously in the beginning stages of healing. For the participants, receiving support is vital for them and these support efforts have come from Black women. The Black men in this study explain how important Black woman are in providing support, as Henry details:

I was always in my coworkers' office after Trayvon was killed. I didn't know what to do or think most days. I call her my personal therapist. She was always willing to allow me to come into her office and vent, cry, complain, or just sit there. I am forever thankful for her.

Throughout the study, Black men made it a point to explain how important Black women are to them. Black men made sure to express a tremendous amount of respect and adoration for the Black women that helped them with anything throughout their careers. Black men made sure to point out that Black women provided help professionally and personally as well, as Lawrence states:

My supervisor could tell something was off with me. It was during a hectic time in the office and we had a meeting in her office. I told her how I was having a difficult time focusing at work because of a family issue dealing with law enforcement. She immediately connected that to the police brutality occurring in society. She told me to take a few days and she would finish my reports. I call her my work mom. She is heaven sent.

Several times in the study, the participants explained how the support received from Black women provided them with the strength to continue working with their students. Bruce details an important conversation he had with his Vice President about continuing to empower Black men on campus:

I didn't think that I would continue working with my students. We failed to receive an important grant that I really wanted the guys to have. It would have given the young men an opportunity to travel and attend important conferences. I contemplated taking a year off from working with the organization because I was so frustrated. I spoke with my mentor who was also the VP of Student Affairs, a Black woman, and she really scolded me (laughs). She told me I was being ridiculous and that my students were counting on me. She told me that I didn't need money to change lives. I've been living by that motto since.

It became evident to me that many Black men have a Black woman on their campus or at other campuses who serve as a consultant or a colleague that they trust to provide advice, guidance, and support. In several instances, Black women serve as the support system Black men need in order to continue in their efforts to help students on their campuses. Having so much support from Black women is extremely beneficial, however the participants in this study were very detailed in explaining ways in which their institutions failed to support them.

Lack of Institutional Support

The lack of institutional support is very apparent during the early stages while an employee is at an institution. Some of the participants were very vocal about their displeasure for institutions that were not supportive and sometimes hindered their progression as a

professional. Bruce vividly recalls an extensive back and forth with his department about his educational opportunities:

Well, I was in a graduate program. My class would meet at 6pm once a week. The only issue was that I had to drive about an hour to get there. So this meant that I had to leave work early. My supervisor was not pleased and suggested that I find another employer because I wasn't "all in" with the department.

Bruce shared a story of not being able to progress academically because his institution failed to support him when it came to him attending class. This is a common occurrence for professionals where institutions refuse to support employees by doing anything to help them excel. Charles shared a similar story:

My supervisor would always ask why I was trying to get a terminal degree at such a young age. She would say that I had so much time to get that degree and I should only focus on work. I never understood why she would discourage me. She always said she had my best interest at heart. I found out later that she disguised her concern as jealousy.

Jealousy seems to be one of the main reasons why supervisors and department heads fail to support employees. Charles' story brings to light the frustration Black men face when trying to reach their goals. It is hard enough to fight stereotypes and other hindrances. Ronnie shared a photograph that describes his frustration with his institution:



Through his loneliness and frustration with the lack of involvement from his campus, Ronnie explained why he selected the photograph:

I won't lie and say that I'm on an island but it almost always feels like an uphill battle with few allies. Most of my colleagues live in a bubble and have the privilege of not having to keep up with current events like say, the murder of an unarmed black man because it doesn't affect their daily lives. A lot of them never have to wonder if that could happen to them or their loved ones.

Ronnie, like other Black men, feel isolated on their campuses. Oftentimes, Black men fail to feel adequately supported on their campuses. This lack of support is a constant reminder of the severe underrepresentation of Black men on campus and that the field of higher education is a long way from fully understanding the needs of Black men. A majority of the participants shared a story of failing to receive support from supervisors and coworkers when it comes to education. Henry detailed a story of receiving a reprimand from a supervisor for supporting a student organization:

I work in the rural south at a public university. After Barack Obama won his first election for President, the Young Democrats of America student organization held a celebration on campus. I stopped by to show my support for the students. A coworker

reported me to my supervisor and said that I was showing a bias through my political affiliation and this was causing a divide with the students and our office. My supervisor agreed and sent an email saying that employees can't divide students during a polarizing time like this.

Moments such as this, when supervisors fail to stand up for their employees resonated with the participants. It is very frustrating to suffer in this society, deal with a coworker who refuses to understand, and have a supervisor fail to be supportive. It makes a Black professional feel defeated and makes them want to quit. These stories caused all participants to be very vocal and they opened up more during these conversations. The participants are isolated because of low numbers of Black men professionals, so when a supervisor fails to support them on certain issues, they shut down even more. Jerome shared a story of holiday decorations in the workplace:

In our office, we are very festive around the holidays. I wanted to use holidays as a teaching moment to recognize Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. A few of my coworkers and other staff members found this to be anti-Christmas and vehemently were against it. My immediate supervisor stated that the idea was great but he didn't believe it was worth the turmoil in the office. I just didn't talk to anyone after that for months.

Failing to receive support makes a huge impression with the participants. All seemed to have a similar story where a supervisor did not support them when it came to an issue around the office. These moments of lack of support are very hurtful because a supervisor is supposed to lead their employees and put them in the best position for success, while also protecting them from anything damaging. The participants made it clear that issues in the office go beyond

supervisors not being supportive. There are also microaggressions that occur which are subtle but just as hurtful.

Microaggressions

Participants in the study were all very aware of microaggressions and shared similar stories about an incident where a coworker, supervisor, student, etc. made a comment that was microaggressive towards them or other underrepresented groups in their presence. Jerome stated:

I come from a very diverse background. I have friends of all backgrounds so I can get along with a lot of people. I can also take a joke. At lunch with coworkers, the conversation of playing sports came up. I mentioned that I've never played basketball and wasn't really good at it. One of my White coworkers looked at me in disbelief and kept saying "Really?" and that's surprising.

Bruce explained a story of advising a student:

One of my mentees came to my office after seeing his academic advisor. He was extremely upset and told me that his advisor told him that his engineering major may be too advanced for him. The advisor stated to him that from his experience, kids from his high school didn't perform well in demanding majors. My mentee went to a predominantly Black high school.

These comments are hurtful when they come from anyone, but when they come from coworkers in the workplace, this hurts a bit more. Staff members require a level of respect where everyone should feel safe and not experience derogatory comments. Black men deal with so many obstacles of racism and discrimination and to experience microaggression from coworkers can be overwhelming to where Black men want to give up all together. Many of the

participants stated that they have considered leaving the field completely. There are instances where microaggression comes from supervisors and individuals in leadership positions. As Lawrence shared:

Every year, our fundraising team has a golf tournament where we ask employees and community members to take part in a round of golf to help raise money for the university scholarship foundation. The Vice President of Fundraising was going around asking people if they had any interest in playing, he deliberately walked past my office and didn't ask me. He didn't know I was an avid golf player. I questioned him about this and he stated that he didn't think I played golf

Comments like these are hurtful because it is a constant reminder that Black men have to overcome stereotypes. It is also a reminder that regardless of how far Black men have come, there will always be people that discriminate against Black people. Lawrence's coworkers overlooking him for the golfing event may not seem like a big deal to many, but it is a big deal for Black men that experience isolation and loneliness on their campuses. Ronnie shared a story of a comment made by a coworker that made him question staying in higher education:

I attended a retreat where the President and his cabinet were attending as well. Our keynote speaker made a joke during her speech and mispronounced an athlete's name. I witnessed one of the cabinet members lean over to another member and say that women and sports don't mix.

Ronnie went on to state that he was in a difficult position because the comment came from a high-ranking higher education employee. Although Ronnie identifies as a man, the comment still affected him because discrimination is hurtful whether it stems from race, sex, sexual orientation, etc. Whenever comments of a microaggression tone occur, the participants

notice and it sticks with them for years. This can stem from being an underrepresented group on a campus.

When leaving a meeting and encountering a group of International students laughing, Lawrence stated that his former coworker said to another employee, “It’s okay, that’s just how they express themselves.” Lawrence proceeded to voice his displeasure about this coworker for a few minutes. Although, the comment was for someone else and not for Lawrence directly, he understands what it is like to receive criticism because of race. The comments made towards the International students are problematic because it makes it seem as if the students are doing something wrong when in fact, all they are doing is communicating with one another. These students deserve to receive the same treatment as other students without comments directed towards them.

Microaggressions are damaging because of the lingering effects that they cause. Recipients of microaggressions have physical, mental, and emotional issues that have the capability of affecting a person for years (Smith et. al, 2016). Many people feel as if comments like these are harmless and not meant to be discriminatory but these comments cause Black men to go into isolation.

Isolation

Being one of a few Black professionals on campus can get very lonely. The participants in this study shared their frustration with isolation and feeling excluded from employee functions. Coworkers tend to look at them as the “Black guy on campus.” The participants made it clear that they are proud to be Black men. They want their coworkers and other staff members on campus to actually take the time to get to know who they are instead of just “The Black guy on campus.” Charles recalled a moment of coworkers leaving him out of office plans:

After being at my position for a couple of weeks, I noticed that everyone would gather together around noon and all go to lunch together. My supervisor would walk past my office and not ask me once. It wasn't until another Black woman that worked in another department came over to ask me to lunch is when I began to stop eating lunch in my office.

The moments of isolation are common with the participants. Sense of belonging exists with professionals as well. Wanting to be included and a part of the group in the work environment are crucial to the overall morale for Black men. Jerome detailed a time where he experienced exclusion by coworkers and felt isolated:

Our office works the graduation ceremony for our institution every year. My coworkers (all White men and women) would meet to carpool since the venue was forty-five minutes away. No one asked me to carpool. This lasted for two years. I finally asked them why they never asked me. Their response was that they didn't think I would want to ride with them.

Assuming incorrectly causes isolation and not feeling wanted at an institution. The participants shared stories of coworkers stating "I just didn't think you would like to do it" as a reason for excluding them from activities. Lawrence provided more insight into isolation on his campus:

During lunch, I usually eat alone because employees at my school are already in groups and since I'm the new guy, and Black, I don't really fit into their groups. This is pretty lonely at times. During campus wide meetings, I sit with my student workers because I'm just not included with the other groups. They aren't that inviting.

It is extremely lonely being a Black man on a campus full of professionals that fail to acknowledge their presence. When society devalues Black men constantly, campus employees fail to acknowledge Black men. Bruce explained a story of isolation by his fellow coworkers:

The employees get really excited for basketball games. Everyone makes it a point to go to all of the home games and support our student athletes. Going to my first game, I get there and all of my coworkers are gathered around this huge tent and breaking it down.

They asked why didn't I come to the tailgate. I stated that I wasn't invited. It hurt to not be included in this. When things like this happen, I just stay to myself.

This was common occurrence. Feeling left out on a college campus is the norm for the participants. There were a few participants that did not feel isolated that much, only a few situations. However, a majority of the participants shared many stories of isolation on their campuses. The participants viewed some of the reason for isolation as a lack of communication and understanding. Some felt as if institutions should be more welcoming, especially to Black men since the numbers are so low.

The common theme among all participants is that isolation occurs and it is extremely hurtful and lonely. In student affairs, where many departments brag about their diversity and welcoming of people from different backgrounds, Black men are still feeling isolated. Isolation goes beyond not being invited to lunch or asked to ride to staff outings; in doing this, there is an underlying tone that says, "You're different from us, that is why we didn't invite you". For a Black man, this part hurts the most. It is bigger than an invitation; it is the context behind the lack of an invitation. Black men endure the isolation with the hopes to overcome stigmas and disprove myths society has about Black men. Black men work tirelessly to prove that the

narrative written about Black men is incorrect and they will show through their hard work and determination.

Overcoming Stigmas

There are certain stigmas and stereotypes that Black men professionals in student affairs are familiar with receiving. Some include, Black men not being able to graduate from college. Others state that Black men are unable to be decision makers within universities. The participants spoke openly about their fight to overcome these stereotypes and change the narrative higher education and student affairs has about Black men. Lawrence explained how these stereotypes drive him daily:

We all hear about the stereotypes that are out there about Black men when it comes to education. Every day I strive to prove people wrong and show them that with a little support, how talented and awesome Black men are.

Proving others wrong drives people to accomplish their goals. The stereotypes against Black men drive the participants to work harder. The stereotypes results in Black men becoming mentors and witnessing other Black men succeed. Much like Lawrence, other participants shared how they view societal perceptions of Black men and what they do to combat them. Henry detailed:

I always explain to my mentees, family and friends that our life is a book and we are the writers who control the story. Society has a perception of Black men and we can't focus on that. Our job is to be the best version of ourselves and be an example for the next generation.

One of the ways the participants stated they overcome stigmas is through support and accountability. Through support systems, Black men act as a community where everyone can go to receive help and criticism when needed. Jerome explained:

I have a support system in place of all Black men in student affairs. We have a group in GroupMe that we use to check on one another and have deep discussions. Our focus is to build one another up and not buy into what society says Black men should be and how we should act.

Having a support system is huge when trying to overcome different stigmas. Another tactic in overcoming stigmas is sitting down to have conversations with people of all races.

Bruce shared that having conversation with all people helps to eliminate perceptions:

I do a lot of traveling where I have uncomfortable conversations with student affairs officials. My goal is to transition their mindset about Black men; at the very least make them challenge their preconceived notions. These conversations are not always successful, but my job is to make sure they are happening.

Through these conversations, individuals' mindset about Black men can eventually change. Bruce goes on to state the importance of allies.

During my years of traveling and having conversations, we have obtained several allies of all races that are now very understanding and supportive. In order to fight against stereotypes, having allies is important as well. These allies play a critical role.

The participants all listed reasons why fighting stigmas and stereotypes are important to their job as student affairs professionals. These reasons varied from having support systems in place to challenge and support them to having those critical conversations and obtaining allies. Allies are important because they can use their privilege to combat negative stereotypes. The

participants in the study are all well aware of how society views Black men and they work daily to prove society wrong.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided the major findings from the narratives of Black men professionals in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. I separated the findings into themes of the Societal Concerns, Role of Mentoring, and Campus Life. Using these themes, I shared the narratives of the participants describing the current climate of being a Black man on a college campus navigating between different roles. The men were very open in their experiences of life on and off their campuses during the Black Lives Matter movement. The men shared their experiences of navigating their mentorship relationships with their mentees during the Black Lives Matter movement also.

Mentoring is a very important role that the participants serve. During the BLM era, mentoring undergraduate Black men is extremely important for many reasons. One of those reasons being that the undergraduate Black men need someone on their campuses who understands what it is like to be a Black man in society today and can provide the support needed to maintain in this world. Another reason that mentoring is extremely important is that it provides undergraduate Black men an opportunity to receive support and knowledge from a Black man that can provide guidance as the undergraduate Black man navigates through life.

These Black men serve the role as a campus employee where they have a job to perform. There is also the role of mentor where there is a huge responsibility to the success of undergraduate Black men. The last role discussed is navigating as a Black man and finding ways to manage their emotions during the current climate in America involving police brutality. The participants also provided their perspective of how their institutions fair when it comes to overall

support. The various roles Black men have often intersect, which the participants explained throughout this chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provided a perspective into the lives of Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. This study looked to examine the stories of six Black men during the Black Lives Matter movement and provide an outlet to tell their story. The Black Lives Matter movement is a social justice movement seeking to bring awareness to police brutality and the murders of Black people by the hands of law enforcement (Cooper, 2015). Through the participants' stories, the objective was to gain understanding and present their perspective in a storytelling format.

Summary of the Study

The transformative worldview guided this study. Transformative worldview places importance on the lives and individual experiences of diverse groups (Mertens, 2010). The transformative worldview examines how research intertwines with politics and confronts social oppression (Mertens, 2009). I examined the participants' story through Critical Race Theory. Through CRT, it is understood that racism is normal and at times an everyday occurrence (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Using this theory, the objective was to obtain the participants' story in their voice in the most genuine way by keeping race at the center to guide my study.

By using narrative inquiry, I provided the storytelling aspect of the perspective from the participants. Through the participants' lived experiences, I presented their individual stories. The goal was to shed light on Black men professionals in student affairs who mentor

undergraduate Black men during the BLM movement. Through the participants' stories, I collected data and separated the information into overall themes for the study.

Interviews were the primary data collection method in this study. The research questions that guided this study included: (1) What are the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs positions who mentor students who are Black men, in finding support on campus when it comes to issues of race? and (2) How are institutions supporting Black men who are student affairs professionals when it comes to issues of racism and discrimination? The research surrounding this study examined the lived experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs when it comes to issues of race, specifically during the Black Lives Matter movement.

The interview questions sought to examine what it looks like for a Black man in student affairs who mentors undergraduate Black men. The semi-structured interview structure allowed me to obtain in depth information about the participants and their experiences in their institutions and society. Through the interview questions, participants shared their experience of experiencing microaggressions in the workplace as well as some push back from coworkers and supervisors about their mentoring.

The secondary data collection method for this study was photo elicitation. Through photo elicitation, participants were able to be as creative and vivid as they wanted in answering the prompts. The prompts given to the participants included: (1) Provide a photograph that describes how you feel about race in student affairs. (2) Provide a photograph/meme/ drawing that describe how you feel being a mentor to Black undergraduate men on your campus. (3) Provide a photograph/meme/drawing that describes how you feel your campus supports you when it comes to issues of race.

Participants provided photographs that were a direct representation of their lived experiences in society and on campus. The photos submitted by the participants provided a vivid addition to the study. These photos provided the participants the opportunity to be as transparent as possible when describing what it is like to be a Black man in society today.

Collectively, the participants detailed that they have experienced racial battle fatigue for a multitude of reasons. One of which includes their support of Black Lives Matter. The men all mentioned how constantly discussing race and enduring microaggressions around the work place mentally and physically drains them. Black men experiencing racial battle fatigue is consistent with previous scholarship; due to high levels of stress, Black men internalize a lot of hurt due to racism, which has an effect on their overall well-being (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). Over a period of time, constantly discussing race and being the only Black man on campus can result in racial battle fatigue. The participants stated that their passion for diversity and inclusion is strong, but some days it can become overwhelming where they feel like giving up.

The participants also spoke about microaggressions and workplace racism experienced on their campuses. Lawrence, Chares, and Jerome detailed coworkers and supervisors on campus making racist and discriminatory comments around the workplace. The participants stated how these comments made them feel angry, hurt, and helpless. Experiencing microaggressions and workplace discrimination is similar to literature. At times, Black men feel helpless when microaggression occurs in the workplace (New, 2015). When this happens, the participants wondered if they should even report the incident because reprimands may not take place, which is also consistent with the literature about experiencing microaggression.

Throughout the study, it became evident how much Black men are willing to endure for mentorship and overcoming stereotypes about Black men. Jerome and Bruce in particular

explained how much they wanted to break barriers and change the perception that society has of Black men. Both participants detailed how dispelling the myths about Black men drive them daily and that their goal in mentoring is to develop young Black men to continue the legacy of breaking barriers.

Black men are willing to endure a lot in the workplace to dispel myths and overcome stereotypes. Black men put up with supervisors who are numb to societal issues, microaggressions, and lack of resources for mentorship programs. To Black men, the end goal outweighs their current situation. Dispelling myths and ensuring that mentorship succeeds through undergraduate Black men carrying the torch and going on to succeed is the end goal. For example, it is similar to working out for some people. The act of working out is not fun and it can be hard work. Working out is painful and draining, but the outcome of working out is worth it. To a lesser extent, this describes Black men working in higher education/ student affairs.

The amount of issues Black men endure while remaining resilient at their institution was something that I did not find in the literature. After conducting the interviews and witnessing the passion behind what drives Black men, it became evident. Black men deal with race issues in the workplace and other race issues outside of the workplace. They deal with these issues in hopes that staying at their job and helping undergraduate Black men through mentoring, that all of their hard work and resiliency will pay off with the success of Black men in graduating.

The participants also explained their lack of fitting in to the campus culture at times. Bruce, Henry, and Charles detailed stories of isolation on campus. Coworkers and supervisors failed to include Black men in campus events. Oftentimes, Black men feel lonely and left out of the campus culture and it contributed to their overall loneliness. With the events of BLM

happening, Black men already feel isolated in society where no one values them at all. With the mindset of Black men, it seems as if society does not value us, our campuses do not value us, and our coworkers fail to see how problematic these situations are.

Being a Black man on campus comes with a certain level of insecurity. Some of the insecurities the Black men face are whether they are qualified for their position, if employees like them, and the overall perception students and coworkers have about Black men. An imposter syndrome exists as well for Black men, as they question whether they actually belong. The loneliness felt by Black men is consistent with overall sense of belonging. The sense of belonging needed by Black men professionals in student affairs is something that was inconsistent in the literature.

Mentoring stood out the most during the study. Black men understood the importance of mentoring and took it seriously. As participants mentioned, at times mentoring took precedent over family and friends. One of the most important reasons mentoring is important for Black men professionals are because of the BLM era. The Black men in this study made it clear that they are experiencing loneliness and isolation during this period. The murder of Black men causes Black men to question their overall self worth. Mentoring provides the support needed to provide uplift during periods of self-doubt. Black men supporting undergraduate Black men through mentoring become very important during the racial climate of society today.

It is important for Black men to receive mentoring as well. It is crucial to have someone, who looks like you, be present to offer their support when experiencing racism and discrimination. Oftentimes, Black men professionals offer so much support that they fail to receive the same amount of support for themselves. In the next section, I will get into

implications and recommendations that leaders of institutions need to implement in order to support Black men professionals in student affairs.

Implications/ Recommendations for Practice

While interviewing the participants, it became evident that Black men did not feel a part of their campuses. For a majority of Black men, the consensus is that institutions fail to welcome them on campus or make them feel welcome in their overall transition to the institution. Black men do not expect a welcome party with balloons and confetti thrown to welcome them, but they felt as if the institutions they work for made an effort to make them feel wanted.

Mentoring is a very important aspect to Black men in student affairs. In this current BLM era, law enforcement treats Black men as if they are less than human. It is important to have mentoring in place to let the undergraduate Black men know that they are important and it is okay to be angry, upset, and hurt. Mentoring provides the support needed for Black men to lean on one another through this difficult period. Leaders of institutions should be cognizant of the climate of society and make sure mentoring programs are in place to assist Black men. There are specific ways in which leaders of institutions should improve their campuses when it comes to Black men: 1. Intentional Institutional Support for Black men 2. Mentoring matters. I will provide examples of how institution leaders should support Black men on campus.

Intentional Institutional Support for Black Men Professionals

Throughout the study, participants continued to mention their relationship with their institution. Black men struggled with the isolation and loneliness they felt on their campuses. Black men struggled so much at institutions that the lack of welcoming them and making them feel wanted, caused them to leave their institutions. Black men want to know that their institutions support them and want them a part of the campus. It is important for institutions to

be intentional about their level of support for Black men because the percentage for Black men professionals are consistently low. Institutions understand this and should develop action plans to intentionally support Black men professionals.

For Black men, their relationship with their campus (coworkers, supervisors, faculty members, etc), influenced how they felt about being at the institution. Black mens relationship with their institution has a direct impact on their relationship at the institution when it comes to overall morale. The inability to connect with an institution affects the Black male professionals' ability to perform their assigned job duties well and the ability to mentor undergraduate Black men.

Institutions lack of being intentional about retaining Black men professionals in student affairs is a direct correlation to the low numbers in the field. This also affects the mentorship relationship between undergraduate Black men and professional Black men in student affairs. If professional Black men in student affairs are not in the field, undergraduate Black men suffer. There is a direct correlation between Black men mentoring undergraduate Black men to retention and graduation.

When institutions support Black men, the results are apparent through results at the institution. There are certain incentives that institutions should offer that would go a long way in retaining Black men in student affairs. These incentives will help with overall morale and have a direct impact to the students in which institutions serve. Leaders of institutions can be intentional in their efforts to support Black men by A. Professional development opportunities B. Helping to create a sense of belonging for Black men C. Conduct critical conversations on campuses. In the following sections, I will provide examples of how institutions may better serve Black men student affairs professionals.

Professional Development. In the study, Black men stated that professional development is one of the biggest reasons for being satisfied at an institution. Jerome, Ronnie, and Bruce explained that when an institution provides opportunities for development, that shows actual caring about their employees. These professional development opportunities include setting aside funding for conferences, offering tuition assistance programs for furthering education, bringing in speakers to educate employees, to name a few.

Other areas of professional development display an institutions commitment to their employees. An example of leaders of institutions providing professional development opportunities is providing incentives for obtaining a degree. Four out of the six participants mentioned receiving extra money for finishing a degree and staying at an institution. The participants explained that this was a special moment for them and their overall perspective of their institution. The participants shared that when an institution rewarded their employees, it was a way of showing appreciation. Rewarding employees with professional development opportunities and accomplishing goals is a way of showing employees that the institution cares about their professional development and offers payment for them to stay.

Sense of Belonging. Strayhorn (2012) explained sense of belonging when it comes to students. While conducting interviews, it was noticeable that sense of belonging also connects to Black men in student affairs. The participants mentioned several instances where their institutions did not make them feel as if they were wanted at their institutions. In doing so, this had a direct impact on the participants' ability to perform their job duties and mentor undergraduate Black men. Institutions understand the disparity in numbers when it comes to the low percentage of Black men professionals who work in student affairs. There should be more of a plan in place to provide a sense of belonging to the Black men in student affairs.

Lawrence and Charles shared vivid stories of their institutions failing to make them feel a part of the institution. The participants explained that being a part of an underrepresented group on campus, there comes with a sense of loneliness already. The participants expected the institutions to be mindful of this and have plans in place to make them feel more welcome and provide a sense of belonging for the Black men professionals.

To aid in the sense of belonging aspect, institutions can develop a diverse welcome committee that looks to welcome all employees and make them feel a part of the institution. On this committee will include the president of the institution, a faculty member, high-ranking student affairs officer, and two currently enrolled undergraduate students. Members of the welcome committee would reach out to new employees for the first year of their employment to ensure that they are becoming acclimated to the institution and they would be a resource for anything the Black man needs.

The committee would host activities throughout the year including, faculty/staff mixers, lunch meetups once a week, and monthly birthday acknowledgements. These activities provide Black men with the confirmation that the leaders at their institution actually care about their overall well-being and their ability to become acclimated to the institution. If leaders of institutions conduct these activities, this will help with the loneliness and isolation experienced by Black men on campuses and help in their sense of belonging.

Critical Conversations. The participants explained how upsetting it was to have so much happening in society when it comes to race and unarmed murders of Black men, then come to work and their institution acts as if nothing is going on. Throughout the study, Black men explained how they would put their feelings to the side in order to be a support system for their mentees and other students. There should be a program available for everyone to discuss societal

issues. Having critical conversations on campus allows an outlet for faculty members, staff, and students to express themselves and have a dialogue with others.

A monthly session conducted by the leaders of an institution is something that takes little effort on campus. During these sessions, a moderator can open the floor for discussion and allow everyone to speak their mind on subjects that are occurring in society. This shows the campus body that institution leaders are aware of the issues happening in our society, that they are not ignoring these issues, while also allowing discussion of the issues. Doing this, will help with the disconnect felt by Black men towards their institutions. This also helps the institution in educating the campus on societal issues.

The president and other high-ranking officials (Vice President of student affairs, VP of Academic Affairs, etc.) can host a town hall meeting on campus addressing all issues and concerns with their campus. Issues addressed will include on campus and off campus important topics. During the town hall, an open discussion takes place where students, faculty, and staff can ask questions to the cabinet members. Conducting town hall meetings shows the campus and community that the cabinet members of the institution are aware of the issues the campus body wants to discuss and they are ready and willing to sit down to discuss these topics.

Mentoring Matters

As discussed previously, mentoring is very important to the overall success of Black men. The participants interviewed understand this, and make mentoring a priority in their personal and professional lives. With so much happening in society surrounding BLM, the importance of mentoring is at an all time high. Law enforcement officers are murdering Black men to a point where Black men are fearful of their lives. Mentoring provides a safety blanket in knowing that someone has your best interest at heart and will look out for your best interest.

Mentoring also provides a support system when Black men need it more than ever during this BLM era.

Institutions must do their part to ensure the success of mentoring. Their part includes supporting departments and offices that have programs in place to assist with the success of undergraduate Black men. Institutions understand the low percentages when it comes to Black men in higher education. It is important that institutions hold themselves responsible and understand that mentoring programs matters.

Decision makers at institutions should provide Black men professionals with mentoring opportunities as well. Understanding the importance that mentoring has on the lives of Black men, there should be an emphasis placed on the support of mentoring for undergraduate Black men as well as Black men professionals in student affairs.

Mentoring for Undergraduate Black men. Programs such as African American Male Initiative (AAMI), Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), and Brothers Of Leadership and Distinction (BOLD) are working tirelessly to aid in undergraduate Black men retention and graduation success. These programs offer tutoring, mentoring, and other resources to ensure that Black men have the help needed in order to succeed in college. Sadly, some of these programs struggle when it comes to institutional support and funding.

While understanding the importance of providing services to undergraduate Black men, the leaders in place at institutions need to be intentional about providing areas of support and funding for programs that directly help Black men. Several institutions mention diversity and inclusion in their mission statements but rarely implement programs or provide adequate funding that aligns to that mission. If education officials, universities and colleges, and institutions truly

care about diversity and providing opportunities for Black men to succeed, there should be more resources in place to aid in the support.

Adequate funding and support that directly assist in the retention and graduation of Black men is a primary area that leaders at institutions need to focus their efforts on. Levels of support include adequate staffing in place, where staff members are hired to directly assist undergraduate Black men, and that is their only position at the institution. There are instances where an institution leader hires a Black man to work with undergraduate Black men, while also having two to three other job responsibilities outside of that role. When a Black man has other job responsibilities outside of mentoring, this takes away from the primary goal of being a crucial resource to aid in undergraduate Black male success. Institutions need to ensure that these programs are adequately staffed and intentional in their responsibilities.

Mentoring for Professional Black men. When Black men receive mentoring from professional Black men, they have a higher chance at success (Whitaker, 2017). In understanding this, institutions should have systems in place to provide aid in helping to recruit and retain professional Black men on their campuses. Providing mentorship opportunities, where pairing Black men with one another so that they can have a point of contact to assist them would be very helpful.

Ultimately, it is up to the individual Black man to participate in mentoring. It is the responsibility of the institution, state, and educational systems to organize programs in order to retain professional Black men. Mentorship programs are a proven method that simply works. Although, some professional organizations currently offer mentorship opportunities for Black men (ACPA and NASPA), there should be more of an intentional effort by all institutions across the world. Executing these mentorship programs will create a domino effect. Mentorship

programs help retain the Black men professionals, these same Black men professionals remain at positions in their institutions while mentoring undergraduate Black men, which causes Black men to graduate from college.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future research is vital when it comes to advancing the field of higher education. It is important to look for different areas to research in order to help with the support efforts for professional Black men in student affairs. In this study, I examined the perspective of Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. It would be beneficial to research Black men in different institution types. Different institution types include Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Doing so could add to the research needed for Black men in student affairs. Conducting this type of research provides insight into the levels of support provided at different types of institutions. Data produced in this study further provides insight on ways to support professional Black men.

In this study, the participants are Black men of all ages. I did not specify any age group. Future research can look to investigate Black men who identify as a millennial as opposed to older professional Black men. The researcher can specify what they deem as “older” in their study. Conducting this type of research examines whether age plays a significant role in how Black men who mentor undergraduate Black men perceive levels of support.

It was apparent throughout the study the important role that Black women play when it comes to providing support to Black men in higher education. I think it is important to conduct research on the narrative experiences of Black women who provide support for undergraduate Black men. Also, I believe it will be beneficial to conduct research on the impact professional Black women in higher education have on Black men in higher education when it comes to

providing support. Hearing the stories of Black women is important in determining how to support all involved.

Finally, conducting this type of research using quantitative analysis could result in some beneficial information. Researchers can conduct surveys to gauge overall satisfaction with support levels by the leaders at institutions, institution type, institution size, part of the country, and satisfaction with mentoring programs. This type of research provides insight into what type of institutions provide the best level of support for professional Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. For example, a researcher can conduct a quantitative research on this study and provide their findings using charts and graphs. With these charts and graphs, a researcher can present the level of support a professional Black man feels for specific months of the school year. Understanding which months Black men feel the most supported provides information that would be beneficial for the field.

Chapter Summary

This study examined the experiences of Black men professionals in student affairs positions who mentor undergraduate Black men. While conducting interviews and listening to the participants story, it became evident that leaders in student affairs/ higher education have a long way to go. Some of the biggest concerns leaders at institutions need to address is ensuring that Black men feel safe and wanted at their institutions and making mentorship a priority on campus. There are issues occurring in society that are very important to Black men and some institutions are simply ignoring the issues. Black men are also enduring discriminatory comments and microaggressions in the workplace, which makes it difficult to feel a part of an institution. These comments are hurtful and cause anger. Black women display an unwavering

level of support for Black men. Throughout this study, participants mentioned being supported consistently by Black women in and out of their workplace.

Mentoring is also very important to Black men, and with a lack of resources and support from their institutions, Black men continue working, providing mentorship and leadership for their mentees. Black men also suffer under isolation and loneliness on their campuses.

Oftentimes, there are a handful of Black men, at most on campuses, which can lead to alienation and helplessness.

Overall, the participants showed that Black men professionals in student affairs have a certain level of fortitude and determination to break down barriers and overcome stereotypes to dispel myths society has about Black men. The goal that the Black men in this study have remains to empower undergraduate Black men and ensure they have every resource possible to succeed. When institutions fail to offer resources and funding to aid in the retention and graduation of Black men, Black men keep going. When discriminatory comments and microaggression happens, Black men keep going. When police abuse, assault, and murder Black men, Black men keep going. The resiliency Black men possess comes from knowing that there are other Black men and women in their corner who genuinely understand them and will always tell them to “Keep going.”

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM

A Narrative perspective from Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: *Demetrius Smith*
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide the perspective of Black men in who are professionals in student affairs that mentor undergraduate Black men. I intend to provide the stories of Black men and their experiences in the field of higher education/ student affairs.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- *Participate in interviews that will take place in person or through skype, google hangouts, etc.*
- *Participate in interviews lasting about an hour.*
- *Provide a photo based on a prompt provided by the researcher. Participant will provide their reaction to a photo elicitation prompt. Participant will be asked to provide their feedback for the photo elicitation section before the interview is conducted.*
- *Participants will be asked to provide stories of any workplace discrimination, injustice, or racism experienced. Participants will be asked for any stories of racism, injustice, or discrimination experienced by any of the students that they mentor.*

Risks and discomforts

- ❖ *There is a chance of Psychological risks (e.g., feelings of stress/discomfort, sadness guilt or anxiety, loss of self-esteem, etc.)*
 - *During the interviews, I will ask questions about race, discrimination, high profiled murders, etc. These questions may cause stress and discomfort to some participants. During the interview, I will constantly remind the participant to take as many breaks as needed and that participation in the study is completely voluntary.*

Benefits

- *Through this study, the field of higher education will receive access to the perspectives of Black men professionals in higher education/ student affairs during one of the difficult times the United States has faced when it comes to issues of race and racism. Participants of this study will provide the voices of these Black men and share their unique and individual stories of their experiences.*

Incentives for participation

There are no incentives for participation.

Audio/Video Recording

Audio of the interview is needed in order to analyze the data during the study. Audio recordings will be destroyed after a year.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this audio interview recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have this interview recorded.

_____ I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the identity of all participants. Upon completion of interviews, participants will receive a copy of the interview transcripts to review. Also, only the interviewer (Demetrius Smith) will have access to all audio interview recordings, interview questions, etc. to ensure the confidentiality of all participants involved.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is *Demetrius D. Smith*, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact *Demetrius D. Smith*. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Consent Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Chris Linder, Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled A Narrative perspective of the support efforts in place for Black men in student affairs who mentor undergraduate Black men. The purpose of this study is to hear the perspectives of Black men in student affairs and to provide an opportunity to learn from their experiences in the field.

Your participation will involve an interview and photo elicitation prompts and should only take about an hour. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Collected data will be retained and analyzed that relates to the subject up to the time of subject withdrawal. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Your confidentiality will be secured during the duration of this study. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only.

The findings from this project may provide information on the perspectives of Black men professionals in higher education/student affairs. There are some minimal risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include potentially speaking about any racism or injustices experienced and how the participant feels about the incident.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me or send an e-mail. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Demetrius D. Smith

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

- Describe your role at your university
- Describe your role as a mentor to undergraduate Black men at your university
- What are your thoughts on racism
- Have you experienced racism in higher education? At your university? In your department?
- Have the students that you mentor experienced racism in higher education? At your university? In your department?
- How do you feel about the police brutality of Black men occurring in this country?
- How do the students that you mentor feel about the police brutality of Black men occurring in this country?
- How do you deal with your emotions when it comes to high profiled police brutality incidents?
- Do you have someone to talk to? If so who?
- Do you have a support system of colleagues? Can you describe them?
- How do you communicate?
- Do you feel as if your institution is supportive of you when it comes to racism? Why or why not?
- Is your institution progressive when it comes to issues of race and racism?
- Should there be more conversations on campus for issues of race for faculty/ staff/ students? If so, what are some ways to increase the conversations?

APPENDIX D

Photo Elicitation

For this part of the data collection, I will be providing a prompt for you to share a photo, meme, gif, drawing or any other picture that answers how you feel about the prompt. Along with your picture selection, please provide 3-5 sentences explaining your reasoning for selecting the photograph. You can submit to me once you are finished through e-mail, Dsmith91@uga.edu

Prompt #1: Provide a photograph/meme/gif/ drawing that describes how you feel about race in student affairs. Below your photo selection, provide 3-5 sentences explaining your selection.

(Insert photo elicitation selection here)

Prompt #2: Provide a photograph/meme/gif/ drawing that describes how you feel being a mentor to Black undergraduate men on your campus. Below your photo selection, provide 3-5 sentences explaining your selection.

(Insert photo elicitation selection here)

Prompt #3: Provide a photograph/meme/gif/ drawing that describes how you feel your campus supports you when it comes to issues of race. Below your photo selection, provide 3-5 sentences explaining your selection.

(Insert photo elicitation selection here)

Prompt #4: Provide a photograph/meme/gif/ drawing that describes how you feel as a professional during the Black Lives Matter movement. Below your photo selection, provide 3-5 sentences explaining your selection.

(Insert photo elicitation selection here)

APPENDIX E

Codes and Themes

CODES	THEMES
Black Lives Matter Workplace Discrimination Microaggression Community Politics Discrimination Racism at work Racism outside of work Unpacking emotions	Societal Issues
Support Late hours Students Success Failures Institution support Financial support Emotions Crying	Role of Mentoring
Helplessness Support from Black women Supervisors Coworkers Community involvement Lack of empathy Hurting emotionally Bubbling inside Loneliness Inability to understand Inability to relate Idiotic comments	Campus Life
Law enforcement Being pulled over Forums Family interactions w/ police BLM Trayvon Martin Eric Garner Disconnect Lack of trust Critical conversations	Police Brutality