

HE GETS ME: BLACK MALE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AS SITES OF MUTUAL
LIBERATION

by

VERONICA NADYNE PERRY

(Under the Direction of Bettina Love)

ABSTRACT

Black male students find themselves in a conundrum when they walk into the school building each day. There is often a desire to be educated, but a gradual breaking down of who they are since they are the anthesis of the dominant culture. Teachers are often the welders of this power, which leads to unfavorable outcomes in the school setting. Due to the lack of Black male adults inside of the school building, these relationships often go unformed. This study, coming from a qualitative narrative research approach, offers the narratives of nine Black males 18-40 who experienced a Black male mentoring relationship as either a mentor or mentee. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling. The narratives were gathered using semi-structured interviews and help us understand the lived experiences of Black males who had been involved in mentoring relationships and how it assisted them in navigating race, racism, and masculinity. The study provided the findings 1) Navigating race and racism involves intentional conversations when the mentee is ready for them 2) Black male mentoring relationships help youth and adults alike to understand the complexities of identity development

3) Masculinity is multidimensional and develops over time. 4) Schooling can be oppressive and enlightening depending on who is in your corner 5) Black male mentoring relationships are successful when they are loving, accepting, and mentee driven. Participants were able to offer recommendations for successful Black male mentoring relationships, and additional research topics are suggested to improve the field and meet the needs of Black males.

INDEX WORDS: Black males, Education, Mentoring, Critical Race Theory, Narrative Inquiry, Race, Racism, Masculinity

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the epitome of a mentor... My Papa Bear, Frank David Brown. Love you, I hope I am making you proud.

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“ For I know plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I think back over my thirteen years in education, there is one day that holds both regret and pride. Six years ago, I got into an argument with a fellow teacher at work, whom I will call Mr. Thomas. The argument came about from my observation of the way a white male teacher was treating a group of Black male students. I work at a school that has 90% Hispanic student enrollment. Black students are in the minority at the school. This particular year, there were five Black boys in 8th grade. I was the only Black teacher on the grade level. The boys had come to me on different occasions, complaining about the way Mr. Thomas had been treating them. They complained that they got in trouble for doing the same thing as other students, or they were singled out in front of the class.

The students were in my class for first period, and this particular day, I wrote them a pass to their lockers. When they got to the cafeteria, Mr. Thomas decided that the five of them together were a threat and sent them back to my classroom. I sent them again, and once again, they were returned to my classroom. The next time, I walked with them. I sent the students to their lockers, and the teacher proceeded to come to tell me why he had not allowed them to go. We started arguing in the cafeteria. While I am not proud of the way that I handled it, I am satisfied that these five young men knew that I would not allow anyone to stereotype or mistreat them within our school building.

After the confrontation, my Principal called me in her office. I explained the situation. She told me that I made the situation racial by talking to the teacher, and that I should have sent a

white colleague to talk to the teacher. I stood my ground and told her that I would not stand for watching any staff persons in the building treat our students differently because of their race. Somehow, I remained employed following that meeting.

Often Black teachers see and hear things that are done to their students and do not feel empowered to do anything. Other times Black teachers are the ones who are oppressing students. No matter who is doing the oppressing, Black students are affected by the way teachers interact with and teach them. As the only Black teacher in that grade level, these boys spent much time within my classroom. They were always very vocal about the fact that one of the reasons I was their favorite teacher because I understood them and what they were going through. At my school, during that time, there were no other Black teachers in the grade level and a Black male teacher was the gym teacher. Overall there was not a large percentage of Black teachers at the school. These boys expressed how important it was for them to see someone who took the time out to talk to them and, in essence, mentor them throughout their 8th grade year. Two of these young men still come back to the school to visit me and volunteer at the school even though they are in their twenties.

My relationship with these boys was not only beneficial for them, but it also made me a better teacher. I became more aware of the microaggressions with teachers at our school, and more willing to call them out on them. I also became more aware of my own biases when it comes to Black students, like the idea that you have to speak to them a certain way in order for them to listen. Looking back at that year, there was a mutual liberation that occurred for both those students and myself.

Throughout history, Black and Brown students have had their intelligence, culture and their very beings problematized. When students feel disenfranchised from school, they often

give up, and this further complicated their futures (Lewis, 2014). Young Black men need people in their lives who can help them navigate these moments in their lives.

This chapter will begin with the background and context for the basis of the study, followed by the problem statement, purpose, and research questions. My background and assumptions will be displayed, and the chapter will end with the significance and the rationale for the study. For this dissertation, the terms African American and Black will be interchangeable.

Background

Researchers studying U.S. Census in 1900 reported that 57% of all African American males were illiterate. In the 2000 Census, this figure was 44%, which means that literacy has only decreased by 13% (Jenkins, 2006). The Schott Foundation on Public Education has determined, based on graduation data, that only 52% of Black males graduate from high school, compared to 70% of their white counterparts. In 38 out of 50 states, Black males rank the lowest for graduation percentages among Black, Latino, and White, non-Latino male and female students (Jackson, 2012). If graduation rates continued in the same manner, it would take 50 years for the rates to reach that of their white counterparts (Jackson, 2012). Black males are also the most likely to be placed in special education services, labeled mentally disabled or behaviorally disordered, and more likely to be disciplined, suspended, or expelled from school (Jenkins, 2006; Kenyatta 2012; Noguera, 2003). The statistics related to the academic achievement of Black males are disheartening. Interestingly enough, the last major update of educational data was done in 2016, before the new president came into office.

Ladson-Billings directly disagrees that there is an achievement gap for Black students. She states that the issue within America is that the educational systems have not given students,

especially those in poverty, what they deserve (Ladson-Billings, 2007). She points the structural inequalities that exist that give students in poverty an inadequate education and the desire to study the population without doing anything to address their plight (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Ladson-Billings (2007) points out the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debts that have all combined to account for how education occurs for Black students and their owed educational debt.

Justice System

Students' lack of performance in the classroom often correlates with future illiteracy, unemployment, and the overrepresentation of Black males in the criminal justice system. According to Palmer and Maramba (2011), one in four Black males between the ages of 20 and 29 are either in jail, on probation or parole. Looking at the statistics for Black males in jail, however, does not tell the whole story. Left out of the conversation is information about where statistic were gathered from structural education issues and the mass incarceration of African Americans (Toldson, 2019). The documentary, *13th*, presents the historical and political connection between African American males and the penal system. The documentary begins with the importance on the 13th amendment, which is known as the one that freed the slaves, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States" (U.S. Constitution, 1776). The documentary points out the importance of America's obsession with placing Blacks back into prison for a continued labor source. As Michelle Alexander points out in *The New Jim Crow*, over time, America has continued to find ways to control African Americans, in slavery, Jim Crow, and in other programs that continue mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

Stereotypes

Many Black male stereotypes are believed, entrenched, and perpetuated by the school system. These perceived stereotypes begin at the top with Superintendents who make school policy and drizzle down to the staff who enforce these policies. Even before slavery officially started, there were negative views of Blackness, which became more prevalent as Africans were brought over to the Americas (Isom, 2007). The idea of Black men as laborers, overly sexualized, and aggressive beings are thoughts that have not gone away even centuries later (Isom, 2007). Black males tend to be stereotyped as violent, over-sexualized, and anti-school, and many of these stereotypes have been around for centuries (Isom, 2007). The result is Black male students who are subject to people who are inherently afraid of them and treat them as such. Due to this, there is a likelihood of teachers labeling Black male students as at-risk and determining that their behavior is problematic (Bryan, 2017). Perceived problematic behavior leads to them being punished for their behavior more often and more severely than their peers. As students begin on this path of being suspended or punished for their infractions, the likelihood that they drop out and become involved in the prison system increases; this is known as the school to prison pipeline (Bryan, 2017).

Black Teachers

Black male teachers make up less than 2% of the teaching force compared to White female teachers who make up 63% of the teaching force (Toldson, 2019). For every 15 White female students, there is one White female teacher, but for every 534 Black male students, there is one Black male teacher (Toldson, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Information in the latest available information from 2016, over 80% of public school teachers were White, and 7% were Black (De Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S.,

Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Branstetter, C., & Wang, X., 2019). Compared to the data presented in 2011, the White population of teachers has gone down 4% while the Black population has gone down 1%. This statistic speaks to the diversity of ethnicities rising while Black is not. In a nation where over 17% of our school children are African American, these numbers seem problematic. Some students go through 12 years of school without having a minority educator (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Over 35% of schools in the United States do not have a single minority teacher (Ingersoll & May 2011). The majority of teachers in the United States are middle-class White females who find African American males outside of the norm and thus either treat or punish them due to that perception.

For over twenty years, there has been an issue with the recruitment and retention of Black male teachers in the United States. Lewis and Toldson (2013) state that there are three reasons for this, the low numbers of Black males who attend college, which they report is around 13% of the Black male population. Of this 13%, very few chose a field related to education, and an even smaller percentage of those who choose it as a major, become an educator. Brown (2012) states a similar explanation that focusing first on the fact that Black males have had negative experiences in school, lessens their probability of graduation and entering college and decreases their interest in education.

The increased interaction between Black male adults and students is necessary. In a study done by Ellis et al., (2018), the authors found that race centrality, the sense of race being an essential part of their being, is a predictor of school efficacy, their feeling of being a part of a school community. This fact is important because of the strong correlation that they found between combating racial academic stereotypes and school efficacy (Ellis et al., 2018). When

African American males feel like their race relevant to who they are, they can achieve educationally despite the stereotypes that exist about them.

Mentoring

Since the number of Black male and female teachers in school systems is proportionally small, mentoring becomes the perfect vehicle for communication between the two. According to The National Mentoring Partnership, a 20-year veteran agency that advocates for mentoring, when at-risk students have mentors, their chances of success improve. For their research purposes, the organization defines "at-risk" as students who answered yes for any of the following: low academic achievement, having a parent who was in jail, behavioral issues at school, poor attendance, homelessness and delinquency (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). For this reason, communities, schools, non-profits, and government agencies are all investing in mentoring programs (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). More than 75% of youth who are labeled "at-risk" but have available mentors graduate from college compared to 56% who do not (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). In the 4th Edition of Elements for Effective Practice for Mentoring, mentoring is defined as taking "place between young persons (i.e., mentees) and older or more experienced persons (i.e., mentors) who are acting in a non-professional helping capacity to provide relationship-based support that benefits one or more areas of the mentee's development" (Garringer et al., 2015, pg. 9). Mentoring improves students' academic achievement and engagement with peers. Studies show that students with mentors are more likely to have better feelings about school, better academic performance, better social relationships with peers, and other positive factors (Wheeler, Keller and DuBois, 2010). Furthermore, at-risk students who have mentors are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and be involved in leadership roles in school (Rhodes, 2005). Research comparing the costs of mentoring programs

with the cost of handling youth who are in trouble suggests that there is a \$3 per person that returns to society when spending money on mentoring programs that provide quality services (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Problem Statement

Even as we get farther away from slavery, Black males are still confronting the stereotypes that are placed on them by society. While they take place in the larger society, the first place that youth learn these are in schools. Schools are the first place that students learn what is acceptable for them and what is frowned upon.

Paulo Freire (1993) stated that schools either maintain social standards or help people to change them. For many Black male students, social standards are maintained. It is evident in how those within the school building interact with them (Isom, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Lynn 2010; Wright, 2011). One particular issue is the stereotype of the violent Black male who does not want to learn. Students are surrounded by stereotypes that are perpetrated by the school and trickle down to their teachers. These stereotypes lead to unfair treatment in school and low academic achievement through the ways that it impacts students (Graham, 2008).

One of the ways to address this is to provide Black youth with people that have been through similar situations and can alter the common misconception of what it means to be a Black man. This means offering young men with the spaces to openly and honestly discuss what it is like to be a Black male, helps them to survive and succeed in the institutions that are holding them down. Since schools are the first place Black youth come into contact with these stereotypes, it would be an appropriate place to combat them. However, the underrepresentation of Black males in the school building, combined with the master narratives, there is little to combat these stereotypes for Black youth without a mentor.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the mentoring relationships between Black males and how these relationships help navigate race, racism, and masculinity. By looking into their interaction, communities, teachers, and schools with gain information and tactics to make sure that we address the needs of Black males that grow up in a world where everything about them is problematized. As a community, it is necessary to increase the number of interactions between Black males and students. By strengthening interactions between Black males, where they see themselves in other Black men, it will help to contradict the stereotypes and build positive identity and masculinity. The study is also needed to uncover what helps Black males feel satisfied by a mentoring relationship, and what makes it successful in their eyes. A successful mentoring relationship for this study is one that liberates Black males from the dominant narrative that they grow up hearing and to help them feel comfortable expressing their voices.

The conversations between Black males in mentoring relationships are essential to uncover because of the lack of literature concerning them and the impact that they have on the lives of Black youth. My study aims to shed light on the mentoring relationships that have been experienced by Black males between the ages of 18-40 and how schools, communities, and society can work together to combat the counternarratives that impact the lives of Black men. This study is directed by a guiding research question and four secondary questions.

Guiding Research Question: How does the Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism, and masculinity?

- 1) In what ways do Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of Black Males?
- 2) What do Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?

3) What counter narratives are told between Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?

4) What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?

Statement of Significance

This study is significant because it provides the voices of Black men that are usually silenced. It also indicates how Black men use what they learn from their mentors and what they teach their mentees about race, racism, and masculinity. Providing mentors and mentees with counternarratives is vital in ensuring that Black students, and for this study, Black males, can exist in a world that sees them as a problem. To truly understand the lives of Black men, people must hear their voices. The conversations Black men have with each other, and the things that they share, help them to navigate the world they live in. This study helps to combat the dominant narrative that often has adverse effects on the construction of identity and masculinity.

Mentoring programs are often designed by whites who have a deficit view of Black males, so this research will help build mentoring programs that are effective and impactful. Participants in mentoring programs must also be allowed space to talk about their feelings and process issues that come as a result of stereotypes or the images conveyed in the media (Graham & Anderson, 2008).

Research Approach

While there has been much research on the deficiencies of Black males, the academic community is just beginning to provide research on successful Black males. Often this research is done without Black people, and research conducted about Black people without the perspective of Black people should not be considered as valid research (Toldson, 2019). This study fills the gap in the literature by providing counternarratives from nine Black males, who

have either been mentors or mentees. Participant selection occurred through snowball sampling and the narrative are presented from the voices of the participants.

Overview of the Theoretical Framework

While covered in depth during the literature review, Critical Race Theory (CRT) came about as a way to describe and focus on how race is a remarkable and essential way to look at and respond to the treatment of people of color in America (Dixson & Lynn, 2013). While in its inception, it was used to look at the legal system, it has since expanded to other areas, including the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Five tenets, or hallmarks, support the CRT framework: race matters, history matters, praxis matters, interpretation matters, and voice matters. Using CRT is helpful because of the systemic nature of the issues that cause the assault on Black male youth.

When viewing an issue with a CRT lens, some researchers find that the tenant of voice is the most important (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The voices of Black males are often missing from research, and their lives are looked at from the outside in (Hucks, 2011). Voice uses the experiences of minorities and turns them into knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Overview of Methodology

This study will employ Critical Race Theory as its theoretical framework and methodology. Solórzano & Yosso (2002), present CRT as a way to ground the research done on people of color. CRT methodology with a focus on counter-storytelling will bring these issues to light and also help to find solutions to the problem. The lack of counternarratives provided to teachers, administrators, policymakers, and society affects how the public views these students and also their probability of being inadequately educated. Black youth are also affected by the missing counternarratives, which, if provided would give them a clear picture of themselves.

Counternarratives are a useful method in researching education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counternarratives are the methodology that connects to the CRT tenet of voice. They allow for the experiences of those that are marginalized to be heard, at the same time providing a humanistic side to theory and practice (Sleeter & Delgado, 2004). Counter storytelling can also be a pedagogical tool, in that it can allow educators to understand experiences. In order to capture these narratives, the research was conducted using interviews and field notes.

Definitions

There are several terms that will be used throughout this study that are important to understand.

Counternarratives/Counter storytelling: These are narratives provided from the perspective of someone who is not a member of society's dominant group (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013).

Dominant Culture: In America, the background of the persons that are in charge in the country, white, middle-class males, and females

Formal Mentors/mentoring: Mentors provided by schools and organizations (Black, Grenard, Sussman & Rohrbach, 2010).

Intersectionality: How the combination of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc. combine to form identities (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Master Narrative/Dominant Narrative: Narratives given from the perspectives of society that come from the dominant culture, i.e. White society (Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgeman, 2011).

Mentoring: the one to one or group dynamic of an adult and one or multiple young people, or adults (Fruht & Wray-Lake, 2013).

Natural Mentors: Mentors that occur naturally in a young person's life; often these are people from their family, teachers, coaches and community members (Fruht & Wray-Lake, 2013).

Voice: The ideas and opinions express from a member of a minority group. (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

How does it feel to be a problem? – W.E.B. Du Bois

To examine the research on Black males is to reveal how it mostly problematizes them. Research on Black men paints them as inferior and urban, engaging the subject at hand from a deficit perspective where bad things that happen are the fault of the Black men themselves (Howard, 2013). In 1884, Nathaniel Slaughter wrote about Blacks as the most challenging problem in civilization (Howard, 2014). For many Black males, society's perception, developed over centuries of lazy history and lousy science, has deemed their very existence a societal problem. These stereotypes are often accepted and acted out within communities, schools, and workplaces. These stereotypes are developed by what scholars call the dominant narrative: the beliefs and stories of a white society that has been in power for centuries. To reject the dominant narrative, it is critically important for Black men to define who they are for themselves. To fully understand race, racism, and masculinity, one must use a historical and modern lens. This chapter begins by looking at this problematic history and how it has affected the education system and ends with an in-depth look at mentoring as a way to counteract the damage done.

Race

Many scholars state that race is a social and political construct used to relegate minorities into a place of inferiority (Noguera, 2016). Though constructed, race is an essential part of society. Historically, race justified slavery, by stripping away Black peoples' humanity, it could

explain away their mistreatment. As time continued, they are dubiously labeled “science” provided “evidence” for why Blacks were inferior. The “science” of eugenics perpetrated the idea that there were groups, obviously white, who were genetically superior to minorities (Noguera, 2016). More recently, biological, genetic, anthropologic, and social sciences have determined that race is a social construct and that, in terms of DNA and genetic traits, there are very few differences between people of different races (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Identity

Racial identity

Racial identity refers to how people respond to racism and oppression (Gordon, D. M., Iwamoto, D. K., Ward, N., Potts, R., & Boyd, E., 2009). Developing a positive racial identity is paramount to becoming a successful Black male since Black males are constantly bombarded by media images that paint them in a negative light (Toldson, 2008). In a study by Denise Isom (Isom, 2007) performed at a community based after school program with seventy-five fifth, sixth, and seventh graders, students discussed how they perceived themselves racially and concerning gender. Results indicated that most of the boys associated athleticism or toughness with being male. When the youth defined themselves regarding what their teachers would say about them, they often referred to their academic abilities or their behavior, and most of the time, it was in a negative connotation. The students also reported being watched more closely than their white peers and being treated like they were outsiders.

As Black students struggle to get away from the stereotypes placed on them due to their race, some students begin to distance themselves from their Black peers and reject them as well. Black male students begin to adopt the idea of individualism prevalent in white communities, leaving behind the connectedness present in Black communities (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager,

1995). There has been conflicting research as to whether denying themselves or assimilating is academically beneficial or detrimental for these young men (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012; Isom, 2007).

An ethnographic study done by Jay MacLeod provides a thought-provoking point of view (MacLeod, 2009). The book chronicled the lives, aspirations, and expectations for the future of a group of white students, the Hallway Hangers and a Black group, the Brothers. The Hallway Hangers had seen their families and friends be unsuccessful academically, and thus believed the same would be true with themselves. Many had given up on the prospect of achieving anything in school. They began to find their respect in the community, which they said led them to drug use, violence, and jail time. The Brothers were not bogged down by the limited success that they had seen in their parents' lives and were still optimistic about their future. MacLeod (2009) credits a robust racial identity for this outlook.

While many negative consequences can result from being Black and male in a school system that does not understand them, there is a silver lining. Research suggests that students that develop a healthy self-concept can do well in these situations (Matrenec, 2011). Students who develop a positive racial and ethnic identity can counteract the effects of stereotypes on their identity and tend to have a better sense of belonging in school. (Wong, Eccles, & Smaeroff, 2003; Wright, 2011). Having a robust racial-ethnic identity (HREI) helps students to understand why they are expected to do less well than their peers and why discrimination occurs. It helps these students to see whom they are despite not fitting within the white-dominated school culture (Wright, 2011). Students that do exhibit an HREI tend to excel better academically than students that are ashamed of their ethnic background and who develop Eurocentric identities (Wright, 2011). When youth report high levels of racial respect, which is respect for themselves, their

ethnicity, and their community, they are less likely to display negative behaviors (DeGruy, Kjellstrand, Briggs, & Brennan, 2012). The case for culturally responsive learning communities, which will help Black students achieve academically because their teachers are sensitive to their culture and understand them, can then be made (Wright, 2011).

Academic identity

Academic identity develops when students believe that they can do well. To this, students need to feel able to earn good grades and receive support from friends, teachers, and parents (Graham & Anderson, 2008). If students feel as though their teachers and peers do not believe that they are capable of obtaining good grades, then they are less likely to have a sound academic identity (Wong et al., 2003). Considering the racial makeup of schools, Black males will have other Black males as their peers, and so they may have the same limited sense of academic identity. In general, Black adolescents are continuously refining their identity based on their experiences in schools (Isom, 2007).

According to Bennett (2006), schools are the place where students socialize and prepare for the “real world.” When students report positive school interactions, they are more likely to have high self-esteem and positive life outcomes. When students begin to recognize that members of their school have negative associations with their identity, they internalize those judgments (Bennett, 2006). Because of this, Black students have to choose between their racial identity and their academic identity (Graham & Anderson, 2008)

W.E.B. Du Bois did not specifically discuss identity or gender within his writings, but his idea of double consciousness helped to describe the development of multiple identities based on the oppression of being different people in one world (Du Bois, 1994; Howard & Reynolds, 2013). Black people have the dual lens of seeing the world through the eyes of someone is

Black, but lives in white society (Du Bois, 1994; Ransaw, 2019). Blacks understand that they must assimilate to white culture in order to be accepted. The conundrum of what to do to be accepted causes internal conflict. Although Black males are not a monolithic people, there is a perception of the collective identity that all Black men have. The collective identity often affects the construction of individual identity because it holds some Black men to the narrative of what it is to be a Black male (Ferguson, 2003).

Teachers

There are significant gaps in the diversity between students and teachers across the United States. The majority of educators are white, middle-class females (Hucks, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), which is a contrast with whom they are serving in the classroom. According to the Center for American Progress, minority students make up 40% of the student body in K-12 settings, while minority teachers represent only 17% of the teaching force (Bosher, 2011). In the 2011-2012 school year, U.S. public school teachers were 82% white and 73% female (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Power of Teachers

Due to their position, teachers are the gatekeepers of gifted and special education assessments, as well as the people who provide recommendations for enrichment programs. Teachers are responsible for placing students in ability grouping, often based on their judgment of students' strengths and weaknesses (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999). They have an insurmountable power to track and sort students into different life paths (Kenyatta, 2012).

When tracking occurs, it relegates students to remedial or special education classes based on standardized testing results, behavior profiles, or subjective categories, rather than being allowed to perform in regular or advanced placement classes. Student placement is based on their

perceived academic capabilities, and research suggests that students' race plays a heavy influence (Ferguson, 2003). Tracking also affects teachers' perceived ability to work well with Black male students (Ferguson, 2003). Teachers believe that they will not be able to make a difference with students who have specific labels, and because of this, they do not offer the same level of support to all their students. Not only do these students not receive the same support as others, but they do not receive the same feedback, positive reinforcement, or helpful tips as their white counterparts (Ferguson, 2003).

Teacher Perceptions of Students

As early as elementary school, school personnel, mainly teachers and counselors, have already begun to develop negative expectations about Black male students (Hucks 2011; Noguera, 2003). Teachers are teaching from a skewed perspective to their Black male students. Most of the information gathered about African American males comes from a media perception that states they are dangerous, have a propensity towards violence, and are naturally overly sexual (Caton, 2012). These perceptions promote fear in teachers, which leads to a determination that these students' actions are violent or dangerous (Caton, 2012). Because these teachers are getting their information from the media, they do not expect their students to achieve. Kunjufu (1995) asserts that teachers start to be apathetic about Black student achievement in the fourth grade. When teachers become apathetic, they believe that there are very few things that they can do to help a student do well academically.

A study conducted by Davis and Jordan (1994) found that when teachers did not take responsibility for their students' successes and failures, the academic performance of Black males was low. These placements and expectations, or lack thereof, lead to a deficient learning experience. Other research shows that teachers attribute low student achievement to the students

as opposed to any school factors (Sleeter, 2017). This hegemonic understanding comes from the deficit perspective. Teachers who work from this perspective allow this to affect how they interact with the students and also the community (Picower, 2009). From the teacher's perspective, Black males are disinterested, disruptive, and stupid individuals who will eventually drop out of school (Harper, 2009).

In a Critical Race ethnographic study conducted in 2010, researchers studied teachers' feelings about the low academic achievement of Black male students (Lynn, M., Bacon, J. N., Totten, T. L., Bridges, T. I., & Jennings, M. E., 2010). The study looked at an underperforming school in a low-income community. It took place over 18 months using focus groups as well as individual and group interviews. While the study's focus was primarily Black teachers, researchers found that like white teachers, the Black teachers had begun to believe negative things about the communities where they taught (Lynn et al., 2010). Many participants stated that Blacks were lazy and that their parents did not provide adequate support in order for them to learn. Some participants even felt that their students were incapable of learning and that the teachers, therefore, could not help them. It may seem surprising that Black teachers said these things, the researchers determined that the teachers' middle-class privilege and internalized racism led them to behave in the same way as the white teachers who were oppressing students (Lynn et al., 2010).

Effects of Teachers on Students

There is research that suggests that teachers have an impact on the academic performance of children. Noguera (2003) found that the relationship with teachers is more important for Black male students who are more sensitive to teacher support than other students. His study also found

that the care and support received by low-income students from their teachers allow students to do better academically (Noguera, 2003).

Hucks (2011) found that teachers whose students believe they are unsupportive fail to examine the consequences of their actions. The failure comes from a lack of perspective on how to educate minority students. As found in a study by Harper and Davis (2012), Black males care about their education, but teachers' actions make them feel deficient. Many Black students feel that their school does not care about them and expects them to fail (Harper & Davis, 2012). Black elementary aged male students begin to develop negative feelings about education (Kunjufu, 1995). There have been supportive research concerning the general crisis of Black children and education. However, as researchers suggest, African American males are more affected because schools emasculate whom they are by making them feel that they are oppositional to the school culture (Monroe, 2005).

When teachers have negative feelings about their students, the students begin feeling ignored in classes, except when receiving disciplinary action, which leads to poor academic performance (Caton, 2012). Students relate better to teachers who do not see them as their stereotypes and do not look at them as adult males, but rather as children (Johnson, 2017). For this reason, Minority students tend to do better academically when minority teachers teach them because they are more in tune with their cultural and economic backgrounds.

Black males must have teachers who invest in doing the involved work to educate them. It is not enough to place Black male or female teachers within the classroom: teachers need to make sure they are not buying into the projected image of Black male students. (Brown, 2012).

Teacher Education Programs

After leaving teacher education programs, teachers are more equipped to teach middle income, white Christian students than the multi-racial student population that exists (Juarez & Hayes, 2015). Due to the way society remains segregated, many educators may know Black people and other people of color only as blue collar or service workers (Picower, 2009). When a teacher only knows people of color from their interactions with them at grocery stores, as nannies, as waitresses, etc. this does not help them develop an authentic interaction with people of color.

Teacher education programs are failing to meet the needs of all students. In many education programs, “diversity” is a singular course to solve all problems. These programs tend to discipline professors who discuss race and therefore make students uncomfortable, therefore pushing minority teachers to adopt the same stereotypes and ideologies of their white counterparts (Matias, Montoyo, Nishi, 2016). Most multicultural education programs spend about 50% of the program addressing differences, but very little time, around 29% towards discussing racism and oppression (Gorski, 2009). Teacher education programs focus on the emotional needs of white students and not those of students of color (Sleeter, 2017). As a result, teacher education programs fail to educate future teachers around disrupting racism. When racism goes unchecked, programs are propagating domestic terrorism against minority students, which, if left uncorrected, can lead to an academic lynching of a person’s soul (Juarez & Hayes, 2015).

What can be done?

In order for educators to help reduce inequalities in the classroom, they must acknowledge race as a factor and be aware of its intersections with gender and class (Zamudio et

al., 2011). Teachers should study the ways that racism has been challenged in other sectors and use this to address inequities present in schools. Schools must acknowledge the bias that white middle-class teachers have against their minority students.

One of the ways to address this bias is to have students and teacher have critical conversations. These discussions should tackle the meaning and the history behind power dynamics and look into the cultures within oppressed populations (Zamudio et al., 2011). It will also take a critical look at where teachers gain their knowledge and whose knowledge, they actually value. When teachers only appreciate the knowledge of the dominant culture, that is where the continual belief that Black men are oppositional is developed and reproduced.

Masculinity

Before discussing masculinity, there is a need to explore “boyhood.” Dumas and Nelson (2016) note that it is not simply boyhood, but boyhoods because of the varying experiences that Black males have. Because of their race, many Black boys do not have the opportunity to live their lives as children. During slavery, Black children were put to work at a young age, stripping them of their childhood, and resulting in an idea of them as older and less innocent than their white counterparts (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). This idea has persisted to the present day. No matter how they think of themselves, they are dehumanized by those around them (Goff, Jackson & Di Leone, 2014; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Recently, videos have surfaced of school security handcuffing, beating, and attacking Black children (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). As society continues to “adultify” Black children, there becomes a natural progression into demonizing Black adults (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). As Black males deal with the reality of what it is like to grow up male in a patriarchal society, yet not be privy to the privileges of their masculinity, they can develop a warped version of masculinity (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

The masculinity of Black males is viewed as a threat within school culture (Duncan, 2002). Boys are also assumed to be more of a disciplinary liability than females and are treated as such (Monroe, 2005). Much of this literature focuses on students' inabilities and relies on the premise that students are responsible for their lack of achievement. Current research focuses on the problems, but few offer suggestions (Jackson & Moore, 2008). As stated by Jenkins (2006), the experience of the Black man in America seems to be one in which he is called "mister" but with "niggardly" regard. Society pretends to be concerned about the plight of African American males but still treats them as if they do not exist.

Much like race is socially constructed, so is manhood and masculinity. Manhood is the idea of what it is like to be a man, while masculinity is how people act it out (Travers, 2019). Based on the fact that people can portray them differently, Travers (2019), suggests the use of masculinities as opposed to masculinity.

In the U.S. society structures are in place to keep men in power (hooks, 2004). Patriarchy subjugates women to a particular place in society while simultaneously designating specific characteristics as feminine, and therefore weak (Travers, 2019). Black men are viewed as men but are not allowed to have all of the patriarchal power that white men hold (Howard, 2014; Travers, 2019). Patriarchy is dangerous to Black male existence (hooks, 2004). Because Black manhood is constantly questioned, many males adopt stereotypes as a way of claiming their masculinity (Harper, 2004; hooks, 2004; Majors & Billson, 1992). Ferguson (2007) suggests that Black males place their masculine values in being sexual, disruptive, and violent. Recent literature suggests that Afrocentric mentoring programs can counteract this inner turmoil that results from racism.

One study conducted by Reynolds (2010) points to the lack of research on parental involvement, making the case that there is an underlying and unfounded assumption that Black parents are not interested in their children's education. Reynolds (2010) conducted a study with sixteen parents using interviews and focus groups. All parents within the study stated they had negative, hostile interactions with school staff. One parent recalled having a teacher who was express astonishment that her son had no behavioral problems in the classroom. Other parents mentioned W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of double consciousness as they recalled situations where they had to prove they were credible with school administrators. The parents had to talk to their sons about the stereotypical views that they would face. Reynolds mentions the microaggressions that Black male students in the school were subjected to. Parents admitted to having to do more preparation for their sons on what to expect from school officials than they have had to do with their daughters. This went as far as having to caution their sons against spending time with other Black males in a large group (Reynolds, 2010).

Allen (2012) conducted an interesting study on the particularities of microaggressions towards middle-class African American male students. Allen defines microaggressions as ranging from a slightly uncomfortable comment to a person grabbing their purse as a Black male walks near them (Allen, 2012). Allen's study consists of unstructured interviews with six students and their parents, as well as participant observations. The fathers in the study were active in their son's education, regularly monitoring their academic progress and attending school events. The students mentioned a variety of microaggressions from their own teachers, such as seeming distant until they learn the students are high achievers or showing surprise because students had high GPA's. The students and their fathers were frustrated with how the schools handled the discipline policy, stating that Black males were suspended more often by

staff and white substitutes than other students were. School administrators like to think of themselves as colorblind and unbiased when making school related decisions, but both students and parents see that this is not the case. Allen (2012) discusses how microaggressions teach students that being a Black boy is abnormal while being white is standard. The participants in the study see for themselves the intersectionality of their experience. While their middle-class status does provide them with some power, they are still dealing with the perceptions of what it means to be both Black and male.

Racism

Racism is a part of American society that persists. It shows itself in the policies, practices, and structures that exist in society (Romero, 2013). In schools, it shows itself in the curriculum, suspension rates, tracking, and policies students interact with regularly (Romero, 2013). Moreover, schools continue to subject African American males to stereotypes (Howard, 2014). In a 2008 study by Howard, the lives of ten students--five from low-income schools and five from racially mixed schools—were observed. One of the most prominent comments that Howard heard from students was their constant effort to dispel stereotypes. Some of those stereotypes involved the assumption of gang banging or low academic achievement. The students recounted assumptions that they were in the wrong classroom when they entered the room for an AP class. The participants in Howard's study were surprised that someone was interested in hearing their stories. They stated that they experienced racism but did not think that anyone would believe them if they spoke up.

Racist ideology is at work in the school building in the very curriculum used and the methods for teaching it. One example of this is the idea that Blacks did nothing to help create U.S. society and have no influence (Toldson, 2019). Perpetuating this forgets the foundational

fact that slaves built the United States. Adding insult to injury is the idea that slaves were happy, well treated, and did nothing to fight against the oppression they were experiencing (Toldson, 2019).

Stereotypes

Because Black males are more susceptible to racial stereotypes, they have difficulty gaining acceptance from peers and teachers (Matrenec, 2011). Schools circulate a hegemony that reaches outside their boundaries to everyday life (Matrenec, 2011). Howard (2014) explains the five central stereotypes that assigned most often to Black males: (1) the physical brute and anti-intellectual, (2) the shiftless and lazy; (3) the hypersexual; (4) the criminal-minded; and (5) the slickster-pimp gangster (pg. 31). In the first instance, Black males are only useful for their strength and are perceived as childlike (Howard, 2014). Scientific studies that were conducted by people who used more discrimination than evidence gave credibility to the idea of inferiority (Howard, 2014). Stereotypes are often double-sided and even, contradictory: on one side, they are physical laborers, and on the other, they are lazy. This lazy stereotype is one that has followed Black male students into the classroom (Howard, 2014). The hypersexualized stereotype has its origins in the fear of Black men engaging with white women. It portrays Black men as sexual predators (Howard, 2014). In order to keep social order and for political gain, Black males are portrayed as criminally-minded (Howard, 2014).

The media reinforces negative stereotypes. A. L. Brown's (2011) research suggests that since at least the 1960s, there have been negative images portrayed for African American males, which have guided the research about them. In the '60s and '70s, they were impoverished, fatherless, cool, smart-talking, pimp-walking males that hung around on street corners. Brown (2011) assesses that this image made it into the media where characters like J.J. from Good

Times were born. In the '80s and '90s, the image changed to dangerous, violent, and self-destructive individuals. In the early part of 2000, the portrayal was that they were still poor, disappointing underachievers. In general, Jenkins (2006) would say they were seen as self-destructive, violent, and criminal rapists.

The fatherless stereotype is another one that plagues Black communities. Historically, African American males have come from female-centered households, and political figures have determined this as the demise of family values (James, 2012). Other stereotypes come along with the knowledge of a student being from a single-parent family. The assumption is that these students are in families that do not care about education and that they lack social skills and discipline (James, 2012). Another stereotype casts men from single-parent households as wayward and transient because that is what people believe their fathers to have been (James, 2012).

Given the constant negative narrative about Blacks, some Black people internalize these stereotypes and begin to believe the hype, projecting negative values onto their own people (Howard, 2014). Jenkins asserts that Blacks who experience these images develop low self-esteem and a low self-concept (Jenkins, 2006). These stereotypes fueled the research that determined that low levels of academic achievement are the fault of the student (Jackson & Moore, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Jackson and Moore (2008) suggest that the negative fixation on Black males may just be a ploy to further their demise by blaming the victim for the problem they are experiencing.

Stereotypes and Schools

Black males are both loved and hated within the school system (Duncan, 2002; Howard, 2014; Jenkins, 2006). They are loved because they represent hip-hop culture, which is liked by

many students of all backgrounds, and hated, because they are feared. Not all the stereotypes are “bad:” there’s the belief that Black males are naturally good at sports, music, and being cool. While seemingly positive, none of these characteristics have the attributes of honesty or intellect (Noguera, 2008). What students begin to see is that there are uneven numbers of them in athletic teams, but not academic ones. The disproportionate number creates the image that Black males are not able to compete with their counterparts on an academic level (Noguera, 2008). For that reason, Black males with athletic talent receive more attention than their non-athletics counterparts (James, 2012).

Marcia Canton discusses the effect of zero-tolerance policies on African American male students (Canton, 2012). Using interviews and counter storytelling methods, Canton discusses the causes behind these students dropping out of high school. The study took place over nine months and included ten participants who had dropped out of high school within the last year. What Canton (2012) discovers is that students experienced hostile environments where they were subjected to body searches, metal detectors, and angry security officers—school began to remind them of detention facilities. These procedures led many students to feel uncomfortable at school, as though they were criminals. Urban schools invested in massive surveillance despite a lack of evidence that these schools were the most violent ones.

Canton’s participants also stated the importance of positive student-teacher relationships and how they lacked that. Participants recounted tales of teachers overreacting to behaviors. They reported that teachers were more interested in correcting them than providing positive feedback. Black male students were punished for even minor infractions. Teachers with the least amount of qualification and experience are placed in urban schools where, afraid of their own students, they act reactively (Canton, 2012). Students understood their teachers were treating

them differently because they are Black males. The fear exhibited by teachers is tied to society's privileging of whiteness. This privilege allows the media to represent Black males as violent criminals while teachers accept this as fact (Canton, 2012). Canton states that looking at discipline through the lens of CRT helps scholars to ask questions about the actual discipline policies and determine if they are being used fairly or continuing to privilege students over others.

Othering

Richard Delgado states that people cannot identify with or love anything different from themselves (Duncan, 2002). Some teachers consider Black males to be so different from the mainstream that they are unable to love their own students. The students become so marginalized that they feel placed on the outside of society (Duncan, 2002). Johannes Fabian would refer to the reason this occurs as allochronism, which he states is the reason white supremacy is accepted all over (Duncan, 2005). Dominant culture makes its values and morality the one way forward, even for subcultures. Allochronism is viewing someone's culture as different from their own to the point of occurring at a separate chronological time. A language is a form of allochronism when words like urban and barbaric are used to describe African American male students and deem them socially unacceptable. Words such as these, place Black boys in a period that appears less advanced than the one we are living in today. Upon further examination, many of the reasons for stereotypes are due to allochronism.

Intersectionality

Black males are seen as a monolithic people who have all experienced the same things. While focusing centrally on race, scholars cannot ignore its intersectionality with gender, class, and other categories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the concept of

intersectionality (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Intersectionality is a hard concept to grasp because American society functions on binaries and intersectionality is not a “one size fits all” (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, and other factors all come together to make up identity (Howard, 2014). Black males are faced with the joy of being male in society, though juxtaposed with the perils of being Black (Howard 2014; Howard & Reynolds, 2013). Because of their race, they do not get to enjoy all of the privileges of being male. The marginalization of homosexual Black males is different because they lack the privileges afforded to heterosexual Black males (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

When researchers do not think about all the identities of Black males, they miss out on the depth of the experiences (Howard & Reynolds, 2013). Masculinity plays itself out differently depending on socioeconomic status (Howard & Reynolds, 2013). In middle and upper-class communities, masculinity is a more open concept than in lower-income areas where traditional standards and gender roles determine identity (Hill, 2005).

Ladson-Billings encourages scholars to understand that simply because people are the same race, it does not mean all of their experiences are the same. She cautions researchers against “essentializing” views in order to standardize a group (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In order to promote intersectionality in an educational setting, teachers should include marginalized viewpoints (Zamudio et al., 2011). These intersections allow scholars to consider the lives of not just Blacks, but how issues differ between Black males, all while helping to address the root of the problems for the benefit of all (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Sabrina Vaught (2004) provides a look into the lives of gay Black male students that focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientation. She does this by delivering counter-narratives of four different students whom she previously taught and

maintained relationships with. She begins with a student named Jamarcus who states that from his experiences with teachers and other students early on in his life, he learned that his race was a problem, and much later, his sexuality. His interactions with teachers who refused to call on him was identified as disruptive and he was stereotypically labelled criminal. As Jamarcus got older, he was categorized as a good student because he was masculine; however, he was still not manly enough to fit the stereotype of a Black male and was therefore compared to a white man.

Jamarcus was the recipient of racist comments from his teachers, but in his efforts to work within the white educational system, he did not outwardly state that his teachers mistreated him. Within his high school, teachers ignored the signs that he may have been homosexual. As long as he was masculine enough and not exhibiting Black male qualities, he received privileges that other students did not. Because of what the school system says about being a successful Black male, he learned that it meant being straight, and normal as defined by white culture. In the end, Vaught was left with the reality that this student was in a conundrum where his race, gender, and sexual orientation were not good enough. The result was that Jamarcus was confused and did not know who he was supposed to be (Vaught, 2004).

Critical Race Theory

Tenets

Historically, storytelling has been an essential part of African culture, and as Africans went through the middle passage, the need for telling stories became more important. As people were taken from their homeland and brought to an unfamiliar place and broken up from their families, it was imperative to maintain a sense of self. As time has gone on, the need for telling one's story despite what society says has maintained a great importance. Telling stories sheds light on the past, the present, and what will come of the future.

Critical Race Theory came about through the work of several influential people in the field of law. Scholars suggest that the ideas behind Critical Race Theory began with people like Tupac Amaru, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Sojourner Truth, and others, who fought against oppression (Kumasi, 2011). 20th century scholars like Carter G. Woodson, Julia Cooper, and W.E.B. Du Bois are credited with theorizing the effect of race and inequality (Kumasi, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

However, many researchers ascribe the creation of CRT to Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) along with Kimberlé Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, and Mari Matsuda (Ladson-Billings, 2013). It began as a response to Critical Legal Studies (CLS) wherein scholars determined that the legal system was not doing enough to address race and racism in the justice system (Brown & Jackson, 2013; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). CLS brought to light the inability of the legal system to be neutral when enforcing laws, and its tendency to reinforce the dominant order (Brown & Jackson, 2013) and racial hegemony (Kumasi, 2011). The goal of CRT was also to be a form of activism in order to make necessary changes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). It is important to note that CRT is an epistemological and even methodological way of looking at how society deals with race (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

Epistemology is how knowledge is created and produced. From the perspective of CRT, knowledge is generally constructed from the dominant view and has much to do with power and who has it (Duncan, 2005). It is the job of CRT researchers to infuse the minority perspective into what society already understands. What CRT also states is that there is no one way to create knowledge since there are many different minorities with different experiences (Bernal, 2002). In a similar vein with epistemology, CRT states that in society there is a specific ontology or reality

that is a standard for Blacks. CRT exists to dispel the myths of ontology that are provided by the dominant culture (Duncan, 2005).

In places that exist in order to allow children to access information and form knowledge, it is vital to understand whose knowledge is privileged. For this and other reasons, CRT became a theoretical lens in 1995 thanks to the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In regard to education, CRT helps to explain why and in what ways inequalities remain in schools and how to acknowledge students as the creators of knowledge (Bernal, 2002).

While CRT has adapted since its beginnings in education, Ladson-Billings warns scholars not to move too far away from the original components of CRT in the legal field (Ladson-Billings, 2013). There are five central tenets of CRT in education developed from the tenets of CRT legal studies. In Critical Race Theory Matters, the tenets are written as general statements that make their meaning more palatable: Race matters. History matters. Voice matters. Interpretation matters. Praxis Matters. These five buzz statements together make a complete Critical Race Theory in Education (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Race should be viewed from a historical perspective. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that “separate but equal” was illegal. While some consider this a victory, what followed was years of court cases to get school systems, states, and the public to acknowledge and support the ruling. While these cases attempted to correct the issue, as time continued, so did the massive resistance to *Brown v BOE*, which accounts for the reversal of laws meant to keep equality at the forefront of society (Brown & Jackson, 2013). As scholars watched this happen, Dr. Derrick Bell, who was the first tenured African American faculty

member at Harvard University, began to develop an explanation for the politics that were involved in the legal changes that were occurring (Gillborn, 2013).

From this, the idea of interest convergence developed and became a significant way to explain how and why policies come about that can benefit African Americans (Bell, 1992; Bell, 2004; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Bell states that racial equality for African Americans comes only when it matches the needs and interests of white society. He points out that these policies end if whites stop benefiting from them (Bell, 2004). Specifically, Bell mentions policies like *Brown v. Board of Education*, which was passed in order to take attention away from US racial policies during the Cold War (Bell, 2004; Brown & Jackson, 2013). Bell also uses the Emancipation Proclamation as another example of interest convergence, in which slaves were free not for the benefit of the slaves, but so that the war would come to an end more quickly (Bell, 2004; Brown & Jackson, 2013). As Ladson-Billings puts it, “Interest Convergence is about alignment, not altruism” (Ladson-Billings, 2013 p. 38).

Bell recognized that race was endemic to American society and would affect everything else (Bell 2004; Brown & Jackson, 2013). CRT asserts that racism is always present and is a permanent aspect of society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al., 2011). Bell believed that because race is permanent, it is futile to struggle against racism, however, the actual fight is crucial because it helps to empower the oppressed (Bell, 1992; Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Today, many people believe they live in a colorblind society. CRT challenges this idea (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Colorblindness states that not only do people no longer see color, but that race does not in fact exist. The implication, therefore, is that inequalities do not exist (Zamudio et al., 2011). Colorblindness devalues things that are not white because white is

considered the norm (Zamudio et al., 2011). When colorblind policies began, they worked to undermine everything developed during the Civil Rights Era by stating that society perceives no difference. CRT critiques liberalism for propagating the idea of colorblindness. Liberals believe that society creates neutral laws and that individuals should be satisfied with change over time (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Alan Freeman, who was also influential in the development of CLS, states that when people do see color, they do not necessarily see racial discrimination as a social issue, but as one that is exhibited by a small number of individuals (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Seeing it as an individual issue vindicates society of the need to address it (Brown & Jackson, 2013). In regard to education, the acceptance of colorblindness erases racial superiority as a current issue and allows achievement gaps to persist, all while excusing teachers from the responsibility of looking at themselves and their practices in their classrooms (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

In order to truly understand race, history must be examined. As CRT states, to understand history is to understand that racial divisions are historical and continue to be perpetrated (Zamudio et al., 2011). In education, dominant ideologies keep minorities in their subordinate place; CRT challenges them. The challenge critiques the idea of liberalism, which contains in it property rights, and the ability to pursue dreams without involvement from the government (Zamudio et al., 2011). In addressing these liberal policies, individuals must think of the history and the power systems that are in place.

The tenet dictating that interpretation matters encourages scholars to look at CRT from different disciplines (Zamudio et al., 2011). Using an interdisciplinary analysis allows race, gender, and class to be looked at simultaneously, providing a fuller picture of the way expression exists in different peoples' lives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race issues can expand into

women's studies, ethnic studies, LaCrit, TribalCrit, and others to bring in the perspective of varying groups, bringing light to their issues and experiences (Zamudio et al., 2011).

“Praxis matters” is a commitment to social justice and transformation (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al., 2011). CRT can bring to light racial injustices and reveal the truth, thus allowing for changes to the system (Zamudio et al., 2011). Giving students agency and allowing them to see things outside of a marginalized position can bring about change in their lives (Zamudio et al., 2011). This allows students to seek social justice. Social justice means fighting for everyone to be treated fairly and bringing attention to situations that privilege only a few. As Crethar (2010) suggests, social justice is not only something to strive for but something that people continuously fought for. When fighting for social justice, the aim should be for equity as opposed to equality. When the focus is only on equality; laws are still inequitable. Only when addressing the inequality, people can acknowledge how unequal things are. (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

The last tenet, which is used most often in CRT, is “voice matters” (Zamudio et al., 2011). Using one's voice is a way to challenge dominant narratives. When minorities use their voices, it gives rise to experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Students have experiences that add to the classroom and collective knowledge and they should be encouraged to express those things (Zamudio et al., 2011). CRT seeks to overturn the narratives that blame unequal conditions on minorities and develops a reason why things occur (Zamudio et al., 2011).

One of the biggest myths that continues to be perpetrated by the master narrative is meritocracy. Meritocracy is the basis of the American dream; it is the belief that everyone can change their situation as long as they work hard (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al.,

2011). This myth tells people that it is their fault if they are in a bad situation, completely ignoring the web of inequalities people are born into.

Master Narratives

Many of the stereotypes about Black male's views of education come from what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) refer to as master narratives. These narratives are from the dominant perspective and provide only one account of what occurs with students. The master narrative says that Black males do not care about education (Harper & Davis, 2012), and that they are disengaged underachievers (Harper, 2009). These narratives are foundationally reliant on white privilege, which allows those telling the story to maintain that their ideas about minorities are right, sometimes even convincing minorities that these things are right about themselves (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This narrative propagates the idea that being poor, and Black equates to terrible neighborhoods filled with bad schools and bad children (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). When these stories are the only available stories, it is detrimental to the achievement of minorities, especially Black males. It is difficult for Black males to construct their own identities when they are being force-fed a negative collective view of themselves that is difficult for them to dispel on their own (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

Master narratives are not only destructive for the things that they do say, but for the things that they don't. Zamudio et al., (2011) states that master narratives imply that minorities are powerless against their oppressors and that society will continue to keep them down. Using this perspective, it appears as though the dominant group, whites, are the ones who must help the oppressed in order to save them from themselves (Zamudio et al., 2011).

School is oftentimes a pipeline for prison of Black male students. From a CRT lens, this is due to the policies that segregate students into different tracks of education and maintain

colorblind policies that continue with school inequity (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As the demographics of educators and students in the school system continues to change, there is an influx of minority students who are taught by overwhelmingly white female teachers. This representational inequity will become more of a barrier to educating students when the curriculum provides only master narratives about the inadequacies of minority students and the lack of care and concern that their parents have for education (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Counter Narratives/Counter Storytelling

As stated by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), counter-narratives counter storytelling is a useful methodological tool that helps to address the issue of voice. It allows for the experiences of those that are marginalized to be heard, while at the same time exposing a humanistic side of theory and practice (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2004). It is a way to gather research on issues important within the field of education. Counter storytelling can also be a pedagogical tool, in that it can allow educators to understand the experiences of their students. Counter storytelling became a tool after being used in work by Bell and even Delgado, who created stories from a character perspective in order to help readers relate to the experiences (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2004).

From the standpoint of Dixson and Rousseau (2005), the voice is the essential element of CRT. Researchers are beginning to notice that the actual voice of African American males is missing in research (Hucks, 2011). Voice values experiential knowledge by acknowledging the experiences of minorities (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). In order to understand voice, one must know that there is not one voice, but many different ones that come from different experiences. The purpose of voice is to provide an authentic look at discrimination and inequality that cannot

come be understood through the voice of the dominant (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The use of voice is vital for students who feel ignored in the school setting. Ladson- Billings (1995) asserts that without a voice, there is nothing beneficial to be said about the state of education. It is important to note that voice is not only about telling stories, but about acting on them (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Knaus (2009) shares observations about a writing class that he conducted which allowed students to access the importance of their voice. Students learned how to access experiential knowledge and became more accepting of themselves. The students in Knaus' class already felt that the people within the school system did not care about them. Knaus noticed that the school curriculum was designed through the framework of white supremacy, forgoing the stories of other races and cultures. He stated that they learned about Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King through the binary of evil and good but were not taught much else about either person. The school ignored the lives of students outside of school. Allowing his students to hear their own voices and the voices of their peers, they were able to acknowledge the racism and other microaggressions that existed in their lives.

There are three versions of counter-narratives that have been determined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002). The first are personal narratives told from an individual perspective. The second are other peoples' narratives told from a third-person point of view. These stories are generally biographical and concern an institution. The third type are composite narratives, which are discussed from multiple perspectives in order to attempt to culminate the experiences of minorities. When done correctly, counter-narratives provide the reader with new experiences and empower them to change the things in their community (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counter storytelling is necessary in order for others to understand what happens with minorities in the school system. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have developed a list of four things that counter storytelling should do. The first is to build community by putting a human face to the struggle. Second, they challenge what society has put into place. Third is to show marginalized individuals that they are not alone. Finally, others are taught that by adding together stories, they can develop a more vibrant account (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Knaus (2009), gives educators a few things to remember while developing these counter-narratives with students. Teachers should check in with students after they share to help them process what they have uncovered. Teachers must also be honest with their students in relaying that they may get penalized for speaking their truth, however, it is more liberating than staying silent (Knaus, 2009). In order to discourage punishment for students, CRT should be applied to the entire school and, in doing so, transform not only the lives of students, but also of their teachers. Teachers should also take into consideration that while at times it may seem like the students are reticent to participate, it is because it is uncomfortable to unearth difficult issues (Knaus, 2009; Martin, 2014).

By using CRT, scholars and educators can introduce the idea of race back into dominant narratives. In doing so, experiential knowledge is produced and eventually, valued. Counter-storytelling can provide educators with a look into the lives of their students (Zamudio et.al., 2011). Counter-storytelling seeks to provide a voice to the marginalized to counter the dominant narratives that are in research (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Transformation

The purpose of CRT as a framework is to transform and change how education occurs. School culture is based on the dominant culture; those within the system do not see the problem

until they are made to see it. The students need to recognize that there are things that are happening to them in school, not because they are undeserving, but because there are structures in place to oppress them. Much of the research focuses on African American males as inadequate, and as a result, teachers and schools place these students at the bottom of the hierarchy. There need to be clear and decisive steps made to combat the stereotypes that members of the educational community have let permeate the school. If CRT lens is used, solutions can be created to affect the system positively.

In schools, it is clear that curriculum reinforces the dominant perspective (Zamudio et al., 2011). When reading textbooks, many Blacks only come into contact with history about themselves if it is about slavery or the Civil Rights movement. Even then, the curriculum teaches that a white person solved the problems (Zamudio et al., 2011). Rarely are students given the opportunity to look at the contributions that Blacks made in various fields. Educators should provide students with alternate versions of historical events and also guide students in thinking about why texts do not give counter-narratives (Zamudio et al., 2011).

The introduction of more all-male academies could be a transformative solution to the problem outlined above (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013). There are two schools, Urban Prep and Benjamin E. Mays Institute, that provide education by allowing students to have a voice and build their racial identity. These schools demonstrate how they value experiential knowledge by working with the community to become part of the school. Mitchell and Stewart (2013), sought to determine if all-male academies were beneficial for students through a CRT lens. Through the use of case studies, the authors sought to answer the following question: “to what extent can single-gender education constitute a viable strategy for addressing the systemic and cultural forces limiting the educational attainment of urban Black males?” (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013).

They began by looking at Urban Prep Academy in Chicago. This school boasts that 100% of their students each year not only graduate from high school, but are admitted to college (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013). As a single-gender school that works exclusively with Black males, Urban Academy addresses race as permanent and intersectional with gender. While there has not been a large body of research on single-gendered schools and race concerning achievement, Mitchell and Stewart assert the importance of doing so in order to avoid the dismal issues occurring in traditional schools that Black males attend.

Allen & White-Smith (2014), present narratives from teachers, counselors, and school administrators to help explain how racial bias towards Black male students affects them as students. One of the narratives came from a mixed-race female teacher, who due to her assumed whiteness, was privy to a conversation with two white female teachers. The teachers openly discussed their dismay with a five-year old Black male student who wanted to play with a white female student. The teachers believed that the appropriate response to such an egregious act was to punish the young Black student. This interaction shows that even at five, this young man was seen as racially inferior to his classmates and was deemed a threat to white female students. Behavior that is normal for any kindergarten student was criminalized in the case of a Black male student.

Another narrative recounted how Black males were placed in lower tracks or dissuaded from academic achievement even when they had the grades needed to take the next step. In another account, a school called in Black parents in an upper-middle-class neighborhood to discuss gang behavior based off only the students' clothing choice. Since all of these narratives came from teacher education programs, it is clear that this is where education for teachers, counselors, and administrators should begin.

In order for schools to be transformative places, Love (2014) states that teachers must strive to “see” their students. She suggests that teachers need to acknowledge the privileges that they have and find ways to look at these as reflected in the lives of their students (Love, 2014). Teachers can be helped by understanding their Whiteness as property and that they therefore cannot be colorblind. CRT states that racism is a permanent fixture in society; teachers need to acknowledge these differences before they can work on changing the way school is experienced by Black male students. Real teacher education is to understand the fallaciousness of color blindness, to read narratives of the marginalized, and to become intersectional.

There are teachers who are doing this work and they need to be recognized. Many who try do not feel valued or supported enough to express their ideas to leadership at the school (Lynn et al., 2010). Male teachers interested in finding new ways to work with students did not feel that they could (Duncan, 2006), out of fear that not be conforming to racialized standards could spell. Allowing teachers to have the space to suggest things and not feel stifled by their school environment allows for a better environment.

Counter-narratives are not only developed through conversation with students but in other creative ways. Love (2014b), suggests using storyboarding, movie making, and Hip Hop based education as ways to allow students to think critically about what is going on in their world. When using storyboarding or movie making, students are responsible for all aspects of the process, allowing them to be critical of the work that they produce (Love, 2014b). While it has had its criticism, Hip-Hop is a vehicle that challenges racial oppression and gives voice to a population that is silenced (Martin, 2014). These methods can allow students to use their voice and story without having to base what they are doing on the narratives that they have been given. It enables students to develop not only their stories but also an understanding of their schooling.

While this is still an under-researched solution, schools should look into the development of all-male academies. These academies can become spaces where young Black males network with other men, particularly Black men. They can begin to understand intersectionality and that there is not one Black male experience. These types of schools can give Black males the space that they need to process who they are and also reduce the amount of marginalization that they come into contact with during their everyday lives (Terry, Flenbaugh, Blackmon & Howard, 2014).

To look at this from a wide lens, Yosso has developed a critical race curriculum. This curriculum has at its base social justice. Since students come into contact with media and school stereotypes daily, they need a way to digest what they see (Yosso, 2002). With Black males, this would entail having conversations about stereotypes and providing them with alternate histories of Black males that they would not typically read (Yosso, 2002). Using this type of curriculum would also include bringing parents into the classroom and allowing them to share their experiential knowledge with the class. Doing so would simultaneously help dispel the dominant thought that Black parents do not care about their students' education and help teachers to understand that learning from both parents and students is vital to schooling (Yosso, 2002).

One example of communities having conversations that develop voice in pursuit of transformation is Fearless Dialogues, developed by Dr. Greg Ellison, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. Ellison designed this program to match unlikely partners in order for them to gain a better understanding of each other (Ellison, 2014). This program recognizes the fear that is usually present between stereotyped communities and allows them to come to a better understanding of one another. Hosting conversations such as these could help to dispel the dominant narrative by illuminating

the gifts that Black males have and by allowing teachers to gain a better understanding of the students that they serve (Ellison, 2014).

While taking the steps to fix schooling as a whole, the development of transformative practices at the individual level is necessary. Since racism is endemic according to CRT, students must transform in order to exist in a society that will always be racist. Allowing students to provide counter-narratives is a way to hear their voices. Teachers and educators should provide Black males with stories about Black males (Yosso, 2002). This will allow students to see themselves in the curriculum and to value themselves.

Whiteness

Whiteness is a privilege that should be protected by those who have it (Howard, 2008). According to Leonardo (2002), “whiteness is a racial discourse, whereas the category ‘white people’ represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color (p. 199). Leonardo states that in investigating Whiteness, the point is not to study white people, but the social construct that being white allows (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness, which serves to reproduce the dominant culture, lends itself to continuing the racial oppression that exists within schools. Leonardo discusses a few of the characteristics of Whiteness as the following: a) not being able to admit to the factors that contribute to Whiteness like inequality; b) avoiding being a member of an ethnic group; c) disassociating themselves from the history of racism (Leonardo, 2002).

CRT makes it is clear that in society, Whiteness and dominant narratives are standard, and because of their prevalence, minorities begin to accept them as truth (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Many of the master narratives or majoritarian stories are ones that paint minorities as socially or biologically deficient (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These stories allow minorities to believe that when they fail at school, it is because they are not capable of achieving. Teacher

education programs perpetuate these ideas, and future educators begin to believe these as truths about their students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Removing the idea of racism from the dialogue removes the intention to do anything about the inequities that exist.

Whiteness is property, which means that there are certain rights afforded to individuals just based on the fact that they are white. Historically, only those who owned land were able to make decisions and therefore, the fact that whites were the ones who owned property meant that they had the rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Harris (1995) states that Whiteness is the ultimate property and is translated into specific rights. The right of disposition, the right to use and enjoyment, the right of reputation and status property, the right to exclude, and the right to transfer any right of possession (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Harris, 1995).

America's obsession with property rights goes back to formative relationships with Native Americans and taking Africans as property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Those that have property receive a more valuable education. This translates to a broader range of curriculum and classes offered amongst the property owning class (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Property rights determine which schools get access to a better curriculum, in which students can be a part of gifted programs (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Zamudio et al., 2011). Those without property, like those in underprivileged neighborhoods, get lower quality teachers and opportunities in their schools. Even within each school, these property rights allow for a separation of the students.

Gillborn (2005), states that one of the most dangerous things about Whiteness is the fact that some whites may not know it exists even though they act out its characteristics daily. Whiteness is a social construct that normalizes itself through ideology, epistemology, and psychology (Matias, 2013). It comes with many hegemonic understandings that organize society.

Fear is one of the biggest; as previously mentioned, white female teachers are fearful of students of color and allow themselves to justify why the fear is okay (Picower, 2009).

Mentoring

The nine million young people who are labeled “at-risk” in this country have a higher chance of not achieving academic success and will never have an adult mentor (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). According to The National Mentoring Partnership, a 20-year veteran agency that advocates for mentoring, when at-risk students have mentors, their chances of success improve. For this reason, communities, schools, non-profits, and government agencies are all investing in mentoring programs (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). More than 75% of youth who are labeled “at-risk” and who have mentors graduate from college compared to 56% of at-risk youth who do not have mentors (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

The idea of mentoring one-on-one relationships where one person advises the other—has a long history (Dubois & Kacher, 2005; Ross, 2014). One exemplary case is Big Brothers Big Sisters, which has been matching youth from age five to young adulthood with caring adult role models since 1904. Mentions of mentoring date at least as far back as the late 8th century. In the Greek poem, *The Odyssey*, Homer calls the friend who looked out for his son “Mentor” (Ross, 2014). Contemporarily, the need for adult mentors to guide youth into adulthood continues.

Mentoring, which is quite common in the workplace, improves students’ academic achievement and engagement with peers. Studies of the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program shows that students with mentors are more likely to have better feelings about school, better academic performance, better social relationships with peers, and numerous additional positive factors (Wheeler, Keller, and DuBois, 2010). Furthermore, at-risk students who have mentors are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and be involved in leadership

roles in school (Rhodes, 2005). As one of the most cost-effective prevention strategies, mentoring programs cost, on average, \$1,000 to \$1,500 per year per child to operate (Mentor, 2009). Research comparing the price of mentoring programs with the cost of dealing with youth who are in trouble suggests that there is a \$3 return to society when spending on mentoring programs that provide quality services (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Over the years, mentoring has taken on a variety of forms and theories. Mentors can be natural mentors, naturally occurring in the life of the adolescent (Fruht & Wray-Lake, 2013). This informal or unstructured mentoring takes place in everyday relationships where someone other than a parent maintains a connection with a student that is beneficial to him/her. Informal mentors typically have three things in common: they have something to share with the mentee, there is mutual trust between the mentor and the mentee, and they encourage the mentee to reach his/her goals (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). Research suggests that natural mentors are more likely to be effective, because their bond lasts longer than other mentoring relationships and they often share many of the same identifying factors, such as race, gender and socioeconomic status (Black, Grenard, Sussman & Rohrbach, 2010; Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012). Research suggests that adolescents move from mentors in their own family to natural mentors and then to mentoring relationships with teachers, coaches, and community members (Fruht & Wray-Lake, 2013).

Types of mentoring programs

In contrast to natural mentors who emerge in everyday relationships, schools and organizations can provide formal mentors (Black et al., 2010). While mentors from schools and organizations are both considered formal, there are some distinct differences between them. School-based mentoring (SBM) takes place in the school building, allowing for oversight from

school personnel (Karcher & Herrera, 2007). Teachers can also refer students to mentoring whose parents would not ordinarily be aware of such programs (Herrera, 2004; Jucovy, 2000). SBM programs are able to recruit many volunteers because the time commitment is usually small (Jucovy, 2000). Negatives to SBM do exist, however. Since these meetings take place within the school, they are often limited by the school schedule and calendar, making it difficult to find meeting times and limiting the hours of interaction for students and their mentors (Jucovy, 2000; Karcher & Herrera, 2007). Some programs remain restricted to the school building; therefore, SBMs often work better for elementary students than middle and high school students (Jucovy, 2000). When deciding to use an SBM, one must be mindful that the improper execution of the program can lead to disappointment for all involved (Karcher & Herrera, 2013).

Another type of mentoring program is community-based mentoring (CBM). These programs are usually set-up by community organizations and take place at the location of the mentor/mentee's choosing. Big Brothers Big Sisters is primarily known for their CBM programs, but they also run site-based programs. In a study comparing site-based and community-based programs, CBM program mentors spent more time with their mentees, meeting from three to five hours per week at a rate of two to four times per month (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). These programs typically function with less structure than an SBM (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken & Jucovy, 2007).

Afterschool mentoring programs are often a combination of school-based and community-based mentoring programs. These programs attract students of varying ages and engage them over several years (Gray, 2014). Based on the staff and structure of the afterschool program, students can receive different types of mentoring, including group and collective mentoring, in which the whole team has an opportunity to impact students' lives (Mekinda &

Hirsch, 2013). Afterschool programs provide students with more supervision and can reduce the amount of peer pressure that can occur when students are without their parents (Gray, 2014). It is essential for these programs to have a specific goal or approach in order to be successful for the youth involved; otherwise, afterschool mentoring becomes little more than a babysitting program.

An SBM run by an outside organization is often less expensive to operate because schools can sometimes share the costs. However, SBM programs do not receive as much mentoring per dollar as community-based programs, because of constraints like hours of operation and the length of time that mentors can be in the school building (Karcher & Herrera, 2007). Another benefit of CBM programs is mentor/mentee relationships usually last longer than SBM programs. However, the background check for a CBM is less stringent than SBM programs that take place in schools (Karcher & Herrera, 2007). School-based mentoring may involve less risk because there are more eyes available to watch and make sure that nothing inappropriate is happening (Wheeler et al., 2010).

A new method of mentoring called e-mentoring uses messaging through digital networking sites and a 24-hour response period to connect mentors and mentees. According to a study by the Urban Youth Foundation, this form of mentoring can be successful (Coleman & Boxley, 2013). Since social media is a platform that so many youth are using today, allowing them to connect with mentors in this platform helps them to open up and stay engaged. In Urban Youth's program, mentors set-up one school visit through the school, but had no other contact with students. In other e-mentoring programs, communication between the mentor and mentee online is usually made at least once per week. It can sustain mentor/mentee relationships during the summer months (Mentor, 2005). Some e-mentoring programs also include a face to face

opportunity for mentors and mentees, like video chatting. One such mentoring program used video clips and weekly response questions (Grant & Dieker, 2011). Because of the flexibility in scheduling, e-mentoring has become a new method of continuing to provide service. E-mentoring is beneficial for busy mentors, but also for students whose plans do not allow them to meet in person, but who are still in need of mentoring (Coleman & Boxley, 2013).

Effects of mentoring

Jean Rhodes (2005), a scholar at the forefront of youth mentoring, states that people who mentor youth should be aware of how they affect the development of a child. In the developmental model of mentoring, mentees benefit from a relationship of mutuality, trust, and empathy, that develops over time as the mentor and mentee work together (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011). The relationship leads to improvements in the youth's identity, as well as their socio-emotional and cognitive development (Rhodes, 2005). Growth in these three areas produces better emotional well-being, academic achievement, and other positive outcomes (DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2005).

DuBois et al. (2011) provide an in-depth explanation of how the areas mentioned above develop through mentoring. Mentors help youth with their social-emotional development by changing the negative opinions that mentees may hold of themselves and by modeling positive ways to communicate and interact with adults. Mentors promote cognitive development by introducing their mentees to critical thinking skills. Since mentees are learning to have closer relationships with adults, their relationships with their teachers also improve. Mentoring relationships help mentees think about their current and future identity differently. The activities and discussions they participate in help them develop various aspects of their character. The mentees' interpersonal history, social competencies, and developmental state, as well as the

duration of the mentoring relationship and characteristics of the program all influence how the mentee develops over time (DuBois et al., 2011).

Rhodes (2009) suggests that there are two approaches to mentoring: psychosocial, and instrumental. Psychosocial work best with girls, because it focuses on discussing the mentee's issues and helping her to change specific characteristics. Instrumental mentoring, on the other hand, works better for boys, because it revolves around the activities that the mentee and mentor complete (Rhodes, 2009). Darling, Hamilton, and Niego (1994) argue that mentoring relationships involving challenging activities, not just conversations, are more likely to be successful. Morrow and Styles (1995) suggest the two types of mentoring are prescriptive and developmental. In prescriptive, there is often a trusted impact missing between the mentor and mentee, because activities are often mentor-driven and based on the mentor's expectations (Langhout, Rhodes & Osborne, 2004). In developmental programs, the activities surround the mentee's needs and help to develop the relationship between mentor and mentee by providing what the mentee is missing in his/her life (Morrow & Styles, 1995). What may be even more beneficial is the combination of the two, especially for older adolescents who could help direct themselves toward goal setting (Larose, Cyrenne, Garceau, Brodeur, & Tarabulsky, 2010).

As mentioned by Rhodes (2005), the age of students may have something to do with their ability to develop relationships with mentors. As children age and choose to have more autonomy, it is essential that they still maintain relationships with adults who can help to steer them (Fruht & Wray-Lake, 2013). Between the ages of 9-14, students who have had negative exposure are more likely to permanently turn off from school and develop risky behaviors. Research has suggested that this age group is most receptive to mentors because this is the time when goal-setting becomes essential (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Holland (1996) believes that the

implementation of mentoring programs for at-risk students should happen as early as the beginning of elementary school so that they can learn to dream of and love a better life than their current reality. Younger adolescents tend to share more with adults and report more friendships (DuBois et al., 2011). During the middle school years, students experience many more developmental changes. When combined with family stress, students often need someone to guide them (Biggs, Musewe & Harvey, 2014). Prior to the days of high stakes testing, teachers could alleviate much of this stress, but many now do not have the time to develop mentoring relationships with their students (Gray, 2014). Having mentoring programs during middle school can help to fill the relationship void that is often missing for adolescents.

Quality mentoring

Mentoring also varies in the ratio of mentor to mentee. Historically, it was more common to see a one-to-one ratio. As mentoring has developed and as people's schedules have changed, group mentoring can contain multiple students to one mentor or teams of mentors (2 – 9) with a group (2 – 30) of students (Rhodes, 2009; Sipe & Roder, 1999). One-to-one mentoring relationships should occur at least one hour per week, and usually require the most significant time commitment from mentors (Mentor, 2005; Miller, 2008). Group mentoring is another option. Group mentoring is helpful to mentors because it reduces the strain on them and allows the sessions to continue even if one mentor is absent (Sipe & Roder, 1999).

The duration of the mentoring relationship also affects how much mentees gain from the relationship. In mentoring relationships lasting less than three months, students experience a decline post-mentorship (DuBois et al., 2011). The reduction may be due to students internalizing the reasons why the mentoring relationship ended. Successful mentoring relationships should last at least one year and should include mentors that are willing to go above

and beyond the expectations of mentors (Mentor, 2005). Pairing students with mentors may seem like a simple process, however, to be victorious, some things should be present in the mentoring program. The organization MENTORS (2009) provides individuals interested in mentoring with six standards, in addition to benchmarks, in order to develop a mentoring plan. First, there must be efficient recruitment of both mentors and mentees that match the program's goals. Second, screening to make sure that mentors/mentees are interested and able to commit to the program. Third, a training that is at least two hours is instrumental in making sure mentors feel supported and know how to handle situations. It is also crucial for mentees to know what to expect from the relationship. Fourth, making sure the mentor and mentee have things in common that can make their connection dynamic. Fifth, contact needs to be maintained between the mentor and mentee to make sure that things are going well for the match. Lastly, when the mentoring period is over, the program needs to make sure that it is done effectively. These standards are essential for compelling mentoring work. In addition to the six standards, *Effective Strategies for Mentoring African American Boys* (Jarjoura, 2013) stated that in order for a mentoring program to be successful for African American men, there are particular things to consider. The mentoring recruits should be highly engaged in the work and recognize that there is a big picture or larger purpose to their interaction. The program should also consider the relationships in terms of racial identity and cultural competency. Considering these things will allow the youth to develop a sense of belonging. Programs should consider the trauma that may be present in these young men's lives and that it affects their development. Often mentors and mentees are discouraged when they have unrealistic expectations of the program. Ensuring mentors and mentees are well aware of the goals of the program makes it easier for program matches to last. Research

demonstrates that youth matched for longer than twelve months have more positive effects than those matched for less than twelve months (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

The amount of training provided to mentors, mentees, and parents is paramount to the quality of the mentoring relationship. Those who spent at least six hours in training reportedly had the most influential mentoring relationships, whereas those who had less than two hours of training had lower quality relationships (Herrera, Sipe & Mchalahan, 2000). It is also the case that mentors who receive more training spend more time with their mentees. Depending on the population, there are specific trainings that should occur for those mentoring students with incarcerated parents or those mentoring immigrant children, for instance (MENTOR, 2009). Additionally, instruction on how to be more like a good parent and less like a friend should occur, which means that part of the training should include information on developmental models for youth (Langhout et al., 2004). Training for mentors should also be on-going and incorporate aspects of how to deal with stressful situations that may occur in the lives of low-income urban youth (Langhout et al., 2004). There should also be a portion of training that helps mentors and mentees to understand what their expectations should be of the relationships that they are building, so that they do not have unrealistic expectations and become quickly dissatisfied with the program (MENTOR, 2009).

The book, *Critical Mentoring* by Torie Weiston-Serdan (2017), presents a practical guide for a type of mentoring which has shown great success in the lives of minority students. This form of mentoring falls in line with CRT by allowing mentored youth to have a voice in what they need and the direction that the mentoring should take. She discusses the need for mentoring to be transformative, to address race, and to be focused on youth. Critical mentoring programs must be culturally relevant and provide the youth with a supportive look at their culture while

allowing their identities to emerge. It works differently from standard mentoring programs because it does not assume that youth and their culture or identities need to be shaped and molded into something "acceptable," but instead allows youth to come to terms with who they are.

Mentoring for African American Males

In the Handbook for Black Male Mentoring (Grimes, 2014b), the United Way of Philadelphia suggests that three are things affecting the achievement of Black males today. The participants in the study believe that they receive ineffective socialization on becoming a productive Black man and are not given the opportunity to form adequate connections to men that promote positive behaviors. Participants also believe they are not prepared with the skills to help them overcome the challenges that they meet in life. The organization believes that with effective mentoring, participants can overcome these challenges. Mentoring, when done effectively, can be a way for Black males to see their ability to achieve new highs.

There should also be a nontraditional focus on mentoring that does not include the typical one on one relationship so that there can be more significant exposure to other Black men. Successful mentors should have a focus on advocacy, understanding their position in making sure that they are supportive of and understand the issues that face today's young Black men. Because of the nature of funding, successful programs should be flexible and understand that there may not be large scale funding, but regardless, accomplishment is the goal. By using these strategies, it is possible to make successful programming to mentor young Black men.

Susan Taylor founded the National CARES mentoring movement in 2005 as Essence CARES to close the gap between African American youth who need mentoring and African American adults that are available for mentoring. The program has four partners: the National

Urban League, 100 Black Men, The Links and Elimination Racism, and Empowering Women YWCA. The program named HBCU Risings and In School Risings seek to match students in a 1-5 ratio, with as many as 12 mentors to 60 students. Their mentoring teams include both paid professionals and also volunteers. Using “A New Way Forward: Healing what is Hurting the Black Community” curriculum, the organization provides Mentoring Wellness Circles which help both mentors and mentees develop respect for their culture and strategies for dealing with life events. These circles are gender-specific and sometimes only include the mentors to allow them to process information before working with their mentees. Over 20 scholars in the Black community developed the curriculum and had it evaluated by a team of scholars. HBCU Risings matches college students from Historically Black Universities with 6th-grade students. In-School Risings is working to match 200-250 students from Harlan Community High School in Chicago with mentors. Both programs sound promising, but without updated information on their website, there is no indication of how effective these programs have been to date.

In a 1991 study, Ascher suggested that Black males should have unique after school or Saturday enrichment programs to address their particular needs. She recommended six aspects that can and have become part of mentoring programs. First, the programs should provide Black male role models. Second, the program should encourage academic success. Next, Black history should be part of the program. Fourth, there should be a community involvement portion. Finally, there should be a rite of passage portion to celebrate moving into manhood (Ascher, 1991).

David Miller’s (2008) research on barriers to Black adult males becoming mentors highlights several essential considerations. A third of the men studied wanted mentors for themselves, while 23% believed they needed a certain income level to be a mentor. 10% felt that

they did not have enough time to mentor. Other reasons for feeling unqualified to mentor were having a police record and feeling uncomfortable around Black male youth. Ongoing training are vital for showing these potential mentors that such feelings are common and do not necessarily preclude them from mentoring. Some mentoring programs are open to ex-offenders serving as mentors, especially those who committed low-level misdemeanors (Grimes, 2014). It is also crucial that programs do not only seek white-collar mentors. Doing so devalues people in other professions who would make excellent mentors for students.

Since recruitment and retention of mentors can be challenging, mentoring programs need to develop partnerships. For example, Big Brothers Big Sisters has partnered with several Black fraternities, including, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. They have created Mentoring Brothers in Action, which aims to provide one-to-one mentoring for Black males.

It is meaningful for Black males to interact with men who are racially similar to them. According to Pittman (2012), one of the primary reasons that Black male students have negative feelings about academic success are negative relationships with white educators during adolescence and lack of access to positive male mentors. Social Learning theory suggests that Black males tend to learn more from those who are the same race and gender as themselves and who exhibit less problematic behavior than their white counterparts (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003). However, like Watson, Washington & Watson (2015) explain, trust between mentor and mentee still needs to be built: race and ethnicity are not sufficient factors alone. The Empowerment Practice used by Moore, Collins, Golder, Heitzman & Monroe (2005) posits that relationships should be built on a level of shared power and trust. These things work together to help Black males feel safe, to strengthen their self-esteem, to make them willing to discuss a

variety of critical issues, and to help them on their journey to manhood. When forming Black male mentoring matches, it is critical to recognize that Blacks are not a monolithic people. They come from many different family structures and socio-economic backgrounds (Grimes, 2014).

Students who have poor relationships with school are more likely to participate in risky behaviors, such as delinquency, drug abuse, and failure to complete school (Black et al., 2010). Research suggests that Black males who feel good about school and participate in school-based activities have a higher academic achievement (Toldson, 2008). Likewise, Black males that are involved in religious activities, volunteering, and other community activities have better academic achievement.

Grantham (2004) argues that educational, career and personal development mentoring are all critical for Black males, especially personal development, which includes an emphasis on racial identity. While Grantham's work here focuses on gifted Black males, it can expand to the mentoring of Black males in general. Providing mentees with academic afterschool activities, reading literature about successful Black males, and providing college tours provides Black males with experiences that they do not regularly receive. It also allows those who do not see positive images of Black people regularly to see them.

Therefore, mentoring programs for Black must address both racial stratification and mentoring (Gilmer, Littles, and Bowers, 2008). Using Social Learning theory and Resilience theory, Hurd, Zimmerman, and Xue (2009) sought to determine if having a role model or mentor could reduce the adverse effects that were already surrounding youth due to their local community. The researchers interviewed 659 ninth grade Black adolescent participants, 49% of whom were male, and determined that the impact of mentors reduced the association between

negative behavior and violent behavior. This research helps to display the importance of having positive influences in the lives of adolescents.

Fruht and Wray-Lake (2013), found that having a teacher-mentor relationship contributed to higher levels of educational. However, Black and Hispanic students are less likely to report having a teacher-mentor. Because of the issue of recruitment of Black male mentors and due to the lack of Black male teachers, a mentoring program should start with group mentoring until there are enough volunteers to venture into one to one mentoring. Group mentoring allows students to feel comfortable sharing with one another and will not only increase the relationship with the mentor but also with other students. Based on what is known about adolescent development, a program for Black males should begin with entrance into middle school. As previously mentioned, this is when relationships between adolescents and parents are at the most fragile. Starting at middle school also enables mentors and mentees to have critical discussions. Youth that have better social competence, a skill that often comes with age, are better able to control their emotions and participate in activities (Dubois et al., 2011). Knowing how vital duration is in a program, mentors should be asked to commit to at least a year of time, but it would be preferable for it to continue throughout middle school.

Cross and Vandiver (2001) developed the Nigrescence theory, which has three main parts. The first is the pre-encounter stage, which can separate into pre-encounter miseducation and racial self-hatred. The second stage, immersion-emersion, also has two types—immersion-emersion anti-white and immersion-emersion intense Black involvement. While there has been limited research about racial identity and academic achievement, one study found that students who are in the immersion stage of racial identity development tend to have lower GPAs (Gordon et al., 2009). When students are in the immersion “anti-white” stage, they perceive education as

being “white” and do not try to do well. The last stage is internalization, which can be separated into three parts, Black Nationalist, internalization bicultural, and multiculturalist. Mentors are necessary to help students move along these stages, and a misstep along these stages can lead to students underachieving (Grantham, 2004).

Grantham suggests that the racial identity theory combines with Banks (1994) research on multicultural education. Banks presents several approaches to multicultural mentoring. The first is the contributions approach, where mentors highlight holidays that celebrate the contributions of the mentee’s ethnic group. The second is the additive approach, where the mentor adds cultural aspects into the mentoring session. During this stage, mentors should focus on motivation and racial identity (Grantham, 2004). In the transformational approach, mentors work with mentees to examine critical political and historical issues, not only from the perspective of Black males but also from the viewpoints of other racial groups. Mentees that are stuck in the anti-white stage can shift into the next phase when this occurs. The final level is the Social Action approach, which models ways to take a stance on social issues. Grantham (2004) suggests that mentees are better able to accept this lesson when they are in the racial internalization stage. Combining these approaches will help to improve Black males’ sense of themselves, which in turn can help with their motivation and academic achievement. It will allow them to see past the media presentation about them and develop an intellect to excel. Since academic achievement is often related to school identity, this must be addressed towards Black male students who typically have a negative school identity (Gordon et al., 2009).

Majors and Weiner (1995) assert that programs for Black males should have an Afrocentric focus, include the entire family, and connect to Black churches; these strategies increase a student’s racial identity and self-image. In particular, mentoring programs with an

Afrocentric focus help Black males develop a strong sense of empowerment (Gordon et al., 2009). In Wyatt's (2009) study, students who participated in an Afrocentric based mentoring program raised their GPA at least half a point during the study and reported higher self-efficacy. Most programs with an Afrocentric focus use Nguzo Saba, a rite of passage incorporating Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith) (Wyatt, 2009).

Smith and Stormont (2011) contend that mentoring programs must provide consistent and sustainable programming for a defined target group. Having a clearly defined purpose and population is a vital part of a formal mentoring program. With these in place, the programmatic mission links closely to achievable goals and training. Training should be consistent for both mentors and mentees. Not only should mentors be taught how to work with their mentees, but there should be an aspect of training that helps mentees learn how to relate and communicate with people. Finally, human resources and financial capital, as well as buy-in from mentors, mentees, and community members, are needed in order for the program to be sustainable.

A program designed to increase the academic achievement of Black males must start with root issues, and aim to increase a student's racial identity, which in turn can redevelop their academic identity. Many Black males do not feel valued in school or even confident that they are school material.

A robust program would include an Afrocentric focus and would also help students to develop their sense of spirituality. Drawing on the 2010 census data, the Black Male Mentoring Handbook (2014) described the Black community as prioritizing mutual benefits over individual gain and relying heavily on the Black church for information and spirituality. Participants would develop a stronger tie with themselves and also their community. Not only would this promote

the identity and cognitive development mentioned by Rhodes (2005), but also social-emotional development, by allowing youth to see positive relationships with other adults and also reframing how they look at themselves. Dance (2001) stated that an aspect of the Raul Roberson Institute was to reform what it means to be a man. The program taught students that Black men could say “I’m Sorry” and “I don’t know” without affecting their manhood.

Mentoring programs do not occur in isolation. This is why it is essential to build it as a community. This can be done through mentees interaction with the surrounding community. Connection through volunteering will help to create a strong bond. In a study that matched high school mentors with elementary mentees, the students were able to understand the importance of giving back (Lewis, 2014). If these relationships are fostered early enough, it could increase the number of Black males available for mentoring as they already know the effects of giving to their community. A mentoring program should include volunteering as a component. This volunteering can be done in an official capacity, or the mentee could be asked to mentor someone else (Lewis, 2014). The program itself should also make an effort to become part of the community. Mentoring programs should involve the parents and teachers, checking in with them to see how the students are doing in other settings. (Lewis, 2014; Peaslee & Teye, 2015). If students are in a transition year, it is essential to build a relationship with their feeder schools and make sure that connections maintain over the summer (Herrera et al., 2007).

Implications of Research on Mentoring and Motivation of Black Males

Mentoring programs must take the time to evaluate their services. MENTOR (2005), explains in-depth why evaluations are so crucial to mentoring programs. Some of the main reasons are to make sure that interventions are valid and that they do not have harmful effects, and that weaknesses and successes can be determined. Rhodes suggests that even if there is not a

formal evaluation, there should at least be benchmarks. One easy way to look at the effects of one to one mentoring is to look at the duration and the relationship quality of the program. When conducting formal evaluations, there are two types of evaluations: outcome and process evaluations. Process evaluations can give attention to how members feel about the program, the activities of the program, and the operations of the program. Outcome evaluations tend to be more critical for accountability. These tend to rely on surveys, interviews, and give information about grades, classroom behavior, and similar information. Outcome evaluations separate into two types of designs, single group design, which is the most straightforward form and quasi-experimental, which can help to determine if the intervention is the cause of the change in the mentee.

In looking into studies about Black male programs, the majority of evaluations use a single group design. In looking at the studies that brought together both the control and experimental group (See table 1), it is essential to note a few things. Holland (1996) and Biggs, Musewe & Harvey (2015) both included some time of mentoring in the control group. The studies all used a similar or equal number of students in most cases and those students had similar demographics. Holland (1996) and Gray (2014), both used control groups at different schools than the experimental group.

All four programs had different standards for program duration, with Project IMPACT lasting the longest, matching students from 1st grade until 12th grade. It provided a more consistent role model for the participants. The Comprehensive program asked for at least a year of commitment with their mentors, and Young Men of Distinction lasted a year with the program. The research suggested that Project IMPACT was most successful in keeping mentoring relationships going.

One aspect of the Project 2000 study was to conduct seminars for other educators that would help them understand how to work with Black male students (Pittman, 2012). These seminars should be incorporated into other school-based programs so that effects are not lost if students interact with a teacher who does not understand how to work with them.

Table 1

Control and experimental groups particulars

	Biggs et al., (2014)	Gordon et al., (2009)	Gray (2014)	Holland (1996)
	Comprehensive Program	Benjamin E. Mays Institute	The Young Men of Distinction	Project 2000
Study Participants	50 participants 11-14 years old	61 7 th graders	7 th and 8 th graders	75 th 5 th graders
Experimental Group	50 Students	29 in Institute program	40 students	mentors in the classroom
Control Group	48 students 1/hour per week mentoring	32 Students no participation	40 male students Nonequivalent group	students at a different elementary school with school program with activities
Theory			Motivational, expectancy value, attribution, Achievement goal	
Special Aspect	School-Based Group Field Trips Volunteering with younger students 2 Sat enrichments One year commitment encouraged	School-Based Based on Sankofa Paradigm 7 Principles Nguzo Saba	School-Based Afterschool Group mentoring	Community- Based/ In school White Collar and Blue Collar volunteers 3 phases 1 st grade through 12 th No outside activities

Type of mentoring	One to one mentoring After school activities	One to one mentoring Weekly activities Parent inclusion	Group Mentoring, with individual meetings Weekly meetings After school 1 x week	One to one mentoring / Half a day once a week
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All four of the programs reported positive results regarding the GPAs of the students in comparison with the control group. Since these programs were all school-based, it is likely that mentoring increased their positive feelings about the school itself and improved their academic achievement. Biggs, Musewe & Harvey (2014) looked at what could occur with a student with increased levels of engagement and discovered that mentees who had more than 20 contacts with their mentors had better academic success than those with less. The study also looked at what mentors and mentees were engaged in and found that mentee pairs that discussed academics tended to do better overall. One thing contributing to their success is their continued training with mentors throughout the year; other studies are missing that aspect. Gordon et al. (2009) found that the students in the program had higher academic success and were farther along on the racial identity scales. The comparison group, however, had declined in all areas. The comparison group was less clear about race and how it affected them. One crucial aspect of Gray's (2014) findings was that though the intervention was not academic, the participants did well academically, which points to how having a relationship with adults that encourages and shapes identity can improve a student's academic success. Holland found that the primary group had more significant gains on achievement tests and GPAs in the second group developed. This program did involve high school students, but the study did not discuss that in detail.

Table 2

Control and Experimental groups goals, purpose, results

	Biggs et al., (2014)	Gordon, et al., (2009)	Gray (2014)	Holland (1996)
	<u>Comprehensive Program</u>	<u>Benjamin E. Mays Institute</u>	<u>The Young Men of Distinction</u>	<u>Project 2000</u>
Goals of the Study	Determine if more consistent mentoring engagements increased student success	Determine the effect of Afrocentric mentoring on academic achievement of adolescent males	Use archival data to determine if mentoring and academic motivation affected academic achievement	Examine the effect of the Project 2000 program
Purpose of Program	Promote life skills, spiritual development, self-esteem, etc.	Provide Black male adolescents with positive male role models	Focused on character education	Provide positive male role models
Data collection	GPA	Questionnaires, school records	Grades for math and language arts; before and after the program	Grades in reading, math, language arts, spelling, and standardized test scores
Results	Higher GPA's than control group in math, reading, and science More intense engagement	Higher grades, test scores, and racial identity Control group declined in all areas	Positive effect on academic achievement Nonacademic intervention, but affected academics	Higher GPA's than control group in every subject. Success not only academics but character

Some of the other programs researched did not include comparison groups, but information about them is on Tables 3-6. In looking at these programs, it is evident that they included a variety of extra components in their program, which could be the reason why there was not a comparison group. Finding a comparison group that would allow for program evaluators to know which aspects of their programs worked would be difficult.

The seven programs mentioned below have a few similarities and differences. One similarity or difference is the number and ages of the participants vary more. The previous set listed in Tables 1 and 2 had, on average, 40 participants in each group. There were also more studies within this group that had a grounding theory. This second set, as a complete difference from the one to one mentoring programs discussed in the previous set, is primarily group mentoring programs with the Target Success Mentor program as the exception.

Table 3

Additional Studies Particulars (Part 1)

	Jackson & Matthews (1999) Target Success Mentor Program	Washington et al., (2006) The Kuumba Group	Watson et al., (2015) Umoja	Mitchell et al., (2002) MAAT
Study Participants	19 Black males 13-16 years old Only 11 used for research	110 Black males Ages 9-17	Two sites 15 6 th -8 th graders 19 ages 15-19	50 6 th and 7 th graders
Theory		Observational Learning (Social Learning Theory)		Multicultural Education
Special Aspect	School-Based mentors were Undergraduate, graduate and university professors at Auburn University	Ngozu Saba 7 Principles Used therapeutic approach to mentoring	School and Community Based Spirit-rhythm drumming Sankofa Paradigm Ten weeks	After-school African Philosophy based on Kernet. 22 mentor, Eight full-time teachers
Type of mentoring	One to one Monthly workshops (focus on social skills)	Group Mentoring/ Team Mentoring 10 week 90-minute session	Pyramid mentoring 7 Mentors and four mentees	Two X week/hour and 15 mins

One of the thought-provoking aspects regarding these programs is that many of them included teachers as mentors in the program. This factor could influence student success as it gave students a more positive feeling about school in general. Most of these programs also include group mentoring, which gave participants more significant interaction with a positive male adult. Another similarity is that Afrocentric influences were present in all but two of the programs. Project IMPACT primarily worked with Black male students, while the Target Success Program did not.

Table 4

Additional Studies Particulars (Part 1)

	Jackson et al.,(2014)	Wyatt (2009)	Lewis (2014)
	The Umoja Network	The Brotherhood	Project IMPACT
Study Participants	14 Black and Latino High School Students	1,700 students each year	10 Black and Latino youth
Theory	Phenomenology	Empowerment Theory	
Special Aspect	School-Based Mentoring Culturally responsive teaching Multi-year	School-Based Afterschool 30-week curriculum with American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards, Empowerment theory, and the Nguzo Saba	School-Based summer program High school students mentored by college students and mentored elementary students Two months 20 hours/week Continued during school year
Type of mentoring	Group mentoring (2 x per week)	Group Mentoring Four year study	Group Mentoring

Washington, Johnson, Jones & Langs (2006) found that in using the Afrocentric model, there were increases in the student's home behavior, attitudes about school, and attendance. These findings were all given through reported data from the mentee's caregivers and caseworkers. In the Project IMPACT study (Lewis, 2004), while the author did not make the

results clear, he did list that some of the participants learned from being able to mentor and also be mentored.

Table 5

Additional studies goals, purpose, results (Part 1)

	Jackson & Matthews (1999) Target Success Mentor Program	Washington et al., (2006) The Kuumba Group	Watson et al., (2015) Umoja	Mitchell et al., (2002) MAAT
Goals of Study	To determine if University partnership can increase the retention of Black male students	To determine if providing cultural aspects can counteract negative behaviors	To determine if cultural arts can reduce violence in the community	Examine the impact of mentors on Black male academic achievement
Purpose of Program	Increase retention of At-risk students in Auburn Junior High	Teach students conflict resolution, help students make positive decisions and reduce illegal behaviors	Provide conflict resolution, make positive social decisions and reduces illegal and violent behavior	Increase overall academic achievement, parent education, cultural development and college, and career prep
Data collection	Survey Questionnaires	Group interviews/ Focus groups, Caregiver interviews	Teacher focus groups Self-reports by mentees and researchers	Pre and Post attitudinal surveys/ Informal interviews
Results	Mentees felt that the mentoring had a positive impact and that they felt it was planned well and organized	Small increase in spirituality, attitude about school and behavior at home	Mentees felt they learned from mentors and could make better decisions following the program.	Participants believed they became better students because of the program Decreased discipline referrals

The two programs that did not have an Afrocentric focus were coincidentally the two that reported the least favorable results, which makes a case for the effect of Afrocentric elements on the lives of Black males. The students who participated in these programs felt better about themselves and exhibited more positive behaviors. When comparing all six tables, the comparison between the programs with an Afrocentric program and the ones without that focus was not intentional. The programs in the first set of tables met the goal of providing a Black male role model and had success and introduced other aspects. The second set of programs had a range of targets, most of which were academic or behavioral, which could be a reason why the group mentoring worked so well. These programs had more comprehensive goals than the first set, and due to the addition of other mentors, they were able to address more issues.

Table 6

Additional studies goals, purpose, results (Part 2)

	Jackson et al., (2014)	Wyatt (2009)	Lewis (2014)
	The Umoja Network	The Brotherhood	Project IMPACT
Goals of Study	Examine the experience of young men and mentors in to determine what is affected most by mentoring	Examine the effect of Afrocentric mentoring on GPA's and	Examine experiences in the program, and the relationship between mentees and their mentors
Purpose of Program	To help Black and Latino students do better in school by helping them to have a positive academic and social identity	Close the achievement gap for Black males	Help males of color pre-K – 3 rd grade to do better academically and socially
Data collection	Field Observations, three semi-structured focus groups	GPA's and survey's Weekly journals	Interviews and observation
Results	Implementing a caring environment influenced commitment to themselves, their group members and their future	Higher GPA's for participants vs nonparticipants	Unclear results of the study

One thing that cannot be left out is that many of the programs presented used an Afrocentric focus and reported success with the students involved. To address the influences of racial identity, the use of a robust psychometric measurement should be considered (Gordon et al., 2009).

The Mentoring Effect mentions the importance of looking for student voice in research by seeking to understand their challenges and what they gain from the program, which in turn helps researchers improve programs (Bruce & Bridgeman, 2014). Duncan (2002), also mentions the importance of gathering perspectives from Black male students in order to discover their needs. Wyatt (2009), used weekly journals in the mentoring program to help the mentors figure out the next discussions. In this manner, mentors used the voice of their mentees for change.

Chapter Summary

Race, racism and masculinity are critical avenues for Black males to navigate. Black boys hear stories about who they are through the media, schools, and other members of their communities. Often these stories are developed through the dominant narrative, which uses stereotypes to marginalize people of color further. Black males have a difficult time because of the intersection of their race, gender, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation. In order to look at the lives of Black males in a more telling way, it is essential to use Critical Race Theory to provide narratives from the voices of Black men. Because of the unequal representation of the racial and ethnic background of teachers and staff in schools, it is imperative to provide Black males with opportunities to hear the voices of other Black men. Mentoring is a necessitous vehicle for making such an interaction occur. By providing Black males with instances where they can hear from other Black men, navigating the often troubling space of identity and academics can become much smoother.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of Black males in mentoring relationships as they navigate the space between race, racism, and masculinity.

Research Design

I conducted this qualitative study using narrative inquiry and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as both a framework and a methodology. Narrative inquiry allows for the lived experiences to be told, combined with CRT, which focuses explicitly on privileging the voices of marginalized people to allow for counterstories or the stories of people of color be told against accounts that are informed by white society.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is essential for work done in the educational field, and more specifically, in this case, telling a participant's story (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), qualitative research allows a researcher to study stories in-depth and with considerable attention to detail. Another benefit of using qualitative research is that it enables the researcher to look for connections between what themes, which is not possible in quantitative analysis (Maxwell, 2013). This research hinges on offering the voice and counternarratives of African American males and required hearing from this population. When qualitative research foregrounds itself in narratives, it can use the challenges of lived experience to shine a light on racism (Bryant & Lewis, 2019).

Narrative Inquiry

The reason for using narrative inquiry for this study allows for the participant's story to be at the center of the research (Kramp, 2004). A narrative is a story or account of events, fiction, or non-fiction that can provide the information that we are seeking. Narratives can open the minds of those who read them and, in turn, can open the eyes to society. With such a capability as a change agent, researchers need to understand what bolsters the research. It is also critical for practitioners to recognize the ways that narratives can be used in research to improve teaching and learning. Nehamams' (1985) study found the following:

"A narrative that lacks a moral that can be independently and briefly stated is not necessarily pointless. And a narrative is not successful just because it allows a brief moral. A successful narrative does not allow the question to be raised at all. The narrative has already supplied the answer before the question is asked. The narrative itself is the answer." (p. 163-164).

Stories and narratives have allowed people to learn about people and society. Often people determine who they are by the stories that they are told, their experiences, and the stories they tell about themselves and those around them (Cladinin, 2013). As Howard (2004) states, often research done on Black males is done based on observed behaviors, and without analysis, a critical analysis of what is seen paints them in a bad light. Based on this, narrative research gives people who read it the opportunity to see how Black males describe their reality and allows a space for them to critically interrogate their identities.

Critical Race Theory

Under Critical Race Theory, participants own their narratives and their responses (Kramp, 2004). The "gift" of CRT is that it unapologetically challenges the scholarship that would dehumanize and depersonalize us (Ladson-Billings, 2002 p. 200).

CRT recognizes the importance of racial oppression, but also the intersectionality of it all (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT is not only a theoretical framework but also serves as a methodology in which race is a central focus of the work (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As a methodology, CRT provides an effective way to conduct research that does not come from a deficit perspective, reproduce the assumptions or stereotypes that researchers often hold about people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT provides an opportunity for marginalized people to develop their ontology, reality, and become more critical of the stories told about them (Cook, 2013; Howard, 2014; Zamudio et al., 2011). Solórzano and Yosso (2002), present it as a way to ground the research completed on people of color. Using this method in the study allowed my participants to think about their reality and the way they shape their knowledge. For this reason, using CRT also helps researchers not only be a part of breaking the dominant narrative, what is said in white society, but helps them to transform the community (Cook, 2013). In cases where racism may be covert, CRT is essential to unearth the microaggressions that Black men experience throughout their lives (Howard, 2014). Looking through a CRT methodology with a focus on counter storytelling, it will bring these issues to light and also help to find solutions to the problem.

Narrative and Critical Race Theory

Narratives/counternarratives are essential to allowing my study participants to have a voice in such a way where their experiences are perceived. It also allows us to "think narratively" (Xu & Connelly, p. 355). The lack of counternarratives provided to teachers, administrators, policymakers, and society affects how the public views Black male students and also their probability of being adequately educated. The students themselves are also affected by the missing counternarratives, which help to give students a clear picture of themselves.

Counternarratives are a useful method in educational research that connects to voice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). They allow for the experiences of those that are marginalized to be heard, at the same time, providing a humanistic side to theory and practice (Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal, 2004). Counter storytelling can also be a pedagogical tool, in that it can allow educators to understand experiences. Using CRT as my framework, the method of questioning in a nonthreatening way helps to unearth the microaggressions that Black men may have dealt with in school or life (Howard, 2014). Counternarratives within themselves are liberating as they allow the participants to think about their racial oppression and expound on it. The use of narratives/counternarratives humanizes a population that is often dehumanized and transforms the way society sees them and how they see themselves (Howard, 2014). Because the research is usually done on Black males is not done with this intention, the methods and procedures must be clear appropriate for transformative research.

Methods and Procedures

Sampling Strategy

All of my participants were selected using purposeful selection to allow for relevant information that met the goals of this research (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Another reason for using this purposeful sampling is to make sure that I could develop a productive relationship and rich data (Maxwell, 2013). Snowball sampling was used because it increases the opportunity to find Black men who have participated in mentoring programs and who were in the desired age range. which allowed for friends and family to help find participants who met the needs of the study and was necessary to find Black males who had participated in mentoring relationships. (Patton, 2002). In the case of my research, friends, family members, and study participants forwarded the flyer and offered suggestions of other men to contact.

Recruitment

Prior to recruitment, I created a flyer (see Appendix A) that listed the purpose of the study and all of the qualifying information. Initially, I wanted to recruit from mentoring organizations. I felt that this would be the best way to find participants who matched with the study requirements. I reached out to five organizations through either email or their contact form on the website. When I did not hear back from the organizations from the email. I called the offices for the organizations with phone numbers. One organization, which is within a University, did respond but stated that I would also have to go through that University's IRB board. I decided that I would seek participants outside of a site so that I would not have to adjust my research for an institution that I was not attending.

When I began recruiting, I sent the flyer out to my email contacts, both personal and through my job. I also posted it on my personal Facebook and Instagram page. My network, friends, and family posted the flyer on their pages and sent it out to their email contacts. I shared the ad on email and Social Media. The brochure contained my email address and asked interested candidates to send an email. Over the three months that I was recruiting participants, I had ten men reply. I then emailed them a Google Doc (see Appendix B) that asked for participants' age, type of mentoring program, availability, and asked if they had any suggestions for future participants. Two of those participants suggested another person for me to contact. I reached out to those suggestions through email but did not receive a response in either case.

Sample Size

Depth is found in smaller sample sizes (Patton, 2002). The standard rule of thumb is that interviews should stop at the point of saturation, which is when the researcher does not learn any new information from participants and cannot code any further. It allows for the study to be

replicated (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mason, 2010; Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this redundancy. A study by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that saturation was found between 12-16 participants, while Hagaman and Wutich (2017) achieved it at 16 participants. The goal of this study was to recruit 16 males, eight who previously served as mentors, and eight who were mentees. Patton (2002) states that there is no specific number needed to conduct a qualitative study, so I continued my research with the ten confirmed participants. Even though my participant number was relatively small, it allowed me to achieve saturation within the responses and also provide in depth narratives where the voices of my participants shine and are not overshadowed by too much information.

Participants

There is a great deal of research that focuses on millennials not experiencing racism in the same way as previous generations (Brown, 2018). From a CRT standpoint, many millennials see themselves as colorblind and often are not aware of the structural ways that racism infiltrates society (Mueller, 2013). Research also suggests that many millennials are post-racial and do not have many experiences with racism, however this research tends to exclude the realities of Black Millennials (Brown, 2018; Lee & Hopson, 2019). Therefore, the age group chosen for this research includes a combination of both millennials and Generation Z. Black male Millennials have seen the highs of the election of the first Black president, but also the lows of the racially divisive current president (Brown, 2018). Black millennials are also more likely to be subject to the media's perception of Black male youth. Black men in this demographic have to balance the ideals of "thug life" (codes to give order to gang or gun violence, attainment of money and drug culture with the models of being upwardly mobile; codes for social behaviors, material attainment, status, and social class). Participants also need to be involved in a formal mentoring

program due to the structured nature of these programs. Most successful mentoring programs have a clear mission and focus, which are there to meet the needs of their participants (Smith & Stormont, 2011). The participant information is found in table 7. All ages of the participants have already been changed. The ages ranged from 19 to 40 years old and they primarily attend public school. Three of the nine attend a private school for the majority of their educational experience. While we often hear the statistics of low Black male enrollment in colleges, the participants have all been in college, one is still in undergrad, while the rest have all graduated college. Interesting enough, many of my participants are either educators, former educators or work in a helping field. Of the three graduate students, two of them are in seminary and three of them are members of clergy. There were ten participants originally, but due to a technical difficulty with the recording device, it did not record the interview. We were not able to reschedule the meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

Table 7

Breakdown of Participant's Education

Name	Age	Education Setting	Level of Education	Profession
Abraham	33	Public School	Double Masters	Clergy
Brandon	24	Public School	Bachelors	Graduate Student
Charles	19	Private School	Pursuing Bachelors	Student
Emmanuel	28	Private School	Pursuing Masters	Gang Prevention Coordinator, entrepreneur, a former teacher
Faison	28	Private School	Pursuing Masters	Graduate Student/ Musician
Dyson	27	Public School	Pursuing PhD	Teacher
MD Sheffield	40	Public School	Masters	University Communications Manager, Clergy
Gerald	23	Public School	Bachelors	Graduate Student

Harrison	37	Public School	Masters	Clergy, a former educator
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As the study looks at the mentoring relationships of Black males, it is crucial to provide information regarding the participants and their interactions with mentoring (see Table 2).

Table 8

Participant Mentoring Program Information

Name	Mentor/Mentee	Program
Abraham	Mentor	Youth Challenge Program
Brandon	Mentee	100 Black Men
Charles	Mentor	School Peer Mentoring/Boys and Girls Club
Emmanuel	Mentor	Noble Truth Project
Faison	Mentor	Yale Mentoring Program
Dyson	Mentor	Year Up
MD Sheffield	Mentor and Mentee	Big Brother Big Sister
Gerald	Mentor	Athens County Membership Program
Harrison	Mentor	Church Mentoring Program

Setting

Interviews occurred either face to face or through a conference call line. For students who were able to meet in person, I gave them the option of choosing where they wanted to be interviewed or meeting me at my office in the city of Atlanta. The five face to face interviews that took place, three occurred in my office, and one (Faison) happened at a Starbucks that he chose, and Abraham's interview occurred at his office. There was one additional interview that was supposed to happen face to face, but due to Harrison having to change his interview twice, we scheduled a phone interview. The four interviews that were phone interviews occurred using a freeconferencecall.com.

Table 9

Participant interview specifics

Participant	Date	Interview format (e.g., face-to-face, phone)	Duration
Abraham	3/19/19	Face to face	41:43
Brandon	4/29/19	Phone	25:31
Charles	3/21/19	Face to face	42:31
Emmanuel	4/28/19	Phone	1:05:19
Faison	3/08/19	Face to face	42:29
Dyson	3/07/19	Face to face	1:29:03
MD Sheffield	3/01/19	Face to face	1:05:42
Gerald	2/23/19	Phone	35:08
Harrison	4/23/19	phone	1:15:05

Data Collection

The data for the study came from interviews and field notes. Collecting this data was done with clear intentions to make sure that the result would be well-formed stories from my participants.

Interviews

Participants told of their lived experiences during semi-structured interviews. Before the interview began, each participant was given two copies of the consent form (see Appendix C), and I went over it with them. One of them signed and returned to me, and the other copy the participant kept if they had questions about the interview. I conducted one interview with each participant slated to last between 45 minutes to an hour. The interview duration, however, varied based on the participant. The interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 1.5 hours. The length of the interviews is found in table 3. Based on the desire to interview people who had served as either mentors or mentees there were two separate protocols. Participant protocols were based on their self-report as either a mentor or a mentee (see Appendix D and E). The question order was purposeful to allow for demographic, experience and behavior, opinion, and feeling questions

were needed for the interviews as it pertained to the purpose of this study. CRT was evident in the formation of the questions, which allowed for the participant's voices to be the center and allowed for them to critique the things that they saw around them. The open-ended questions like "Tell me about a time" were placed throughout the protocol to allow participants to create their narrative (Kramp, 2004). Through these questions, the participants had the power to recreate their identities to recreate their own identities into name who they are. The question about designing a mentoring program gave the insider, participant, to verbalize their perspective on programming.

All interviews were recorded either on a tape recorder or the conference call site. Once the interviews were over, the taped interviews were downloaded onto my computer and stored in a locked file. The conference call audio files were downloaded from the site and saved within that same file. At the beginning of the interview, all participants were aware that the information would be kept confidential. Participants were also informed that the interview could be stopped at any time if it was necessary. Participants were allowed to choose their pseudonym if they did not have a preference; I selected one for them. All personal information and indefinable information were changed to protect their identities.

Field Notes

Patton (2002) states that field notes aid the researcher in understanding the context of what the participant says during the interview. Throughout the interviews, I wrote descriptive field notes. They were dated and contained the location of the interview (Patton, 2002). These notes captured participant observations related to body language, voice inflection, and a summary of their responses. They were particularly helpful in asking questions outside of the interview protocol to capture responses that were important based on participant responses. I also

wrote down my reactions to the participants' interviews immediately after the interview. My first interview was not captured on tape due to a technical difficulty, and it was from that first interview, that I learned more about proper field notes. While I did take notes from the first interview, they were not detailed enough to offer an appropriate narrative of the participant. When making field notes in a CRT framework, it is crucial to make sure not to make judgments based on the observed behaviors but situate what is seen through the responses of the participants.

Data Analysis

To construct the narratives found in Chapter 4, I read and re-read the individual transcripts before preparing the stories. Doing so allowed me to hear the participant's language and also their story (Kramp, 2004). Part of constructing their narratives was to make sure that the story centered around race and gender and contrasted the dominant narrative (Cook, 2013). Three things should be present to present a counternarrative accurately. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state that 1) the counternarratives must build a community

2) challenge the dominant narrative and

3) expand the way the readers view reality and the things that are possible.

In analyzing the narratives, it was vital for me to keep track of my own biases and not infuse my own thoughts. (Kramp, 2004; McAlpine, 2016). Arguably, this is not easy. I read each narrative at least four times and then took notes about what each participant spent the majority of their time speaking about. In general, the narratives were built around their family life, their educational experiences and their reasons for mentoring.

Analyzing data from a CRT perspective requires a focus on race and its intersectionality with other factors. Looking at what was said and not said in the interviews, allowed me to see

the structural issues that are at work in the participants' lives (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). To analyze data from a CRT perspective, I must place race and racism at the center.

Thinking about the experience is valued more than data collection (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through narrative inquiry, the researcher can assess identity formulation because the process helps create, change, and rebuild the participant's identity (McAlpine, 2016; Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008), details many reasons why this is important, narratives help groups and individuals develop their identities. These identities are often formed and reformed along the way (McAlpine, 2016; Riessman, 2008). The process can also help those who engage in them become activists as these stories are actually what sparks movements for those who have been impacted by discrimination (Riessman, 2008).

After transcribing the interviews, I sent them to the participants so that they could see if what they said was adequately captured. All of the participants signed off on using the narratives, and two of them Faison and MD Sheffield made corrections. Participants were also asked to share information and their perspectives on the project (Patton, 2002). Conducting analysis helps the researcher make sense of their relationship to the world (Patton, 2002). The process of data analysis has to be intentional and synthesized in a manner that makes sense since it requires taking a large amount of data and reducing it into something meaningful (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Conner, 2003).

Coding

Coding is the connection between determining the meaning and gathering data (Charmaz, 2001). It is one of the most important parts of analysis by helping researchers to organize and group data (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2002; Merriam, 1998). Charmaz (2014) describes coding as the bones to the skeleton of analysis.

1st Round

During this research, precoding occurred during the first read. Precoding involved highlighting, circling, underling things that are important (Saldaña, 2016). Once completed, the remainder of the coding occurred on the NVivo software. Using the program, I ran a query for word frequency that searched for words with more than three letters and looked for the word stems. From this list, I had 1000 preliminary codes, excluding prepositions and articles from the search. Table 10 provides the top 10 terms with the frequency included. Using this type of coding helped make the data smaller but did not address creativity (Patton, 2002).

Table 10

Top 10 Word Frequency

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
know	4	458	2.27%	know, knowing, knows
thinks	6	371	1.84%	think, thinking, thinks
school	6	333	1.65%	school, schooling, schools
Black	5	245	1.22%	Black, Blackness, Blacks
speaker	7	240	1.19%	speaker, speakers
things	6	175	0.87%	thing, things
people	6	173	0.86%	people
talk	4	168	0.83%	talk, told, talking, talks
want	4	166	0.82%	want, wanted, wanting, wants
time	4	158	0.78%	time, times

After the first round completion, I created a codebook for the codes. It was stored on my computer to use during the remainder of coding. Each code begins with an abbreviation and is followed by a definition; the first ten are on table 11.

Table 11

Top 10 codes from Codebook

Dissertation Codebook	
BlaMale	Black Male
Disrace	Discussions of Race
Disracism	Discussion of Racism
EdBack	Educational Background
Fam	Family
Iden	Identity
lowInc	Low income characteristics
MalTea	Male Teachers
MasNeg	Negative Masculinity
MasPos	Positive Masculinity

2nd Round

Before beginning this round of coding, each transcript was printed with a 2 in. margin to allow for space to write on the side of each transcript. This margin was used to write codes from the Codebook, but also to conduct pattern coding. Pattern coding brings the smaller codes into codes that have more meaning (Saldaña, 2016). Many of these codes were very similar to the codes in the coding book. Within pattern coding, I looked at the similarities and differences across the codes to see if there were distinct patterns in their responses (McAlpine, 2016). This is often called inductive analysis since the patterns and themes come directly from the data (Patton, 2002).

3rd Round

The third round of coding was theoretical coding that centered around CRT. To do this, I situated the codes around race, gender, and other forms of intersectionality. I also looked back at the research questions to see if any of the codes helped to explain how the participants viewed the research. I asked myself questions like, "does this code help explain participant's feelings about school?"; "does this code allow me to see the creation of masculinity?" From the codes, I

was able to gather broader themes and use some of the smaller codes to become the subthemes within the findings. The analysis became analytic induction at this point, where the theoretical framework is applied (Patton, 2002).

Data Management

Conducting qualitative research produces a vast amount of data, and the data must be managed in a way that will be beneficial. I stored the interview files on the computer in a locked file, and I saved them under the participant's pseudonym name. I kept a copy of each participant's consent form and field notes in a locked file cabinet in my home office. On my computer and also on my external flash drive. All files were stored according to the participant's pseudonym. The list that cross-referenced the participant's names with their alias was kept in a locked cabinet in my school office and also under a separate password-protected file on my external drive.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

While focusing on the participant's voice, it is imperative to ensure reliable data. Lincoln and Guba (1986) provide researchers with methods of making sure that their data is quality. In their opinion, member checking is the best way to ensure that your information is trustworthy.

Member Checking

To make sure that the participants were able to have input in the research, all transcripts were sent out so that participants could check over the transcripts to make sure that the transcripts read correctly. In the instructions sent to the participants over email, I asked them to read over their transcripts and make sure that they were correct. I also allowed them the opportunity to add any information that they felt they left out but wanted to be captured in the study. Out of the nine participants, two of them, Faison and MD Sheffield, made corrections to

their transcripts. It would have also been beneficial to send the participants their narrative to make sure that they were adequately captured.

Researcher's Stance

For researchers who conduct studies on marginalized groups it is important to state their stances in their positionality within the research. I am a Black female who has attended college and is a middle school administrator. I've been in the field of education for 13 years and have seen the effects of improper training for Black students, specifically Black male students. I come from a background where I am privileged because my mother is an academic, and my attendance at a college was never a question I have been able to continue my educational journey through a Masters and now a Ph.D. program.

I attended a private elementary school because of a scholarship I received because I had a single mother. I spent several years as the only Black female in my grade and understand what it is like to feel the need to be represented. For middle and High School, I was at a school with Black students but then began to understand the stigma of low expectations. At a very crucial time during my High school career, my mother had to come to advocate for me to be placed in a college prep class because my counselor did not want to put me in the appropriate course. I watched the disproportionate number of minority students placed in advanced classes throughout my middle and high school experience.

To me, education is one of the only things that someone cannot take away from you. I am also a bonus mother of a Black son who recognizes some of the difficulties that Black male students have in school systems. In schools, white or minority educators, believe the stories told by white society, teach them from a deficit perspective. I am a wife of a Black male who understands the fear that those who are in relationships with Black males often have when their

spouse leaves the house, not knowing what may await him on the outside of the door based on the color of his skin. My subjectivities inform my research, which develops from the ethos of care about who they individually care about how they are treated and care about how they internalize behaviors of others.

As a researcher who seeks to know the stories of others, it is essential to make my ontology and epistemology clear. For me, my ontology is that race is present everywhere and colors how I see reality and how others see me. This reality exists for many Black people who also deal with the added factors of gender and socioeconomic status. As I have learned, the stories told within the school building rarely address my reality or the reality of those who look like me.

Ladson-Billing (2000) states that epistemology is related to an individual's background, race, gender, and color by how they view the world. From my standpoint, the way that knowledge forms or my epistemology come from the stories of those around me. As I have learned growing up, both inside and outside of schools, the stories told within the school building rarely address my reality. These stories come from the dominant perspective, which is white society. From my standpoint, critical that race is discussed and not swept under the rug because that is the only way issues kicked to the importance of what occurs in today's society.

As a CRT researcher, race and its intersections impact how I see society and am always looking for a way to combat the dominant narrative. I believe that the stories of the marginalized and, in my case, Black males are necessary to provide a lived experience that challenges the dominant narrative. Challenging the narrative is essential for Black men, but particularly important for our boys, who spend the majority of their days in a school building that may or may not affirm them. CRT research is vital to letting these stories live and jump-starting change.

Chapter Summary

This chapter took an in-depth look at the process of conducting this narrative inquiry and Critical Race Theory based study. Throughout the chapter, I have expounded on the methods and procedures, the data collection, data analysis, coding, data management, and trustworthiness of the data. This study is situated in providing the voice and lived experiences of Black male mentors and mentees who are ages 19-40. These participants have an array of knowledge that will be laid out in the next chapter as stories of their experiences. As is the purpose of CRT research, the counternarratives provided will help to transform the way mentoring and schooling are done. It will also shine a light on how these mentoring relationships help Black men navigate life.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

Until the lions have their historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.
– African Proverb

Much of the research conducted about Black males comes from the deficit perspective, and whites exist to save the Black male from himself. In previous research, Black men are lumped together as a monolithic group. So much of what we see in the media, read about from the dominant perspective paints Black males in a deeply problematic, stereotypic way. For this reason, it is time for the lions to have their voice.

Counternarratives that are purposeful according to CRT standards should do three things, 1) challenge dominant narratives, 2) tackle social justice, and 3) shine light on the way knowledge comes from people's experiences (Solórazono & Yosso, 2002). When forming these narratives, it was essential to give the participant a voice and speak their truth. The following narratives are an opportunity to have the participant's voices heard and, for this reason, will be without commentary. Chapter 5 will contain an analysis of these narratives.

While Black men share some commonalities, no one person has experienced the same things. These narratives provide a glimpse into the lives of my nine participants. Part of identity formation is defining yourself. For this reason, I asked each participant to provide three words to describe themselves. Their self-proclaimed description precedes each participant's narrative.

Abraham's narrative

Interesting, energetic, spontaneous

Abraham is a 33-year-old born in Atlanta, Georgia. Growing up, he attended public school and participated in a program that buses students to a different side of town to balance ethnicities. His father was physically present in his life; however, he spent a lot of time working to take care of his children.

"My father had five kids, and he worked three jobs. He worked two jobs during the week and one job on the weekend, and so there were times where I would go a week without seeing my father based on his work schedule, but he was present because he was busy providing for his family."

He learned the importance of taking care of his family, from these observations

Abraham was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and spent a large part of his schooling in Special Education classes. His status as a Special Education student is not something that he shares typically he took several deep breaths before sharing it with me (field note). I discerned from his behavior that he is still affected by the stigma that exists with special education. For him, he had to do work to make sure that this label did not keep him from attending college.

"So this white person that was over the special education department said that with a special education certificate, he will be able to get a job. He will be able to get a career; he can do this; he can do that. And she said with a technical one, he can find a trade and go to like Georgia Perimeter and all of that, and so my mom was sitting there, she was like I think he needs to go to the technical side and my dad didn't really say anything. So the lady was like, I think he would do well or excel. I think that may have been the word she used in the special education. So, I listened, I was just sitting there, and I was like, I don't know what ya'll are talking about, but I'm just going to tell ya'll, I want to go to college. I was like I want to go to college. I want to be in the marching band, and I want to make it happen."

He did make that happen by attending an HBCU college on a band scholarship, and as an adult, he additionally obtained two master's degrees. Abraham credits his informal mentors with giving

him the motivation to participate in college. While college was essential to him, he recognizes the same route is not for everyone. As a pastor, he had the opportunity to mentor one of his congregants who had gotten into trouble and ended up in a program that required his participation in a mentoring program to get his charge dropped.

"So, it was in the midst of him being in a new challenge; it was having to continue to motivate him to stick with the program because if he got out of the program, he was going to get all these charges slapped on him. I was his Pastor at the time. He didn't come to church regularly, but his mother did, and she knew that in order to go into a youth challenge, you had to have a mentor. So that was one of the requirements, and it was a very enlightening."

Abraham credits a lot of his achievements to the pastor who baptized him; and who has continued to mentor him. He feels like his constant presence has helped keep him on his toes as he has gotten older.

"I believe that if mentors would take on that, it helps them to grow and to always have someone that they can call before they make a major mistake. He has been really good about that, and I really appreciate that."

Abraham mentors because of the importance his mentors have had in his life and because of his commitment to the community.

"I would say that I believe that Black male mentors are important to our village, and the only way to save our village and to save our young Black men is to have active male mentors who can show out young Black men a different way."

Brandon's Narrative

"impactful, motivated, and genuine."

I initially met Brandon through one of my friends who shared the flyer with him and encouraged him to email me. I met him a few times and have had some additional interactions with him after the interview. We initially set up a face to face interview but had to change to a phone interview because of his changing schedule. I could tell from the moment we began

talking that Brandon was nervous and used "um" a lot during the interview (field note). Having met him, I know that this is not how he usually speaks. After reading his transcript, he was concerned about how he "sounded" in terms of the breaks in his speech.

Brandon is a 24-year-old graduate student. He was born in the city of Atlanta and grew up in a middle to upper-middle-class neighborhood. He describes his relationship with his father as He graduated from college and is currently working part-time. He is a licensed preacher and is now applying to Seminary. Brandon grew up with both parents, and his father is a preacher. He credits the men in his life, especially his father, for being a positive example of fatherhood.

"I feel like they helped shape me into who I am today. Um, they were all Black men. They all had wives, children, and they showed me an example of what a family man should ideally look like. Um, I know that there's oftentimes a negative stigma when it comes to Black fatherhood, and so I was able to grow up around excellent Black fathers."

He went to school in an upper-middle-class neighborhood. He believes his teachers were encouraging regardless of his race. Despite that, he struggled with math, which led to some self-esteem issues regarding his abilities.

"I've always been my biggest critic. And even at a young age when I couldn't get it, I saw that all of my other classmates were able to understand and I wasn't, it kind of affected, uh my self-esteem for a minute."

In the 8th grade, he sought out a mentor because of his academic challenges. He received mentors from the 100 Black Men Organization. His relationships with his mentors lasted from 8th grade until his senior year in high school, and he credits his mentors with helping him to make it out of high school and applying to college.

"They made sure that I wasn't going into college just with a narrow view of what college was. Um, but they made me develop, you know, short-term goals, long-term goals, uh, things of that nature to better prepare me for my first year in college."

Even though his mentors helped him get into college, he knew that they were not all college educated. He appreciated the fact that he was mentored by Black men from all walks of life.

"Some of them had college degrees; some of them didn't. Um they all, uh, encouraged me to pursue goals of higher education, but they also uh, let me know that even if I didn't, there is always work to be done, there's always ways that you can provide for you and your family what are legal and, uh impactful, as well."

For Brandon, mentoring was a space to get academic help, resources, and allowed him to vent.

He feels that other Black men need that same relationship because the world does not offer many opportunities for that to happen.

Charles' Narrative

"personable, funny kind."

Charles was referred to me by another friend. Since he is in college in North Georgia, we scheduled a phone interview.

Charles seemed at ease during the conversation, and our interview lasted forty-five minutes (field note). He is a 19-year-old college student who was born in Georgia. He grew up with both parents, who also happened to be educators.

His parents put him and his brother in a summer mentoring program at Morehouse, which was his first experience with being around a group of Black men at one time. Being around them affirmed who he was a Black boy.

"They were all there, and they were just trying to talk to us; they were just talking to us, you know, as we were. I didn't feel like I needed to talk a certain way around the, I felt like you know, that everything that they were talking about, even though they were much older than me, there was a lot of stuff I could relate to, you know?"

Charles' parents put him, his brother and sister in private school. As a student at a private school where he was one of the only Black kids, it was vital for him to feel like there was a group that he belonged to

"Um, I remember being very young and thinking you know, even at the age of ten, twelve, thinking I could be at this college. You know, this is a place where I think I could belong and thrive."

While he enjoyed his schooling, he did comment on the racial issues of being one of the only Black students at a school. He talked about being the expert on all things Black during Black history month, and he remembers some of the unfair treatment some of his friends received.

"I know a lot of times like growing up that like, I would have you know, some of my friends, some of my Black friends and they would do something and you know, the kid right next to them a, a, white child would also do the same thing and you know, every single time, you know there would never not be a time where my Black friends would not get in trouble and typically the white kid would get away with it."

He is also unequivocal that his teacher's only expectations for him and his friends were for them not to fail their classes. He emphasized that because of parental expectations, the majority of his friends had good grades. He came from a house full of educators so he knew that no less than his best would do. He mentions his friends who came from African countries who had no choice but to meet their parents' expectations.

Charles has committed to mentoring because he realizes the privileged that his family was able to afford him. While growing up, he and his siblings were able to participate in hobbies that are not average hobbies. Charles has been sailing since the age of eleven, his sister rides horses, and his brother has started flying planes at twelve. He understands that this is not common for occurrence for other Black kids.

"I hate that a lot of people have not been given the same opportunities that I have been given. And so I think the biggest part of it all is to just impart with them some of the same stuff that I have been given. You know, try to give them that same ticket that my parents fought to get me. I think that's why I like mentoring so much."

Dyson's Narrative

compassionate, agile, inclusive

Dyson is someone that I met a few years ago during a Charter School conference. We were both educators and so we bonded over that fact. We have stayed friends since then. He saw

my flyer on social media and was willing to participate in my study. Dyson's interview was my longest interview and yielded some very thoughtful comments. Before answering questions, he often took pauses so that he could fully form his answers (field notes). Dyson grew up in Michigan, with both of his parents. He attended both public and private schools, where his peers would make fun of him for being too feminine. His father often agreed with the students at school.

"my dad was, depending on where he was, it was either handle it with your fists or he in some ways affirming like yeah you did sound like a girl when you did or said that."

It was not just because of how he spoke, but also his interest which drew scrutiny.

"I like to dance, I'm a dancer for nine years now and emerged in middle and high school for me, and that's not something my dad approved. I would often hear it like that's not masculine... you're a mama's boy."

The lack of support and the suggestion that there was a problem with who he was, or what he presented caused Dyson to question himself.

"I'm looking up articles in the in the seventh grade, sneaking under my covers trying to find out like am I a girl because I said this? And what I realized was there's no way to research that. Like to type in and say, I like cookies, am I a girl? It was more so like the pitch and tone of my voice, but I had to learn that over time."

Not being clear about who he was led to him not participating in some of the activities that he enjoyed because people told him that it made him seem like he was a girl. He tried to please his father and still do what made him happy, so he felt that he lived in two worlds.

"I feel like I have to live two different lives. I was like I want to be a dancer and be masculine... I also need to fit this trait of masculinity that comes with working on cars . My dad's an engineer, so it's like every Saturday morning I spend being masculine working on cars, but then I had to question my masculinity, and my dance because of my father."

Dyson credits in an informal mentoring relationship with a sports teammate named Maurice, a senior in his high school when he was a freshman, who helped him to affirm who he was. Within this relationship, he learned how to question how it made him feel and what was bothering him about the comments made by others; he feels like this relationship empowered him. The concept of masculinity was paramount in Dyson's life, as shown in the number of times, 50, he mentioned it while discussing his experiences (field note).

Dyson also credits a natural mentor, one of his teachers, who he developed a relationship with after he transitioned from a private elementary school to a public middle school. This was a difficult transition for him, and he had trouble with connecting with other students.

"I definitely stood out from an academic standpoint, and so while amongst my peers, I was pretty much teased for the enthusiasm I had for reading and being smart. Mr. Rock made that bearable for me just the eye contact from greeting me at the door to many of the affirmations and mantras he would share with me when he could observe that there was a student you know probably getting on my nerves."

For Dyson, this relationship helped connect him to his school, but as he looks back, he realizes the impact of this mentor on who he is today as an educator.

"Mr. Rock, I would say he had an Afrocentric dynamic, and from that, I really learned the importance of my capacity to be a public speaker and even today I would say that capacity to exercise my voice and disrupt spaces or advocate has definitely contributed to my educational attainment."

Today, Dyson mentors a young man named Malik, who he met through a formal mentoring program called Year Up. Even though the program ended after a year, he continues to mentor him. Much of what Dyson works with Malik on is the formation of identity outside of Black male stereotypes. They have created a safe space where they feel comfortable discussing

race, masculinity, nurturing. Dyson is a mentor because he is giving back all of the things that he has received.

"I've always claimed to live a life for others. Thanks to Morehouse thank to some mentorship that I received I know that I'm pretty confident in who I am and it's important for me to go into what has made me the person that I am and I can't lie it's exhausting but every day I get up and people ask me all the time... how are you doing all of the things? and it's because it benefits other people, but I'm getting something from it."

Emmanuel's Narrative

enthusiastic, persistent, charismatic

Emmanuel was recommended to my study by a family friend. I emailed him, and he agreed to participate. He is a 28-year-old who was born in New Jersey. He grew up with his mother after his parents divorced. He credits his father with being present in his life and for teaching him about how to manage his money. However, he feels he did not learn about how to be a man from his father.

"My dad is actually homosexual, he's gay, he's a gay Black man. And he came out, that's why my parents got divorced, so I never really felt comfortable speaking to him about masculinity and Black manhood and all that. He's well educated, he's a tax accountant, he's like a six-figure type of guy, but he never really gave us money or my mom. He was upper echelon, being gay kind of superseded being Black for him."

For Emmanuel, his father's identity was tied more to being a gay male, than it was to being a Black male. Because of his relationship with his father, he learned about being a man from popular culture, ie music and television. He states that a lot of what he learned about being a man came from Jay-Z.

Emmanuel attended a private school for middle and high school. He was one of the only Black males in the school and his classmates' stereotypes of him. Eventually he gave into the ideas that they had about him.

"They were perpetuating. I don't think they did it intentionally, but looking back on it, things like that occurred because they believed that, too. They believed it was one way. And I fell into a trap where I believed it was one way too."

As he looks back on his experiences, he realizes that he fed into their stereotypes. He taught them dances, sold them drugs and discussed the latest music. This made him cool at school and he placed himself in the box that they made for him.

"They only asked me stuff about the culture, the music, the entertainment, so I thought my identity falls into entertainment."

Once he graduated, he enrolled at Morehouse College. When he first started there, he found himself in a similar predicament, but this time because his socioeconomic status placed him in a box.

"This might sound crazy, the average Morehouse student is probably third, fourth-generation college student at that point in their family lineage, or they got money. I was thrown off.....so I reverted back to fitting this identity of being the hood guy who can help them because they're not going to go to the West End or go to Ashby because they don't know how to talk to those people."

Emmanuel states that his fraternity is what saved his life and got him back on track. He mentors because he realizes how close he was to ending up in the criminal justice system, and he wants to guide those who are on the same path he was on.

"I need to be a blessing to somebody else who's doing the same because there's somebody just as smart as me, just as gifted, if not more gifted that can do everything that I did and more, but they got caught. So, I just felt the need that I got to tell these kids like, hey guys, stop. Stop because you can get caught. I've been there, I did it, and I didn't get caught, and this is my life. If you stop now and you do this, you'll be even better than I am."

Faison's Narrative

Absorbent, industrious, loyal

Faison was recommended to my study by my mother. He has known her for a few years, and she passed along the information. He is 28 years old and was born in Chicago and grew up in a close-knit upper-middle-class family with Ivy league educated parents.

"They met in grad school at Harvard and so to see Black excellence like that in a household creating the conditions in which we could flourish was just phenomenal."

His father is a lawyer and his mother, a minister with a business degree. From both parents, he learned the value of education.

"always instilling in us the sense that it was possible, but they never made their accomplishments the standard for us. It was just always in the air, and was in the waters we swam in."

He attended summer programs at prominent universities during the summer and ended up attending Yale for undergrad. His first mentoring relationship occurred there. The Black Man's Union organized a program that mentored students from a middle school once a week. They would bring students to their campus, introduced them to college life, and did relationship building. Currently, he is in an informal mentoring relationship with a young man and his brothers, whom he met through a friend.

"I just got connected to the kids, this family who I go see weekly. I got connected to them through a classmate. She met them at a guitar concert.... and one of the boys prayed for a male mentor, a male figure. His dad is locked up, and he prayed for a male mentor figure to keep him company and talk with, and so she then reached out to some of her classmates, including me and my wife, and I prayed about it, and then we've been involved ever since."

The relationship has lasted over two and a half years and has brought him many insights, including race, socioeconomic status, and masculinity. He is sensitive to the way race manifests itself in lower income communities and the way these conversations occur with mentees and people in his academic circle.

"There is a different way that I talk with fellow college trained middle-class Black folk who are trying to fight the system from these ivory white towers where there can be more angst that comes out or analysis than when you're down looking at a garage door that now has paint over where the bullet holes were."

The context of mentoring has been a change agent for Faison, and he continues to mentor. The more he mentors them, the more he learns, and the more he feels changed by the relationship. Faison mentors because of his parents, who have placed the importance of community into him.

"I saw my dad, and mom mentor Black working class boys, and I came to understand that as my rent for being. My reasons have now morphed such that I mentor in order to find my own liberation as well."

For Faison, mentoring is a requirement for his life, one where he not only influences the lives of others but where they have an influence on him. It has allowed him to learn and think critically about race, socioeconomic status, and masculinity.

Gerald's Narrative

"Serious, reserved, hardworking."

Gerald was referred to me by a friend that I have at church who works with young adults. He was one of the first to email me about participation and was my very first interview. Gerald was born in Georgia and attended a religious school before moving to a public school in Gwinnett county. He grew up with both of his parents and had a very close relationship with his father.

"I think my dad has definitely been that rock there because he has always been my biggest fan, my biggest supporter. Sometimes I think like if he had not been there or I don't really know how my life would have navigated or how it would go, and so I am very appreciative of that very thankful of that."

In his middle and high school experience, the school has a majority Black student body. While he lived in a more racially mixed community, the majority of the white students were in private school. He talked about the observable differences in the classes that he had with white students and those he had with Black students.

"I do feel like maybe when I got to high school, and some classes are predominately Black, I maybe sometimes felt like the teachers maybe not tried as hard or they, unfortunately, I think maybe some kids may have gotten on their nerves or something like that, and I think some teachers obviously just didn't care. As far with maybe most classes were white, they were more, I feel like sometimes they probably were more like more diligent."

During college, he participated in a mentoring program that paired him with an 8th grade student. The mentoring relationship lasted for two years. He met with his mentee once a week, and much of their interactions focused on relationship building.

"We would go to the library, and we would play things like checkers, monopoly, connect four, and we would just converse or talk about what was going on, things like at home if he wanted to tell me anything. I would talk about what he wants to do, what do you think about, what do you like doing"

The relationship building was critical to his mentoring relationship because of the bullying his mentee was receiving. He tended to act out in class because of it, and the principal would often call on Gerald to talk him through it. Gerald's relationship helped him talk through the things that his mentee was experiencing. One of the reasons he was able to speak to this was because he was bullied as well during school, and so he learned not to let what other people think to affect how he feels about himself.

Gerald mentors, because he wants to give a young man what he feels like he was missing growing up.

"There's a 15 or 16 year age gap between my brother and me, and so I kind of always wanted a sibling growing up and don't want to say I was like an only child, but I never had like a little brother, a little sister and then when I got to college, and I kind of had to break out of that shyness. I never really saw myself as a leader and I wanted to do something where I felt like whatever mistakes I made when I was little or whatever things I may not have had growing up when I can talk to that person about what to do or things like I can relate to because maybe we are not that far off in certain things. So I just wanted to be a positive person... I just kind of wanted it to be like be the change we seek."

Harrison's Narrative

Outgoing, humble, dynamic

Harrison and I have been friends for around ten years. He was excited to participate in the study. We were initially supposed to meet face to face but had to schedule a phone conference because he missed two scheduled meetings. During our interview, the line disconnected three times, and so our conversation was a little disjointed (field notes). He was also moving around a lot during the interview, so there were times when he would lose focus (field notes).

Harrison is 37 years old and was born in Tennessee. He was born in jail because his mother was incarcerated. His grandparents raised him. Although his grandparents did not stay married, he was heavily influenced by both of them.

"My grandparents only had, uh, so my grandmother only had a third grade education, and my grandfather only had a sixth grade education, and they ended up getting a divorce. However, they both were still influential in my life."

His grandfather was responsible for what he initially learned about what a man should do. His grandfather showed this by taking care of his children, grandchildren, his wife, and his ex-wife; he provided an example of a man as a provider.

He attended public school, where he was in special education. When his aunt found out, she helped him go through the process to test out.

"And so my, my aunt saw one of my report cards and saw that I was in resource class. And then she told me that I will not be able to graduate with a regular diploma taking those classes, no pun intended, on anybody else, anyone who do it. And she said, this will be just like you're going to school to, um, do 12 years of school and you just get a certificate of attendance. I took the test my eighth grade year and was able to test out those classes."

While he was not involved in a formal mentoring program during school, he ran track and credits his coaches with mentoring him by speaking life into him and helping pull him out of some critical moments in life.

"They were very, uh, influential, and they poured into me and gave me hope, I wanted to give up.... some of the situations that I dealt with, um with family, you know, hearing that I was going to be like my mom and dad coming up. Um, I was in a stupor, and there were moments where I didn't want to continue to live."

He continued to receive informal mentoring during college and continues to find it valuable to have a mentor himself.

"even as an adult right now at 37 years old, I have to have a mentor, someone who, um, with what I do right now, mentorships, kind of keeping me grounded as I am human and have moments and stuff, but they keep me shaped and grounded. Um, and I'm able to go and talk to them."

He started a mentoring program at the church, where he serves as a youth pastor. In these relationships, he goes to court, makes school visits, and discusses hard topics that parents request. He mentors because he wants his mentees to know that despite what you are born into, you can still do great things.

"People always told me that I was not going to be this, and I was gonna be like my momma and my dad and this and that.. however, you need to get beyond that and know that even though you were born in the situation, that there is a reason why you were born in the situation so that you can help others. 'Cause a lot of stuff that we go through in life is not just about us and the situations that we go through... Because we're created to also help each other out as a family, as a team."

MD Sheffield's Narrative

"writer, preacher, Black."

MD is a friend that I have known for almost ten years. I met him through a mutual friend. He was one of the people who I sent the flyer to, and he immediately replied to participate. He was very comfortable during the interview and started off singing before we began (field note). MD is 40 years old and was born in Atlanta, where he lived with both of his parents and siblings.

He recalls his first unofficial mentors being teachers from his school, which he developed as one way to deal with what was going on in his life.

"in the seventh grade I was also dealing with a brother who was ill, my brother was gay and had HIV and wasn't quite sure as to how to navigate it as I was also dealing my own identities around my sexuality and so those teachers at that time they were interesting because I never really had like personal conversations with them, but they were anchors for me."

As he began to grow into his identity, he decided to switch High schools so that he could feel safe and start over. For his reason, he attended a public high school in Georgia at a time when the school district was busing minority students to white schools. He describes that he made this decision because he was dealing with his identity issue. Switching schools did not solve this issue, and he found himself struggling more with his identity at his new school.

"I was in eighth grade, taking ninth grade classes, ninth grade taking tenth grade classes. So that experience wasn't different but also in those classes I would be one of two Black men and one of five Black students' period of like 15 students and so I had an identity crisis my first year."

As he attempted to navigate a white school as one of the only Black students, he struggled to find a place to fit in. He had a hard time fitting in as a Black boy who was not athletic. Confronting, this made him feel like he was not as valuable as the other Black students, so he adjusted by accepting who he was as an intellectual student.

"It was so weird, and I was learning how to play soccer and stuff because I was trying to figure out how to navigate it because this was a different environment and at the same time the only other Black students I knew who were popular were the athletes, and I wasn't one of the athletes so then what did it mean so I truly, truly fell back on my intellect. I felt like the only real way to achieve was to be smarter than everybody because I didn't have everything else that made the other Blacks viable in the environment."

As high school continued, he was bullied until his senior year, when he came out.

"It changed everything. I became very popular from just simply coming out. It was very interesting, and it gave me a confidence that I didn't have, so I adjusted how I dressed, I started wearing contacts, it shifted dynamics."

Accepting who he was and playing up that personality gained him acceptance that he was looking for during High School. He became "the gay Black boy," and since that was something different, it gave him popularity.

His identity as a gay Black man has, through most of his life has either caused him to be rejected or accepted. In his first formal mentoring assignment with Big Brothers Big Sisters, but after an ineffective match, he left the program. He admits that part of the weak match was that he and his mentee were both looking for things that the other could not offer. Sheffield wanted his mentee to be excited by theater and museums, and his mentee wanted someone who shared his identity. MD Sheffield did not represent the Black maleness that his mentee wanted. The mentoring relationship fizzled, and he did not complete the two year program.

With his parents, his acceptance has been a gradual process. He married two years ago, and his parents were not thrilled about the wedding, but have gradually come around. Sheffield recalled a family conversation.

"One of my sisters had a conversation with my father around why he was reacting and responding the way he did, and she says that my father said that he had this ideal or this identity of how he wanted me to be in the world and my sister said because he is gay has not made him any less of a man and everything you taught him to be he has become. My father said you're right, which is a powerful moment to hear him say that."

Based on his journey becoming one with his identity, MD Sheffield has begun being an informal mentor for other young gay Black males.

"I have begun to recognize as a pattern is at this level of my life professionally, personally, spiritually, emotionally the young men that I am attacking are they young men who never really had a guide as they got to where they are now, so in what ways could or should that kind of guidance been beneficial to them at that very integral moment to where they get fixed but that some of those challenges that they are not dealing with at this later level may not have been, the lessons might have been different if they had that engagement earlier."

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided nine counternarratives of Black males. The personal reflections these men have experience, felt and shared allow us to see behind the dominant narrative as Black men as hypersexual, criminals with no interest in education. The stories not only educate the reader but in going through this interview process, my participants learned about themselves and helped them talk through thoughts and ideas that they have been experiencing as they navigate race, racism and masculinity. The next chapter will look into the common themes and research findings that these narratives offer as well as provide an analysis through the CRT framework.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES AND FINDINGS

“To study Black men properly, one must do so from a transnational and interdisciplinary standpoint, one that examines critically, humanely, and holistically the music, writings, memoirs, achievements shortcomings, etc. of all Black men. (Williams, p. 44)

One step toward debunking master narratives is to illuminate all aspects of the story, mainly focusing on historically muted voices. Chapter 4 provided insights into the lives, perceptions, and narratives of my study participants. This chapter presents the findings and themes of the study, as gathered from the nine stories developed from the research participants. The research focused on Black males ages 18-40 who had participated in formal mentoring programs as either a mentor or mentee. The participants in the study come from varying backgrounds with different lived experiences. For this study, there was a guiding research question, followed by four questions.

Guiding Research Question: How does the Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism, and masculinity?

- 1) In what ways do Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and enhance the identities of Black Males?
- 2) What do Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?
- 3) What counter narratives are told between Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?
- 4) What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?

These questions were answered by analyzing the interviews of the nine study participants. Examining the data from a CRT framework formed five themes. Each theme has multiple subthemes. The five themes are Race and Racism, Identity Formation, Masculinity, Schooling, and My Brother's Keeper. Table 6 shows the themes and the ways they separated into subthemes. The findings are presented using the voices of the participants to privilege the importance of their experiences. The quotes are verbatim.

Table 12

Themes and Subthemes

Research Question	Theme	Subthemes
1. How does the Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism, and masculinity?	Black men grapple with how to discuss race and racism with their mentees but often experience both through police brutality.	• To discuss or not • Police Brutality
2. In what ways do Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of Black Males?	Stereotypes often make identity formation difficult for Black males, and the choice is often between playing the part and learning to be themselves.	• Playing the part • Being yourself
3. What do Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?	The concept of masculinity is often built from familial examples, is affected by popular culture and toxic examples, and in the end, requires self-definition.	• Familial Examples • Popular Culture and Toxic Masculinity • Self-Definition
4. What counter narratives are told between Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?	When Black males see representation and are in contact with natural mentors, and have some interaction with HBCU's, schooling can be a positive experience.	• Representation Matters • Natural Mentors • Role of HBCU's
5. What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?	To be impactful mentoring programs should offer resources, provide mentees with a sense of community and be transformative for both the mentor and mentee.	• Resources • Community • Transformation

Black men grapple with how to discuss race and racism with their mentees but often experience both through police brutality

Critical Race Theory stands on the certainty that race is and will always be present and is the central component to understanding inequality.

To Discuss or Not to Discuss Race

The participants had varying opinions on whether to discuss race in mentoring relationships. For Brandon, race was often discussed by his mentors at the summer program that he attended during childhood. He stated that he learned a lot during those years about what to expect as a Black male.

“They let me know that being a Black male in America, I would always have to work twice as hard as my, as my counterparts to achieve the same level of success. So, we would always talk about being mentally prepared to have to deal with issues that other races might not have to deal with. And not letting that affect how I view my process and how I go about, uh, doing things with a spirit of excellence.”

Brandon felt these conversations give him tools for his future. Charles also attended a mentoring program where there were conversations about race as it connects to his gender.

“I was going to these programs roughly around the time when, when the Trayvon Martin uh, incident happened. And so, you know, being a young Black male, you know, they would always tell us it wasn't necessarily a safe thing to be, it, it wasn't safe you know, for you to be out certain places at night, or for you to wear your hoodie in certain places, or stuff like that. So, that's more so what we would talk about.”

Several participants addressed their concerns about discussing race and racism with their mentees. In general, their interest focused around either their mentees internalizing issues of race or them already dealing with other forms of oppression and the negative impact of dealing with more.

“But I try not to do with all of them because they are just under so much duress to belabor the fact that anti-Blackness is clearly one of the main factors, not the only but

one of the main factors for why they are where they are. It's not too helpful to just talk about woe to you."

Since Faison works with the families of young men who live in a low income community, he recognized the structural reasons why they live there but did not think it is essential to discuss race continually. He understands that they have entered into this mentoring relationship during their free time and balance between spending time with them and bringing what he feels as necessary to the table.

"I want to say more about racism than I think they're saying, but there's just a constant dance I play with being there at their leisure this is their space and wanting to say what I think should be said, say what I think is helpful but not colonize. That's the answer, and a that's a tough line."

Emmanuel stated constant discussions of race could counteract someone's ability to do other things because race dominates their focus.

"So, if you keep talking that your race is an issue and people don't like your race, psychologically you're going to start to believe that and your interactions are going to be like that. You're going to keep it going because you're manifesting it because your mind is in that state, your mind's always thinking about race, so you think you don't get the job because of your race, or you think you don't do this because of your race. It could have been, but I don't want to perpetuate that."

He also believes that kids today are not ready to discuss race and often are disinterested. The disinterest extends to their feelings about Black history, from which they feel very removed or have little or no knowledge.

"I spoke about racism, and I feel like it's always somewhat of a pushback. Not really, I try not to because it's so obvious. Perpetually, we always talk about race, racism, racism, racism. Where sometimes the kids tune out when you talk about Black or this or study your history or know about your civil rights and know about slavery and know about this. Jim Crow, we do that so much that they disconnect from it."

From a CRT perspective, these discussions should occur in a transformative way, and that does not validate the dominant narrative (Huber, Johnson & Kohli, 2006). Societal denial of

the existence of racism, especially by those who mentor, is contradicted by the daily realities in these young men's lives. Abraham falls more in line with the perspective of CRT scholars as he repeatedly discussed his beliefs about race and how it centralized around what young Black men deal with in the world. There is, in his view, no way to get around race, and so it is something that must be managed.

"He did not want to go to the military. He said, 'I don't want no white man telling me what to do.' I said well if you get a job, you got a white male telling you what to do. If you go to school, you're going to have some white men and some white women more so telling you what to do as well. I said, so that's inescapable. I said that's one of the things you've got to learn how to manage the race in our country in learning how not to let them get the best of you."

To connect with his mentor over the importance of racism, Dyson encourages his mentee to read books that can help him to communicate on the significance of race and racism.

"I just shared with Malik was that that learning of any word with 'ism' has a form of oppression. So, what does that mean? We talked about Cornell West, we talked about Race Matters and that just situated the conversation for him to learn what racism was. There hasn't been any additional explicitness with him in the mentorship, but I did use Cornell West's Race Matters to say this is what racism is, this is why we need to address it, this is why you rather need to be aware of things."

Faison brought up a point not discussed in other interviews. He provided insight into the way he views the intersection between socioeconomic status and race. He found it hard to explain race with people who are confronted daily with the intersection of the two.

"There is a completely different register to this language about race when you are with cats who are feeling the effects of it in a different way. I mean, we're still at risks for diabetes and anything else, but for them, it actually is just a real challenge to say yes this is real, but now we got to address what's it mean to have Black agency in a world that only gives you so many options."

From his point of view, while there are certain things that all Black people have to deal with, it affects them differently when you cannot escape the community where you live. Looking

through a CRT lens as structural intersectionality shoes, how this impacts poor Black men more because it tends to be lasting because of the multiple identity markers (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

Police Brutality

When participants directly offered responses on race or racism, they concerned police brutality. While police brutality in some form has occurred for minorities since chattel slavery, it has become more publicized in the last six years. Media has plastered the bodies of young Black men and women who were killed for their race with no indication that justice will be served. Protesters have lined streets, chanted in front of capital buildings, and launched social media campaigns, and still, there has been very little prosecution for the killing of Black people. For millennials, this has increased the conversations about how race and racism work in our country.

Half of the participants discussed ways in which police interactions or brutality came up during mentoring discussions. While Emmanuel mentioned that he did not want to talk about race, those conversations still occurred with his mentees.

“We talk about race in terms of policing constantly. Your interactions with the police, why these things are happening, how do we combat it. I tend to try to not make it a race thing, but I let them understand socially where we are in the country and as a people. But that generally comes up around that conversation.”

Charles mentors discussed policing in terms of what to do to avoid issues.

“And this, this all happened, like I was going to these programs roughly around the time when, when the Trayvon Martin uh, incident happened. And so, you know, being a young Black male, you know, they would always tell us it wasn't necessarily a safe thing to be, it, it wasn't safe you know, for you to be out certain places at night, or for you to wear your hoodie in certain places, or stuff like that.”

Faison mentioned having similar conversations with his mentee, but he attempted to circle the conversation back to how his mentee should work hard in school.

“There have been various car rides where we talked about race and law enforcement. And in the midst of these conversations, he started to develop a sense of awareness around the way anti-Blackness puts him at a greater likelihood for being incarcerated or just being somehow tied up in the system. And I responded by affirming his awareness of what’s going on, but encouraging him to think wisely about how his schoolwork, how his achievements in school would help push against some of those negative occurrences that have already been coming towards him because he’s Black.”

While encouraging students to do well in school is not problematic, focus on education as helping to combat racism speaks to the notion that people of color can also get wrapped up in the myth of the meritocracy. As CRT suggests, this thought process makes issues students have in school an individual problem as opposed to a societal problem (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

Stereotypes often make identity formation difficult for Black males, and the choice is often between playing the part and learning to be themselves

How identities form is often complicated. Individuals often see themselves through the lens that other people (Cooley, 1922). While this is true for everyone, it is especially challenging for Black males who often have the added burden of struggling against the stereotypes that are put upon them (Howard and Reynolds, 2013). Carbado and Gulati (2000) discuss the costs and pressures of figuring out your identity when you do not want to conform to the dominant norms. Gerald addressed this when he stated

“Like I said, they are all stereotyped as maybe underperforming on standardized tests. So I think that the ones that are aware of that are always trying to overcompensate that stereotype. And I think sometimes because you are trying to overcompensate that there is more pressure on them, especially like the higher you go, the thinner the air gets. And you want to do well, and I think sometimes like because worse our harshest critic we kind of you know may get our own way.”

This underscores the part of identity formation that makes it difficult for Gerald to exist. The more prevalent a stereotype is, the harder it is to develop one's own identity regarding it (Carbado & Gulati, 2000). When fighting against the stereotypes is difficult, some choose to embrace the socialized stereotype rather than fight against it.

Playing the Part

Media portrayals, peer pressure, socialization norms, and life experiences often stunt or decrease the ability of many Black males to develop their own identity and reinforce the stereotypes that they see. These examples sometimes lead to taking on hypersexual, or hyper-violent personas, just to name a few, that is often portrayed. Emmanuel speaks to what he sees with some of his mentees who are in the justice system.

"They just have identity issues. They just believe what the media, social media is telling them, that we are young thugs, and they're going to do what thugs do. It's not that school did it. It might be their home environment. They just believe this is what they should be doing. They shouldn't be studying; they should be flirting with the ladies instead because Black men get ladies. Or they should be the tough guy at school, so they need to bring their gun to school."

As a pastor, Abraham came into contact with many young Black males and spoke about what he sometimes sees with the young men he comes into contact with.

"Then they begin to portray those images, and they try to find their way through popular culture versus finding their way with men who look like them and men who've had to share in the same struggles that they've had to share or similar struggles."

Dyson's mentee had similar identity issues tied to popular culture and money. He based who he was on the amount of money he had or was able to possess.

"I would say at the heart of Malik's challenge was this ideal of identity, but so much of it for him was related to like the money piece like in order for me to be successful... I have to have money...to make sense of myself and in order for me to make sense of my opportunities like I have to have money. Knowing that this not having money presented a

barrier for him to acknowledge who he was, was his challenge, and it was a challenge for me....That was his challenge, just recognizing that his identity does not have to be and should not be tied to this ideal of power through money, but again it he was so lucrative."

Malik (Dyson's mentee) not only fueled by the idea of making money because of media influences, but he also had a child young, and so part of his identity was tied into making money for his child. Black men are generally at the bottom of the socioeconomic totem pole, and this intersectionality often leaves them feeling like less of a man because they are not able to break from the structures (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

As a young man, Emmanuel found himself conforming to the stereotypes that his classmates at his private school had of Black males, so he understands where his mentee's standpoint. Coleman (2019), states that stereotypes are magnified in school settings where there are very few Black students.

"That's a time in which being at the school played a direct impact on my identity as an African American man because your environment will do that. The kids at the white school are saying, "Hey, we need this type of product," or the kids at the white school were always asking questions about the culture like, "What do you think about Ludacris' music video," or, "do you know how to do the new dance? can you show me how to do the dance?" I did it. It was like a step and fetch it. I didn't realize because I was so young. "can you show me how to dance?" I thought it was cool like, "Yeah, man, I'll show you how to dance."

Emmanuel now realizes the effect that "step and fetch it" had on who people thought he was and also who he began to believe he was as well.

"I was the cool guy because I was Black. But it definitely stifled in terms of putting me in a box and thinking this is how Black people act, this is what Black people do. Black people dance, Black people, play football, Black people sell drugs, Black people are this. Never once was I thinking Black people were successful entrepreneurs or construction workers, contractors. Never once did they ask me about mathematics. "Emmanuel, how do you do geometry?"

Once Emmanuel went to college and met men from different backgrounds and began to learn about Black History and culture, who he thought he was changed.

Just Be Yourself

Amid the stereotypes and the pressure to conform, some of the participants emphasized the importance of individuality. Charles, who mentored a young man who was one of the only Black students in his grade, had to make that point to his mentee. His mentee often did not want to speak in front of his peers for fear of the judgment. Charles offered the following advice.

“We did have a couple talks about like, how, just how different, you know, it was for him to just kind of come in and, and feel like he had to kind of play the part in order to fit in, I remember telling him that like, even though you may be the only one in the room who, who has your skin color, that doesn't mean that you have to try to, to hide who you are or anything like that. Like when you walk into a room, you shouldn't be ashamed of the color of your skin, or you shouldn't be afraid to speak the way that you do.”

During his interview, Charles spoke about being one of the only Black students at his private school. Since he had experienced it, he was able to tell his mentee to do what had helped him get through the years at school. While there are lessons about conformity and being yourself, Emmanuel discussed the balance between the two. There are times and places where one or the other may be necessary.

“Our Black men are going to have to understand this is the system, this is the institution, and sometimes in institutions and systems, we conform. There's nothing wrong with that. I go to work; I put on the type of attire that I need for work. I don't wear my jeans at work because I got to...I'm conforming to a certain extent. And I think we got to stop lying and telling kids this and that. We got to, again, tell them the noble truth. There's sometimes where you're going to have to just get in line, and there's sometimes you're going to stand outside the lines and be a leader. Choose your battles wisely.”

Emmanuel's viewpoint most likely comes from the fact that he works within the court system as a gang prevention coordinator. His constant contact with the justice system allows him to see both sides of interactions with those in power. Similar to how identity is hard to come up with one explanation, so is the concept of masculinity.

The concept of masculinity is often built from familial examples, is affected by popular culture and toxic examples and in the end, requires self-definition

There was one question that the participants had difficulty answering. There was silence or uncomfortable laughs (field notes). Asking my participants to define masculinity was a challenging task, because for some of them, as they have continued to evolve, the definition has changed. Faison, who has spent time reading academic work around masculinity responded,

“Oh man, that’s a question. How men, I guess male identifying, how they show up in the world. How men or male identifying folk show the world, that’s all I have, because of in spaces like these because of the kind of constructive work that women are doing to push against patriarchy, what it is in fact and I am sure you’ve heard this, what it is, in fact, doing and this isn’t to pass blame, but I think that one of the side effects is that it’s actually leaving man at a deficient for talking about themselves.”

At times he finds it tough to characterize masculinity in a way that does not negate the contributions of women. He goes on to say,

“I know I will never be you, but I can’t be defined through the negation of you, and so much work now has been done around men lifting up women, being able to respect women, follow women, be able to define women positively and I think that the beauty in that is that it humbles man if they actually want to do that and that’s really necessary, but I’m increasingly struggling especially when I am asked questions like this to define positively what does it mean to be a man.”

Dyson realizes that many factors go into masculinity, and there is no one definition. From his time in college, he interacted with many Black men and learned that they could not be placed in one box.

“Over time, I have learned that masculinity is not one dimensional. Honestly, my experience at Morehouse exposed me to the fact that people should perceive masculinity as like a strength and energy. It’s definitely expressive and an expression. In terms of defining it, I would say that I have come to realize that it’s not one dimensional, I would say that it is a form of expression; it is a strength.”

For Emmanuel, the definition is less gendered and based more on interactions and the idea of being responsible or making sure your word is worth something.

“Masculinity truly, truly to me, is understanding and moving in your values, whatever your principles are, whatever your values are, and you stick to them, and if they do change, you change your behavior with it. Your word is kind of it to me. For my definition of masculinity, a man doesn’t change his words. They say they’re going to do something they should look to it and do it.”

Familiar Examples

One of the requirements for participants was to have been part of a formal mentoring program; each one of the participants discussed the impact of essential adults on their lives. While the enduring stereotype is Black males are often fatherless, each of my participants discussed their relationships with their fathers as necessary to their development and, in turn, their ideas about masculinity. In many of their experiences, the way their fathers lived their lives that spoke the most to them. Faison learned Black boy joy from his father.

“So yeah, my dad, he is the biggest male mentor, I mean yeah, biggest male –Black male mentor in my life. He has been so nurturing and encouraging, and it’s been in part through how he has treated me and in part to how he has treated my mother, his wife, and how I have seen him honor her, affirm her...And so that’s been hugely influential in my understanding of masculinity. In part Black masculinity, he was and is filled with joy, and so I grew up with it being normalized for Black men, Black boy joy it has just always confronted me with him.”

Faison expressed the positive relationship between his mother and father spoke laid the foundation for how he would, in turn, treat his wife. The importance of how fathers take care of their families was spoken about by many participants. Brandon spoke about not only his father but also his uncles.

“I had a great, or have a excellent father- father, and I was able to grow up around those people. And they kind of helped shape me and taught me what it is to be a family man, what it is to be, um, a God-fearing man. What it means to work hard. And so, I’m, uh, always grateful for that.”

Abraham spoke about his father's influence even though they did not spend a lot of time together.

"I would say, my father, all through my childhood, was present but not present physically. My father had five kids, and he worked three jobs. He worked two jobs during the week and one job on the weekend and so there were times where I would go a whole week without seeing my father based on his work schedule, but he was present because he was busy providing for his family... when I observed my father he didn't really talk to me but the time that we spent together he always talked about being able to support his family and take care of his family. So, I would say that even though we didn't have those conversations, those were the things that I observed and have become pillars of how I feel about men in general and what we should be doing."

In situations where the father was not present, as in Harrison's case, his grandfather provided the visual representation of masculinity. Harrison learned a lot from his grandfather just from the behaviors he observed.

"Uh, my grandpa, my grandfather really poured into me, and he show, but it was more, so him showing me, even though he and my grandmother were divorced, my grandfather still poured... But my grandfather had three other daughters by my grandmother, and they really, he looked out for them, and if my grandmother had called and said, "Hey, I need help with this, and I need help with that." And he was married with another, my grandfather, he didn't have any more kids, but my grandfather... There was no hesitation that my granddaddy did not take care of whatever my grandmother asked."

As the saying goes, sometimes actions speak louder than words. In some of these cases, the observed behavior of fathers and grandfathers allowed my participants to learn about masculinity from the way their fathers presented it.

For many who do not have a familial example and some of those who do, learn masculinity from popular culture. Emmanuel provides a quote that helps transition into the next section. Emmanuel, who had a complicated relationship with his father, explained it in this way.

"I didn't speak to my dad; I didn't speak to my mom's boyfriend because I didn't think it was his role. I just kind of learned from my experience. Even Jay-Z has taught me."

Popular Culture and Toxic Masculinity

In today's society, people have access to content 24 hours a day, be it TV, Social Media, etc. In these forums, it is not unlikely to see stereotypic examples of Black males. Gause (2019) points out that these representations, which are often not just national, but international, paint Black men as "duffle bag boys," "thugs" or "convicts" (pp. 717). As a millennial, Abraham learned about masculinity from the visual images provided on television.

"I got a lot of secondhand messages about being a male. A lot of misconstrued messages about being a male and I think a lot of them were you know being a man was about how many women you could sleep with, how many numbers you had, you know, having money, obtaining all these worldly possessions."

MD Sheffield, who previously discussed his sexuality, has been affected by the prevalence of multimedia images. When asked about masculinity, he immediately responded.

"Toxic, masculinity is toxic in that there is this false definition of what masculinity is and should be and how we should operate in a world, so I see masculinity as very misogynistic and damaging and toxic, particularly to the Black community."

He was not the only one who felt that masculinity could negatively affect the community. Faison recounts a time when his mentee's garage got shot up, and the brothers were discussing retaliation. Faison wanted to talk them out of it but realized that he was not prepared to address the intersectionality between race and socioeconomic status because of the differences in how he and his mentees grew up.

"I didn't grow up in a situation in which violence was the means by which my masculinity was defined, confirmed, but I'm in this like we in this for real for real. So I really ended up being at a loss for words, and I'm trying to think well what does, how do I counsel them against violence if violence begets violence knowing that every night they go to sleep with the great possibility that somebody could run up on the crib and try to shot them all?"

Faison recognizes masculinity as being related to violence. Dyson notices that his mentee believes that inherent in masculinity is the inability to care about another man.

“Society has reduced masculinity to being not capable of having a nurturing aspect and so with Malik when I initially started mentoring him I could tell that he was shocked that I demonstrated a certain amount of care and so I think for him and considering where he is from, where he goes to school, his neighborhood that was not masculine to care about another man.”

When mentoring relationships can break down the boundaries that society places around them, it helps individuals to define themselves by offering examples of how life can be led.

Self-Definition

While there are negative images presented about masculinity, for many, the way they present it changed as they got older. The change occurred either through their engagement with their families, their peers, or the mentors in their lives.

Abraham initially accepted the stereotype about masculinity, but his definition has changed as he has aged.

“I have to say I think masculinity is not before what I can define what it is. I don’t think that its muscles, the tone in your voice, or your strength. I think masculinity is one being true to oneself, knowing who they are, knowing what they believe, and being confident and comfortable in that. I would also say that masculinity is not driven by a particular sexuality, either.”

Emmanuel describes masculinity in terms of energy. For him, masculinity is not just one thing or not only one part of an individual. What makes him masculine is a combination of different things that, in the general sense, people would not think of going together.

“There is no masculine energy without feminine energy; it's like a yin and a yang; there's a negative and positive. You got to have both at all times. Everything is always operating in polarity. Understanding that I do masculinity different... I can talk my way with the waitress, and they'll notice that, but then they know that I do the yoga. They know I'm in crazy yoga positions and poses. I kind of always throw them off. They want to be like, man, that's whack or man, that's gay, but they're not because our relationship is so strong that they know that's not true. They know now, seeing me that you can be a Black

guy and not have to put your guard up all the time, you can just, you can be you and still be a masculine man.”

For Emmanuel, he has become confident enough in who he is, that he is not affected by what people may say about him or his interest. The important part is to connect to who you are and live that truth. Dyson explains masculinity as a form of energy as well.

“People should perceive masculinity as like a strength and energy. It’s definitely expressive and an expression. In terms of defining it, I would say that I have come to realize that it’s not one dimensional.”

Continuing to redefine what masculinity is, MD Sheffield believes that the concept of masculinity needs to be broken down to be built back up.

“Masculinity can be good in that when we readjust how we understand manhood and masculinity that it is not about being or displaying, or expressing this hardness this man-ness, this ruler, this king, this controller but just someone who has their stuff together, who is responsible, who is a great example, who is impacting society and developing legacy and when we adjust the definition that way then we have a better and stronger perspective around masculinity.”

Lastly, as participants defined masculinity for themselves, they realized that for it not to harm the person who is taking it on, they must be entirely comfortable with who they are. Both Dyson and Emmanuel provided challenges to masculinity daily. Dyson is a dancer, who had dealt with comments from others about what he likes to do.

“Indeed, masculine, which is layered but I know for me, and I went through a similar situation where I like to dance, I’m a dancer for nine years now and emerged in middle and high school for me, and that’s not something my dad approved.”

Even with that, Dyson has continued to express himself in ways that make him comfortable. Emmanuel challenges through Yoga; this is not only his way of challenging the dominant narrative but also the way he provides clarity and focus for the young men in the program.

“I challenge masculinity all the time. I’m a yoga instructor who works with at-risk youth, with adjudicating adolescence doing yoga, which is really highlighting their feminine

energy, because I think sometimes we get caught up in so much masculine energy that you see all the videos with the ladies, or you see the guns in the picture where people are gangbanging because they're so into this masculine energy and they haven't embraced or even acknowledged that they do have, we all have some feminine energy too that we need to connect with."

For both men, they are defining themselves as they wish. While for both of them, this was not an easy or immediate process, as they have entered their late 20's they have gone through enough experiences that have led them to reject negative ideas of masculinity and are defining themselves. Abraham describes names that are needed for this to occur, and it is confidence. For many young Black men, this does not come easily, mainly because of the stereotypes.

"I think it can be related to masculinity, particularly for a Black male, because I think that's where the confidence and the security that one needs to be okay with who God has created them to be."

For Black men, masculinity is a double-edged sword. They are Black, which already relegates them to a certain level of society, and then they are men without the social standing of a patriarchal society (Howard & Reynolds, 2013). Considering this, Emmanuel provides this nugget.

"Every individual, every Black man has to craft their own, because once we start labeling and say, this is it, we're in trouble, we're in trouble. I think that's what has been done, we have said this is it. It's not. It's just you, whatever you want to do. If you're a Black man and that's how you operate, then that's it because you, yourself, are a Black man."

When Black males see representation and are in contact with natural mentors, and have some interaction with HBCU's, schooling can be a positive experience.

Schools often reproduce the inequality present in society (Zamudio et al., 2011). Schools are often a site of trauma for Black male students because of the school's inability to meet the needs of the students and adjust to their learning styles (Coleman, 2019). For this reason, being

in a school building can often be the site of oppression for Black males, while for others, it can be enlightening.

Emmanuel speaks very highly of his educational experience at a private school and how much he learned while he was there.

“I’m actually blessed that I went to private school because, in private school, I realized what I was being taught is completely different than what they’re teaching in public school... Project-based learning, we did whatever we wanted. We would have some type of formal curriculum, but I feel like we just did whatever we wanted. I can’t explain. It’s one of those things you just got to experience. There’s no testing; there’s none of that. It’s paper based, read discuss, paper, project. What are your thoughts? What are your ideas? It wasn’t like a yes or no answer in private school. I was never taught this is right; this is wrong.”

Brandon, who also attended while a private school and had good relationships with his teachers, feels that this experience changes based on the socioeconomic status of the school.

“I guess in lower-income neighborhoods; I feel like Black men are, in school, are treated, you know, as ... They’re looked at almost as criminals. You have, you know, as some lower-income areas you have, like, security at the door, checking to see if they, you know, have weapons and guns and whatnot. But at, you know, white schools, they don’t have to deal with that as much, because they’re amongst people who are in the same social class as they are or have the same resources available to them.”

What Brandon and Emmanuel describe can be bolstered by the fact that schools located in neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic classes are often built on structure and making their students follow the rules. In contrast, those in higher socio-economic status provide students with critical thinking activities (Zamudio et al., 2011). Emmanuel believes this is one of the things leading to the miseducation of Black students.

“In our formal education system, we’re teaching kids right and wrong, like your answer’s wrong because it should be A, not... In private school, we wouldn’t even have an answer, we would have a Socratic kind of conversation, discussion, and just be like, it’s both A and B. That’s what’s kind of helped disabling and disarming our kids, we’re telling them things are one way, and this world is not build like that. There’s multiple ways.”

Schools in lower income areas not only teach students to become laborers, but they also do not meet the needs of Black students because there are not enough resources or people who have enough time.

“Nobody’s talking to him. And we don’t have the time to really speak to him. The Principal’s busy, the counselor’s busy. Everybody’s moving, and nobody really can set aside an hour... Unless it’s after school, but people got to go really have a one on one, hour long conversation with a student, and some people need it daily. The type of homes they’re going back to, they need it daily. Until you do that, this is what is going to happen with our education system and our young Black men.”

CRT reminds us of how schooling is political, and the intention is to relegate people of color to the status intended (Zamudio et al., 2011). But the dominant narrative (Stories told by whites who control society) tells us that no matter where students come from, they will be successful as long as they work hard enough. It is similar to the Black cultural mantra of “You have to work twice as hard to be thought half as good.” What these narratives help us see is that this is not always the case. While schooling can be oppressive, some factors help make it more bearable for Black men.

Representation Matters

There is a substantial amount of research which discusses how the presences of the Black, both male, and female, educators in our school systems, contributes to the curriculum, policies, discipline and the way things are handled in today’s schools (Brown, 2009; Hayes, Juarez & Escoffery-Runnels, 2014; Lynn, 2006). When there is not adequate representation, students suffer. Study participants spoke very freely about the lack of representation in schools.

“So, I think one of the challenges is there is not enough representation as it pertains to Black men being in classrooms where not just Black boys but everybody else can sort of see them in a different kind of way. But Black boys having those examples create a different level I think of confidence and ability in attainment that were not seen.”

Lack of representation relates directly to the discussion on masculinity and how few examples there are of Black males in the school building. Research has proven that teachers are often more sensitive to Black male behavior, especially in classrooms run by white female teachers (Ferguson, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Gerald relays how he feels about the absences of Black male teachers in the school system.

“I don’t know the percentage they make, but I only had when I went to Snellville when I went from elementary school I had one Black male teacher, and I think that sometimes and it’s not to knock white educators, sometimes it’s definitely a dynamic that they may not be able to see, they may not be able to understand and I think there are a lot that do try very, very hard, but I think that’s also important to have representation and understanding this person has been through the same things you have, etc.”

MD Sheffield agrees with that sentiment and discusses how having teachers that look like them can positively impact students and how they feel about themselves.

“So I think one of the challenges is there is not enough representation as it pertains to Black men being in classrooms where not just Black boys but everybody else can sort of see them in a different kind of way. But Black boys having those examples create a different level I think of confidence and ability in attainment that were not seen.”

The identity issue is also present when Black students are in the classrooms by themselves. Charles, who attended a private school where there were not many Black students, talks about how it was to be one of the only ones in his class.

“You take a, a child, you know, a African American child out of their environment and you know, where they are really just the minority in their situation, you know, it can be harder for them to, I mean, once, once they are the minority of the classroom, they’re always going to be sticking out...And so, you know, if they do anything wrong, even if it was a minor thing, you know, they’re still sticking out like a sore thumb.”

Not only are students affected when there are not teachers who look like them, but also when there are few other students who look like them (Coleman, 2019). Representation is also crucial in terms of curriculum. Teachers who are not from the same socioeconomic status or

racial background are less likely to provide students with examples of themselves in what they learn (Zamudio et al., 2011). The absence of stories about themselves in the curriculum leads to issues with identity and, in some cases, leads students to blame themselves for their failures (Huber et al., 2006). Examples are the dominant narratives told about Abraham Lincoln freeing slaves without the accounts of Blacks who freed themselves or revolted. These stories portray Blacks as always needing a Savior.

Natural Mentors

As previously stated, the majority of Black male students do not have an opportunity to interact with Black male teachers; however, in situations where they are present, their impact is significant. Research shows that natural teacher mentors are better indicators of students having positive school relationships (Fruith & Wray-Lake, 2013), which is helpful for Black males who tend to have negative relationships with the school building.

"I think number one is the relationship to build a positive male relationship. So many of our African-American young men don't have that role in the home and so what happens is that they have no one to bond with, they have no one to show them what real masculinity looks like, and so they revert to what they see on TV and images and videos."

Abraham credits his 9th grade math teacher with his decision to attend college. As told earlier, his desire to go to college gave him the motivation to exit special education so that he could receive a High School diploma.

"I've had numerous teachers who poured into me. I remember one; specifically, my math teacher in 9th grade was a SIGMA, and he had a thing on his wallet that said GOMAB, and so we were always trying to figure out what GOMAB meant, and he would never tell us. He said, "you just have to know, you have to be one," so I became one. He was very influential to me as well, and then I was in marching band, and all my band directors were very, very instrumental in my personal development so much so that I went to college on a marching band scholarship... I would say that my high school ninth grade math teacher encouraged me to go to college. You know that was the only way

that you were going to be able to pledge as well as my high school band directors, there was nothing for us to go to Clark and be in their band room hanging out with the band there and so they gave us that pre-exposure to Black college life and one of the reasons that I attended an HBCU.”

With the encouragement of these mentors, Abraham went to an HBCU on a band scholarship and joined the same fraternity as his math teacher. Another participant, Harrison, credits his natural mentors with helping him to get through one of the most challenging times in his life when he had lost himself and was ready to give up.

“The mentors I've had if I can start out from school, my school age, which were several of my teachers and coaches. Um, they were very, uh, influential, and they poured into me and gave me hope, uh, even when there were times where I didn't sense and feel that there was, uh, that I had hope, I wanted to give up. I was actually being transparent if I can. Um, and I share with the youth that I deal with now. It was so bad. Some of the situations that I dealt with, um, with family, you know, hearing that I was going to be like my mom and dad coming up. Um, I was in the stupor, and there were moments where I didn't want to continue to live.”

If it had not been for his mentors, there is no telling what could have happened to Harrison.

Dyson's high school mentor is one of the reasons he mentors today and acknowledged his academic abilities and encouraged him.

“Mr. Stone made that bearable for me just the eye contact from greeting me at the door to many of the affirmations and mantras he would share with me when he could observe that there was a student you know probably getting on my nerves... He was very consistent, you know, in that acknowledgment in that accountability. I think something that he did for me that I use in my own mentoring is just the ideal of asking questions like, exercising, and agree to hear my thought process and perhaps get me to become aware of things that I may not be.”

MD Sheffield discussed his mentors being instrumental during a period of his life where he was not particularly close to his father.

“He was a very big influence, and I had a lot of respect for him, and in a lot of ways, I was drawn to him in a way that for lack of a better phrase, I didn't have a very close relationship with my father at the time and especially at that time because my father was dealing with his son who was dying. So, this teacher Mr. Ashe was foundational for me. He was just sort of someone who was a presence. He was tall, former military, someone

that I really listened to and I was nerdy and quiet but really, really smart so he and the other teacher Mr. Butler poured into that. They like unofficially advised me on being responsible.”

Many Black males go throughout their school career without the encouragement that their white counterparts receive from educators that look like them (Horsford & Grosland, 2013). When these opportunities do present themselves, they produce positive academic identity and provide a chance for the young men to be heard (Lynn et al., 2010).

Role of HBCUs

Research shows that familial relationships, formed with family members, have an impact on the colleges and universities that young men choose to attend. They are also impacted by their relationships with their same race friends (Harper, 2012). There is no secret to the reason so many of my participants either attended an HBCU or were mentored in an organization that was conducted by members of an HBCU.

Charles participated in a mentoring program with an HBCU and credited the program with helping him feel more comfortable in relationships with other men.

“That was, I think, one of my first real exposures to just so many um, so many African American men in one room, you know, all dressed in ties. Um, they were all there, and they were just trying to talk to us; they were just talking to us, you know, as we were. I didn't feel like I needed to talk a certain way around them, I felt like you know, that everything that they were talking about, even though they were much older than me, there was a lot of stuff I could relate to, you know?... when these people would speak to me this way and, and they would want to try to help me out. And you know, they would give me their contact information you know, as busy and as successful as they were. That showed that, to me, that showed to me that somewhere in there, they see a little bit of me in them when they were younger. And you know, if they can see a little bit of themselves in me, you know, then I certainly can see a little bit of myself in them as I continue to strive for greater things.”

The same was stated by Emmanuel, who learned what it was like to be in a group of other men from his mother's boyfriend. From what he saw and felt, he attended an HBCU and also joined the same Fraternity as his mother's boyfriend.

“My mother had a good boyfriend at the time when I started to transition to middle school. His name was Ronald Shepard. He introduced me to Omega Psi Phi because he was a member of Omega Psi Phi. He introduced me to HBCUs, which I ended up going to one in Atlanta, he went to a different one I just saw his interaction with his fraternity brothers and things of that nature which I guess helped me develop or feel more comfortable speaking to men... Going to my college and seeing different brothers operating, coming from all over the world, all over the country, with not a set way, really helped me craft my own definition of what it is to be a Black man. I think that's the key.”

Looking back at Emmanuel's narrative, he needed that interaction with Black men after his private school experience. Previously he stated that his Fraternity is what saved him from the negative road that he was going down. His interactions with Black men from different walks of life helped him to walk away from the stereotype that he was living. Dyson provided a similar narrative on how his HBCU contributed to his development.

“I can say in many ways, me and my HBCU brothers were mentors, are mentors, but with that, we were constantly pushed to realize like, I don't have to wear a tailored suit to be masculine. I don't always have to think in terms of my gender like I think that's another piece like people think masculinity-male, and its one of those things where because I see masculinity as an expression... I'm just thinking about my college...but you can look at pictures, you can watch videos, you can go on the campus and see that we all have masculine traits, there is masculinity, but it doesn't look the same.”

When thinking about schooling with mentoring, it is essential to note the difference between schooling and education. Emmanuel offers a look into the differences.

“We got to be realistic about what education is. Education is not in a building in a classroom. That's what we are taught in society, and that's what's keeping a lot of our people in debt. Education is just knowledge being passed around, and that can be done on a corner, that can be done through a phone, that can be done through you just reading your own book. It doesn't require you to spend four years and pay \$25,000 a year for a piece of paper.”

Emmanuel recognized that you could learn anywhere, and there does not have to be a formal process that goes along with it. From a CRT perspective, since schools reproduce inequalities, the same can be said for Colleges and Universities that charge and contribute to debt despite the promise that hegemony promises (Leonardo & Boas, 2013).

To be impactful mentoring programs should offer resources, provide mentees with a sense of community and be transformative for both the mentor and mentee.

The participants asked what they thought the purpose of a mentoring program and what makes a program successful. The general consensus was that to be impactful mentoring programs should offer resources, provide mentees with a sense of community and be transformative for both the mentor and mentee. Brandon's statement is an overall look at what a successful mentoring program would look like in his eyes.

"The purpose of a mentoring program to me is to provide an outlet or an escape outside of family or, um, young people. Um, give them a safe space to confide in them and offer solutions and, um, advice to any of their problems. Um, just to- to be there for 'em and let them know that when you can't talk to family and when, you know, your friends aren't always there for you, I'll- I'll be here. And I'll be able to- to not only tell you what you need to hear, but also give you something tangible that you can take with you so that you can get through whatever it is you're dealing with."

Resources

Mentoring relationships should provide resources to the mentee. The term resource does not necessarily mean money but also refers to scholarships, contacts, and opportunities. For Harrison, resources refer to offering mentees advice and suggestions, but from an open and honest place.

"It's about how to reach, and so you have to meet them where they are, meet the students where they are, which means that as adults, we have to be more transparent. As a Black male, I have to be more transparent to the male now versus when I was coming up... I mean it's about being transparent. And the kids, the kids tell me now, they just want somebody that's going to be real with them and be transparent. And I think that's the answer right there. Like transparency, um, and what's real to a person."

Brandon's desire for resources affirmed that when he was struggling academically, it was critically important that his mentors were able to point him in the right direction and provide him with tools. He believes that these tools include the opportunity to dialogue.

“one of the things I appreciate about my mentors was that they didn't just offer me advice, but they offered me solutions and gave me resources for the advice that they were offering...maximizing all of the- the opportunities that I had: tutors that I wouldn't have been able to access on my own. Um, but they were able to provide those people for me with the connections that they had made...So I feel like mentoring is a- a pivotal, plays a crucial role in the African American community, making sure that we have our own spaces to vent and engage in, you know, dialogue with like-minded people who are able to- to help us the- there financially and, uh, socially, as well as mentally.”

Once again, the desire to have someone to talk to is made clear. Black men have more problems with expressing themselves emotionally and benefit from having single gendered spaces where they feel freedom (Terry et al., 2014).

Gerald believes that programs should also be instrumental in providing scholarship to youth and provide mentees with a historical component that allows them to get a glimpse into the excellence of our people.

“ I would try to have scholarships including people the best in the business after the private sector whether its people like in these fortune 500 companies that look like us or from people that are from STEM people that are educator and just having kids, having a holistic perspective of just Black excellence in general because I think that sometimes I think a lot of kids especially I think sometimes Black kids don't really know where they come from and I think our history, unfortunately, is never genuinely taught through our lens correctly. Unfortunately, it's through the broader perspective where you want to stay whitewashed. So I think sometimes kids growing up may not understand the importance of because it's 2019, we are 400 years since the first slaves came from Plymouth, Virginia. And I think just having that dynamic of different people that are being great and doing what they can it's like we'll show kids like, you I can do this it means something more that's maybe them thinking like about pop culture or athletics.”

Abraham agrees that programs should provide historical and literary resources. As previously discussed, Black students are rarely given opportunities to see themselves in their school curriculum. Mentoring provides the perfect vehicle for this type of education since it does not happen within the school building.

“I would include African heritage, I would include, there's an author name Na'im Akbar, a professor at FAMU who wrote several books and one is call Visions of Black Men and another book call Psychological Chains of Slavery, and I would begin to share some of the things that are embedded in America that if we are not conscious of it we fall into the

trap of modern day slavery. Positive images of Black men, men who've had to navigate through systems of poverty, racism, failing educational systems, and had to rise to the occasion to conquer themselves against all odds. I would also include different pathways. I will say that college is not for everybody and there are several ways to be successful in life and not go to college, so I think that one thing that we fail our Black young men is that we try to force them to go to college and that may not be the model for them."

Mentoring programs must also be accepting. This means in all of the areas in which young Black males might not fit the mold. Emmanuel believes this should carry over into discussing what mentees would like to do in their future. Some mentoring programs place Black men in a box of respectability and do not want to see them take any steps outside of that.

"If you're saying college, college, college and the kid doesn't test well, they don't do well in school, why are you doing that? You're disconnecting from their path. They might be a great mechanic and open up several autobody shops or something... If a kid tells me they want to be a sound engineer, a music engineer, why in the world am I saying you need to go to college? I need to tell him he needs to get an internship at the local studio and just work his way up. If they want to do art, maybe they start doing painting or different types of vocational schools with trades and things of that nature. I always preach, get your GED. At least get your high school degree, diploma."

As an accepting mentor, it is also vital that mentors understand that changes may not be immediate, and small changes occur over time. Since mentoring programs are most effective when they last, this shouldn't be something hard.

You just want to be their support system because after the program ends, if you did a good job, it never ends because they'll continue to call you, they'll continue because they know you're looking out for them. They know that you're going to give them the best advice because you're not talking about their pants hanging down. They'll get there. They'll pull their pants up on their own if you mentor them where they're at. Where they're at and not mentor them from where you want them to be." -Emmanuel

Community

My participants feel that mentoring programs are the responsibility of everyone in the community. Abraham states this in saying

"I just feel as though mentoring and mentorship is a vital part to the growth and development of African American community. And without it, we really don't have that much of an outlet to voice our- our grievances about ourselves, about the world...I would

say that I believe that Black male mentors are important to our village, and the only way to save our village and to save our young Black men is to have active male mentors who can show our young men a different way.”

As a part of the community, mentors must make sure mentees feel that it is okay to be themselves when discussing identity and masculinity. As long as programs attempt to create little clones of themselves, they will continue to reproduce what the dominant narrative suggests as proper (Zamudio et al., 2011)

“The purpose of a mentoring program should be to help a young Black man understand themselves. That's key. Not understand your program, not understand your values, understand their values, their own personal gifts, their own personal, I guess, professional career. I think we fail because we want them to conform to our way, and we will continue to fail unless we start listening, learning, relating. And just saying that even if I don't agree with my mentee, I support my mentee, and I'm going to help him navigate in this space.

In the school system and life, Black males are placed on the outside of what is normal in society. Mentoring programs should be their safe space, where they can discuss their feelings, have space to grow, and find their identity. To do this, the right people need to be work with mentees. Emmanuel provides a narrative on the importance of being in the right place in the program. Everyone can help out for the good of the program, but everyone cannot be a mentor.

“Yeah, the one other thing would be just the community aspect. Play your role. Understand your role. If that's your role, play your role. I think everybody can play a role. Not everybody needs to be the one in front of the youth. If there's a younger person who can talk to the youth better, is not going to say, "pull up your pants," but there's an older guy with enough money to finance the mentoring program, maybe they both connect, and one provides the money while the other actually provides the curriculum or the teaching. So, we got to get our egos out the way and just work together as a unit to help our kids.”

Transformative

When you consider Critical Race Theory (CRT), one of the tenets is that the research must be transformative and do work towards social justice. Mentoring, if done correctly,

transforms the lives of not only the mentees but also the mentor. Below are statements from some of the participants on how mentoring has affected their lives and the lives of their mentees.

“So that’s why I loved it; I mean that’s one reason I’m so changed by doing this. I mean as much as I am there to be a presence for them I really need that for myself, and I’ve been humbled and changed so much as a result of being there. Not even just knowing them but being there. You know seeing that garage door, being with them eating with them, going to their games and then trying to figure, okay were talk about race here and there but we’re living this.” - Faison

“It's in my spirit, it's in my blood, it's in my heart, it's in my soul. And I think that's key, too. Some of this stuff has just got to be in your heart and soul. It's like a calling. It's just like you just feel the need to give back and just feel maybe you became enlightened in your own experience, and you say, wow, because so-and-so, I was able to do this. So maybe I need to lift as I climb and go back and do it. – Emmanuel

“I would say my joy for seeing young men become great. I think I would not be who I am without my mentors and so I think I have to pay for that. I think I have to reinvest back into our community and give others a positive image that they can look at...being there for them and pointing them in the right direction of resources. And I think a mentor should be able to do that. I can't; I don't have all the answers. I'm not a counselor. I can't do deep conversations with people because I don't have that degree.... proper channels of, uh, help from a psychologist and counselors, um, and different things like that. So being able to point them in the direction of resources that they need and they receive it and not get offended when you, uh, say, well, you know, "Hey, I can't, this is not like..." I think people respect honesty.” – Abraham

“I’ve always claimed to just live a life for others. Thanks to Morehouse, thanks to some mentorship that I’ve received, I know that I’m pretty confident in who I am and it’s important for me to sow into what has made me the person that I am, and I can’t lie, it’s exhausting, but I get up every day, and people ask me all the time like how are you doing all these things, and it’s because it benefits other people, but I am also getting something from it. I can’t go through a week without seeing or being around kids like I just can’t.” - Dyson

“I rolled up on him on the last day of the conference, and I said, “I think you should be my mentor.” It was just some organically happened, and to this day we are still very, very close, like we have transition out of the mentor mentee relationship. And for a period of time, I then became his mentor, and it was really weird. But it was one of those moments were organically I saw; I still don’t know to this day don’t know what I saw, but I saw this relationship being fruitful, and he was one of the best mentors I had.” MD Sheffield

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the shared experiences of the participants as it relates to the connecting themes of the study. The connecting themes are 1) Black men grapple with how to discuss race and racism with their mentees but often experience both through police brutality. 2) Stereotypes often make identity formation difficult for Black males, and the choice is often between playing the part and learning to be themselves. 3) The concept of masculinity is often built from familial examples, is affected by popular culture and toxic examples, and in the end, requires self-definition. 4) When Black males see representation and are in contact with natural mentors, and have some interaction with HBCU's, schooling can be a positive experience. 5) To be impactful mentoring programs should offer resources, provide mentees with a sense of community and be transformative for both the mentor and mentee. For these young men, mentoring is not just a program to participate in, but how they have been able to navigate being a Black man in American and the method through which they would like to lead others. It is evident that for those who were mentees as well as those who serve as mentors, these relationships with other men have been transformative. In the final chapter, I will discuss the concluding thoughts from the study and provide information on how this study adds to the current literature available on Black male mentoring.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

If you turn on the television any given day, you will find examples of Black men as violent, hustling, and hypersexual. These troubling images have been present for generations. They often provide a biased narrative not only to the larger society but also to Black youth who may not have other examples available. In literature, taken from the deficit perspective, Black males are portrayed as academically problematic with little interest in education. Kunjufu (1995) suggests that Black males are a threat to White Supremacy, and that is one of the reasons why they are often the subject of so much scrutiny. Young Black men benefit when they interact with adult Black males (Brown, 2009). Mentoring is an environment where cooperative learning can occur through other Black males in either a formal or informal capacity.

This current study was designed to address the gap in the literature of how mentoring relationships help to combat Black young men's issues with race, racism, and masculinity that is often worsened by the widespread dominant narrative. The study was based on a guiding research question and supported by four additional questions.

Guiding Research Question: How does the Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism, and masculinity?

- 1) In what ways do Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of Black Males?
- 2) What do Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?

3) What counter narratives are told between Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?

4) What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?

The study looks at the lived experiences of Black males ages 19-40 who have been a part of formal mentoring programs. Table 13 highlights the connections between the research questions and conclusions.

Table 13

Research Questions and Conclusions

Research Question	Conclusion
1. How does the Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism, and masculinity?	Navigating race and racism involves intentional conversations when the mentee is ready for them
2. In what ways do Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of Black Males?	Black male mentoring relationships help youth and adults alike to understand the complexities of identity development
3. What do Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?	Masculinity is multidimensional and develops over time.
4. What counter narratives are told between Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?	Schooling can be oppressive and enlightening depending on who is in your corner
5. What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?	Black male mentoring relationships are successful when they are loving, accepting, and mentee driven.

In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth look at the study's conclusions through the Critical Race Theory lens, which requires race at the core but also looks at the other causes of oppression such as gender, social class, sexual identity (Howard & Reynolds, 2013). After addressing those, I will explain the implications for the research and present the

recommendations provided from the thoughts and minds of my participants. From there, the limitations of the study will be offered as well as the suggestions for further research. Finally, the conclusion of the study will close out the chapter.

Navigating race and racism involves intentional conversations when the mentee is ready for them

Race is also socially constructed and developed to justify many of the efforts to maintain dominance over one society or another, for example, slavery, the taking of native land, colonization of other countries, just to name a few (Zamudio et al., 2011). In a similar vein, racism is normal, precipitant, and part of the fiber of U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Zamudio et al., 2011). Because these two will never go away, mentors and mentees must have conversations about the structural implications of being a Black male in this country. Even more important is the notion that there is no one way to be Black (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Mentoring is a perfect vehicle for discussing race and racism. Mentors should be discussing race in a way that allows mentees to reflect and look toward the future. (Berry & Stovall, 2013). As Tatum (2017) points out, students attend heavily segregated school communities and often receive secondhand information about race and racism. The purpose is not only to deconstruct the idea of racism but also to become activists to fight against inequality (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018).

A review of the participant responses indicates that some, like respondents, Faison, and Emmanuel that did not feel comfortable discussing race. This was because they thought that their mentees were daily, exploring the structural weight of racism as members of the lower social class or young men in the juvenile justice system. While they did not feel comfortable, all of the

participants mentioned their mentoring narratives about race always centered around police. For Black men, this is a subject that is not ignorable. The Master narrative tells society that Black men would instead go to jail than be in school (Berry & Stovall, 2013). Similar to the school system, the legal system reproduces the socioeconomic hierarchy that exists in society (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). With Black youth being four times more likely to be in the juvenile justice system than white children, mentors must continue to have conversations with their mentees (Love, 2019).

Black male mentoring programs help to uncover the multifaceted layers of identity.

The development of identity is a critical step in everyone's life and one that has a bearing on how people see themselves as students (Howard et al., 2012). Tatum (2017), states that identity develops over time and becomes more prominent with age. In terms of mentoring, the seeds that the mentors sow today, many not fully manifest themselves until the future. When looking at the study participants, they have had experiences with their familial, natural and formal mentors that have occurred throughout their lives. One of the more salient thoughts is that Black men should learn to be themselves, whatever that means for them. Part of what makes identity difficult for Black men is that they often find themselves between the collective identity and individual identity (Howard & Reynolds, 2013).

Identity is usually negotiated by what they see. Mentoring programs allow young men to try on identities without feeling stifled (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). It is essential to consider intersectionality when discussing the formation of identity and to remember how race, class, genre, and sexual orientation all come together to form an individual's complex identity (Howard et al., 2012).

My participants have made it clear that while they were a diverse group, heterosexual, homosexual, two parent background, single family background, poor or upper class, as adults the most important thing is that they have learned to live out their true self. What is true is that we often focus on the parts of our identity that other people notice and not the things that are "normalized" in society (Tatum, 2017).

Masculinity is complex, multifaceted, and often requires self-definition.

An article written by Gause (2019), provides a perfect quote for the findings of Black masculinity. He states, "Black masculinity, must begin with the understanding of our duality- as gendered bodies, emotional beings, and spiritual entities (pp.716)". My participants alluded to the importance of dealing with their emotions while also making clear their relationships with God. For many of my participants, their definition of masculinity has changed as they have moved into adulthood. The fact that this changes over time validate that similar to race, masculinity is socially constructed (Travers, 2019). As a socially constructed identity, dominant society defines masculinity in one way, and Black men must redefine it for themselves (hooks, 2004; Mutua, 2006; Travers, 2019).

One particular thing for mentors to watch out for is the "adultification" of young men, particularly young Black men. Adultification includes calling the "little man," telling them to "man up," expecting them to be the man of the house, etc. The racist history behind the term "boy" often leads people to jump passed this stage; however, boyhood, is still vital in the living of Black youth (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Mentoring spaces should allow for the opportunity for boys to enjoy their youth since society and schools automatically see Black boys as older and treat them as such (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ferguson, 2000; Monroe, 2005). The notion of "Black boy joy," the freedom it allows, and the space to be a kid enables them to go through the

journey of boyhood to manhood in a much more natural way (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Finding this joy will help Black boys, Black men find strength, heal from trauma, and persist past an oppressive society to be human, (Love, 2019).

All of my participants tied masculinity in with being providers and taking care of their families. While this seems like an admirable thing for young men to learn. It sets up unrealistic expectations for Black men who may have difficulty attaining this because of the hegemony in American society that keeps them on the lower end of the social class totem pole (Harper, 2004). To construct identity, Black males must move beyond singular notes and excludes men who are not hyper masculine and deem them as problematic.

Schooling can be both oppressive and liberating.

Meritocracy is the idea that if you work hard enough, you will be successful, which is heavily criticized under Critical Race Theory based on the structural barriers that often are in place for minorities (Carter, 2008). What is often presented as truth is the schooling is the great equalizer; however, this is not factual (Zamudio et al., 2011). Schools are highly oppressive places for Black males who are a part of school systems that problematize their every move. For Black males, this happens far too often and leads to many of them hating school. In schools, there is a love-hate relationship between schools and Black males (Ladson-Billing, 2011). Many of them are considered beyond love by those in the school building because they do not conform to the dominant narrative of what students should be (Duncan, 2002).

The majority of my participants expressed very positive relationships with schooling, and I contribute that to the fact that each of them had a natural mentor. These natural mentors help to liberate Black male students by affirming them, encouraging them, and contributing positively to

their education (Dancy, 2012). Black male teachers continually have greater success with students because of their commitment to social justice (Brown, 2009).

Another factor that could also have an impact on my participant's liberating experiences in school is where they attended school. Of the nine, two attended private schools, one a magnet school and two others attend a public school but as a part of a program that bussed minority students into schools that were majority white. Of the remaining four that participated in a public school, only one attended school in a low income neighborhood. Lower income schools teach students to be obedient and to follow the rules and guidelines, while schools in higher income classes teach critical thinking skills (Zamudio et al., 2011). Knowing this explains why the majority of the participants stated that they had positive experiences within the school building. The relationships between teachers and Black male students differ based on the school environment.

The research also pointed to the importance of HBCUs in the liberating experiences of Black males. Two of my participants attended mentoring programs at HBCUs, while four of them attended college at HBCUs. Every single one discussed the importance of these schools in their lives. One of my participants attend a PWI for undergraduate education but is now at an HBCU for graduate school. He also described how the school had an impact on his schooling experience. As Black men are exposed to Afrocentric ideas in college, they often report more beneficial forms of masculinity (Harper 2004; McClure, 2006; Travers, 2019).

Schooling can be pushed in the direction of liberation when we allow for student's voices. Doing so allows for all involved to see what occurs in schooling for Black males (Howard et al., 2012). While understanding that the majority of schools continue to reproduce the dominant

narrative, it is paramount to remember this "Education can't save us, We have to save education." (Love, 2019 p.88). Knowing this allows us to see why mentoring programs are so important.

Black male mentoring programs should be loving, accepting and mentee driven

Mentoring programs often are the best places for youth to explore feelings and ideas based on the smaller adult to youth ration (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Black males are not one singular type of person. They do not all have the same family, goals, or background. For these reasons mentoring programs should be a place of love and acceptance. Research shows that mentoring relationships have a positive effect on participants' attitudes (Watson et al., 2015). Programs also benefit in decreased socioemotional issues and a more positive racial identity (McGee & Stovall, 2015; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). Dyson said it best when he stated how important it was for his mentee to know that he loved him. For Dyson and his mentee, love was express in the way they interacted in the care Dyson showed for Malik, his education and his future.

Programs that introduce reciprocal love, which is love for self and then love for others are a place of healing and can help to counteract the stereotypes that are heard (Jackson et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Zamudio et al., 2011). Black males find peace in being able to talk to someone else and tell their stories (Quigley, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Mentoring programs should build agency that makes changes in society (Weiston-Serdan, 2017; Zamudio et al., 2011). These programs should be critical mentoring programs that are designed to help young people overcome the challenges in their lives and address the racism that they experience (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

Emmanuel also stated mentors should make sure that they are not only projecting the idea of college to every mentee. Not all people are interested in going to college, and this does not

make them any less of a man, or any less important. As Abraham pointed out, his mentee was heading to lineman school, which is not a typical program. While it was not collegiate, the money that he would be able to provide for his family once completed was significant.

After reviewing the conclusions from the study, it is evident that the voice of Black males is crucial in the liberation of other Black men. Through the use of counter narratives, they can name their own reality and debunk the dominant culture (Milner, 2007). Mentoring relationships help to build the beloved community, which is the only way to show that we matter to each other and how we survive (Love, 2019). make sure that we all survive, and we show we matter to each other

Implications

The goal of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black male mentors and mentees and how they navigate race, racism, and masculinity, specifically through the counterstories that are told within the relationships. My study offers evidence that mentoring, whether in an informal or formal capacity helps Black men develop their identities and define their own masculinity. Understanding the counter stories that are told between mentors and mentees will help mentoring program, mentors, schools, and communities develop programming that is beneficial for Black men. By adding the voice of Black males to the research, it will change how they are viewed in schools and life and provide them with

Implications for Mentoring Programs

Considering the importance of mentoring relationships in discussing race, racism, and masculinity, programs should make sure that mentors are culturally relevant. If programs are not doing critical work of helping to break societal narratives, then programs must evaluate how they mentor that meets the needs of marginalized Black men. Programs should also shift who is at the

center of the programs. If the mentoring program is not youth focused and designs their curriculum around what adults want as opposed to what youth want, then they will not be effective.

To determine how beneficial a program is for the participants, mentoring programs need to conduct evaluations using narratives. Centering evaluations around the voices of the participants, will ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the youth and the mentors. The participant's voice is not only important for evaluation but also to let the mentee know that their voice matters and that people are listening to their thoughts and ideas.

Mentoring programs should also make sure that they are doing more than respectability politics and teaching young men to dress in ties. There may be times when teaching young men to dress up are appropriate, but mentoring programs should revolve around much more than that. When programs focus on that aspect of the mentee's culture, they are reinforcing the standards of white society and encouraging youth to assimilate to white culture. Mentoring programs are meant to help Black males love who they are and find their identities on their own, outside of the pressure of dominant cultures.

Implications for Mentors

My participants were adamant about the necessity for mentors to respect their mentee's choices and desires. They specifically spoke about it in terms of not only navigating them towards college but providing them with information into the fields where they show interest. With all of my participants, mentoring relationships were long term. Before deciding to begin a mentoring relationship, the mentors must consider their real commitment and make an effort to becoming a long term mentor.

Mentors should make it a point to discuss race, racism, and masculinity with their mentees to help them unpack the feelings that they are not able to get out. Making this means making it a point to get to know your mentee and knowing what they deal with within the school, and in their community. When discussing masculinity with mentees, it is also imperative that mentors allow the mentee's identity to develop and not add to the stereotypes that already exist for Black males.

Emmanuel makes a strong point that not everyone should be a mentor. It takes a certain amount of love and acceptance to do so. Realizing that although mentees may not listen to everything that is said or follow every piece of advice, it does not mean that they are not listening. Everyone in the community can have a place in a mentoring program, but everyone is not meant for front line interaction. This can be compared to the Civil Rights movement, not everyone was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., but everyone had a part. As a mentor or a supporter of a mentoring program, one has the option as to time, monetary contributions, or other support. Knowing what you are capable of personal investment is important for Black men to consider when thinking about mentoring.

Implications for Schools

Given the overall small numbers or abject lack of Black male presence in school buildings as teachers, administrators, or staff, it is important to provide Black males students to have alternative ways to interact with adult Black males. The natural mentors that the study participants found in their school building impacted them. They helped them to interact with the curriculum and also with the other students. If hiring more Black males is a struggle, implementing a school based mentoring program would be a good step.

Recommendations

When considering the study as a whole, several recommendations can be made regarding mentoring programs that serve Black males. The majority of these recommendations have come from the critical race theory lens, but all of them come from the participant's voices and validate the voices of the participants.

- An opportunity for a solid Mentor and mentee match by allowing them to choose each other. (MD Sheffield)
- Kickboxing because it helps with regulation and modulation of the body, and how to be tactical, it helps them breathe and know how to apply their reflex. (Dyson)
- A lot of music, listening to their stories, and a lot more affirming over disciplining (Faison)
- Yoga in the beginning to allow them to focus, breathe, and clear their mind. It will enable them to get the information, balance them out, and make sure their mind is clear. (Emmanuel)
- A public speaking class, improvisational speaking, to speak up for what you believe in you're going to have to speak, resume building would also be significant. (Gerald)
- Scholarships, or mentors from the private sector, fortune 500 companies, STEM, giving a holistic perspective of Black excellence (Charles)
- Black history taught through our lens correctly, so it's not whitewashed, looking back at where we came from. Books like *Visions of Black Men*, *Psychological Chains of Slavery*, so we don't fall into the trap of modern day slavery. (Abraham, Charles)

- Positive images of Black men, men who've had to navigate through systems of poverty, racism, failing educational systems, and had to rise to the occasion to conquer themselves against all odds. (Abraham)
- Making sure to have an academic component to help the mentees with their educational struggles. (Brandon)
- Providing spiritual, physical and emotional wellness for mentees (Harrison)
- Making sure to have transparent, honest conversations that provide a safe space for mentees to discuss whatever they want. (Emmanuel, Harrison, Brandon)
- Political cartooning to help them make sense of the systems that marginalize so that they can navigate through those systems. It will give them a certain degree of activism, agency, and urgency. (Dyson)
- Alternate pathways to success that do not revolve around college. Encouraging them to find their path. (Abraham, Emmanuel)
- Conversations about financial literacy, Relationship building, Sexuality, race
- Form a Teamwork triangle with the parent or guardian, the mentee, and the mentor. (Harrison)

Limitations

When doing qualitative research, there is rarely a study that is without limitations. When addressing the limitations of the study, one of them is linked to the study sample. I was not able to get into contact with any mentoring program sites, and so the participants came from my network. As this relates to my research, the network of people that I interact with have similar educational backgrounds and socioeconomic status. All of my participants except for one was a college graduate and the one who was currently enrolled in

college. My research did not gather the perspective of people who had engaged in mentoring relationships who are presently in another social class.

Another limitation to this study is while I attempted to recruit an equal number of participants who had served as mentees and those who had served as mentors, the number was very uneven. All of my participants except for one had been a mentor, while only one had only served as a mentee. This means that I may not have uncovered a wider variety of lived experiences of Black mentees.

Future Research

This study gives a brief look into how socioeconomic status affects mentoring. One of my participants, Faison, spent a good part of his interview discussing the problematizing that middle class Blacks place on lower class Blacks. Gause (2019) describes it as the oppressed becoming an oppressor once they become free. A future project would involve more in depth look at how mentoring relationships in low income communities address race and racism.

Another vein of research should look at the trauma that Black males experience in school, and their community and how mentoring programs address that trauma. Mentoring programs are hopefully beginning to address the trauma that occurs in those that participate and provide both mentors and mentees ways to manage it.

While only one of my participants currently mentors in a church mentoring program, further research around the way church based mentoring programs work and how they engage young men in their spiritual, gendered, and sexual identity would be essential to add to the conversation.

Conclusion

This study provided the narratives of the nine Black males ages 19-40 who had been a part and continue to be a part of a mentoring program. The work offers the thoughts and feelings of the men in their own words to add counter narratives to the body of research. When looking from the CRT framework, the tenets are present. Race continues to be a salient factor in the lives of these men. A look into their lives provided information from a historical perspective to provide a basis for their narratives. The desire to help move toward more effective practice in mentoring programs is a look toward praxis. Intersectionality was present as participants discussed how being Black and Male, straight or gay, interact upon each other. The most intentional focus was to provide the voices of each participant in a narrative, but also in the research findings.

Black male mentoring programs, whether formal or informal, have a profound effect Black men's ability to navigate the space between race, racism, and masculinity. Throughout my study, I have found that they are helpful in the lives of Black men regardless of their socioeconomic status, family makeup, and sexual identity. Mentoring is not only useful for those who are being mentored, but my participants expressed how transformative it was for their own lives to develop relationships with their mentees.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER



The flyer is titled "YOUR VOICE MATTERS" in large, bold, red capital letters. Below the title, there are three questions in yellow capital letters: "ARE YOU AN AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MALE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18-40?", "HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN A FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM EITHER AS A MENTOR OR MENTEE?", and "IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO THESE QUESTIONS, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT MENTORING". The text is centered and framed by a thick black border. Decorative yellow chevron and circle graphics are placed at the corners. The bottom section contains details about the study's purpose, contact information for Veronica Perry, the principal investigator Dr. Bettina Love, and a statement about risks and discomforts.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

ARE YOU AN AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MALE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18-40?

HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN A FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM EITHER AS A MENTOR OR MENTEE?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO THESE QUESTIONS, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT MENTORING

The purpose of this study is to examine mentoring relationships between African American/Black males. Participants will be asked to share their mentoring experiences and how they have shaped their views on race, racism, and masculinity. Participants will be asked to participate in one 45-60 minute interview and one focus group. The interview and focus group will be scheduled to take place between February and March. Participants will not be compensated for their time.

If interested in participating in the study, please contact Veronica Perry at vmitch@uga.edu.

The study is being conducted by Veronica Perry, a graduate student at the University of Georgia.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Bettina Love, Educational Theory and Practice, University of Georgia, blove@uga.edu

Risks and Discomforts: I do not anticipate any risks with participating in this study.

APPENDIX B: GOOGLE FORM

I AM A MAN: Initial Study Questionnaire

* Required

1. Email address *

2. What is your name? *

3. Are you between the ages of 18-40? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. How old are you? *

5. Have you participated in a formal mentoring program either as a mentor or mentee with a Black Male? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

6. What was your role? *

- ☐ Mentor
- ☐ Mentee
- ☐ I have been both

7. What was the name of the mentoring program that you participated in? *

8. Would you be willing to participate in an interview in February? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. What day would you prefer to conduct your interview? *

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐ Sunday

10. What is your first time preference for an interview? *

11. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group in March? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. Do you have any suggestions on other people who would be interested in participating in this study? (Please supply their email address)

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM

I AM A MAN: Navigating Internal and External Black Male Identity

Researcher's Statement

My name is Veronica Perry and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I am inviting 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:

Dr. Bettina Love
Early Childhood Education; Department of Educational Theory
and Practice
706-542-4244; blove@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine mentoring relationships between African American/Black males. Participants will be asked to share their mentoring experiences and how they have shaped their views on race, racism and masculinity. The aim is to provide African American/Black males to provide their experiences being a part of a formalized mentoring program.

Study Procedures

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

- Share information about the mentoring relationship between yourself and either your mentor or mentee. Questions will ask about your educational experience along with issues of race, racism masculinity
- Participate in one 45-60 minute interview along with one 60 minute focus group.
- Have your interview and focus group audio recorded and transcribed following the interview.

Risks and discomforts

- There are no known risks from participating in this research.
- You may skip a question or stop the interview at any time if discomfort arises.

Benefits

- The participants in this study will not be compensated in any way and their only direct benefit will be their opportunity to reflect on their mentoring relationships and how they interact with their African American/Black mentors or mentees
- The benefits to humankind the study will be to inform school systems, community organizations, policy makers on the significance of African American/Black male mentoring relationships. Specifically, this study deals with the relationship and its impact on race, racism and masculinity.

Incentives for participation

Participants will not receive any incentive (monetary or non-monetary) for being in the study.

Audio/Video Recording

- The interview and focus group will be recorded using an audio recording device. This will ensure an accurate account of the interview. The recording will begin as soon as the interview begins. After the interview and focus group, the interview will be transcribed. Any identifying information will also be removed from the interview transcripts so that participants can remain anonymous. All audio from the interviews will also contain pseudonyms and the audio file will be erased after the completion of the complete project. The transcribed documents will be kept in a password protected file.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview and focus group audio recorded or not. You may not 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

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law. All participants will be identified using pseudonyms and demographic information will be adjusted as well. All audio files will be kept in a secure location and at the completion of the project, all audio files will be destroyed. Transcribed documents will be kept password protected. Please note that during the focus group our ability to protect your confidentiality is limited because other participants may choose to repeat what's shared.

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 Veronica Perry a graduate student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact

Veronica Perry at vmitch@uga.edu. 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 Researcher	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX D: MENTOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, my name is Veronica Perry and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Theory and Practice department at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research project on the mentoring relationship between African American mentees mentors. I would like to learn more about the interaction between AAm mentors and mentees and if their relationships help to construct who they are as African American Males. I appreciate you meeting with me today to help me gather more insight on this particular topic.

Before we begin this interview, I would like to remind you that the information being gathered today will be kept confidential as indicated in the consent form. I will not use your name or any other identifying information. If there are any questions that you would like to skip, please let me know. I anticipate this interview to last between 45 minutes to an hour. If there are any questions that you would like to ask during the interview, please do so. Are there any questions that you have before we begin?

I would like to start our conversation by learning a little bit more about you, so please tell me about yourself.

We will begin with background information:

- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- Tell me about your where the elementary school you attended is located? (City, State)
 - What was the SES of the majority of people in the school?
 - What about middle school?
 - What about high school?
- What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
- Are you employed?
- What do you do?
- What type of mentoring program do you participate in? (church, school, community, fraternal?)
- What are three words you would use to describe yourself?

Guiding Research Question: How does the African American/Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism and masculinity?

1) In what ways do African American/Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of African American/Black Males?

- Tell me about the role models/mentors you had as a child in elementary school.
 -middle school

- ...high school
 - ...college
 - What role did these people play in your educational attainment?
- Tell me about a challenge that one of your mentees has encountered?
 - Tell me about what that was like for you as their mentor
- Tell me about a time you had to talk to your mentee about race?
 - What circumstances surrounded this?
 - What did you tell them?
- Tell me about a time when you discussed racism with your mentee
 - What circumstances surrounded this?
 - What did you tell him?

2) What do African American/Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?

- How would you define masculinity?
- Tell me about a time that you discussed masculinity with your mentee?
 - What were the circumstances?
 - What did you tell him?
- Who did you talk to about being a man?
 - What was told to you?

3) What counter stories are told between African American/Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?

- Tell me about an experience that you had in school that affected how you felt about yourself
- What kind of conversations do you have with your mentee about school?
 - How does your mentee feel about school?
- How do you feel AA male students are treated in schools?
- What do you believe are challenges to educational attainment that are faced by AA male students?
 - What do you think is a solution to these challenges?

4) What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?

- What do you believe the purpose of mentoring programs is?
- What made you decide to become a mentor?
- What led you to the organization that you are currently mentoring with?
- If you could design your own mentoring program what would you include?

Final Question: I have asked many questions today, but I would like to give you the opportunity to share with me anything that you would like to add. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to add?

Summary Statement: In the interview, I noticed several themes that were noticeable to me. These included (insert themes). Do you think I summarized these correctly? Are there any other things that stand out to you from the interview?

Wrap-Up: Thank you so much for the time that you have spent with me today. As I review the notes and have more questions, is it okay for me to contact you again?

APPENDIX E: MENTEE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, my name is Veronica Perry and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Theory and Practice department at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research project on the mentoring relationship between African American mentees mentors. I would like to learn more about the interaction between AAm mentors and mentees and if their relationships help to construct who they are as African American Males. I appreciate you meeting with me today to help me gather more insight on this particular topic.

Before we begin this interview, I would like to remind you that the information being gathered today will be kept confidential as indicated in the consent form. I will not use your name or any other identifying information. If there are any questions that you would like to skip, please let me know. I anticipate this interview to last between 45 minutes to an hour. If there are any questions that you would like to ask during the interview, please do so. Are there any questions that you have before we begin?

I would like to start our conversation by learning a little bit more about you, so please tell me about yourself and your education.

We will begin with background information:

- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- Tell me about your where the elementary school you attended is located? (City, State)
 - What was the SES of the majority of people in the school?
 - What about middle school?
 - What about high school?
- What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
- Are you employed?
- What do you do?
- What type of mentoring program did you participate in? (church, school, community, fraternal?)
- What are three words you would use to describe yourself?

Guiding Research Question: How does the African American/Black male mentoring relationship help navigate race, racism and masculinity?

- 5) In what ways do African American/Black male mentoring relationships help to develop and/or enhance the identities of African American/Black Males?**
- Tell me about the role models/mentors you had as a child in elementary school.

-middle school
 - ...high school
 - What role did these people play in your educational attainment?
- Tell me about a challenge that you encountered that you discussed with your mentor?
 - What advice did your mentor offer?
- Tell me about a time you had to talk to your mentor about race
 - What circumstances surrounded this?
 - What did he tell you?
- Tell me about a time when you discussed racism with your mentor
 - What circumstances surrounded this?
 - What did he tell you?

6) What do African American/Black males learn about masculinity from mentoring relationships?

- How would you define masculinity?
- Tell me about a time that you discussed masculinity with your mentor?
 - What were the circumstances?
 - What did he tell you?

7) What counter stories are told between African American/Black male mentors and mentees about schooling?

- Tell me about an experience that you had in school that affected how you felt about yourself
- What kind of conversations do you have with your mentor about school?
 - What advice did he offer?
- How do you feel AA male students are treated in schools?
- What do you believe are challenges to educational attainment that are faced by AA male students?
 - What do you think is a solution to these challenges?

8) What aspects make the Black male mentoring relationship successful?

- What do you believe the purpose of mentoring programs is?
- How did you get a mentor?
- What was the biggest lesson you learned from your mentor?
- Have you considered being a mentor?
 - Why or Why not?
- If you could design your own mentoring program what would you include?

Final Question: I have asked many questions today, but I would like to give you the opportunity to share with me anything that you would like to add. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to add?

Summary Statement: In the interview, I noticed several themes that were noticeable to me. These included (insert themes). Do you think I summarized these correctly? Are there any other things that stand out to you from the interview?

Wrap-Up: Thank you so much for the time that you have spent with me today. As I review the notes and have more questions, is it okay for me to contact you again?