Fall 8-15-2019

The Mentor & Mentee Perspective: Mentorship From Faculty and Staff for Black Male Students in Higher Education

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The Mentor & Mentee Perspective: Mentorship From Faculty and Staff for Black Male Students

in Higher Education

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College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Higher Education

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Concordia University–Portland

2019

Abstract

Trends in academic statistics show a decline in enrollment, academic achievement, and program completion for Black male students in higher education. Research indicates a decline in Black student enrollments and graduation rates. This single qualitative case study was an exploration of perceptions of mentorship for Black male students among faculty and staff in higher education. Using social capital theory as a theoretical framework, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of mentorship by way of semistructured interviews with five faculty and staff members and five Black male students at a Texas university. The literature review revealed the numerous factors– social, environmental, mental, and psychological–that contribute to Black male student persistence and engagement in higher education. The literature review also revealed the advantages and disadvantages of each type of mentorship available to higher education students. The findings of this study revealed three major themes that emerged from the questionnaire and interview responses: characteristics of mentorship, keys to successful mentorship, and positive outcomes of mentorship, each with its own set of codes that emerged from the statements of the participants. Participants expressed perceptions of mentorship that favored nonacademic efforts with academic benefits as a byproduct. Implications of these findings and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: mentorship, Black male students, higher education, perceptions, case study, social capital theory, persistence, engagement, achievement, academic, nonacademic

Dedication

First, I'd like to dedicate this dissertation in honor of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As the scripture Isaiah 41:10 (ESV) says, "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God I will strengthen you and help you and I will hold you up with my righteous right hand." I am grateful that my Father is with me. This achievement of my life has been a journey which I would not replace. For the wisdom and knowledge of life has helped me to develop as a man during this journey.

During this journey, my greatest backbone; my grandmother, passed away from cancer in 2016. Alice was my motivator and prayer warrior, and she stepped in when my mother passed away several years ago from cancer as well. These two women inspire me, to this day, to continue on this life journey with the intention of helping others the way these women have helped me.

Although I've lost them, they have sown the seeds of wisdom into me, and I have gained an abundance because of that. Months before my mother passed, she showed me she received her GED and completed all her courses. To see how she worked so hard for me and my siblings was humbling. I keep the document of her completion on the wall to remind me to keep the faith and keep moving forward.

Furthermore, I want to dedicate this to my children, my sister, my brother, and my father. All the good people that have helped me along this journey. James 1:2–4 (ESV) "I will Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge the support of my chair, Dr. Edward Kim. I thank you for your utmost support, your guidance, direction, and wisdom as my dissertation evolved. I also want to thank my committee members, Dr. Cavanagh and Dr. Kanai, for their support and words of wisdom and encouragement throughout the dissertation process. I am grateful for all the support an inspiration from the committee. Lastly, I want to thank all my family, friends, Bishop, Pastors, and my church family who have been encouraging me from the beginning to complete this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the United States Department of Education, the Fall enrollment of undergraduate Black male students in postsecondary institutions saw a significant decline between 2010 and 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Furthermore, statistics show a difference of 20.8% points in the graduation rates of first-time, full-time Black male students graduating between four and six years after starting at a 4-year postsecondary institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

> Much of the research on Black male achievement presents troublesome statistics and often negative stories about their chances of academic success. The plethora of negative findings is alarming and often neglects the insight of students themselves and potential solutions for these obstacles. (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013, p. 288)

This deficit model is, in part, a condition of the education system, particularly the perspectives of teachers who maintain a deficit perspective in relation to student differences (Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013). As Scott et al. (2013) pointed out, higher education faculty and staff must consider the lack of insight from students in order to increase academic engagement, achievement, and completion for Black male students.

Academic retention rates are also a vital factor to consider with regard to the academic engagement, achievement, and success of Black male students in higher education. For example, in a literature review, McClain and Perry (2017) discussed five components that play a role in academic retention. "The five components are: Institutional historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, Compositional diversity, Psychological climate, Behavioral climate, [and] Structural diversity" (p. 2333). Understanding each of these factors, as well as those previously mentioned, and how mentorship does or does not affect each one will be important to the present study.

Mentorship is an area that have been explored significantly, such as in Eller, Lev, and Feurer's (2013) qualitative study investigating the major components that allow mentorship to be used effectively. The study involved 117 participants across 12 universities in various parts of the United States (p. 816). The researchers discovered eight primary elements that are conducive to effective mentorship efforts between a mentor and their mentee. "These included (1) open communication and accessibility; (2) goals and challenges; (3) passion and inspiration; (4) caring personal relationship; (5) mutual respect and trust; (6) exchange of knowledge; (7) independence and collaboration; and (8) role modeling" (p. 816).

Yomtov, Plunkett, Efrat, and Marin (2015) explored the success of mentorship as it applies to first-year students using a quasi-experimental survey-design study. Surveying 19 students, the researchers discovered the participants cited a better social experience in the academic institution versus those students who did not participate in mentorship programs or efforts. The students who participated in the mentorship efforts noted feeling more connected to the institution, including interactions with various activities and generally assimilating with the educational environment in the institution (p. 32).

Background, Context, History and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

The Student Perspective

As the primary investigator, I sought to determine whether mentorship plays a role in any or all of the factors mentioned herein. If so, it is also important to determine the level to which mentorship affects each factor. Academic achievement in the higher education field is an area that has seen a wealth of literature attempting to determine the factors that contribute to academic achievement, the methods faculty and staff use to facilitate achievement, and the results of said methods. Considerable literature also exists presenting the factors that go beyond

the educational setting into the personal setting. "Students who are connected to and experience successful integration into the academic and social systems of the institution are more satisfied with their college experiences and also experience gains in learning and personal development" (Quaye & Harper, 2014, p. 218). Mentorship within the educational setting that helps Black male students pursue their goal of completion in higher education can, in turn, benefit external goals outside of the educational setting.

Palmer and Maramba (2012) also pointed out that academic achievement requires students (regardless of race or gender) to be engaged with the communal space of the higher education environment. The environment in an educational facility, especially in higher education, is of the utmost importance in terms of academic engagement. The researchers used Schlossberg's theory to demonstrate the ways in which students in the higher education environment (particularly Black male students) feel a sense of marginalization in the academic environment. Through qualitative measures, the researchers also discovered what Black male students deemed important in support of their academic engagement. "The participants explained the importance of faculty moving beyond simply lecturing to engaging Black men in the classroom. They suggested that the classroom can be used as critical spaces for facilitating student learning, engagement, persistence, and retention" (p. 110). Without proper mentorship to help students acclimate themselves to an unfamiliar environment in higher education, students may feel lost while trying to navigate such an environment (Bagaka et al., 2015, p. 324).

Perception of faculty and staff in the higher education institution also plays a role in academic engagement and persistence for Black male students, as well. Harrison and Palacios (2012) demonstrated the importance of students' perceptions of faculty. The researchers focused on a theory devised by Harris and Wood known as the socioecological outcomes (SEO) model.

According to the SEO model, success for Black male students is, "attributable to four socioecological domains, including; the noncognitive domain (e.g., interpersonal outcomes, identity); academic domain (e.g., faculty-student engagement, service usage); environment domain (e.g., familial obligation, employment, life stress); and the campus ethos domain" (Harrison & Palacios, 2012, p. 136). According to the researchers, an encouraging environment and faculty are vital to the campus ethos, which, in turn, is vital to Black male students' engagement in the academic setting.

Stebleton and Soria (2012) discussed the difficulties that first-generation students often contend with, stating that first-generation students reported they did not contribute as often during discussions in the classroom, and they also interacted less with faculty in the classroom. As a result of the lack of contributions in class discussions, students also did not incorporate things they had picked up in other courses, which could reinforce concepts in the core course material. (p. 680). Although the current study does not relate to first-generation students in higher education, the results from the researchers' study are still relevant to students' perceptions in general.

The Mentor Perspective

The role of mentorship from the perspective of the mentors is also important to analyze. Current research explains mentorship. Campbell, Smith, and Dugan (2012) analyzed the role of mentorship from the perspective of setting a specific goal of social development in addition to academic development has more positive results as students continue through their academic careers and beyond completion. The researchers argued that when mentors worked to assist mentees with personal development, it played a much larger role in reinforcing skills that could

be used in positions of leadership (in and out of the academic environment) as opposed to mentorship specifically geared toward empowering and developing leadership skills specifically.

Similarly, Dweck (2015) found that mentorship also plays a significant role in shaping students' mindsets both academically and otherwise. The researcher found that a major factor in student motivation and academic achievement was significantly influenced by students' mindsets through their academic endeavors, and academic achievement and completion could be increased by positively affecting change for students in regard to their mindset (p. 24). The researcher contended a student's mindset (which the researcher referred to as a "growth mindset") focused on developing intelligence, versus simply focusing on reciting facts and figures and other memorization necessities, is much more conducive to a student's academic achievement and engagement. Much of Dweck's work regarding growth mindset has been in connection to K–12 education, however, "the benefits of growth mindset training have replicated with large samples of high school, community college, and university students across the United States who received as little as one or two online mindset sessions" (as cited in Rattan et al., 2015, p. 722). With regard to mentorship, faculty and staff must be adequately equipped to provide such mentorship that guides and aids in developing intelligence.

The role of the mentor also has a significant effect not only on student engagement with mentors and other mentees, but also with the institution itself. Holley and Caldwell (2011) analyzed the mentor/mentee relationship between doctoral students and their mentors, not all of whom were faculty members, but other students who were in a more advanced position than their mentees. Regarding the faculty mentors, the researchers noted, "A consistent factor across academic disciplines, institutions, and individual demographics is the interaction between the individual student and faculty member" (p. 245).

In terms of mentee relationships with student mentors within the mentoring program, the researchers found interactions between students occurred through both mentor/mentee relationships, and the mentoring program also allowed students to learn from one another academically without the use of mentoring as well (p. 253). Although the researchers focused solely on graduate students, the study demonstrates a significant factor regarding the role of mentorship in general in the higher education setting.

Conceptual Framework: Social Capital Theory

The primary theory that guided this qualitative case study was that of social capital theory, which was used as a backdrop to determine faculty and staff and Black male student perspectives on mentorship for Black male students. Griffin (2013) presented the most significant discussion on social capital theory (referred to as social exchange theory), discussing the perspectives of Black professors regarding the social exchanges that occur stemming from their efforts to engage with and support Black students in higher education (pp. 176–179).

In relation to mentorship, social capital plays an integral role in students' academic and non-academic endeavors as:

(a) social networks determine the availability of mentors and the formation of mentoring relationships, (b) individuals other than mentors and mentees influence mentoring relationships, (c) mentoring has effects on relationships outside the match, and (d) mentoring can expand social network structures. (Deutsch et al., 2013, p. 131)

Social capital theory provides a lens by which to analyze how students and faculty members view current mentorship efforts for Black male students, specifically incorporating reciprocity between students and faculty in the institution. Therefore, rather than discussing deficits that either students or the institution may have, analysis of student and faculty and staff

perspectives will present insight into the perceptions of mentorship on academic achievement and persistence for Black male students in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Trends in academic statistics show a decline in enrollment, academic achievement, and program completion for Black male students in higher education. Currently, research has indicated a significant decline of Black student enrollments and an equally significant difference in the graduation rates of first-time, full-time Black male students graduating between four and six years after starting at a 4-year postsecondary institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

According to data on educational attainment obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), from a population of approximately 14 million Black male students aged 18 and over, about 1.8 million Black male students obtained a bachelor's degree, which accounts for about 12.8% of the total Black male student population aged 18 or over across all levels of educational attainment (primary to postsecondary education). Educational attainment for master's degrees, professional degrees, and doctoral degrees accounts for a combined total of approximately 871,000 Black male students aged 18 or over (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Several factors affect academic engagement, persistence, and achievement, including: the academic and social environment of the institution, interactions with faculty and staff, peer-to-peer interactions, self-awareness, and confidence, among other factors. From a qualitative perspective, Salnave (2013) investigated the factors that contribute to academic achievement and persistence for Black male students in predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The researcher posited connections between academic persistence and completion and several factors including:

support from family and their community, institutional policies, faculty makeup, the high school to college transition, support groups for Black males, and instructional techniques (pp. 161–162).

Gordon (2018) utilized a qualitative case study to explore the factors that affect the success of marginalized students in their first two years in the higher education setting (p. 43). The study revolved around surveying 15 students with a sense of marginalization and, according to the findings in the study, the researcher discovered that 91% of the research participants noted that one of their primary issues in entering the postsecondary setting from the secondary education setting was a lack of "formal and useful mentorship" to aid and guide them in making the switch between the two educational settings (p. 74). Furthermore, according to the findings, only 9% of the students who participated in the study deemed the mentorship efforts that were provided for them as sufficient in providing the proper level of guidance that the students required in their educational endeavors (p. 74).

In a quantitative statistical analysis, Reid (2013) investigated the connection between perceptions of racial identity, self-efficacy, institutional integration, and academic achievement for African American male students in PWIs (p. 79). The researcher used a combination of survey methods to test the hypothesis regarding the aforementioned connection (pp. 79–80). According to the researcher's findings, institutional integration and self-efficacy were the two primary connectors that played a significant role in affecting academic achievement for African American male students (p. 81). This study specifically revolves around mentorship and its role in fostering an environment that facilitates academic engagement, persistence, and achievement for Black male students and the role that mentorship plays in supporting the aforementioned factors (and others) of engagement, persistence, and achievement.

Purpose and Description of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceptions from faculty and staff and Black male students of mentorship for Black male students at the university level. The study was developed incorporating a qualitative case study design with questionnaire and interview methodologies to collect data. For the purposes of data analysis, an in-depth inductive analysis was used to analyze the data.

According to Yin (2018), a case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 15). The case and real-world context this study will investigate pertain to the perceptions of both students and faculty and staff members of mentorship and its effects on academic engagement, persistence, and completion for Black male students. Using interviews and questionnaires specifically targeted to Black male students as well as faculty and staff at the institution, information gleaned will aid in understanding the effects of mentorship from the perspectives of the interviewees. According to Devlin and McKay (2014), in order to develop and support students, faculty must take the time to get to know and understand the students in the institution, including such details as their learning styles, the needs of each student, and the strengths and weaknesses that each student possesses in order to facilitate an environment to address them (p. 106). This study follows this train of thought and is designed to learn students' needs with regard to learning styles and preferences as well as their stance regarding current mentorship efforts and the types of mentorship efforts they deem beneficial for the academic endeavors of Black male students in the higher education setting.

Research Question

One primary question guides the research in this study:

1. What are Black male students' and faculty/staff members' perceptions of mentorship as it relates to academic achievement and persistence for Black students?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is two-fold in that it explores the perspectives of Black male students regarding the role of mentorship and its effects on their academic careers and addresses the perceptions of mentorship and its effects from the faculty and staff members responsible for providing such mentorship. In order to explore a possible link between the perceptions of mentorship, exploring the effects of the lack of mentorship on academic persistence and engagement will help to demonstrate a negative correlation. "Negligence in fostering the necessary conditions for engagement and the infrequency of collective efforts to study and craft strategic responses to factors that compel Black men's detachment from the educational experience have been inadequately considered" (Quaye & Harper, 2014, p. 60).

Additionally, the methods for engagement of Black male students in the higher education setting is a key area to explore. "The importance of partnerships was identified as a core institutional responsibility in the CAO [context, actions, outcomes] model. Specifically, partnerships that foster college preparedness and fluid transitions between institutions were extolled" (Wood & Palmer, 2015, p. 81). Wood and Palmer (2015) discussed the topic of preparing students during their secondary education and therefore bridging the gap of preparedness between secondary and entry into postsecondary education. This study could serve as a continuation, furthering analysis of student experiences upon entry into higher education.

Exploring the emergence of Black male student perspectives on mentorship and instruction from faculty members is another area the research in this review illuminated. Specifically, "in addition to needing academic instruction from Black male teachers, the respondents [in this qualitative study] believed that more Black male teachers would provide additional opportunities for mentorship and guidance" (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013, p. 292). Although the present study was not delimited specifically to Black faculty or staff members, the results, as discussed in a later chapter, correlate and confirm these findings.

The present study discusses Black male students in higher education versus students in secondary education. The information obtained from the qualitative responses from the interviewees in this study can help educators, faculty members, and staff in universities develop programs and other efforts to focus on mentorship for Black male students. This study can also bridge a gap in current literature regarding Black male students and mentorship from faculty and staff in higher education.

Given the lack of discussion regarding the role of mentorship as it relates to the factors contributing to academic engagement, persistence, and achievement, this study adds a significant layer to the discussion and seeks to determine the importance of mentorship in the academic endeavors of Black male students in higher education. Resiliency against negative stereotypes and against disadvantages such as socioeconomic standing and the resulting social disadvantages are another area of research uncovered during this literature review. "Resilience studies offer the opportunity to elicit the voices of Black men themselves to provide explanations of how they might navigate adversity in a specific cultural context" (Kim & Hargrove, 2013, p. 306). While this study did take resilience into account in analyzing Black male student persistence and success, the study also analyzed how mentorship can bolster such resilience or, in some cases,

possibly negate its necessity by way of a positive educational environment wherein the stressors of disadvantages and negative stereotyping have been either greatly diminished or entirely eradicated.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used heavily throughout this study, and therefore require definitions to delineate their usage in this report:

Academic engagement: According to The Glossary of Education Reform (2016), academic engagement is defined as, "the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" (p. 1).

Academic persistence: The definition of academic persistence utilized herein aligns with the definition presented by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. "Persistence is defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any institution" (2015, p. 1).

Cultural capital: Cultural capital is defined as, "'cultural competences', which can be embodied (internalized and intangible), objectified (cultural products), and institutionalized (officially accredited)" (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 195).

Social exchange: Social exchange, and social exchange theory, is defined as, "individuals interact over time, they experience the need to reciprocate the support and assistance of the other person" (Moss, 2016, p. 1).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The development of this study included two primary assumptions regarding the population sample involved in this study. The first assumption was that all students participating

in the study had substantially been made aware of any and all mentorship efforts currently in effect at the institution. Because the study focused on the role that mentorship plays in supporting Black male students' academic achievement, persistence, and engagement, it was important that participating students in this study were aware of, and have, to some degree, made use of mentorship efforts available to them. Previous research into the institution demonstrates mentorship efforts for students (regardless of race) do exist; therefore, there were no assumptions pertaining to the existence of mentorship efforts in the institution, as this was already a known fact.

However, the second assumption made for this study pertained to the faculty and staff's awareness of the mentorship efforts in the institution. While students may not necessarily be made aware of mentorship efforts, it is vital for faculty and staff members to be aware of mentorship efforts should they interact with students who could benefit from said mentorship. Because faculty and staff members often serve as mentors for students, it is important that faculty and staff members in the particular institution involved in this study be aware of the mentorship efforts available to the students they serve.

Limitations

Limitations of the study design will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this report. In terms of general limitations, one of the primary limitations for this study was the time constraints regarding obtaining the proper data during data collection in the interview process. Similarly, the analysis of the resulting data was also significantly affected by the time constraints for this study. The small sample size in the participants of this study, as well as personal bias given my position as a Black male student and a former educator, could have also significantly affected the validity and reliability of this study. However, to counteract both of these

limitations, I limited the study to a small sample set and, as will be discussed later, chose to use member checking and triangulation to bolster analysis during the data analysis procedures.

Delimitations

I chose to specifically delimit this study to Black male students. Much of the extant literature focuses on Black students—both male and female—who have left postsecondary education without completion. Similarly, much literature exists pertaining to Black students (regardless of gender) just prior to entering postsecondary education. As mentioned, this study was delimited to a small sample set of five students and five faculty and staff members at a Texas-based higher education institute. This delimitation was used primarily to allow for accurate and in-depth analysis of responses in interviews and questionnaire responses given time constraints.

Chapter 1 Summary

Current trends in higher education for Black male students show a decline in enrollment and completion. Literature discussing the statistics presents a variety of potential causes for the decline. However, the persistence of the decline in academic endeavors for Black male students demonstrates an inability to alleviate the decline. This chapter developed the background to the problem and the research questions this study was designed to answer. This chapter also presented a discussion of the purpose and design of the study, including the theoretical framework that guided it, a definition of the terms used throughout, and the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations that further defined the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Entering the university, as with any other life change, brings various challenges, especially for new students. For that reason, it is extremely important to provide those students with mentorship and guidance to ensure an impactful and effectual transition into the university setting. This study focused on the effects of mentorship from faculty and staff on Black male students' academic persistence and success in the university setting. This study was developed to explore the perceptions of mentorship among Black male students at the university level as they progress in their academic endeavors.

This literature review analyzes and discusses literature pertaining to the various influences and motivators of academic engagement and persistence in higher education, which ultimately lead Black male students toward academic achievement and completion of their chosen academic program. Heavy focus is placed on the perceptions of both students and faculty/staff toward each other and toward their specific relationships (e.g., mentor/mentee, teacher/student, authority figure/subordinate) as well as the factors that affect the level of engagement between faculty/staff and the students they are responsible for guiding. Social capital theory provides a lens by which not only to analyze how students and faculty/staff members view their roles in the mentor/mentee relationship, but also to shed light on their perceptions of current mentorship efforts for Black male students in the university setting. "Social capital theory posits that beneficial resources are embedded in a person's social network, and the value derived from a person's social network is called 'social capital'" (as cited in Aikens et al., 2016, p. 2). Analyzing mentorship and mentor/mentee relationships in terms of the social capital can "provide insights regarding the nature of support available to the mentee and the mentor, [and] the factors affecting development of the mentoring relationship" (Deutsch et

al., 2013, p. 129). Therefore, it is important to review any literature pertaining to both subjects to provide evidence demonstrating their connection to faculty and staff and Black male students' perceptions of mentorship.

Conceptual Framework

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has been widely discussed and presented in an array of applications such as business, politics, social and cognitive sciences, and economics. In a broad definition, "social capital implies that people well equipped with social resources—in the sense of their social network and the resources of others they can call upon—better succeed in attaining their goals" (Lancee, 2012, p. 17). Social capital can be directly linked to mentorship, as mentors can, "offer youth access to expanded social resources, human capital, and valued types of socialization and cultural practices" (Keller & Blakeslee, 2013, p. 176). However, little discussion and literature exist applying social capital theory to the field of education.

Griffin (2013) partially filled that gap using social exchange theory, which is a theory that argues that human interaction is solely based on a reciprocal return, as the framework for her discussion. The researcher provided a discussion of the perceived costs and benefits in the mentor/mentee relationship between Black professors and Black students in higher education. "When viewed through a social exchange framework, it can be assumed that Black faculty who work closely with Black students will experience both costs and benefits associated with their relationships" (Griffin, 2013, p. 170). Concepts such as "organizational recognition" and "loyalty of their mentees" are the types of benefits that faculty look for in their interactions with students in the educational field. By contrast, Griffin discovered some faculty members view a drain on

energy and time to work on outside research projects as costs in their interactions with students in the educational realm.

Reciprocal relationships between Black male students and faculty also show that some instructors negate reciprocal interactions due to negative perceptions of minority races as compared to nonminority races. Some teachers' perceptions of race and socioeconomic status come into play in their interactions with and treatment of students. Students living in a low socioeconomic status—particularly minority students, especially African American students— are viewed as lazy (Kenyatta, 2012, p. 39). Beyond the characteristics of race and socioeconomic status, previous quantitative research has also shown that a longer duration of a mentoring relationship has a greater effect (positively or negatively respective to the relationship duration) on students' GPAs (Gaddis, 2012, p. 1251). Furthermore, Moschetti and Hudley (2015) used a qualitative phenomenological approach to discuss the way social capital affects the educational experiences of working-class, first-generation White students in community college. The researchers found a lack of support from mentors and/or family members as well as strenuous social and economic concerns have a detrimental effect on students' academic performance and achievement.

Previous research also shows that trust plays a role in developing and maintaining social capital by way of reinforcing a desire for social engagement. In this instance, trust can revolve around people's relationships to their academic institutions, their communities, or families/friendships (Fuller, 2014, p. 23). Additionally, academic institutions function as both facilitators and enhancers of the capital that students seek and that which they bring with them when entering the institution. Furthermore, trust is an essential element in developing and maintaining social capital within the academic institution (Wimberly, 2013, pp. 39–40). The

researcher further suggested that the academic institution helps students develop human capital (i.e., knowledge, ability, and talent) and creates an environment where that human capital can further translate to social capital. "Schools' academic emphasis is part of the human capital which students can convert into social capital through their institutional connection to the school" (Wimberly, 2013, p. 44).

Research has also explored possible links between the influence and impact of academic preparedness programs and how they help students develop social or cultural capital in the institution. One such program is the Trinity Education for Excellence Program (TEEP) and its influence in helping students involved in the program to develop capital in the institution. According to the researchers, the program is, "a values-based program offering college preparatory programming that emphasizes capital development" (Sommerfeld & Bowen, 2013, p. 48). Further, 100% of the students that had been involved in the program completed a bachelor's program within five years of beginning. While the evidence in this explanatory case study cannot necessarily be representative of a larger group beyond that involved in the study, it is useful for exploring mentorship programs geared toward helping Black male students with academic endeavors.

Furthermore, research has also indicated social capital in an education setting, "pays off because, in addition to sorting and certifying America's young people, it adds value. In the nation's colleges and universities, students acquire new skills and new perspectives that make them better workers, life partners, and citizens" (Hout, 2012, p. 396). Although this quantitative study presents a different function of social capital in comparison to the current study, the purpose of incorporating it into this literature review was to present all the relevant angles demonstrating how social capital functions within the education setting.

The literature also establishes the role of social and cultural capital as an integral element in both deciding to and actively enrolling in higher education. Specifically, the steps that a student must take in order to enroll in higher education all function as a barrier to the student taking those steps toward higher education enrollment (Klasik, 2012, pp. 509–511). "By looking at each step in a consistent way, this study is able to identify clearly the relationship between race, family income, academic preparation, and step completion" (Klasik, 2012, p. 511). Klasik focused primarily on the intermittent stage between high school completion and postsecondary enrollment, which would be useful in examining the social capital that students currently enrolled in higher education carry with them upon entering the higher education setting.

Along the same lines of examining social and cultural capital in the higher education setting, students' social class and the social and cultural capital developed within that social class play a role in that "in comparison to executive, middle and subordinate class students, professional class students report higher levels of satisfaction with campus community, social life, coursework and quality of instruction" (Martin, 2012, p. 440). Martin also reported that "at highly selective, private universities, class background is associated with different expectations for and experiences with campus social life" and pointed out that upper social class students devote more attention to the social aspects of the higher education experience compared to middle- and lower-class students (p. 444).

In contrast to the student-centric analyses focusing on the social capital students either acquire or maintain during their higher education experiences, other researchers have analyzed the inherent landscape of the higher education setting itself. Changes in the overall higher education landscape have developed a barrier for students, especially those of lower-income levels, to enroll in and take full advantage of higher education. "Despite the promise of reduced

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costs, ubiquitous technology access, and competency-based degree programs to democratize

education, there remain open questions about the impact of the changing educational landscape

on African American college degree attainment" (Marks & Reid, 2013, p. 223).

Review of Research and Methodological Literature

Search Strategy

For this study, I focused specifically on the concept of mentorship and the effects

mentorship has on academic persistence, achievement, and success for Black male students in

higher education. Therefore, a vital element for the search strategy in this literature review was

to research and analyze the factors related to academic achievement, persistence, and success in

higher education. The search strategy also focused on the mentor/student relationship between

faculty and staff and students and how to develop and nurture positive perceptions from mentee

students. Social capital theory served as the backbone for exploring the perceptions of

mentorship that Black male students and faculty/staff held. I conducted the research using

Google Scholar, JSTOR, Google Books, as well as ProQuest. The keywords I chose to focus on

were *academic achievement*, *higher education faculty*, *higher education staff*, *Black male*

students, *higher education*, *academic persistence, mentorship*, *leadership*, *influence*, *social*

capital theory, *cultural competence*, and *cultural capital.*

Race and Perceptions

Throughout the literature analyzed for this review, a theme regarding the students'

perceptions of their academic environments and endeavors in relation to race emerged. This is

not only in relation to their own race, but also to that of the faculty and staff with whom they

consistently interact in their chosen academic environment. Race and perceptions of race play a

significant role in the academic engagement and persistence for Black students in higher education.

The subjective experiences from several Black students is an area the literature appears to go to great lengths to explore. In one particular study:

several students reported that they entered the learning environment with the attitude that because they shared a common racial background, they automatically were more trusting and comfortable when they were in classes taught by professors who were Black like them. (Tuitt, 2012, p. 192)

Tuitt's study brings into question whether or not Black male students would hold the same perceptions of their professors had they been of another race. Furthermore, Tuitt introduced the destructive nature of racial stereotypes that occur not only in the academic realm, but in the social sphere as well. Boyd (2017) presented a similar point in that, as result of current social, cultural, institutional, and even psychological constructs, this type of interaction emphasizing and perhaps even enforcing racial identity is deeply rooted (p. 8).

Racial stereotypes and racism in general dramatically affect Black male students' persistence and diminish the sense of welcoming that Black male students (and students in general) feel. Mentorship efforts for Black male students are necessary in order to subvert the racial stereotypes and the negative effects that Black male students may incur as result of said stereotypes.

This fact should not be taken lightly, yet should spur faculty-related trainings that incorporate cultural sensitivity and student-focused teaching approaches so those students who are under-represented in numbers within the class still feel welcomed, supported and inspired to pursue their academic endeavors. (Wendt, 2014, p. 80)

Howard (2013) used a phenomenological approach to analyze the current view in academic literature pertaining to the Black male experience in education. The hope was to enact a "paradigmatic shift" (p. 62) in the analyses and discussions of the Black male student experience.

> This shift is crucial to uncover how certain school cultures and pedagogical practices are able to engage these young men in the learning process in a manner that many practitioners and researchers do not believe are possible or are an aberration when it takes place. (p. 63)

Furthermore, current viewpoints and analyses of the Black male student experience focus only on the negative aspects of that experience, the social, academic, cultural, or economic deficiencies that Black male students must contend with in order to see success in education (p. 62). Similarly, through the methods in the current study, while focusing on the perceptions of mentorship, I also sought to deviate from the deficit model of viewing the Black male student experience in higher education. Instead, the intent of the current study was to demonstrate the effects of mentorship on academic persistence and success and, ultimately, completion in higher education.

Black male student achievement and success are also significant topics in the literature reviewed. Hotchkins and Dancy's (2015) "particular [qualitative case] study examined the intersection of the Black male identity as self-labeled 'student,' 'leader,' and 'high-achieving' to determine how participants constructed and enacted excellence" (p. 76) in a predominantly White institution. The researchers analyzed the responses of Black male students who were leaders in various student organizations. The purpose of the study was to analyze and understand how the perceptions from their White peers influence how Black male student leaders project

and amplify certain aspects of their identities and the ways they self-actualize aspects of their identities when met with racial, social, or intellectual perceptions and stereotypes (pp. 83–89). While I did not directly consider the perceptions of non-Black males or non-Black students as a whole in conducting the current study, I did acknowledge that racial, social, and intellectual perceptions might have some form of influence, which therefore makes this analysis relevant to my study.

Having support from various avenues within the campus, as well as academically engaging curriculum, is another factor that contributes to Black male students' satisfaction with their institutions, while interactions with faculty members may sometimes negatively affect satisfaction (Hauge-Palmer, 2013, pp. 78–79). Academic success was another area which aided student satisfaction as well. According to the researchers, academic success was further broken down into four smaller elements, of which two elements were found to be strongest among each (p. 81).

Turner's (2016) qualitative case study serves as an analysis of the perceptions of Black male students on their higher education experiences specific to students from one community college. The themes that resulted from analysis of the data in the study were: "(1) Campus Environment: Faculty, staff, class and support; (2) Persistence and graduation; (3) Academic Challenges; (4) Academic Successes; (5) Personal Challenges; (6) Personal Successes; (7) Inspiration: (personal, family, colleagues) and (8) Mentors – on and off campus" (p. 113). The researcher found generally positive perceptions of each student's experiences in the higher education experience. Given the researcher's inclusion not only of the element of mentorship, but also the focus on Black male students and their perceptions of their higher education

experience, this study was relevant for analysis in this literature review to explore other methods and findings that could be comparable to the current study.

Allen (2015) used a qualitative descriptive analysis to explore the factors both within the academic setting and externally, such as individual and community factors that contributed to low completion and high dropout rates from higher education for Black male students. The researcher focused on students from a college in the South (p. 75). The findings in the study demonstrated a majority of students cited a lack of experience in college life organizations (such as student organizations) and "data results indicated that an overwhelming majority of participants regretted their decision to drop out of college and thought of returning. However, participants did not identify how or when they might return" (Allen, 2015, p. 112). Overall, the researcher found that in order to maintain student retention, the particular students in this study cited support from the academic institution, their families, their community, and self-efficacy as factors contributing to possible retention in higher education. The results of this study were consistent with the expected findings of the current study, and therefore are relevant and useful as possible background to help support the current study.

Roscoe's (2015) descriptive study and analysis had similarities to the present study in that the researcher sought to analyze the role that academic advising and guidance in various areas play in enhancing student success in higher education for both African American and Latino students in higher education. According to the researcher, by implementing more effective academic advising for these students, educational institutions, "can implement certain strategies to help African and Latino students succeed in college" (pp. 56–57). The researcher argued that incorporating effective academic advising can help develop role models for students while on campus, increase social integration, ease low self-esteem, and help develop stronger

academic skills and overall education. Given the significant similarities to the current study,

Roscoe's study was relevant to explore as it applies to employing academic assistance from

faculty and/or staff of a given institution and determining its role in increasing academic success

and persistence in higher education.

Cultural Competence and Cultural Capital

While analyzing the literature for this review, as was shown earlier in this chapter, a

common theme that arose in relation to social capital and social capital theory is the concept of

cultural capital and cultural competence. Through the present study, I attempted to reconcile the

concepts of cultural competence and cultural capital with that of social capital to determine how

each type of capital is employed throughout the mentor-mentee relationship between Black male

students and faculty/staff members of the participating institution.

Many mentorship programs have been developed with the goal of helping students

develop social and cultural capital to facilitate their persistence and success in academic

endeavors. One such program is the Trinity Education for Excellence Program (TEEP;

Sommerfeld et al., 2013, p. 47). TEEP was developed to engage African American youth to

inspire college-bound preparedness and persistence. "In their roles as counselors, high school

students promote the establishment of TEEP values, behavioral expectations, and college

aspirations. Once graduated, alumni continue their mentorship, returning to visit TEEP" (p. 51).

Nichols's et al. (2013), in a qualitative case study, used a purposeful sample of 15 faculty

members at a Midwest faith-based university to explore the how faculty defined and helped

facilitate cultural competence in the institution. A portion of the 15 participants in the study had

been educators in the area of cultural competence. "The participants talked about awareness,

respect, knowledge and skills, power, understanding and acceptance, language often found in

definitions of cultural competency and language that supports the definition given by Rivera et al." (Nichols, 2013, p. 102). The conceptual definition that the researcher used related to maintaining an open and understanding mindset toward groups from differing cultures, that is, differing race, gender, ethnicity, and those with differing values. The findings in relation to how faculty members defined cultural competence was useful for this study in determining whether or not the faculty members involved in the present study define cultural competence in the same manner.

Merida (2016) used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the way staff— particularly administrators—approach the challenges of cultural competence in order to maintain diversity within the institution. Three universities and 10 administrative-level staff members were involved in Merida's study. Similar to Nichols (2013), Merida (2016) sought to first develop a functional definition which the participants shared in common. However, the definitions that the participants in the study shared were "similar but varying" among one another either within or across institutions (p. 75). In summation, campus administrators from the participating institutions comprehended that, "while an office of diversity or office of multicultural affairs may be a resource for guidance, it is the responsibility of everyone at all levels of administration to satisfy the needs of the students and campus community" (p. 78).

Harper (2018) developed a comparative, quasi-experimental, quantitative research design to investigate how cultural competence develops within higher education institutions by way of the educational approaches used (p. 31). The researcher used various survey methods as well as the Cultural Intelligence Scale as the primary method of data collection (pp. 39–40). The study was developed to determine whether a set of instructional approaches served to develop cultural competence for the students involved in each of the courses. The researcher's findings

determined there was a "statistically significant" difference in students' cultural competence when comparing the level of cultural competence prior to and following each instructional approach. Further, "the addition of an enhanced study abroad program following the introductory classroom-based instruction showed evidence of additional increases in CQS scores" (p. 69). This study presented noteworthy evidence demonstrating the impact of cultural competence in the classroom and how it can impact students' educational development. The study will be useful in developing comparisons to previous literature compared to the results of the present study.

Current instructional methods and institutional praxes indirectly develop environments that influence students of various cultures to disconnect from their cultural backgrounds and communities in order to maintain a successful academic endeavor (Jayakumar & Allen, 2013, p. 557). "While students received some cultural capital from their high school context, the community program served to value, leverage, and nurture community cultural wealth" (Jayakumar & Allen, 2013, p. 568). This study highlighted not only the impact of cultural competence for faculty and students in a given institution, but also serves as a basis for comparison with the present study in terms of determining whether mentorship from nonfaculty (i.e., staff members) at a given institute have the same impact in terms of facilitating and supporting cultural competence and cultural capital.

Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, and Sriken (2014) used a mixed methods survey design to investigate the impact of racial discrimination toward college students of various cultures and races by way of what the researchers refer to as racial microaggressions (p. 462). The researchers used two quantitative scales—the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale—to explore the effect of racial microaggressions on 225 undergraduate students (p. 466). The findings of the study revealed a negative relationship exists between the

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frequency that racial microaggressions are experienced and the level of self-esteem that the participants sensed (p. 468). Furthermore, self-esteem was also negatively affected, "when they concurrently experience (a) microaggressions where they were treated like second-class citizens or criminals and (b) microaggressions that occur in school and workplace settings" (p. 468). This study is similar to that of Pittman (2012), which will be discussed later in this literature review, further emphasizing the importance of cultural competence and its effects in altering negative associations and perceptions of differing cultures and races.

Kruse, Rakha, and Calderone (2018) used an explanatory design by way of reviewing literature to demonstrate a lack of cohesion and discussion regarding the methods that educational institutions use in fostering and supporting cultural competence. "Simply put, it is not that colleges and universities have failed to respond to the changing tensions they face, they have responded in uncoordinated and clumsy ways" (p. 736). Contrary to Harper (2018) and comparable to Jayakumar and Allen (2013), the findings of Kruse et al. (2018) showed that although current efforts from college and university faculty and staff are a step in the right direction in facilitating cultural competence, current efforts are still inadequate, "to support sustained and successful effort" maintaining cultural competence in higher education (p. 745). The findings from Kruse et al. are important to the present study as they serve as a point of comparison in the negative in terms of the development and facilitation of cultural competence and cultural capital for Black students.

Factors of Persistence

Numerous researchers in the higher education field (Boyd, 2017; Davis, Nagle, Richards, & Awokoya, 2013; Flores & Park, 2013; Harper, 2012; Hope, Chavous, Jagers, & Sellers, 2013; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Wood, 2012) have attempted to determine the factors that contribute to

academic achievement, the methods faculty use to facilitate achievement, and the results of these methods. Much literature also exists presenting information regarding the external (environmental) factors that contribute to academic achievement for students in higher education. Factors such as childhood development, family relationships, and psychological factors have all been analyzed and discussed at length. Additionally, researchers have studied academic achievement from several angles including creating subsets of study participants based on race, gender, socioeconomic background, and several other factors. Mentorship can play a significant role in reinforcing student persistence. "Benefits [of mentorship] appear to hold for undergraduate students on the whole as well as for students who have been traditionally underserved in higher education and for students who remain underrepresented in particular academic fields (e.g., STEM)" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 44).

One specific factor that affects persistence and retention for Black male students pertains to the development and fulfillment of personal goals. Wood and Palmer's (2014) explanatory monograph indicates goals do not strictly revolve around the academic domain, but amongst others as well, including social, spiritual, economic, and others (Wood & Palmer, 2014, p. 223). The factor of goal development and fulfillment has, within itself, other factors that promote goal development and fulfillment, namely social integration, organizational involvement, and engagement with faculty (Simmons, 2013, p. 62).

Hope, Chavous, Jagers, and Sellers (2013) used a person-oriented statistical analysis and identified, "four distinct profiles of self-esteem and achievement among Black college students as they entered college [which are the] High Self-Esteem/ High Achiever and Low Self-Esteem/Low Achiever clusters [and] High Self-Esteem/Low Achiever and Low Self-Esteem/High Achiever clusters" (pp. 1141–1142). In each cluster, data the researchers analyzed

indicated at least a partial correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement. Wendt (2014) further added that minority male students who move through their academic endeavors without some form of academic counseling lack the necessary academic direction and lose sight of expectations regarding their academic progress. Thus, social and interpersonal environments in the higher education realm are also a significant factor that can either help or hinder academic achievement and persistence for Black students. The environment in an educational facility (be it higher education or otherwise) is of the utmost importance because if a student does not feel welcome or cared for in said institution, it is likely that their performance will fall.

In a qualitative case study, Palmer and Maramba (2012) identified two themes that run through the participants' responses; the first is "authentic caring," which refers to "consistently displaying interest and concern for Black men's well-being and success in college" (p. 104), and the authors claimed it can be measured when faculty check in with students periodically. The second theme is out-of-class engagement, which refers to facilitating student activities and engagement with faculty outside of the university setting. The social and interpersonal engagement not only pertains to Black male students interacting with their fellow students, but also with faculty at their chosen academic institution. "The chance for persistence is more likely when African American students connect with African American faculty. These faculty members are uniquely positioned to serve as role models" (Simmons, 2013, p. 63). While Simmons focused solely on African American students, the same is true for other minority students as well.

In a qualitative case study analyzed in this literature review, Dickens (2012) explored the perceptions of Black male students regarding the factors that contributed to their academic persistence in higher education. Findings indicated academic persistence for the participants in

the study was most significantly influenced by involvement from family members in support of the students' academic endeavors, and the extent to which each student prioritized their educational attainment in connection with individual goals (pp. 144–145). The aspect of community and family involvement in support of academic goals and endeavors were incorporated into the current study, making the results of Dickens's study relevant.

In a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study, Phillips (2016) explored the factors of persistence from the perspectives of nontraditional Black male students from Bible colleges in the Southeastern United States (p. 98). "In the analyses of the data persistence factors were formalized into five themes that became apparent throughout the narratives and transcriptions" (p. 134). Participants in the study cited their overall experience at a Bible College, spiritual growth and development within the Christian faith, and support from family and church community members.

Student Engagement

Engagement in higher education begins with first acclimating oneself to the new social, academic, and personal environment. As students become more acclimated to their environment and start to feel as though they fit in, they begin to take in more experiences and more opportunities in the educational field. Soria and Stebleton (2012) highlighted the importance of both student engagement as well as social capital in relation to mentorship particularly with first-generation students, pointing out that, "as a consequence of lacking social capital at a large institution, first-generation students may lose opportunities to develop supportive mentoring relationships with faculty, and they may become less engaged in their overall academic pursuits" (p. 675).

Using data obtained through interviews with four student affairs members in a qualitative case study (Palmer & Maramba, 2012, p. 101), two primary factors conducive to facilitating and enriching the sense of fitting in for Black male students pertain to authentic caring and out-of-class engagement. The element of authentic caring "signifies the emphasis the participants placed on faculty and administrators demonstrating authentic concern for students by forming mentor relationships with them, listening, and displaying concern for their in-class and out-of-class experiences" (Palmer & Maramba, 2012, p. 104). The second factor, out-of-class engagement, refers to facilitating student activities and engagement with faculty outside of the university setting. Simmons (2013) explored the benefits of student organizations and overall networking within the academic setting in connection with academic engagement and persistence for Black students in college. "Sustained levels of involvement and networking can stimulate African American men to successfully negotiate their higher education environments and persist toward a college degree" (Simmons, 2013, p. 63). Black male students' perceptions of their institutions are also significantly affected by their levels of comfort and overall enjoyment of the social and academic activities in the university. "When faculty members create conditions where students feel welcome to engage in the class by asking questions, responding to queries, and inquiring about their progress, then students will engage with faculty" (Harrison & Palacios, 2014, p. 141).

Yearwood and Jones (2012) provided a quantitative analysis on student engagement. Using a cross-sectional design with survey data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; p. 101), the researchers analyzed five different variables of student engagement in higher education. The five variables were as follows: "level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational

experiences, and supportive campus environment" (p. 115). Furthermore, fraternity and sorority members are primarily engaged in connection with the categories of academic and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and enriching educational experiences. Additionally, interactions with faculty facilitate higher engagement with regard to active and collaborative learning, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environments (p. 117).

Similarly, Harris, Hines, Kelly, Williams and Bagley (2014) used a thematic analysis in a qualitative case study to break down factors of engagement into categories as they analyzed academic engagement for Black male student-athletes in high school. "Behavioral engagement, academic engagement, cognitive engagement, parental engagement, and educator involvement" all play a role in relation to academic engagement for high school student-athletes (pp. 182–183).

Student Retention and Student Completion

A byproduct of student engagement that require analysis, particularly in this study, are the factors of student retention and student completion. "Mentored college students are also more inclined to mentor other students themselves; persist to degree completion; and report higher educational aspirations, greater academic achievement, and more personal development" (Johnson, 2015, p. 139). In this section, I discuss the literature that often connects these two factors and demonstrates the influence that one (student retention) has on the other (student completion). Upon analysis of the extant research on student retention and completion, many researchers have presented evidence demonstrating a sequential connection, that is, student retention often results in student completion.

Current research also connects student retention and completion to academic achievement. Snowden and Hardy (2012) used an ethnographic case study to explore this connection as they analyzed a possible connection between student achievement and peer

mentorship of first-year students from third-year students within the same institution. "Mentored students achieved on average nine more percentage points than those without a mentor" (p. 80). Furthermore, the academic achievement attained due to the peer mentoring resulted in 100% retention of students who had participated in the mentorship program discussed in the study.

Other existing research on student retention and completion connects retention and completion to factors that contribute to student motivation through their academic endeavors. Petty (2014) explored this particular line of analysis as it pertains to first-generation students. Petty used Maslow's hierarchy of needs in a qualitative literature review to analyze the needs of first-generation students that would contribute to successful academic achievement. "The needs are based on internal states of mind that cause individuals to have certain attitudes and behaviors to satisfy their needs. Specifically, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization are linked to the barriers of first-generation students" (Petty, 2014, p. 260).

Essack (2012) established yet another angle of analysis regarding student retention and completion, namely the role of the institution in facilitating and aiding access to education and, in turn, academic retention and completion. The researcher delved into pre- and postadmission of African students in higher education, highlighting the need for equal access to education as well as significant student support strategies that could aid in academic achievement and retention. Furthermore, mentorship efforts from faculty:

> who are considered realistic role models, who provide inclusive academic and personal advice, who monitor academic progress, who display sympathy and empathy and who play an affirming and advocacy role in terms of each student's unique academic, career and personal issues. (Essack, 2012, p. 58)

Grillo and Leist (2014) further explored the importance of academic support in order to facilitate and reinforce student retention and completion. A statistically significant correlation existed between an increased number of tutoring hours and an increased cumulative GPA. "Likewise, the path from Mean Cumulative GPA, which is the mediator, to Graduated is also statistically significant and exhibits a positive association" (p. 400).

Wilson et al. (2012) demonstrated the benefits of STEM curricula in connection with graduation rates for undergraduate students:

> The six-year graduation rate of students who entered STEM curricula as freshmen and continued through to BS degree attainment (in a STEM field) ranged from 32 to 35% per year and the graduation rates for African American students, the largest minority group at LSU, ranged from 19.2 to 23.5%. (p. 152)

Faculty and Staff Involvement

This section will demonstrate that existing literature presents evidence indicating the importance of faculty/staff involvement with students' academic endeavors and the benefits to be had from such engagement. In relation to mentorship:

> excellent mentoring, and in particular, student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom, is associated with academic achievement and persistence in college. When college freshmen are actively engaged by faculty, they are more likely to return for the sophomore year and are more likely thereafter to persist until graduation. (Johnson, 2015, p. 7)

Quaye and Harper (2014) emphasized the importance of faculty interaction with students, particularly in relation to student athletes. "Faculty interaction both inside and outside the classroom is an important form of engagement for student athletes and should be highly

encouraged" (p. 217). However, students with disabilities did not always find a connection in relation to faculty interaction being pertinent to their success (p. 192). While the two groups of students are obviously different, this brings into question the effects of faculty and staff engagement in connection with student engagement, which the current study will address in connection with mentorship.

Differences between students who interact with faculty mentors compared to students who interact with student affairs mentors also play a role in the level to which faculty and staff are involved in student academic affairs. "Faculty who want to instill socially responsible leadership in their mentees should be trained on how to encourage personal development for student mentees" (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012, p. 617). Students' desire for personal development is a significant factor in student/faculty interaction, and the research suggests faculty mentors who desire to aid in personal development for their students should undergo training to properly facilitate this type of development.

Smith (2016) modernized the discussion of the student-faculty interaction discussions, demonstrating ways the student-faculty relationship has changed with the advent of technology. "scholars of teaching and learning have identified ways that faculty can use these media to meet students where they are and to facilitate contact that they might not otherwise have had" (pp. 555–556). These new channels of faculty-student interaction have allowed privileged students to develop strategies for redefining interactions with faculty in their institutions to facilitate academic achievement in their chosen academic programs.

Lambert, Rocconi, Ribera, Miller, and Dong (2012) demonstrated a more traditional form of the faculty-student relationship, as they analyzed two primary elements in that relationship.

The more involved faculty members, who put effort not only into their methods of

instruction through focus on teaching clarity, but who also incorporate good faculty

practices such as a concern for active participation and positive atmosphere are related to

student successes like higher GPA and persistence from the first into the second year. (p.

14)

The researchers showed the importance not only of the academic endeavors of students, but also

the social endeavors that students often seek in the academic environment.

Much like the mentorship efforts (which will be discussed later in this chapter)

sometimes incorporate social exchange in the interactions between the mentors and the mentees,

Cook-Sather (2014) demonstrated how faculty-student interactions not revolving around

mentorship can also carry social exchange elements as well. "'If faculty can recognize students

as differently situated knowers with insights to share as partners in exploration but not ultimate

authorities', they can experience a fundamental shift in how they perceive the contributions of

students" (as cited in Clark, 2018, p. 89).

Thus, an essential element in the faculty-student relationship is the faculty/staff member

having been equipped with pertinent strategies and information with regard to learning styles and

general personality. Having this prior knowledge will allow for faculty and staff to find easier

modes of facilitating positive interactions with students, and therefore engage students much

more significantly, therefore leading to academic achievement for students in the given

educational institution.

DeFreitas and Bravo (2012) explored relationships between mentorship and faculty

involvement and academic achievement for African American and Latino students in higher

education in a quantitative survey study. "Involvement with faculty was related to better

academic achievement in African American and Latino college students. In addition, that relationship was partially explained by higher self-efficacy. However, mentoring was not predictive of academic achievement" (p. 6).

In a quantitative survey design, Kim and Sax (2014) researched the effects of student-faculty interactions based on conditions specific to various groups and situations. One such example the researchers pointed out was related to student-faculty interactions outside of the academic environment as well as student-faculty interactions wherein the students challenged faculty members in an academic setting (p. 798). These particular results are pertinent to the present study as faculty and staff involvement is a significant element and area of analysis in the study.

Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2013) explored the effects of retention programs on African American male students during their 1st year of college. In the mixed methods design using qualitative interviews and quantitative measures, African American students cited "stronger relationships with mentors, better university academic acculturation, and improved social integration into the university community" in connection to the freshman retention program the students participated in (p. 217). These results demonstrated the positive effects of mentorship via retention programs for the specific subgroup of students analyzed. This study is yet another that can be incorporated as background against which the results of the present study can be analyzed.

Shabazz's (2015) qualitative phenomenological study revolved around male and female African American students and analyzed various elements including interactions with faculty and staff in relation to persistence toward degree completion. The specific population involved in the study were male and female African American students with partial completion (12–90 credit

hours) for an associates or bachelor's degree. In one particular example, the researcher noted that the African American male student respondents cited persistence occurred in relation to interactions with faculty/staff members as well as the cultural capital that the student acquired while attending the institution and their involvement and integration with the institution. This study seems to present positive evidence in the relationship between faculty/staff and student involvement and academic persistence and success for Black male students, which will be a useful finding to apply comparisons to the findings in the present study regarding the same element.

A quantitative longitudinal study from Fuentes, Alvarado, Berdan, and DeAngelo (2014) theorized that when students interact with faculty and/or staff within the 1st year of entering the higher education setting, it allows the student to develop an understanding of how to connect with faculty in a mentor-mentee relationship by the time the students enter their senior year in the same institution (p. 292). The findings in this study confirmed said hypothesis as well as demonstrated that African American/Black students had "significantly higher . . . levels of faculty contact and communication during the first year of college" (pp. 297–298). The findings in this study linked to both mentorship relationships and faculty/staff-student interactions will be important in applying to the analysis of the perceptions of faculty/staff-student interactions from the participants in the present study, thus making this particular study important for this literature review.

The Role of and Necessity for Mentorship

Much literature exists pertaining to the role mentorship plays in the educational experience for students in general but, more specifically, for Black students. According to the various literature that exists, mentorship and its benefits vary depending on the educational area

in which it is used. Lacy and Copeland (2013) sought to determine the role of mentorship and its benefits to students pursuing a career in librarianship. They sought to answer a variety of questions involving the role of mentorship, including, "What kind of education does a mentorship program provide? What do students need to know in order to feel prepared for a career in librarianship? In what ways do practicing librarians benefit from mentoring LIS students" (p. 138). However, the mentor/mentee relationship is not necessarily specific to the faculty/student relationship but could also occur between fellow students as well. "Educators should provide. . .periodic forums comprised of students of color provide a space for students to develop and sustain relationships with students across multiple disciplines" (Quaye & Harper, 2014, p. 27).

Kendricks et al. (2013) developed a very strong argument demonstrating the connection between academic achievement and mentorship. Their study sought to "evaluate the effectiveness" of the Benjamin Banneker Scholars Program at Central State University, a historically Black university (HBCU) in Ohio (p. 42). The researchers analyzed the program itself, the environment of the university, and the student and faculty/staff perceptions of both (program and environment) as they pertained to student academic achievement.

> Student surveys on effectiveness of faculty mentoring showed strong correlation between academic success of scholars and their degree of acceptance of mentoring as a positive experience in their learning. This study reinforces the notion that good mentoring can lead to academic success. (p. 42)

Kim and Hargrove (2013) demonstrated yet another aspect in Black students' social and academic sphere that is ultimately enriched by mentorship. "[Black students] revealed that their talents were recognized at an early age and nurtured by a mentor, often beginning in elementary

school and persisting through postsecondary education, a factor that assisted in the cultivation of self-efficacy" (p. 303). Thus, according to Kim and Hargrove, mentorship not only presents positive influences on Black students' academic endeavors, but also aids in developing a sense of self-efficacy in a general sense.

Quantitative data also exist demonstrating, in a statistical form, the importance of mentorship and the role it plays for Black students, including Black male students:

Data indicate that mean values varied at a statistically significant level between successful Black students who interacted with faculty often and those who did not regarding the Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Supportive Campus Environment, and Enriching Educational Experience scales. (Yearwood & Jones, 2012, p. 115)

Yearwood and Jones found that students who interacted with faculty frequently developed a more engaging experience in their academic endeavors. Thus, even at a statistical level, the importance of mentorship for Black students is noticeable. Furthermore, Fountaine (2012) presented additional quantitative data derived from qualitative responses demonstrating a strong connection between faculty/student engagement and academic achievement for Black students at HBCUs. Fountaine developed seven variables by which questionnaire respondents indicated their level of engagement with specific faculty members based on their academic endeavors (e.g., faculty chairs for their doctoral studies).

The relevant data from the study pertain to, as Fountaine (2012) termed it, internal engagement, which is engagement between faculty and students throughout said students' doctoral academic endeavors. Fountaine's data demonstrated a strong connection between faculty/student engagement and academic achievement. "The majority, 62.2%, of respondents

revealed having high levels of internal interaction with faculty. Fewer than 11% indicated low

levels of internal engagement, while 23.8% reported neither high nor low levels of internal

involvement with faculty" (p,140). Fountaine's data pertain specifically to doctoral students at

the selected HBCU; however, as Fountaine suggested, the data originally applied to

undergraduate students as well.

Types of Mentorship

The type of mentorship that students receive is equally as important as whether or not

students receive mentorship at all. In order to delve into the types of mentorship available to both

students and faculty/staff, however, it is important to develop a broad definition of a mentor and

mentorship in general:

> A mentor is someone who is usually a colleague in the same work environment and who
>
> is more advanced in the workforce. In an academic setting, a mentor aids the protégé in
>
> setting and prioritizing his/her short-term and long-term career goals. (Law et al., 2014, p.
>
> 2)

Mentorship can be attainable from a variety of sources both in and out of the academic

setting. Ashtiani and Feliciano (2012) presented evidence pertaining to mentorship for low-

income students. In a longitudinal approach using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of

Adolescent Health, the researchers analyzed the effects of mentorship in connection with college

entry and completion for lower-income students (p. 1). The researchers noted these students

succeed following mentorship from "teachers/guidance counselors, coaches/athletic directors, or

employers are more than twice as likely to attend some postsecondary education than students

who have had no mentoring relationship" (p. 3). The researchers delimited the data to strictly

focus on the effects of mentorship and omit the effects of other factors on college completion for

the low-income students they surveyed in the study. This added validity to the results of the study and made the results much more effective. The results of this particular study are relevant to the present study as they help to establish a background as it pertains to mentorship for higher education students.

Mentoring relationships can develop regardless of academic experience or age. Reverse mentoring is an area that has seen a vast amount of literature with applications in both the workforce and the academic field. "Reverse mentoring is defined as the pairing of a younger, junior employee acting as mentor to share expertise with an older, senior colleague as the mentee" (Murphy, 2012, p. 550). Reverse mentoring takes advantage of social exchange theory in the workforce as well, particularly involving baby boomer employees and younger millennial employees. Developing a mentoring relationship between—in the case of their study—baby boomers and millennial employees, it will aid in maintaining engagement for baby boomers and provide a means for millennial employees to gain a sense of leadership and commitment. The researchers found, "leadership is not contingent on hierarchy or seniority in reverse mentoring; the junior, young mentor has the responsibility of providing feedback like that of a leader to the older, senior protégé" (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012, p. 62).

Johnson (2015) further explored the social exchange factors involved in mentorship, primarily pertaining to relational mentoring. Relational mentorship—which is a mentoring relationship based around principles of trust, sharing, and loyalty—is mutually beneficial in terms of learning and opportunities for growth. The researcher noted this is counter to the typical mentor/mentee relationship wherein the mentor is solely responsible for the growth and learning of the mentee.

Peer mentoring is yet another type of mentorship that can occur within the higher education setting that also implicitly uses aspects of social exchange in the interactions in the mentoring relationship. Beltman and Schaeben (2012) presented qualitative evidence on the benefits of peer mentoring. The researchers discovered participants in the study claimed to gain benefits in altruism (i.e., helping others), cognitive benefits (i.e., skills development), social benefits (i.e., new social interaction opportunities with students), and benefits to personal growth (i.e., self-confidence and responsibility).

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset theory and application is a relatively new strategy that has found applications in various areas of the educational scene, both nationally and abroad. Growth mindset as a method of educational attainment places significant importance on reinforcing positive social, mental, and psychological characteristics for students. Dweck (2015) broadly defined the precepts for a growth mindset, stating that a growth mindset goes beyond simply showing effort in educational endeavors. Students who adapt a growth mindset, instead, discover a variety of methods, including asking for assistance from others. In relation to mentorship, Searby (2014) suggested that because the concept of growth mindset and its opposite as described by Dweck, fixed mindset, imply that one can develop certain capabilities or outlooks, this would, in turn, indicate that mentees can develop strategies that could ultimately benefit the mentor/mentee relationship.

Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck (2016) demonstrated the applications abroad and the usefulness of the growth mindset methodology:

The relationship between student mindsets and achievement was comparably strong and held across all students in Chile. . . . Our research shows that, at every socioeconomic

level, those who hold more of a growth mindset consistently outperform those who do

not. (pp. 8665 & 8667)

As such, the researchers demonstrated that not only can the growth mindset theory transcend

educational backgrounds, but it can transcend socioeconomic backgrounds as well.

The growth mindset precepts also hold implications for technology-based learning in

education as well. "Integrating growth mindset principles into an online math game enhanced

students' persistence and use of adaptive strategies" (Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck, 2016, as cited

in Rattan et al., 2015, p. 722). Given society's persistent use of technology, adapting the

principles of growth mindset theory into technology-based instruction and mentorship can be a

useful tool in reinforcing positive outcomes for students across all educational areas.

For Black male students in higher education, growth mindset principles can have a

significant effect on student engagement, persistence, and student retention not only in higher

education, but in other areas. Students involved in their study who were taught growth mindset

principles in incremental pieces "showed a significant increase in overall grade point average at

the end of the year of roughly .23 grade points" (Yeager & Dweck, 2012, p. 304). The

researchers specifically noted the effects of growth mindset theory for African American

students involved in their study was slightly greater than for the White students who were

involved in this study.

Dweck, Walton, and Cohen (2014) used an explanatory analysis of the factors that

promote growth mindsets for students. "Academic tenacity is about the mindsets and skills that

allow students to look beyond short-term concerns to longer-term or higher-order goals, and

withstand challenges and setbacks to persevere toward these goals" (p. 4). Furthermore, students

who develop a growth mindset further develop a sense of belonging in the social and academic

settings of the educational institute, and they seek out and are engaged by academic challenges and developing new strategies with which to surpass those challenges. The findings in this particular study (among others) were important as I explored whether mentorship efforts effectively promote and facilitate such mindsets and beliefs for Black male students in the university setting in the present study.

Hochanadel and Finamore (2015) added to the discussion of academic tenacity, here referred to as grit, in a descriptive analysis exploring the reciprocal effects of grit on growth mindsets and their combined ability to support and enhance academic persistence for students across all levels of education. Grit coupled with a growth mindset can positively affect students attending postsecondary education via an online environment. When faculty and staff members work to promote a mindset aimed at persistence in education as opposed to strictly focusing on educational endeavors such as testing and specific curriculum, it helps students actively develop their persistence, thus developing a growth mindset. This, in turn, helps those students reciprocally develop academic persistence and achievement in their educational endeavors.

Dweck (2015) has also analyzed the effects of a growth mindset on educators as well. In an explanatory analysis, the researcher explored previous research which itself explored how growth mindsets altered and positively affected teachers' perspectives on their abilities as educators (p. 11). The specific characteristics of a growth mindset in the context of educators was also present in this study:

> Those [teachers] who endorsed more of a growth mindset valued learning more than looking good or risk-free teaching. Like students who hold more of a growth mindset, they cared more about learning than about their reputation as a good teacher or their perfection as a teacher. (p. 12)

In the context of the present study, this aspect of the growth mindset as it applies to faculty and staff helped to add background to my analysis of the faculty and staff perspectives of mentorship and their efforts toward fostering academic engagement, persistence, and success.

Travers (2018) used a quantitative structural equation modeling design to investigate how perceptions of gender and race and intelligence affect and relate to Black male students' academic success in higher education. Counter to a majority of the research pertaining to growth mindset and its effects on academic success:

> Whether Black men hold a fixed or growth mindset does not significantly predict their level of academic achievement in college. This finding is inconsistent with a body of scholarship that indicates mindset is significantly associated with a range of student success indicators for college students generally. (p. 110)

Although the results of this study specific to mindset seem to negate the notion that a growth mindset positively affects academic success, it was still useful for the current study as I sought to explore whether mentorship positively affects academic persistence and success for Black male higher education students.

Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental instruction is a common function within the mentorship efforts of an educational institution. In one particular example with students in STEM programs, Packard (2012) noted that mentoring programs including supplemental instruction (SI) inspire students to excel in their given academic endeavors in comparison to standard tutoring programs. The subject of supplemental instruction and its effects on student engagement and student achievement vary significantly in terms of scope and overall conclusions. Several researchers have concluded that supplemental instruction does carry some significant positive effects for

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academic performance in general. Previous research (Dawson et al., 2014, Dias et al., 2016, Grillo and Leist, 2014, Ribera et al., 2012) has also presented evidence of the positive effects that supplemental instruction has in relation to student engagement as well, which is also a significant part of the mentorship process.

"The increase in academic performance . . . shows an overall increase for the SI over the non-SI cohorts from 52% to 59% for all students taking the exam and from 44% to 50% for all students enrolled" (Dias, Cunningham, & Porte, 2016, p. 6). Further research reviewed in this literature review support those findings in a boarder sense. "All students who attended SI meetings performed better on average than students who did not attend. The difference between an average student with high SI attendance and an average student not attending SI is about 13 credits" (Malm, Bryngfors, & Mörner, 2014, p. 9). While these statistical findings pertain to students in general, the information within can be generalized to other student groups including Black male students to determine the benefits of supplemental instruction on their academic engagement and success in the university setting.

Ribera, BrckaLorenz, and Ribera (2012) presented quantitative results explaining the benefits of supplemental instruction in relation to student engagement. Using a sample of 9,000 first-year students and 13,000 senior-year students across 700 colleges and universities, the researchers sought to discern whether or not a connection exists between supplemental instruction and learning experiences (i.e., collaborative learning, practical skills, general education). The students who participated in the study experienced better academic engagement and learning experiences, as well as improved academic achievement in comparison to students who had not undergone supplemental instruction. The researchers' findings served to confirm the

feasibility of proper supplemental instruction and added consistency to the literature pertaining to supplemental instruction that was analyzed in this literature review.

Dawson (2014) further emphasized the idea that supplemental instruction is a multipurpose tool that can be used in the overall development of student performance, whether in higher education or otherwise. "Supplemental Instruction (SI)'s main objectives are subject-related; the development of knowledge and academic skills specific to a unit of study. Other objectives of SI are developmental: the development of social skills, self-efficacy as a learner, and motivation" (p. 139). Therefore, incorporating supplemental instruction in the mentorship process for students could hold significant benefits in relation to both student engagement and, in turn, on student achievement in the higher education university setting.

Review of Methodological Issues

A vast majority of the research analyzed in this literature review used qualitative methodologies to discuss the issues of academic engagement and persistence for Black students in higher education. A smaller number of studies use quantitative methods to analyze the subject. Experimental and survey designs of quantitative research approaches are used both to assist the researcher in analyzing a variety of variables and the connections between them and to present potential opportunities for the researcher to generalize the sample results to a wider population (Creswell, 2017). A major drawback to quantitative research, however, is that "effective quantitative research usually requires a large sample size sometimes several thousand households. However, lack of resources sometimes makes large-scale research of this kind impossible" (Choy, 2014, p. 102).

Grillo and Leist's (2013) quantitative case study is one such example that is limited by a lack of resources, specifically from the institution involved in the study. The researchers stated

the study had to maintain a small scope as result of these limitations. The quantitative study used

data from an extensive database from a Louisville university; however, as the researchers

demonstrate, the study could not obtain data from students who did not utilize support services

available at the university. Had the researchers been able to obtain such data, the study itself may

have been more comprehensive and robust.

The descriptive, nonexperimental quantitative study conducted by Yearwood and Jones

(2012) demonstrated an example of limitations due to instrumentation used in the study and

weaknesses in the resulting data. The researchers stated that weaknesses in the study exist as

result of the NSSE survey instrument utilized and the potential inaccuracy of self-reported data

used in the study as well. This quantitative study further demonstrated the instrumentation used

can potentially diminish the study's vigor that could ultimately affect the data presented in the

study.

A primary example of the limitations due to sample size is Gaddis (2012), who analyzed

social capital in relation to mentorship involving individuals of varying race and class.

"Although these results are interesting, once again I believe that the small sample size limits my

ability to fully explore these interaction effects" (Gaddis, 2012, p. 1259). Limitations due to

research design can also occur in both quantitative and qualitative research. Fountaine's (2012)

quantitative study "was constructed from a correlational design and does not lend to clarification

of each significant relationship among the variables" (p. 143).

Qualitative methodologies include narrative, case study, and phenomenological

approaches. Regarding the qualitative case study approach:

> generally, the focus of the case study is on developing a narrative or revealing a
>
> phenomenon based on an in-depth, real-time, or retrospective analysis of a case.

Therefore, issues related to experimental control and internal validity are nonfactors

within this approach. (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 143)

Qualitative methodologies carry weaknesses similar to quantitative methods. "All researchers

interpretations are limited. As positioned subjects, personal experience and knowledge influence

the observations and conclusions" (Choy, 2014, p. 102).

Qualitative research designs are not without their limitations, however. One such

example is Palmer and Maramba's (2012) qualitative case study in which the researchers used

qualitative interviews to analyze the relationship between academic engagement and academic

achievement. The researchers conducted interviews with four student affairs members. However,

"interviews with other campus administrators would likely have provided other insights into

factors critical to Black male students' sense of mattering" (p. 113). Therefore, the present study

will remedy this limitation by interviewing both students, faculty, and staff members of the

institution involved in the study.

Researcher bias is another potential pitfall in relation to qualitative studies and their

validity. "The researcher's personal world view and individual biases are contributing factors

that may influence the study. It is necessary to be cognizant of these factors and guard against

interjecting bias within the study" (Kolb, 2012, p. 86). In their qualitative study, Harris, Hines,

Kelly, Williams, and Bagley (2012) presented an issue with the potential for researcher bias.

"The researcher's presence during the data collection period (i.e., interviews) could have affected

the subject's responses, perhaps contributing to a biased data set" (p. 192).

Synthesis of Research Findings

The results developed in the studies analyzed in this literature review all came to the

same or very similar conclusions regarding student engagement, persistence, and academic

achievement for Black students—regardless of gender—and for faculty as well. The primary themes in the literature pertain to racial stereotyping and race-based interactions in higher education, socioeconomic status contributing to diminished academic performance and/or prevention from entering higher education, and institutional or student ineffectiveness resulting in low graduation/completion rates.

Harper and Harris (2012) argued that the onus for improving Black male student academic achievement rates falls on the policymakers at the state and local levels, and they should focus on policies from financing and funding to data processing to institutional programs supporting Black male student retention and completion in higher education. Another significant factor revolves around the socioeconomic struggles and other barriers that students face when entering higher education at the university level. The primary factors contributing to low academic achievement for Black students are: "financial strain; time pressures; competing priorities; unclear expectations of university; low confidence; academic preparedness; family support; and aspirations" (Devlin & McKay, 2014, p. 107).

Multiple researchers including Kim and Hargrove (2013), Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown (2015), Turner and Grauerholz (2017), and Wendt (2014) each presented their findings related to race and/or socioeconomic status, demonstrating a link between low completion rates for Black students and racial stereotyping or lack of affordability for higher education due to low socioeconomic status. Pittman (2012) further emphasized this line of discussion related to race. "The first finding of this study is that racial microaggressions are common in their interactions. The two settings in which the African American faculty experienced racial microaggressions through their interactions were (a) White colleagues and (b) White students" (p. 86).

Critique of Previous Research

As discussed previously, issues in previous research on the subject of the factors influencing student engagement, persistence, and success for Black male students primarily revolve around issues of methodological inadequacies, the scope of study, and lack of duplicability and generalizability. There is also a gap in research analyzing and defining how incorporation of mentorship specifically for Black male students in the university setting plays a role in student engagement, persistence, and completion of academic goals.

Conversely, previous research on the subject does present valuable evidence that could be useful for faculty, staff, and policymakers in the area of higher education to develop strategies that could increase student engagement, persistence, and academic achievement for Black students in higher education. However, many of the solutions provided negate either one perspective or the other, either the faculty/staff perspective or the student perspective. This study demonstrated the necessity of obtaining both perspectives in order to attain viable, usable information not only for faculty/staff and policymaker use, but for student use as well. Much of the research demonstrated viability with regard to efforts to develop strategies and programs aimed at increasing student engagement, persistence, and/or academic achievement for Black students. This study will serve to add to that previous research and provide further strategies and programs related to mentorship for Black male students, providing a preemptive solution to increase engagement and persistence and therefore diminish student attrition rates for Black male students in higher education.

The previous research discussed in this literature review provides a solid backbone that informs the methodologies and the theoretical framework of this study. Few researchers used social capital theory in the field of education as a theoretical framework from which to analyze

the issues of engagement and persistence among Black male students. The limited research available using these frameworks demonstrates a gap that this study can fill by incorporating both theoretical frameworks in a single study.

Chapter 2 Summary

Understanding the factors that contribute to academic engagement and persistence for Black male students could prove beneficial in improving completion rates in higher education. A wealth of information exists discussing the contributing factors and providing various theoretical frameworks from which to analyze the way these factors function to promote academic completion. This study serves to add to the extant body of literature analyzing these factors as they pertain to Black male students while filling a gap with regard to the effects of mentorship on the factors that contribute to engagement and persistence for Black male students. The research analyzed in this review helped to develop the scope of the study by presenting evidence regarding social capital theory and its possible applications to interactions between mentors and their mentees. The research analyzed in this study also helped to determine the contributions to the body of knowledge that the research has provided.

Namely, the research analyzed demonstrated the various methodologies and conceptual frameworks viable for exploring the problem of engagement, persistence, and academic success for Black male students. While extant literature covers various levels of the higher education setting involving Black male students (including the transition from secondary to postsecondary education), current literature seems to lack significant analysis of the effects of mentorship on the factors that influence engagement, persistence, and success specifically for Black male students. This literature review also served to validate the researcher's decision to use a

qualitative case study methodology for this study as opposed to a quantitative methodology or any other qualitative form.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceptions from faculty, staff, and Black male students of mentorship for Black male students at the university level. The case study methodology and participants chosen were appropriate for this study to spotlight the perceptions and experiences of Black male students in the university setting. Faculty were chosen to corroborate responses by student groups. Using the case study methodology allowed me to maintain impartiality regarding the participants and the institution discussed in the study. Case study methodology requires researchers to only observe either participants in the study, or data provided by participants. Therefore, this methodology prevented me from contaminating the data with my own thoughts since I was not an active participant.

In a qualitative approach to research design, "the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2017, p. 4). Qualitative research is comprised of various methods, one of which is a case study. Case studies often consist of interviews followed by synthesizing responses to answer the research questions.

"Interviewing . . . is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 7). Thus, the method of research for this study included interviews with Black male students as well as faculty and staff members at a Texas university. The study focused on their thoughts about and perceptions of the significance and the effects that

mentorship has on the academic persistence, achievement, and academic success for Black male students in said university.

Research Question

One primary question remained at the center of this qualitative case study, which pertained to the faculty, staff and student perceptions of mentorship. The specific question was:

1. What are Black male students' and faculty/staff members' perceptions of mentorship as it relates to academic achievement and persistence for Black students?

Purpose and Design of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceptions from faculty and staff and Black male students of mentorship for Black male students at the university level. Within the context of Yin (2018) and Hancock's (2017) parameters regarding case studies, this study explored how mentorship may affect academic achievement and persistence for Black male students and why current trends in academic achievement and persistence have remained low. In a case study approach, "the more that your questions seek to explain some contemporary circumstance . . . the more that case study research will be relevant" (Yin, 2018, p. 4). The usefulness of the qualitative case study approach in the present study also extended to exploring the subject of mentorship from the students who may benefit from it as well as the faculty/staff members responsible for facilitating it. "In qualitative research, the goal is to understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participants', not the researcher's, perspective" (Hancock, 2017, p. 8). The goals of the study were primarily what informed the design of the study. Determining the goals of the study is important as, "first, they help to guide your other design decisions to ensure that your study is worth doing . . . second, they are essential to

justifying your study, explaining why your results and conclusions matter" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 23).

Using interviews and questionnaires specifically targeted to Black male students and faculty at the institution aided in understanding the effects of mentorship from the perspectives of the interviewees. I collected data via interviews with faculty and Black male students to explore their perceptions of mentorship in the educational institution. The purpose of the qualitative method was to discern how mentorship affects academic persistence and achievement for Black male students at a 4-year university.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Research Population and Sampling Method</h3>

The research population consisted of students, faculty members, and staff at a Texas university. Faculty and staff members were to have significant familiarity with current efforts toward mentorship. Faculty and staff did not have to be Black nor male to participate in this study; their input was equally valued regardless of race or gender. Student participants were Black male students actively seeking degree attainment at the university level.

The initial method of population selection for this study began with private discussions and correspondence with the university contact to determine the demographics of Black male students at the university as well as a general demographic of faculty and staff members. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Purposeful sampling was the most logical method of population sampling in order to find the proper number of participants and those that facilitated information-richness. Following the purposeful sampling of the population, random sampling was used for both the faculty and staff population as well as the student population. "In this method, every

individual has an equal chance of being selected in the sample from the population" (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013, p. 330).

The sample size for faculty and staff members consisted of five faculty and staff members. Despite the study's focus on Black male students, the faculty and staff members interviewed in the study were not delimited in the same fashion. The purpose of including faculty and staff in the study was to obtain a broad overview of mentorship efforts and the perceptions of mentorship from those responsible for providing mentorship to students. Given the population of approximately 4,300 Black students, the sample size for students consisted of at least five Black male students who were at various levels of their educational endeavors at the university level. All willing participants in this study participated in thorough, in-depth interviews to obtain their responses to questionnaires preceding the interviews to determine the initial pathways of exploration for the interviews during this study.

Instrumentation

The primary instrumentation for this study involved questionnaires and semistructured interviews. Interviews consisted primarily of open-ended questions to allow detailed responses from participants. The questionnaires were used prior to the interviews to allow respondents to provide a broad perspective their opinions regarding mentorship in the university. The questionnaires were not in-depth, but primarily consisted of short-form responses and were used only for demographic purposes (see Appendix A). The semistructured interviews provided the basis for further exploration of participants' responses to allow for more in-depth discussions and to gain more detailed responses in comparison to the questionnaires. The interviews were used as a supplement to the questionnaires (see Appendix B).

Utilizing open-ended questions in a semistructured interview allowed for "reciprocity," as discussed by Galletta (2013). This reciprocity between myself and the participants in the study helped "to achieve clarification and understanding" (Galletta, 2013, p. 78). In order to properly interpret the responses from the participants in the study, and fully understand their stance on mentorship in the university, the open-ended, semistructured interview was the best instrument.

Data Collection

Data collection followed all requirements from the institutional review boards (IRBs) from the Texas university and Concordia University–Portland and was conducted upon approval from both. Prior to the study, participants were contacted via email to request their permission to participate in this research study. Preliminary data collection occurred in multiple steps. First, data were collected from the questionnaires strictly for demographic data to obtain a broad overview of the perspectives that the participants have regarding mentorship and its effectiveness on academic achievement, academic persistence, and success.

Data collection was first used to determine the level of mentorship Black male students may have received prior to the interviews. Data collection then followed the logical course to determine their perceptions of mentorship. Finally, interviews conducted with faculty explored current programs/efforts toward mentorship for Black male students followed by data to understand their perceptions of mentorship efforts and how they can be strengthened. Overall, the data were used to understand the role that mentorship plays for Black male students in higher education at the university level.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires used in this study primarily contained direct questions. Direct questions, "might ask someone whether or not she likes her job. An indirect question might ask

what she thinks of her job or selected aspects of it, supporting the researcher's attempt to build

inferences from patterns of responses" (Tuckman & Harper, 2012, p. 245). Thus, the design of

the questionnaire was such that the questions within it were used to set a baseline for

participants' feelings toward mentorship both in the university level and the specific university

they attended. Questions were not used to delve into significant detail regarding participants'

perceptions; instead, questions in the questionnaires were meant to scratch the surface of the

topic at hand.

Semistructured Interviews

The semistructured one-on-one interviews lasted roughly 60 to 90 minutes and consisted

of brief questions to help add more context and detail to the participants' responses in the

questionnaires. Interview questions used similar wording as the questionnaire questions so as to

provide context for the question to the participant responding. The primary questions focused on

participants' opinions and perceptions on mentorship to guide students through the process of

advancing through the university including enrollment, program selection, course selection,

engagement, and overall program completion. Additionally, the interview questions focused on

things the students perceived as important for their engagement with and advancement in their

academic endeavors. It was vital to gain an understanding of their perceptions of current

mentorship programs and efforts toward mentorship currently existing at the university level, as

well as what the college could do to better facilitate academic achievement and persistence

through mentorship.

Interviews were conducted on campus in a readily available space free of distractions.

Interviews were also recorded using a mobile audio recording device and questionnaires were

provided to participants online one day prior to interviews. The interviews were digitally

transcribed for reference purposes to incorporate responses within the text of this study. Transcription of interview audio recordings was conducted on a laptop computer for the purposes of mobility and ease of access.

Security protocols (e.g., password protection and other security measures) were utilized as needed to protect interviewees' sensitive data. Responses to questionnaires were acquired using the reporting system from Qualtrics after all of the interviews and data provided in questionnaires were analyzed during the data analysis. The participants' names and personally identifying information were left out of all responses and recordings, and instead, transcriptions were coded with numbers. To protect against deductive disclosure of personally identifying information, interview responses were paraphrased, and no personally identifying information was disseminated in the study. Hard copy information such as questionnaires did not require personally identifying information and strictly focused on multiple choice responses to questions.

All data will be scrapped and deleted as necessary three years after completion of the study. Until that time, all sensitive information and materials are kept on USB flash drives with built-in password-protected software to store files securely. I maintain possession of the USB drives in a secure location at all times until such time that disposal of information (deletion of transcriptions and all materials utilized in the study) occurs.

Identification of Attributes

The attributes that guided this case study were academic achievement, Black male students' university experiences, academic persistence, mentorship, and leadership through mentorship efforts and programs. The overall goal was to determine what, if any, role mentorship plays in the academic achievement and academic persistence for Black male students in higher education at the university level.

The goal of the study was to engage faculty to design and implement further methods for mentorship and to provide rationale and suggestions for how to implement those advancements. Based on participants' responses, the goal was to help facilitate better engagement and persistence for Black male students starting university education. The aforementioned attributes of the study were the primary focus to help understand current trends in mentorship specific to the university and facilitate a discussion on possible enhancements and advancements to current trends.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis for this study was conducted in multiple ways, both during the interviews as well as afterward. Data analysis during the interviews primarily involved active listening on my part to identify pathways for uncovering deeper responses regarding the participants' perceptions. What follows in this section is a discussion of obtaining reciprocity in the interview process and how it aided in enhancing and ultimately completing the study. Following that, a discussion of secondary data analysis techniques demonstrates how interview responses were analyzed along with questionnaire responses to uncover, in greater detail, perceptions of mentorship from both faculty and Black male students.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire questions were designed to determine the participant perceptions on mentorship specific to Black male students as well as in a broad, demographic sense. Questionnaire responses were analyzed purely for demographic purposes to determine the number of participants how many participants chose the same responses. Data analysis with the questionnaires mainly involved analyzing the responses through the Qualtrics-generated reports to obtain a broad overview of the perceptions of various areas of the mentor/mentee relationship

and participants' willingness to participate in such relationships. Qualtrics reports are automatically generated by the web-based survey program and provide information on the number of participants who responded to each question in the survey as well as what their responses were. The responses are aggregated from the total number of participants per question in the survey. For example, a report was generated for Q1 in the survey showing the total responses to the question as well as the specific response chosen for each respondent. Identical reports are generated for every other question that follows. Each of these reports was analyzed to determine the number of participants who chose each answer available for each question. As result, the Qualtrics questionnaire provided a broad overview of participants' perceptions of mentorship.

Once data were organized in the Qualtrics-generated reports, data were then analyzed inductively to determine whether responses supported or opposed the expected findings of this study. Furthermore, data were analyzed to gain a significant, in-depth understanding of faculty and student perceptions of mentorship as they relate to enrollment, achievement, and completion of Black male students' chosen program of study.

Interviews

In order to facilitate reciprocity between the researcher and the participants, "you must ascertain what further inquiry is appropriate and often necessary. It also takes some spontaneity and guesswork, as you come upon junctures in the interview that potentially offer a deeper understanding of the participant's narrative" (Galletta, 2013, p. 76). Thus, analysis of responses occurred in the midst of interviewing the participants to understand their thoughts and perceptions regarding the role of mentorship in Black male students' enrollment, engagement, achievement, and completion of their programs.

Secondary Analysis

Data analysis occurred following completion of all interviews and questionnaire responses. Analysis began, first, with transcribing audio into written recordings in a digital format using a web transcription service from Rev. Once audio recordings were transcribed, I downloaded each of the resulting transcription files into a Word document and saved each individual file in two separate group folders. The folders were marked for faculty/staff responses and student responses. After adjusting the resulting transcriptions to account for accidental errors that occurred in transcription, inductive analysis was used as a basis, "in which coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data" (Wildermuth, 2017, p. 319).

Using inductive analysis, the raw data were coded into categories that were derived from emergent codes appeared in the respondents' statements. Inductive analysis is a form of data analysis which consists of finding patterns in the data that emerges from the investigation of a given phenomenon or situation. Once patterns are found, inductive analysis then focuses on determining how those patterns obtained from one's observations fit into the research question being explored (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). Codes were developed by analyzing each of the respondents' statements and analyzing the word choice and overall totality of the statement to determine the general concepts and themes discussed in each statement.

"The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (Creswell, 2017, p. 185). This is referred to as a *data spiral* technique in collecting and analyzing qualitative data. The data collection process and data analysis procedures used in this study followed the data spiral model, particularly in developing themes and categories by which to organize the raw data collected through interviews.

Limitations of Research Design

With regard to this study, limitations existed pertaining to the method of semistructured interviews. Although the semistructured nature of the interviews assisted in maintaining order and organization in the data collection process, limitations existed with regard to data analysis. One such limitation was that, "since the interview is a particular kind of situation, you cannot assume that what a person says during an interview is what that person believes or will say or do in other situations" (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 106).

The potential limitations of the study also revolved around generalizing the resulting data to duplicate the methodology while focused on other educational institutions. The sole focus of the study centered on the university setting, and therefore the scope of the interview process and data analysis focused solely on this setting. The data provided were specific to the students at one single educational facility. Given the focus on Black male students, the experiences for the students and faculty at the institution may not be representative of a larger group (e.g., returning university students and students pursuing graduate level degrees). The small sample size involved in the study also further exacerbated this limitation of the study. Given that a maximum of 10 participants were involved in the study, it is unlikely that participant responses could be representative of a larger group.

I chose to delimit this study strictly to responses from Black male students as opposed to the qualitative responses from students of other races and ethnicities which also limited the ability to generalize the study. The purpose of this delimitation was to focus on a potential cause for the low statistics regarding Black male students' academic achievement and persistence. An additional delimitation the study's focus on the college level. Although delimiting the study in such a way could have possibly affected the ability to extend the study to other educational

applications, it was important to utilize the university setting to focus on students who are first

entering higher education to determine if mentorship has a greater effect on them more than

students who are enrolled in other higher education settings. This study could serve as a

foundation or framework for extended and more detailed study in other educational realms.

<center>**Validation**</center>

"In interview research, one key question of validity is whether the views expressed by the

interviewees reflect their experiences and opinions outside the interview situation, or whether

they are an outcome of the interview situation itself" (Silverman, 2016, p. 414). Validation in

this study revolved around ensuring participants provided accurate and honest answers to the

interview and questionnaire questions, and I attempted to minimize bias to avoid influencing the

participants to provide more favorable responses. In this case, credibility and dependability relied

on accurate analysis and interpretation of the interview transcripts and questionnaire responses to

provide equally accurate results in this study.

There are four primary types of validity including: social validity, ecological validity,

content validity, and criterion validity (Ledford & Gast, 2014, pp. 97–98). In the present study,

both social and ecological validity were of the utmost importance as this study tested "socially

important" subjects, and the study holds significant "relevance" (p. 97) in terms of real-world

applications in the higher education setting, especially for university students.

Credibility and Dependability

"A credible study is one that provides assurance that you have properly collected and

interpreted the data, so that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the

world that was studied" (Yin, 2018, p. 85). In relation to this study, credibility was achieved by

following proper interview protocol to ensure accurate recording during interviews and by

<center>67</center>

accurate interpretation and analysis of the interview and questionnaire responses. Most importantly, however, it was vital that I maintain a singular role as that of observer and recorder of the data to avoid contamination and bias, which would have ultimately skewed the results of the research study. The primary way to avoid such contamination occurred by bracketing, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

"In terms of applying reliability criteria in qualitative research, a first requirement is to have a clear understanding of what features of the raw qualitative data might be expected to be consistent, dependable, or replicable" (Richie, 2013, p. 356). While this study focused specifically on Black male students and the factors that contribute to their academic achievement, persistence, and engagement, the formation of the interview questions and questionnaires could also be applied to other research populations. Interview questions and questionnaires would only require slight modification (specifically, removal of referential statements and phrases relating to Black male students) in order to be applicable to a wider range of sample populations. Thus, while the language in the study was specific to Black male students, I was able to maintain dependability in this study in terms of its replicability in future studies.

This study used both triangulation and member checking to maintain validity and dependability. Triangulation "cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses" (Anney, 2014, p. 277). Triangulation in qualitative research can be utilized in numerous ways, such as, "data triangulation for correlating people, time, and space . . . and methodological triangulation for correlating data from multiple data collection methods" (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1411). In this study, triangulation occurred by way of interviewing not only Black male students, but also faculty and staff members from the same university to cross-examine each group's responses

regarding the effects of mentorship on academic achievement and persistence. Triangulation offered evidence for this study in that if responses did not align, such misalignment may have presented evidence that mentorship is either ineffective or nonexistent for Black male students or that students are not well-informed regarding typically effective mentorship efforts.

Member checking was also used to ensure dependability. "The analyzed and interpreted data is sent back to the participants for them to evaluate the interpretation made by the inquirer and to suggest changes if they are unhappy with it or because they had been misreported" (Anney, 2014, p. 277). Member checking allowed me to maintain thorough and accurate interpretations and analyses of the interviewees' responses for the credibility and validity of the study as well as for protection of the participants involved in the study.

Expected Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceptions from faculty and staff and Black male students of mentorship for Black male students at the university level. The expected findings in this study related to a potential correlation between mentorship and academic achievement and persistence. Given current trends regarding academic achievement and persistence of Black male students in university education, the interviews conducted in this study were expected to reveal perceptions that may have provided insight into potential causes for the current trends. The expected results of the interviews were to determine whether there was a lack of or inadequate mentorship efforts for Black male students or a lack of awareness of mentorship efforts on the part of the students in the university setting. Otherwise, the results of the study may have also indicated no correlation between mentorship and academic achievement and persistence for Black male students.

Previous researchers have presented data regarding academic achievement and persistence as they related to overall engagement with their educational endeavors. Hope et al. (2013) presented evidence linking Black college students' self-esteem and racial identity with academic achievement and engagement. The researchers discovered "four distinct profiles of self-esteem and achievement among Black college students as they entered college" (p. 1141). The study results demonstrated both corresponding and opposing connections between self-esteem and racial identity and academic achievement and engagement. Harper and Davis (2012) and Kim and Hargrove (2013) focused specifically on Black male students' academic achievement in college, the latter focusing on "resiliency" and "self-efficacy" (pp. 301 & 308) and the former on the factors that reinforce engagement in educational endeavors.

However, previous researchers have not discussed the role mentorship plays in relation to academic achievement and persistence. As such, this study's findings added to current research discussing the factors that contribute to positive academic engagement and academic achievement. The expected findings for this research study were that increased mentorship, as well as bolstering current mentorship efforts in the university setting, will prove to be far more beneficial to Black male students. Furthermore, expected findings were expected to demonstrate whether said mentorship efforts would ultimately increase engagement for Black male students as opposed to said students undergoing their chosen educational endeavors without any such mentorship.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues, while potentially only thought to exist in experimental studies wherein participants undergo experimental procedures, also exist in qualitative studies. With this study, ethical issues could have presented themselves regarding my position as a former educator in

higher education as well as a Black male student enrolled in a university. Additionally, my

experience as a mentor could have created a situation involving bias both on my part as the

researcher as well as with the respondents in the study. Furthermore, ethical issues could have

existed while handling data after data collection and analysis procedures. Confidentiality and

informed consent were both extremely important to protect the participants in the study and

prevent their identities from being discovered–deductive disclosure. A consent form detailing

confidentiality, protection using pseudonyms, not including personal information, and not

including contact information, was used to provide informed consent to all the participants

involved in the study.

Researcher's Position

Discussing my position in this study was of the utmost importance to avoid ethical issues

regarding conflicts of interest. Given my position at the time as a Black male student myself, and

as a former educator at various levels of education, it was important for me to maintain total

impartiality with the participants with regard to skewing their responses to interview questions.

This included maintaining impartiality during data analysis to avoid skewing the resulting data

and affecting perceptions of the data.

Additionally, it was important for my position to not be a negative factor in the study.

This included conflicts of interest for me as the researcher as well as those for the university and

the faculty, staff, and students involved in the study. A conflict of interest is defined as "any

financial interest or substantial benefit" that may prevent a researcher from impartially

conducting his/her research study. Conflicts of interest in this qualitative case study could have

occurred particularly in connection with the university involved in the study, both from me as the

researcher and the participants. Questions could have been developed in such a way as to skew

the perception of the mentorship efforts of the university and the responses to the questions could have also been skewed in such a way as well. Triangulation, as discussed previously in relation to credibility and reliability, was used to avoid researcher bias and conflict of interest bias as I conducted the study. I also negated personal bias by limiting the relationship I had with any of the faculty or staff I interviewed (i.e., faculty members were not previous acquaintances and did not have any previous relationship with me, as the researcher, whatsoever).

Another way I avoided personal bias was through bracketing. Bracketing is defined as a method used by researchers to prevent the research from being damaged or otherwise contaminated by possibly unknown preconceived notions a researcher may carry related to the research at hand (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing occurred prior to, during, and following data collection as well as during data analysis to prevent personal bias on my part at all points in the research process. As bracketing occurred, a record of bracketed notions and ideas was kept on a writing device as available.

Despite the potential pitfalls of the shared experience that I carried as the researcher involved in this study, my shared experience also carried some advantages, as in other previous research. In a previous study, personal experience benefitted the researcher in the United States after having moved from Israel. "Coming from the 'shard experience' position, I was better equipped with insights and the ability to understand implied content, and was more sensitized to certain dimensions of the data" (Berger, 2013, p. 223). In the case of the current study, the same was true for me as the researcher. Having the experience as both a higher education student and a former educator afforded me with the insights to comprehend both the students and the faculty and staff members interviewed during the study. It also afforded me the ability to communicate

on the same level of both the students and the faculty/staff members and comprehend their responses in relation to the subject of mentorship and its effects.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 laid out, in detail, the methodology for this research study including the rationale that was used to determine the selection of the research population and the sampling method. The methods for data collection and data analysis as well as the expected results of said data analysis were explained. Ethical issues and procedures to mitigate such issues were also discussed including potential issues relating to data handling following the research study. These, as well as further potential limitations of the study were discussed at length. The study also provided detail on the purpose and necessity of the study, and how it fits into the body of research regarding Black male students' academic achievement and persistence based on faculty mentorship.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This study was conducted in order to determine the perceptions of mentorship on academic persistence, success, and completion for Black male students in higher education at the university level. The study followed a qualitative case study methodology using interviews and questionnaires to answer the primary research question: What are Black male students' and faculty/staff members' perceptions of mentorship as it relates to academic achievement and persistence for Black students? Social capital theory was the conceptual framework that guided the data collection process as well as the analysis of the data following collection.

The study specifically used Griffin's (2013) discussion of social capital between faculty and students in the higher education setting:

> While the actual activities are often quite similar, the nature of the interactions appears to be somewhat different when working with Black students. Their narratives indicate a unique set of interactions between Black students and faculty that differ in key ways from the interactions they have with students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.
>
> (Griffin, 2013, p. 175)

The current study focused on determining the qualitative responses regarding the perceptions of both the students and faculty/staff members involved in the interactions, specifically as they relate to mentorship efforts.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the overall population followed by the sample population involved in the study. Next is a brief discussion of the data collection and data analysis procedures followed by a brief summary of the results in the study including emergent codes and similarities between responses. Finally, a full analysis of all the interview and

questionnaire responses concludes this chapter. The analysis includes further discussing

emergent codes as well as analyzing similarities not only within student and faculty/staff

participants, but across each as well (i.e., responses from students were compared for similarities

with faculty/staff responses).

Description of Sample

The participants in this study were faculty and staff members, and students of a Texas

university. The participants were chosen using a purposeful sampling method (Creswell, 2017).

The university itself was selected based on ease of access for me as the researcher. The

university was also chosen specifically because of the availability of a mentorship program,

which would allow for easier selection of participants for the study. Initial referrals for student

and faculty/staff participants were acquired from a contact within the university. As described

previously, the study focused on the perceptions of Black male students as well as faculty and

staff members in higher education. Student participants in the study were at all levels of

education in the university setting (i.e., first-year and upperclassman students). Factors such as

tenure for faculty and staff members and education level for students were not included in the

criteria in order to analyze a wide range of experience levels in the higher education setting.

Such factors were, however, used for purposes of identification within this dissertation. Prior to

contacting and scheduling interviews, recruitment emails (see Appendix C) had been sent to all

of the participants that were referred by a university contact. First, faculty and staff were

contacted, followed by student participants.

Although it was not necessary for faculty and staff members participating in this study to

fit the same criteria as the students involved in this study (that is, faculty and staff did not have to

be strictly male nor did they have to be Black faculty and staff members), all of the faculty and

staff members in the study were Black faculty and staff. Three of the faculty/staff members were male and two were female. Each of the faculty and staff members held various positions in the institution, which placed them in prime positions to offer mentorship to the student body in the institution. During the semistructured interview process, all of the faculty and staff members confirmed their positions, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

The students involved in the study were chosen from a total population of over 30,000 students. Of the total population, roughly 11% of the students identified as Black, and 42% of that group were Black male students. Out of the population sample of Black male students, five students were randomly chosen to participate in the study. Upon acquiring referrals to contact each of the students, the initial recruitment emails were sent to the referred students (see Appendix C). Initially, four of the five students contacted responded within 48 hours of contact. Meeting times and dates had been scheduled with the four initial respondents in order to conduct the study interviews. Upon scheduling meeting times with the initial four respondents, another student was referred and contacted in replacement of the initial student who had not responded to the recruitment email.

All of the interviews conducted for this study took place within the campus at an undisclosed setting, which was mutually agreed upon during the initial contact phase of sample population acquisition. The interviews were conducted during school hours; however, this did not compromise the privacy and security of the participants in the study, nor did it compromise validity or reliability of the study itself. As the researcher, I recorded the interviews with the participants' permission using a digital recorder, and the resulting recordings were kept on a secure computer to which I solely have access.

Description of Participants

Faculty/Staff Members

The following section provides a brief description of each of the participants including their experience/grade levels at the university and their experiences with mentorship. The names used in this and subsequent sections are pseudonyms. The faculty/staff members involved in the interviews were heavily focused on their personal experiences not only as mentors, but also their experiences growing up as mentees throughout their own academic careers. Many of the faculty/staff members linked their individual experiences to their methods and beliefs on mentorship, noting how their experiences helped to inform their methods. In turn, the general consensus was that they hoped their methods ultimately had a positive effect on the students they mentored, and that those students would, in turn, learn to help others who may be in their shoes in the future.

John. John was a Black male faculty member who has had considerable experience working as a mentor both at the Texas university involved in this study as well as other areas. John was among several of the participants who not only discussed his methods and beliefs regarding effective mentorship, but also discussed the ways mentorship was effective for him during his time as a student and growing up. Like all of the other faculty/staff participants, John mentioned the ways in which his methods of mentorship had been effective and how he hoped to influence mentorship efforts on campus.

Ruth. Ruth was a Black female faculty member at the administrative level with several years at the Texas university involved in the study. Ruth also discussed, at length, her experiences as a nontraditional student and having been an active mentor for many students at the Texas university. Additionally, Ruth mentioned having been involved in various programs

and mentorship efforts across the university campus for students in general as well as specifically for Black students.

Sarah. Sarah was a Black female staff member with experience not only within the Texas university, but also in other grade levels and in various areas. Sarah made a point to note she initially had fallen into the area of mentorship, initially not intending to become a mentor. Initially, Sarah's mindset was focused specifically on the requirements for her given position, but she found herself slowly becoming a mentor for various students at various age levels. This particular detail was noteworthy because it helped to establish how mentor/mentee relationships can be established regardless of the specific roles the mentor or mentee may have at the time.

Mark. Mark was a Black male faculty member with vast experience both as a mentor and as a mentee. In particular, Mark made a point to discuss the ways mentorship helped him throughout high school and into his college years. Like the other faculty/staff members interviewed, Mark laid out his methods for the way he engages in mentor/mentee relationships with students in general, but also specifically with other Black men on campus. Mark consistently responded to questions using his own experiences as a mentee and relaying how those experiences informed his mentorship efforts at the university campus.

Simon. Simon was a Black male faculty member who, like many of the faculty/staff members interviewed, discussed his own experiences as a mentee going as far back as K–12 and into his undergraduate academic career. Simon discussed his beliefs on mentorship as result of those experiences as a mentee. Simon's responses during the interview process focused heavily on the nonacademic effects and factors that he believed should be present in mentorship efforts in order to reach out to and engage with students to help elevate their comfort level and help connect with them in a meaningful way.

Student Participants

As was expected, the student participants in this study focused their answers primarily on their own experiences at the university and a majority of them discussed their thoughts and perceptions of the faculty/staff members at the university. Many of the students discussed mentorship not only in relation to their current academic careers at the university, but also how their lives prior to entering college were affected by either having or not having a mentor for them to speak to and engage with.

Matthew. Matthew was a male freshman student at the university not only with experience in a mentor/mentee relationship in the university, but also with second-hand experience witnessing how mentor/mentee relationships function outside of the classroom. Matthew's experiences with both forms of mentorship were instrumental in informing his responses in the interview questions and were extremely informative in helping to develop an idea for how some Black male students may perceive not only the notion of mentorship, but specific mentors as well.

Bartholomew. Bartholomew was also a male freshman student at the university. Like all of the other student participants in the study, Bartholomew was extremely intelligent in expressing not only his experiences at the university, but also his beliefs on mentorship as well. Bartholomew was somewhat soft-spoken, but he had much to say regarding the mentorship efforts at the university and the available supplemental instruction as well. Like many of the participants in the study, Bartholomew discussed many of his firsthand experiences in which mentorship was vital for him in helping to facilitate and maintain academic engagement and persistence at the university.

Peter. Peter was a male freshman student at the university who was very vocal about his experiences with mentorship at the university. In particular, Peter noted the positive experiences that he had with a peer mentor to whom he was assigned at the university. Additionally, Peter noted his previous experiences in other grade levels with mentors who helped to facilitate his academic persistence in those previous grades prior to entering the university. Like Bartholomew, Peter also discussed the supplemental instruction resources available, and Peter was one of a few students who linked nonacademic and academic mentorship efforts.

Isaiah. Isaiah was also a sophomore student at the university who, like Bartholomew, was somewhat soft-spoken, but he was very knowledgeable of the mentorship efforts and resources available at the university. Like many of the students in the interviews, Isaiah mentioned the difficulties of connecting with non-Black faculty/staff members. Additionally, Isaiah noted the importance of mentorship both inside and outside of the classroom. Also, like many of the student participants, Isaiah expressed the importance of mentorship and academic efforts geared toward personal development for students, especially for Black male students at the university.

Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a freshman student at the university. Unlike many of the students involved in the study, Jeremiah did not discuss his personal experience prior to entering the university. However, he discussed many of his experiences with mentors within the university and expressed, at length, the factors and the characteristics of mentors that would help facilitate his own persistence and success in the university.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The aim of this study was to explore the thoughts and perceptions of mentorship by faculty and staff for Black male students and its effects on academic persistence, achievement,

and success in higher education. The case study approach was chosen for this study because "case study research typically focuses on an individual representative of a group (e.g., a school administrator), an organization, or organizations, or a phenomenon (e.g., a particular event, situation, program, or activity)" (Hancock and Algozzine, 2017, p. 15). Data analysis used inductive analysis to explore patterns within the data that explain and answer the research question at hand. Inductive analysis "provides a systematic approach to processing large amounts of data in ways that allow researchers to feel confident that what they report is indeed representative of the social situations they are examining and/or the perspectives of participants they are studying" (Hatch, 2002, p. 179).

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted using semistructured interviews as well as a questionnaire prior to the interviews. The questionnaires and the interviews both used the same questions for all participants in the study. The questionnaire was composed primarily of yes-or-no questions with one final multiple-choice question (see Appendix D). The semistructured interviews were subdivided into categorized questions and each subdivision included two primary questions followed by two follow-up questions, a total of 30 questions (see Appendix E), and the interviewees were given ample room and time to expound on their responses as necessary. None of the participants in the study were identified by name or any other personal information. Instead, all participants were given numerical identifiers (e.g., Faculty-Staff 1.1, Matthew) and these numerical identifiers were utilized in the transcripts of the interviews and will be used herein during the analysis of the data. All of the interviews were conducted in the span of two weeks during the Winter 2018–2019 school year.

Member Checking

Member checking was used in this study in order to maintain validity and reliability because of my position as the researcher in this study and the fact I am a Black male student myself as well as my experience serving as a mentor and educator. As stated previously, member checking is when, "the analyzed and interpreted data is sent back to the participants for them to evaluate the interpretation made by the inquirer and to suggest changes if they are unhappy with it or because they had been misreported" (Anney, 2014, p. 277). Ensuring nothing had been misreported was of the utmost importance for this study given my position as the researcher and my experiences as a Black male student and serving in mentorship and educational efforts. Member checking was conducted once all interviews had been transcribed; all transcriptions were sent to the respective participants to ensure accuracy. None of the participants requested any changes or adjustments to the transcribed interview data.

Data Analysis Procedures

The first step in the data analysis process was to use the Qualtrics online software to generate response reports to analyze responses from each of the participants. Once the reports were generated for each question, I went through each of the reports to tabulate the responses from each participant for all of the questions. Because the Qualtrics data were strictly used for a broad overview of participants' perceptions of mentorship, I did not include identifying information. Instead, all of the responses were obtained and tabulated together to provide numerical data to identify how many respondents answered each question, that is, either yes/no or, in the case of the multiple-choice question, which answer(s) were chosen most.

Once all interviews were conducted, transcribed, and member checking was complete, data analysis ensued. Data analysis was conducted following the multistage inductive analysis

procedure, as outlined by Hatch (2002, p. 162). Using the initial research question as a foundation, the frames of analysis were formulated based on the initial reading of the questionnaire responses and interview responses. The initial analysis revealed five potential frames of analysis, with three frames of analysis viable for answering the research question. Once those three frames were finalized, various relationships between the participants' statements were organized into groups umbrellaed under the frames of analysis. From there, several codes began to arise from a subsequent analysis of the interview transcriptions. During this coding analysis, 113 codes emerged across all 10 participant interview transcripts. Following this analysis, the criteria used for organizing all of the viable codes for answering the research question were established and used for purposes of organizing each of the emergent codes into the frames of analysis that were established earlier in the data analysis. A final analysis was used to determine the number of codes shared across all 10 participant transcripts, thus resulting in a total of 19 codes as described in the following section. These 19 codes were the most relevant and viable to answer the research question at hand.

Emergent codes were then tabulated and the interview responses that generated said codes were analyzed in detail to determine their significance to the research topic and question at hand. Discussion of the specific themes and codes discovered in the initial and subsequent analyses of the questionnaire and interview responses will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Summary of the Findings

This study was guided by the single purpose of discerning the thoughts and perceptions of faculty and staff as well as Black male students regarding mentorship efforts geared toward academic achievement, persistence, and success for Black male students in higher education.

Responses to the questionnaires helped to develop a snapshot to determine faculty, staff, and student perceptions regarding how mentorship fits into the landscape of education and whether or not it can assist students in their academic endeavors.

Responses to the interview questions showed significant focus on the nonacademic aspects of mentorship for students in higher education and the efforts mentors go to in order to bolster nonacademic engagement, persistence, and success. A majority of the interview responses linked the positive academic effects as a byproduct of nonacademic efforts of mentorship rather than a direct focus on mentorship efforts.

The interview questions were divided amongst five topics with a total of six questions per topic. During the analysis of the interview responses, several themes and codes emerged, with some of them repeated across differing sections of the semistructured interviews as well as repeated between faculty/staff interviews and student interviews. Within the faculty and staff interviews, three major themes emerged, along with various codes. These same three themes emerged within the student interviews with somewhat differing codes emerging within the themes. These various themes and codes are identified in Table 1. Results from the coding process will be discussed in full in the following section.

Table 1

Emergent Themes and Codes

Key Themes	Emergent Codes	Frequency
Characteristics of Mentors	Empathy	105
	Availability	
	Authenticity/Genuineness	96
	Adaptability	
	Understanding	90
	Caring	
	Consistency	52
		43
		35
		20
Keys to Successful Mentorship	Engagement	79
	Accountability	
	Encouragement	65
	Shared identity	
	Giving of your time	40
	Meeting the students where they are	34
	Give-and-take relationship	
		24
		22
		15
Positive Effects of Mentorship	Impactful relationships	32
	Meaningful experiences	
	Academic and non-academic engagement	29
		25
	Academic and non-academic persistence	
		20
	Academic and non-academic success	13

Note. Emergent codes organized by cumulative frequency per theme from all participants.

One significant difference appeared with regard to students' awareness of mentorship efforts and students' levels of awareness of resources and opportunities available to them through the faculty and staff in the institution as well as resources outside of the classroom. While faculty and staff spoke about the available resources for students, especially students of

color in the university, two of the student interview responses indicated a lack of awareness and a lack of attention from faculty and staff in guiding students to such resources available to them. This was the only significant diversion between faculty/staff interview responses and student responses.

Presentation of Data and Results

The data acquired from the questionnaires and the semistructured interviews were analyzed using an inductive analysis as defined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018) who stated, "in the inductive approach, the researcher discovers recurrent phenomena in the stream of field experiences and finds recurrent relations among them" (p. 239). The structure in the semistructured interviews helped to focus the questions in an effort to obtain the most relevant responses to the research question: What are Black male students' and faculty/staff members' perceptions of mentorship as it relates to academic achievement and persistence for Black students? The inductive analysis functioned to find and analyze themes and codes in the responses to the questionnaires and the interview questions within the predefined topics developed during semistructured interview construction (see Appendix B).

Questionnaires

The detailed analysis of the results first began by analyzing the frequency of responses in the questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire consisted of a total of six questions: five yes-or-no questions and one multiple-choice question. Questionnaires were provided using the Qualtrics online platform. Demographic information such as names, ages, experience, and grade levels were not included in the questionnaire in order to maintain anonymity. Frequency of responses to Questions 1–5 was tabulated and charted (Figure 1), and this was analyzed along with the interview responses following completion of interviews. Percentage frequency of

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responses to Question 6 (Figure 2) was also tabulated and information gleaned from all questions was utilized in analysis following interviews.
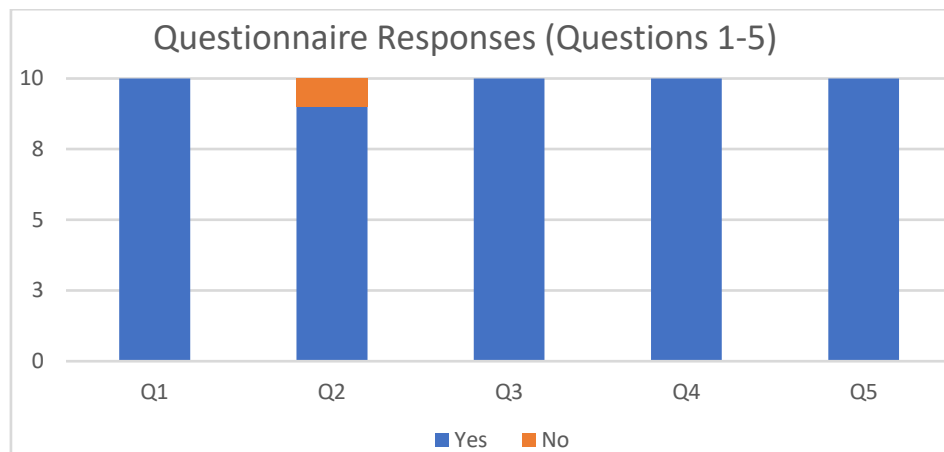
Figure 1. Questionnaire responses (questions 1–5).
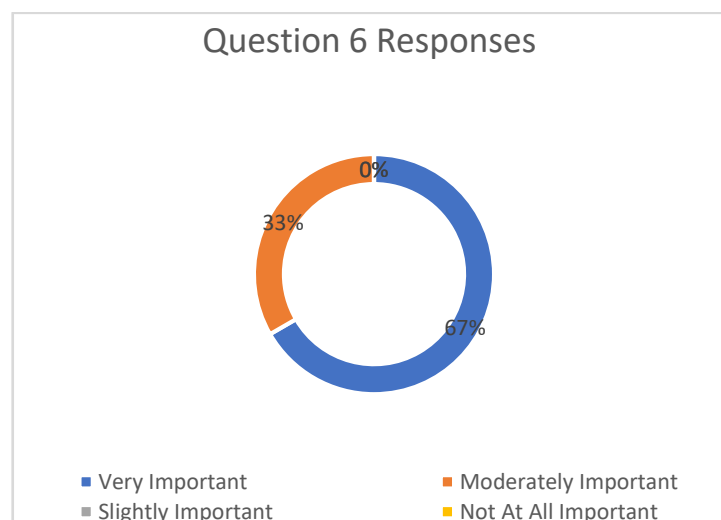
Figure 2. Questionnaire responses (question 6).

Primary Themes

The inductive data analysis (Hatch, 2002) uncovered three major themes with several codes emerging within each individual theme. The three themes that emerged during the data analysis were characteristics of mentors, keys to effective mentorship, and positive effects of mentorship. Under each of these themes, several codes emerged from the statements from both

faculty/staff members and students. Table 1 presented a list of each of the codes that emerged within each individual theme and the frequency with which each code emerged during the interview process with the participants. The codes that emerged were not all directly stated verbatim as written in Table 1; rather, analysis of the statements from the participants helped to develop the emergent codes.

Some of the emergent codes in the interview responses were: empathy, availability, authenticity/genuineness, adaptability, understanding, caring, consistency, engagement, accountability, encouragement, and shared identity, among others. Each of these codes was among the most frequent codes that emerged during the interview and analysis process and each indicated a nonacademic aspect of the mentor/mentee relationship that the participants felt strongly about with regard to effective mentorship. Although each of these codes relates to nonacademic aspects of mentorship, several of the participants indicated each of these nonacademic aspects plays a significant role in helping students develop academic persistence, achievement, and academic success.

Semistructured Interviews

The analysis of the semistructured interviews was split between faculty/staff interview responses and student responses. Coding was conducted first within the faculty/staff and subsequently within the student interview responses. Themes and codes were compared both within each group and against each group to determine similarities between themes and codes in the context of mentorship for Black male students in higher education. Themes that emerged from analysis of each of the interviews were the same across faculty/staff interviews and student interviews. Codes that emerged within the analyses were also similar, with the only exception being with regard to viability of current mentorship efforts in the university. As discussed above,

some of the student respondents indicated a lack of awareness of resources geared toward

mentorship efforts for students in the university while faculty/staff clearly indicated the presence

of such resources and indicated students should be aware of such presence. What follows is a

discussion of the themes and codes that emerged within each group of interviewees.

Characteristics of Mentors

The theme of characteristics of mentors refers to the personal traits that the respondents

believe mentors should have. The data from the interview responses revealed seven major codes

within this theme. The most frequently mentioned code was that of empathy. Nearly all of the

participants of the study stated a mentor should maintain a sense of empathy toward their

mentees and their situation in life.

The teacher perspective. The first instance wherein the code of empathy appeared was

in the response from John. He stated that a key characteristic is to be empathetic toward the

mentee's situation in their life at that particular moment. In that same vein, the same faculty

member noted some students struggle academically as result of struggles that may be going on in

their personal lives:

> It's important that mentors are concerned about the academic welfare, but also, too,
>
> realize that life happens outside of the classroom that can affect them in the classroom.
>
> So that's where the empathy comes into because if you have a student who's dealing with
>
> life crises well, be mindful that they're not going to excel academically in the classroom
>
> because they may be preoccupied with life.

In order to be an effective mentor, according to John, it is important to be aware of such

struggles and help the students work through them, so they do not become a hindrance.

Ruth also broached the subject of empathy stating that a mentor may not necessarily have had the same experiences as the students he or she is mentoring, but that should not be considered a requirement in order to have empathy for their mentees. Ruth also demonstrated an indirect concept of empathy as she stated she was a nontraditional student, a college student typically over the age of 24 (NCES, 2017), prior to her career at the Texas university where the study took place. The faculty/staff member's experience as a nontraditional student lends a semblance of empathy for current students who also happen to be nontraditional students.

Sarah echoed many of the same sentiments as John as she stressed the importance of comprehending and being understanding of the differing viewpoints that exist in the university setting from the diverse student body, as well as the faculty and staff members:

There's [sic] different ideologies, there are different ways of seeing things, and so empathy, I think, opens up that door for people that have that horse with blinders type deal. . . . There's [sic] other things that you can see outside of just your one view. And it's okay.

Sarah linked this acknowledgment of differing ideologies and perspectives to the notion of empathy both from the mentor and from the mentee to realize that both participants in the mentor/mentee relationship (as well as those in a group mentoring setting) bring their own thoughts and perspectives to the table and must be willing to acknowledge them even if one does not necessarily believe the same thing. Nonetheless, Sarah said, having empathy for others' perspectives is vital to an effective mentor/mentee relationship.

John also discussed a connection he believes exists between empathy and the third most frequent code expressed during the interviews: authenticity of the mentor:

I do think the genuineness of the mentor plays a huge role in that. Because that way they know that it's authentic, it's not just, "oh, he's just a mentor just for the sake of being a mentor." Well, a lot of times mentors do it because they were mentored themselves and are still being mentored.

This comment from John not only demonstrated the importance of authenticity in the mentor/mentee relationship, but also made clear how empathy can be conducive to authenticity in said relationship. For mentors who have been on the mentee side of the relationship, it aids in empathy, knowing where their own mentees may be coming from.

Authenticity was further discussed during the interview with Mark. The faculty/staff member was asked about whether a reward system should be set in place for mentors in order to give incentive to help their mentees through their university experiences. Mark stated he believes a reward system would take away from the genuineness and the authenticity with which the mentor chooses to help his or her mentees. On the contrary, a mentor should have a genuine, authentic desire to assist his or her mentees through any challenges or experiences they are currently undergoing.

The second most frequent code discussed in the semistructured interviews was availability, which was brought up in various aspects of the mentor/mentee relationship. One such instance was in the responses from John, who stated it is important for other faculty and staff members in the university to try to attend events geared toward the students. In John's view, doing so will help increase engagement between the faculty and staff members who do attend such events and the students who benefit from the events. Additionally, it opens up numerous opportunities for students and faculty/staff members to develop stronger rapport with the students in the university.

Ruth echoed the same ideas, stating that faculty/staff members should set aside time to be available for students to interact with them and engage with them whether it is engagement for academic purposes or non-academic purposes:

It's just sometimes you take out that time and listening, whether it's taking up your lunch and taking them out to lunch. . . . You do whatever it takes. So, I've given meals out, they call me mama. Sometimes they need that. So, I've given a lot to students to make sure they feel like they can come to me.

A number of faculty members, including John and Ruth, cited interacting with students outside of the classroom on campus such as interacting with students during student programs or during respective lunch hours, sharing a meal with a number of students and engaging with them in that regard.

Adaptability was yet another code that was vastly important to a number of the respondents during the interviews. Adaptability was described in several ways including having mentors adapt to situations with different mentees and learning their strengths and weaknesses and working within those frames. John described adaptability in the context of mentorship not having a universal application for all students. In other words, not all students are going to be receptive to the same mentorship techniques and efforts as every other student. In order for mentorship to be truly effective, it must be adapted to each student individually. Additionally, John noted that adaptability also means learning the ways which students communicate—texting, email, verbally, by telephone—and being willing and able to comply and communicate effectively through those available channels.

Mark discussed adaptability in connection with another code that arose throughout the interviews: that of meeting the students where they are. Many of the faculty/staff members stated

it is vital to determine where a student stands in terms of academic endeavors and in terms of life situations. Once a mentor is able to determine these aspects of a mentee, according to the faculty/staff members in the interviews, it is important to adapt mentorship efforts taking the mentee's current standing in their academics and in their lives and developing techniques that will help facilitate persistence and achievement both in and out of the classroom. Mark discussed adaptability as it applies to the forms of mentorship as well:

> I think even the informal may be because you may have people who may be introverts and so they may not seek those relationships out. They may be uncomfortable. They may not have had a mentor and they may not know where to look, so some of those formal processes were developed to reach out to students may be what's needed for some students. So yeah, I think that both the formal and informal are good.

In these instances, it is far more beneficial for the student to reach out to other individuals who may be able to fulfill that role.

The student perspective. Bartholomew also discussed how empathy functions within the mentor/mentee relationship, as he stated it was important to him to find people who have dealt with the same issues and life experiences as he had at the point in time when the interview had taken place. Bartholomew discussed a personal life situation that he had endured and stated that having an authority figure who has endured the same life situations and managed to surpass such a situation was comforting and helpful in knowing there was someone who the student could speak with should he feel the need.

Peter discussed how empathy from mentors can also assist students in the academic realm. The student stated for him it is important to connect with a peer-to-peer mentor who is currently active in the same academic experiences as he is:

My peer mentor that I have this year, we're literally on the same page. So, she's able to

tell me, "Hey, this is going to be hard but remember why you're doing this. You're doing

this because, at the end of the day, you're doing it to help other people." She literally

went through [the same thing] last semester.

For the student, having a peer-to-peer mentor who is actively pursuing the same academic

goals affords him the ability to form a stronger connection with the mentor as they are able to

relate to one another by way of their individual experiences in the same academic sphere.

Matthew expressed the same opinion regarding genuineness, especially with regard to

mentors offering some sort of assistance to their mentees. Matthew noted it is important to him

that a mentor actively try to help and actively try to guide him through both academic and

nonacademic experiences while attending the university. Additionally, Matthew also raised the

same characteristic as Sarah with regard to one's emotional state and inner self. Matthew noted

part of being genuine is learning to accept oneself, knowing one's inner self, as this will then

allow the mentor to better maintain a genuine intent in wanting to help and support his or her

mentees.

When asked what he feels are necessary skills for a mentor to have, Jeremiah also voiced

his opinion on authenticity and emphasized having an authentic, genuine demeanor transcends

any other characteristic such as race, gender, age, and others:

Being open to dialogue, an encouraging and reassuring connection and, if anything, more

authentic than just the Black and white because I can get someone to give me a

presentation or just be what I see on TV, but if I can't get a vulnerability and authentic,

"You want to be here or you're doing this with this purpose or intention" then, okay, we

can be progressive and get some things done and really accomplish, versus the surface

level kind of stuff that people can find almost anywhere.

For Jeremiah, it is much more important to have a genuine connection based on open and honest

discussions of intentions and expectations for the mentor/mentee relationship rather than

establishing a surface-level interaction with little effort from either person involved.

Bartholomew cited an example of the lack of availability and what that could mean for

students, especially Black men or other students of color in the university. The student discussed

a lack of awareness for many of the Black men and students of color regarding student programs

and student resources that are readily available to students. The student acknowledged the lack of

awareness could be a result of the students not actively pursuing such resources and student

programs to provide opportunities for engagement. However, the student stated it could also be a

lack of engagement between the faculty/staff members at the university and the students as well

as limited visibility of the tools used to promote student events and programs.

Matthew discussed the importance of availability from a personal perspective acting as a

peer-to-peer mentor for members of his family. The student stated that being active in the role of

a mentor for the members of his family not only helps those family members in their persistence,

achievement and success both in life and in the world of academia, but also helps the student

himself in developing a sense of accomplishment and a sense of responsibility:

I'm setting the tone. "Y'all got to pass me up. This is how I got to be, but I have to stay on

you all. I'm gonna tell you all stuff you don't want to hear, but I'm doing that because

that's my job." So, I'm kind of mentoring them also. I'm gonna do that naturally, but

they're getting older now. They're about to graduate from high school, and different stuff

like that, so we're just trying to set them up so to where they won't make the same

mistakes I did.

Matthew said these efforts he uses for his siblings can then carry over into his own academic

endeavors as he can be aware of what he looks for in a mentor and can pursue such things.

Peter also discussed the subject of availability from a subjective standpoint describing

what he would look for in a mentor in terms of the characteristics that he would prefer a mentor

has. Availability was one of the first characteristics that he mentioned, describing that he would

prefer a mentor be available to discuss things that he may be going through or that he may be

experiencing. The student also linked this availability to a sense of privacy as he stated that while

he would like a mentor to be readily available and open to discussing things that are important to

him, it is also equally as important that such discussions remain private and confidential and that

any personal details or business not be revealed to others in the university.

From the student perspective, few of the students expressed opinions pertaining to the

necessity or the importance of adaptability with regard to mentorship. Isaiah discussed

adaptability in terms of the various forms of mentorship. The question was posed whether or not

the student felt there are differing skills necessary for the various forms of mentorship available

to students. Isaiah responded saying he believes the mentor should be able to adapt to each

mentee's situation, and that only occurs when the mentor can understand the mentee's situation:

> I would need my mentor to have an open mind and an open understanding of things. . . .
>
> You have to know the person you mentor and actually know about their situation, so that
>
> takes time. Most people don't take time, they just wanna give directions or, "This worked
>
> for me, do it!" But it's not always that simple when you don't know that person's
>
> situation.

For Isaiah, understanding a mentee's life situation and taking the time to understand where the

mentee is coming from is vital to be an effective mentor because then the mentor has a better

idea of what the mentee may need in order to succeed.

Matthew discussed adaptability from a personal standpoint based his experiences as a

high school football player. The student was asked about what more he felt faculty and staff

could do in relation to mentorship that could help Black male students, including him, to have a

more effective and successful experience in higher education:

> So, my junior year I went out to the country and it was a culture shock for me. But I'm
>
> grateful for it because, like, football is the best thing that happened to me. But during that
>
> time, I'm a city boy, and I'm going to the country. So, it's a culture shock for me, and I'm
>
> adapting to it, but I'm with people who don't look like me. Right? But I'm used to it. But
>
> I'm grateful for that experience because it got me ready for here.

Matthew used this experience as an example of the preparation that other students could

experience if faculty and staff make a more concerted effort toward exposing students to

opportunities for networking and engagement that could assist them in the workforce. Matthew

also stated such opportunities would help them adapt to various situations in the real world

outside of the academic setting and develop a network of peers and others who could establish a

mentor/mentee relationship with them. He noted that while current efforts exist for such

situations as networking experience, students are not always aware of the opportunities.

Keys to Successful Mentorship

The theme of keys to effective mentorship is related to those factors which help establish,

develop, maintain, and reinforce effective mentor/mentee relationships between faculty and staff

and the students in the university. Within this theme, seven codes emerged as the most consistent

codes that the interviewees expressed during the interviews. Engagement, accountability, encouragement, shared identity, giving of one's time, meeting students where they are, and establishing a give-and-take relationship were the major codes that developed during the analysis phase of interview responses.

Under the theme of the keys to effective mentorship, the code that surfaced the most during the analysis process of the interviews was that of engagement. A majority of the respondents in the interviews felt one of the most important aspects of mentorship is the development of engaging, deep, meaningful relationships between mentors and their mentees. Additionally, mentorship helps establish engagement between the students and their peers as well, especially in the group mentoring environment. Several faculty/staff respondents cited examples of group mentoring wherein engagement was a key factor in order to facilitate an effective mentor/mentee/peer relationship.

The teacher perspective. Frequently, the notion of mentors being a sounding board for their mentees arose throughout the interview process. One such example was with Simon, who stated mentorship helps Black male students succeed in college because it provides a sounding board for the student to engage with his mentor and express his feelings regarding the situations he may currently be dealing with both academically and nonacademically:

> And from a mentoring standpoint, I think that's when that relationship comes to play even more important because we've all been through it, and to hear somebody else struggle, you understand, like, 'alright well cool, well maybe what I'm going through ain't that bad.' And even if it is that bad, you know, there is somebody there that you could just kind of be there to listen to and hopefully get you over that obstacle that you're facing. And even someone to be there to celebrate the successes.

Additionally, the faculty/staff member cited the importance of having someone with whom the student can speak and engage and get advice for things both inside and outside of the academic setting: life experiences, personal issues, and academic questions about coursework or advising for their degree plans.

Ruth described a nonacademic situation within the setting of the university wherein engagement is vastly important: that of meeting faculty and staff upon entering the university for the first time. The faculty-staff member outlined a situation wherein the Black faculty and staff members are introduced to Black students (both male and female) who are entering the university for the first time. Ruth expressed that this sort of introduction serves as an opportunity for the students to see there are faculty and staff members in the university with the same shared identity, that is, members of the faculty and staff who are Black, in an effort to increase awareness and a way for students to comprehend that those faculty and staff members are there to help them along through higher education.

Accountability was the second most consistent code discussed in the interview responses. Several of the participants described how mentorship establishes and reinforces a sense of accountability for both the mentor and the mentee in various aspects of the mentor/mentee relationship. John discussed, at length, the concept of accountability in mentorship relationships providing several examples how mentorship helps to develop one's sense of accountability. The primary example the faculty/staff member provided was related to establishing a set schedule for he and his mentees to meet on a frequent basis. He stated that he helps reinforce the sense of accountability by requiring his mentees to keep a calendar of the scheduled meetings to help build consistency with regard to their meetings.

John also cited the example of a mentee directly seeking out a mentor to help keep them accountable with their academic endeavors or other nonacademic experiences they may be attempting to navigate in their lives:

> I think mentors should think about what their expectations of the relationship are. Mentees too. Mentees may not know what to expect though, but sometimes it's the fact that you ask them and say, "Hey, what, what is your expectation of me as your mentor?" Sometimes they say, "I don't know," because they've never thought about it. And then sometimes they may have thought about it and say, "Hey, I need somebody to help hold me accountable."

In this way, the student demonstrated a sense of responsibility and initiative as a byproduct of going out of his way to request a mentor to assist the student with developing a sense of accountability. John noted that this request of accountability also works in the reverse in that he will accept when one of his mentees requests to have more frequent communication with him as the mentor or emphasizes a need that would require accountability from the faculty/staff member in ensuring that such requests and requirements from the mentee are met.

Shared identity was another code that emerged under the keys to effective mentorship. In the context of their academic experiences, students expressed ideas of shared identity not only in terms of race, but also in terms of individual experiences that they go through as students of the university. Faculty and staff members discussed shared identity primarily in terms of race, describing situations wherein faculty and staff members or other students who "look like them" were there for the Black male students to engage and interact with as needed for the purposes of mentorship or personal interactions.

John discussed shared identity in the context of the mentor/mentee relationship as well, however, the focus was on racial identity and establishing a connection with faculty or staff members who share the same racial identity. The faculty/staff member provided one specific example wherein he may share details about a particular member of the faculty or staff who not only shares the same racial identity, that is, he or she looks like the student, but he also has various qualifications that the student may benefit from. John believed it helps in establishing networking opportunities, especially academic networks that will help the Black male students branch out in their social and professional circles and learn communication skills.

One of the more significant details that was recounted during many of the interviews is the fact that the university where the study took place was a predominantly White campus (PWI). This detail about the demographics in the university play a significant role as, according to Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, and Lewis (2012), "Black students at PWIs, when compared with those at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), do not feel integrated into the campus" (p. 159). Ruth provided an example of that feeling of a lack of integration as she stated that the Texas university was a predominantly White campus and there are very few faculty and staff members in vital roles in the university who share the same racial identity as the Black male students on the campus:

> Because it's definitely a predominantly white campus, there's nobody that looks like them in key roles across campus. There's not too many faculty [members], there's not too many staff and sometimes they just need to have a welcome face. And so, I became one of those key figures on campus where they can come and just have a conversation about what they're going through. And so, I believe that because I was a welcome face, they were able to kind of just come and just talk about whatever that's happening in their

lives. Whether it's something that's going on at home, a lot of times they carry a lot with

them from home.

The faculty/staff member stated, because of that, it is important for the students to interact and

engage with other faculty and staff members who will provide a welcoming and nurturing

disposition for them.

Simon discussed accountability from the perspective of mentorship helping provide

guidance specifically to Black male students and to develop a sense of accountability from the

start of their postsecondary careers to their graduations. The faculty/staff member noted that

having a mentor is key to preventing Black male students from engaging with negative

influences that may deter them from completing their academic goals and detract them from their

academic success. The faculty/staff member stated it is important for mentors to encourage Black

male students to continue on the track of higher education and help reinforce a sense of

accountability in that once the student begins their journey in higher education, it is important for

them to complete that journey.

The student perspective. Bartholomew discussed the importance of engagement in

higher education, particularly for Black students. The student was asked whether he felt race or

gender played a role in terms of engagement that he may have with faculty and staff members:

Yes, [race does] because I feel like minorities of this campus feel like they can only talk

to minorities of faculty and staff. But what I've come to learn, I don't discriminate. I

don't judge, I talk to anybody. So, you can't judge everybody by the color their skin. A

conversation will tell you what you need to know. So, it's just being open minded and

being able to engage and not have those pre assumptions of, "Oh, I'm not going to like

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this person or this person's not going to know what I'm talking about." Just lack of resistance.

Nonacademic interactions, particularly with extracurricular activities in the university setting, were a topic Isaiah discussed as conducive to promoting engagement between students in a peer-to-peer mentor relationship. In particular, Isaiah pointed to intramural sports and organizations such as the National Society for Black Engineers as opportunities not only for faculty and staff mentor relationships, but also for peer-to-peer mentor relationships, as student organizations often have students of varying educational levels, from freshmen to juniors in the university scale.

When asked whether he felt mentorship could help promote persistence on a consistent basis, which included setting goals, positive reinforcement, and seeking challenges, Jeremiah stated that he believed mentorship would be vital in helping to promote goal-setting and positive reinforcement specifically:

I think just a bit of raw positive reinforcement, because there's an accountability partner kind of thing, it makes it less self-obsessed in a sense. Because I feel like a lot of the times, males have this thing that you go "I've got this, I'm good by myself." But knowing that there is somebody else who is rooting for you or just in cohorts with your progressiveness. I feel like it's a positive reinforcement towards saying, "okay this is what I'm doing, this is how I'm going to get there and I'm going to finish through, and this is what I'm going to do after that."

The concept of accountability also arose in the response from Peter who discussed the topic in relation to students first entering the higher education environment following secondary education:

I feel like it would because when you have mentorship, you feel like you got somebody there for you. Because, I mean, being here you start to realize that you take that jump from high school and this isn't the same. And you start to feel like . . . in high school, people be like, "Oh, he's not in class. What's going on with him?" And college is like, "Oh, he's not in class. That's on him to come to class." You know? Mentorship kind of holds you accountable when you're there, when you're here.

According to both Peter and Ruth, the elevated level of responsibility in higher education regarding attendance and general accountability is an area many students are not prepared for when entering higher education.

In terms of shared identity, Jeremiah shared the same notions as Ruth, noting that having better representation for Black students and Black faculty and staff members would help to facilitate a sense of furtherance and progress for his academic and nonacademic endeavors. Jeremiah also connected this with faculty and staff involvement; having faculty and staff members being more involved with the mentorship efforts and the academic efforts of the Black male students in the university would provide him with someone he can speak to and engage with who may be understanding and empathetic of the struggles he has dealt with. However, Jeremiah also acknowledged the fact that faculty and staff members are currently involved as much as time allows for them given the busy schedules they typically contend with. He also acknowledged the level of commitment that faculty and staff currently exemplify within the university.

Peter was asked whether race, gender, or any other factor play a role in mentors having an effective mentor/mentee relationship with mentees. The student stated that while gender does not play a role in terms of the interactions he personally has with mentor figures, race is a

significant factor. Shared identity in terms of race also carries with it personal experiences attached to race, which is what Peter pointed to in terms of establishing a mentor/mentee relationship. For this particular student, mentors who do not share the same racial identity often have a more objective and impersonal way of handling various situations that minority students may come to them to discuss. The student felt as though mentors who are not Black may not fully grasp the gravity of the situation, and therefore it will diminish their ability to help alleviate or navigate the particular situation.

Positive Effects of Mentorship

Beyond the characteristics and the major factors that help to facilitate effective mentor/mentee relationships in the university, the interviewees also discussed the positive effects that mentorship has for the Black male students who are in the position of the mentee. However, this aspect of the discussion was not as prolific with regard to code generation and overall discussion compared to discussions of the characteristics that are important for mentors to have. Within the theme of the positive effects of mentorship, five specific codes surfaced during the analysis. Impactful relationships, meaningful experiences, academic and nonacademic engagement, academic and nonacademic persistence, and academic and nonacademic success were the primary codes that emerged in the analysis of the interview responses.

The teacher perspective. The notion of impactful relationships occurring as result of mentorship arose in various forms throughout the interview process. John discussed the topic in relation to the types of mentorship that are most useful for Black male students. The faculty/staff member stated a combination of one-on-one mentorship and peer-to-peer mentorship helps the mentee establish and maintain impactful relationships.

John remarked that one-on-one mentorship is more beneficial for students who may be more introverted and less open to communicating within a group and sharing with others the experiences and the difficulties they may be facing in that particular moment. The faculty/staff member also discussed peer-to-peer mentoring, noting that students may be more receptive to this type of mentoring as it is easier for them to open up to a peer who is on the same level as they are, referring to the fact they are both students, not necessarily the same grade level, compared to faculty and staff members who are considered authority figures and therefore at a higher level.

Sarah connected the importance of impactful relationships and the benefits of impactful relationships in connection to both nonacademic and academic endeavors for Black male students in the university:

So, a lot of students I think are hindered from making networking connections and job opportunities for the future, and if anything, are stifled in their college career because all they think college is, is going to school and coming home. I can't tell you how many students, especially my Black students that graduate, and it's a big question mark on "What do I do with this degree?" Well that is the reason why we need to be talking to them outside of our classrooms, outside of our office hours, and going to their events, supporting them, talking and communicating with them.

Contrary to this, Sarah noted that students who do take advantage of the networking and engagement opportunities afforded to them have a better understanding and a better concept of how to navigate real-world situations such as job acquisition and financial stability. In this way, the faculty/staff member emphasized the importance of faculty and staff engaging with students and speaking with them and demonstrating to them that they are important and that they matter.

In terms of academic and nonacademic engagement, Mark conveyed his thoughts regarding the importance of faculty and staff involvement with students' academic efforts aside from teaching and instruction:

> I think it's essential because all of your learning is not done in the classroom. Say you've got three classes today and you spend three hours in those classes where you have these other things going on in life including what's happening in those classes. So how do I sustain? How do I deal with those things? So that's learning that's invaluable that's outside of the classroom. That's life. So, it's just as valuable outside when you're talking about the academic area as well and it's a different perspective sometimes from talking with a faculty member and a staff member."

In other words, by engaging with students in a nonacademic role and helping them make sense of real-life situations that are going on outside of the classroom, it would be beneficial for those students as they will be able to concentrate more in class and perform better, thus increasing academic success.

The notion of academic and nonacademic engagement, persistence, and success was also major themes that were each interrelated with one another both in the interview process and in the analysis/coding process. A majority of the statements that the interview respondents made connected all three concepts, generally with emphasis on the nonacademic aspects of Black male students' experiences in the university. In terms of academic and nonacademic success, Sarah noted mentorship can be a major asset in promoting success for Black male students in higher education. This is provided mentors are able to key into various aspects of the students' personalities and establish connections with the students and understanding that the students today are from a differing generation than the formal mentors that may be reaching out to them.

The faculty/staff member also emphasized that mentors must be willing and able to learn from their mentees just as much as the mentees learn from the mentors in order to truly establish an effective and beneficial mentor/mentee relationship.

Regarding academic and nonacademic persistence, a majority of the respondents provided examples of nonacademic persistence that mentorship is commonly responsible for. However, others noted the importance of mentorship for academic persistence as well. One such example was John, who outlined the importance of having mentors to help guide students and help provide encouragement when their academic performance may be lagging behind their usual performance efforts.

John expressed that when he works with mentees, he will often require them to look over syllabi in order to establish a study schedule. Subsequently, the faculty/staff member will help students go over grades to help them gauge their performance and help them determine their academic trajectory as they move through the academic year. In an effort to assist mentees in advancing their academic performance, the faculty/staff member will steer them toward academic resources that the mentor believes will be beneficial.

The code referring to meaningful experiences was the second most prolific code discovered during the analysis phase of the interview responses. This code arose in numerous ways across all of the interview responses and in connection with many aspects of Black male student academic experiences in the university. The concept was also brought up in the context of personal experience such as in the response from Ruth who cited her own experience acting as a mentor, linking that with her experience as a student previously.

Ruth emphasized the importance of giving back with regard to reasons why mentors become mentors. The faculty/staff member noted that, as a student, she had a vast number of people who assisted her throughout her academic career:

> And to me because of the experiences I've had with mentors, is for me giving back because I came here as a single parent with three children. And I was a nontraditional student, so people sowed it to my life, so it was really important when I came here because I didn't know anybody. And so, I had people that helped me and so I want to help somebody else. And so that was really important to me to have those mentors and me to be a mentor to others.

Therefore, her intent in becoming a mentor was to reciprocate the same assistance and caring she received as a student. These statements serve as an example of the social capital concept as outlined by Griffin (2013). Griffin found equivalent results in a qualitative study exploring the social exchanges occurring within the relationships of Black professors and their Black students. Griffin noted that, "participants generally acknowledge the overlap between their Black students' struggles and their own and express a commitment to helping them" (pp. 175–176).

Simon expressed his opinion regarding peer-to-peer mentorship and the fact that, sometimes, peer-to-peer mentorship helps develop more meaningful and impactful connections between the peers who are the mentors and the peers who are the mentees. The faculty/staff member was asked whether seniority or age played a role in determining whether a mentor/mentee relationship would be effective:

> No, I believe, I think it's just a scenario where if there's trust, I don't think it has to be a seniority kind of set-up. It could be peer to peer mentoring where they understand, 'hey

I'm a freshman, I see [this person] doing a lot of work, you know he's a junior, I want to

be like him when I grow up' kind of attitude.

According to Simon, experiences throughout life outside of the academic setting carry more

weight compared to discussions or conversations relating to academic matters.

The student perspective. Matthew discussed the idea of impactful relationships in

connection to having mentors to help guide students through their college careers. The student

expressed in particular that developing impactful relationships during one's academic career in

higher education will not only allow students to strengthen their networking and communication

skills but will also create opportunities to continue those impactful relationships beyond the

higher education setting. Establishing and maintaining impactful relationships during a student's

academic career will ultimately benefit interconnectedness between students and alumni from the

same university as they are able to share experiences with one another.

Jeremiah viewed success through mentorship from the perspective of increasing

enrollment for minority students, students of color, especially Black male students in the

university. The student stated that current enrollment rates demonstrate a lack of Black male

students and male students of color in general:

I do think it would help increase success in college for males in particular just because a

lot of the times, even here, I hear that the enrollment rate or just the population in general

it's more compromised of females than it is men. Even then, it's less men of color that

have a presence here on campus and having a mentorship of any kind for males in general

or men of color, I feel like seeing a success or being able to relate and talk to a success

story like a mentor, it would be very helpful for me personally just because I know that

it's doable and I'm not just dreaming with my eyes closed kind of thing.

According to demographic information from the university, the Fall 2018 (when this study was conducted) enrollment included 41.5% male students, of which 11.2% were Black or African American. The percentage of male students between the Fall of 2013 and 2018 decreased by one percentage point. However, enrollment of students who identified as Black/African American increased from 7.9% in Fall 2013 to 11.2% in Fall 2018. Therefore, the demographics align with statements from Jeremiah regarding enrollment rates.

The importance of academic engagement through mentorship was a subject Peter discussed when asked the same question regarding faculty and staff involvement in students' academic efforts outside of formalized instruction. Peter's statements somewhat contradicted statements discussed previously about the lack of awareness of available resources for Black male students and students in general. The student asserted that one of the important and positive things that occurs in the university is that there is a wealth of resources for students take advantage of including learning centers and other academic tutoring centers that are geared toward academic achievement and success. The student conveyed the notion that without mentorship efforts emphasizing use of such resources and facilities, many of the students, especially Black male students, would not be aware of such resources.

Academic persistence occurred as a code in response to various questions during the interview and was raised in connection with several aspects of the mentor/mentee relationship. In one particular instance, one student discussed the concept of academic and nonacademic persistence from a social capital perspective. Bartholomew stated that for many students in the university, their level of academic and nonacademic persistence is in direct proportion to the persistence and the level of caring that faculty and staff may demonstrate.

Bartholomew cited a hypothetical example of a faculty or staff member having mandatory office hours allotted per week and choosing to use those office hours throughout one single day:

> Some teachers I've experienced, they have to have mandatory office hours for a school. And I think that's about like, I want to say he's like six, It's like four to six hours a week. And some teachers I know will stack those hours in one day just so they don't have to be here for the rest of the days. And it just kind of shows like it goes back to like if you don't care, why should I? And it's like, well other people care so that's why we should care.

According to the student, this served as an example of faculty and staff not showing enough effort in establishing an effective mentor/mentee relationship with the students. Instead, doing so demonstrates to the students that the faculty and staff choose not to put a concerted effort toward caring for the students and their academic efforts.

Another example linking mentorship occurred at the outset of Matthew's interview wherein he was asked about mentorship's effect on student success. Matthew discussed his experiences with a family member who served as the coach of a school sports team. As the student observed the interactions between the teammates and the coach, he noticed that the teammates looked up to their coach and sought out his attention and advice and made efforts to interact with him whenever possible. The student stated this interaction served as the catalyst to establish a meaningful relationship between the coach and the teammates of the sports team, and this also instilled in Matthew the notion of what positive mentorship in and out of school could mean for students such as himself.

Chapter 4 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and perceptions from faculty and staff as well as Black male students regarding mentorship for Black male students at the university level. The study used questionnaires as well as semistructured interviews with both faculty/staff members and Black male students to uncover in-depth views and perceptions on mentorship and its effects.

The data presented in this chapter demonstrated a strong connection between nonacademic mentorship and its indirect effects on academic achievement, persistence, and success. Analysis and comparison/contrasting of the interview responses from both faculty/staff members and students uncovered three major themes regarding the role of mentorship for Black male students. The themes were: characteristics of mentors, keys to effective mentorship, and positive effects of mentorship. Within each of these themes, a number of codes were subsequently uncovered, and a complete analysis and discussion of these codes was provided in this chapter.

Although the interviews were geared toward determining the role of mentorship in relation to academic persistence, achievement, and success, the interview responses appeared to treat such matters as a secondary byproduct of life experiences outside of the classroom that would ultimately assist the students both in and out of the academic setting. Additionally, interview responses placed heavy emphasis on social experiences within the university setting, but still only indirectly related to academic experiences and efforts.

The implications of the data and results of this study for future studies as well as policy and practice in the field of higher education will be discussed in full detail in the following

chapter. Furthermore, a discussion of recommendations for further study incorporating the data

from this study will also be provided in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This qualitative case study was developed to explore the thoughts and perceptions of faculty and staff as well as Black male students on the effects of mentorship for Black male students in higher education. The study consisted of questionnaires and semistructured interviews, the data from which were coded using a multistage thematic analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). The 10 participants involved in this study consisted of five faculty/staff members and five Black male students currently enrolled in higher education at a Texas university. The participant responses revealed three main themes: characteristics of mentors, keys to effective mentorship, and positive effects of mentorship, with various codes across the three themes.

What follows is a summary and discussion of the results from the study, situating the results within the context of some of the major literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Following that is a discussion of the results in relation to extant literature on the topic of mentorship for Black male students as well as a discussion on the limitations of the study. Implications of the results for theory, practice, and policy as well as recommendations for further research are also explored at the end of this chapter.

Summary of the Results

This qualitative case study was guided by a single research question.

1. What are Black male students' and faculty/staff members' perceptions of mentorship as it relates to academic achievement and persistence for Black students?

The results of this qualitative case study were used to explore the perceptions of faculty/staff members and Black male students from multiple angles including the social exchanges that occur in mentor/mentee relationships, the keys to effective mentorship

relationships, and the overall usefulness of mentorship for Black male students. The results of the study indicated that faculty, staff, and students perceived a stronger inclination toward the social and otherwise nonacademic effects of mentorship compared to direct academic-based mentorship efforts. Responses from the faculty and staff members and students in this study showed the participants perceived more importance on the nonacademic benefits of mentor/mentee relationships and the academic benefits were, instead, a byproduct of those relationships. The academic aspects of students' experiences in the university in question are positively affected in connection with the nonacademic mentorship efforts according to the participants involved in this study.

Discussion of the Results

Despite the initial intent for this study to focus on the academic effects of mentorship for Black male students, the results of this study indicated a strong connection between mentorship and nonacademic effects. The questionnaires and interview process used in this study were designed to explore the effects of mentorship for Black male students from various angles of analysis. As shown in Appendix B, the interview questions were developed to explore the usefulness of mentorship from the perspectives of faculty and staff involvement and student engagement. Moreover, the questions were designed to explore the social capital aspects of mentor/mentee relationships and the effects of mentorship on the factors of persistence discussed in Chapter 2. As previously mentioned, the three major themes that emerged during the analysis of the interview responses were: characteristics of mentors, keys to effective mentorship, and positive effects of mentorship.

Characteristics of Mentors

The theme of characteristics of mentorship relates to the primary research question in that the participants discussed the major characteristics they felt would facilitate effective mentorship from a mentor. Within the theme of characteristics of mentorship, interview respondents discussed the characteristics they felt were most important for both mentors and mentees to have in order for the mentor/mentee relationship to be effective. The most frequent characteristic for mentors was empathy. Respondents indicated empathy is extremely important in order to comprehend what students may require for effective mentorship. All of the respondents expressed the importance of empathy from faculty and staff because mentorship is more effective when the mentor is able to comprehend the internal and external factors that affect students on a daily basis.

Availability was another characteristic that was significantly important to both faculty/staff members and students. Students, in particular, expressed the need for mentors to be readily available to them, especially for students who may not have previous experience with mentorship. The student respondents stated that students who lack previous experience with mentors often lack direction and support outside of the classroom, which ultimately affects their engagement and persistence in their academic efforts.

The characteristic of authenticity/genuineness was, by far, most important to students as many of the student participants indicated the level of authenticity a faculty/staff member shows demonstrates the level to which they will put effort toward the mentor/mentee connection. The faculty/staff members in this study also indicated authenticity is important for mentors to have for the same reason as the students. Multiple faculty/staff members indicated students are able to tell when a faculty/staff member is not being genuine with them, and as a result, the student

becomes distrustful of the mentorship efforts the mentor is attempting to provide. The

implication is the less authentic the connection, the less effective the mentorship efforts are

because a lack of trust develops resulting in the students disregarding any possible mentorship

efforts mentors may attempt to provide.

Keys to Effective Mentorship

The keys to effective mentorship arose in the interview responses in connection to

discussion on the most effective qualities a mentor/mentee relationship contains. Engagement,

accountability, and encouragement were the three most frequent qualities that both students and

faculty/staff members articulated. Engagement by way of interpersonal connections between

students and faculty/staff members as well as students with their peers were the most discussed

notions. Participants in both groups indicated peer-to-peer engagement and mentorship are

extremely effective as students are most frequently going to open up to their peers as opposed to

a faculty/staff member whom they view as an authority figure. The fact students share the

common ground of attending the same university and reaching toward the same goals makes

students more susceptible and open to sharing personal issues and seek advice and assistance

from peers.

In terms of availability, this was something both faculty/staff and students voiced was

important both for one another and themselves. Faculty/staff members, in particular, expressed

the importance of availability and presenting students with alternatives should they be

unavailable. For example, if a mentor is unavailable for any reason, other equally capable

mentors should be readily available to assist the students with their needs. Students expressed

faculty/staff should be available for them not only when seeking guidance or assistance, but also

in terms visibility at student functions and programs developed by students. Several student

participants indicated faculty/staff members sometimes lack availability during student functions, or the same faculty/staff members attend the student functions, leading to students developing the belief that faculty/staff are uncaring for the students.

Both faculty/staff and student groups expressed the importance of encouragement and discussed how mentorship purely by nature helps to facilitate encouragement. Faculty/staff members particularly conveyed the importance of mentorship in facilitating encouragement, not only with academic endeavors, but also with helping students develop networking connections beyond the university into the workforce. They stated mentors are commonly available to verbally and nonverbally maintain self-confidence and self-efficacy as well as help to facilitate persistence both academically and nonacademically.

Positive Effects of Mentorship

Positive effects of mentorship in the context of this study arose in relation to the keys to effective mentorship. A majority of the participants indicated mentorship, by nature, exemplifies, develops, and enhances various positive effects when correctly implemented. According to both groups, the nature of effective mentorship helps to develop impactful relationships, that is, strong bonds between students and their peers as well as with faculty and staff at the university. Participants also indicated impactful connections for Black male students with potential employers and with recruiters during career fairs and other similar functions reap benefits of effective mentorship from faculty/staff members.

Meaningful experiences were another area in which both groups indicated proper mentorship implemented correctly helps to develop and enhance. In the context of the university setting, meaningful experiences refer to experiences that help facilitate students' caring and engagement with the university. This includes academic experiences; classroom experiences and

supplemental instruction experiences, as well as nonacademic experiences; interactions with other students and faculty/staff members, extracurricular activities, or groups; and personal development. Students and faculty/staff members indicated the nature of effective mentorship helps facilitate such experiences for students.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to Literature

The conceptual framework developed for this study was guided by social capital theory. Results from previous research using social capital theory as a basis for exploring mentoring relationships between faculty/staff and students supported the results of the current study. Griffin (2013) discussed social capital in relation to Black professors' interactions with Black students. The researcher uncovered recurrent themes relating to the positive and negative effects of professors' interactions with Black students. A commitment to success and the ability to maintain a somewhat informal connection with students were two positive themes Griffin discovered (pp. 175–176). The results of the current study uncovered the same themes in the interview responses from both faculty/staff members and Black male students. All of the participants noted that mentorship plays a significant role in Black male students' success, and several faculty/staff members noted a commitment to success for their mentees.

Griffin (2013) also presented findings regarding negative effects of professors' interactions with Black students, finding professors cited a lack of reciprocity and a significant drain in their time and energy when working with Black students (pp. 176–177). In the current study, multiple faculty/staff members and multiple students acknowledged the level of time commitment required for faculty/staff members to maintain mentoring relationships with students. Multiple faculty/staff members also acknowledged that with regard to mentorship, faculty and staff members are typically not financially compensated for their time as mentors.

However, those same faculty/staff members noted that, while that is the case, it does not nor should it serve as a deterrent for themselves or other faculty/staff members to serve as mentors for students. In terms of reciprocity, many of the participants mentioned both mentors and mentees should be willing and able to contribute equal time and energy/effort in establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships. However, contrary to Griffin (2013), the participants did not indicate such contributions were a deterrent or a negative result of maintaining such relationships.

Perceptions of Mentorship

The results of this study were virtually identical to those from Moschetti and Hudley (2015) who developed a qualitative phenomenological study to explore the perceptions of mentorship from first-generation, working-class White students in community college. Using interview methods for data collection, the researchers found the perceptions of the students revolved around four main themes: institutional support, personal characteristics, family support, and financial resources (p. 242). According to the researchers, 80% of the participants, "reported that the transition from high school to community college was challenging and that institutional support was typically lacking" (p. 243). This coincides with the results in the current study as many of the student participants reported having difficulty finding their bearings when first entering the university. One student also raised a hypothetical situation describing the ease with which it would be possible for a first-time student in the university to be lost when attending the university. One of the faculty/staff members responded in kind stating the environment in a higher education institute is vastly different from that of high school, and it is very easy for a student to have difficulty fitting in or finding their way.

Contrary to the results of this study, Moschetti and Hudley (2015) found, "personal responsibility was repeatedly mentioned when students discussed their current academic progress and expectations about their future" (p. 244). Further, the students in the study stated their academic achievement was directly correlated to a sense of personal responsibility as opposed to connections within the institute or encouragement from parents. Self-effort and time management were cited as specific factors that contributed to their advancement (p. 244). On the other hand, in the current study, students articulated that the combination of self-efficacy and encouragement from mentors and peers were the catalyst that helped facilitate and reinforce their academic achievement and persistence.

Effects of Mentorship

The focus on the effects of mentorship specifically on academic persistence was significantly influenced by Wendt's (2014) mixed methods study exploring the effects of reciprocal mentoring on minority male student persistence. The researcher also sought to explore the effects that reciprocal mentoring would have on students' general academic experience as well (p. 34). The researcher used semistructured interviews and questionnaires on the qualitative side as well as two quantitative surveys to explore the subject of minority male student persistence and academic experience in connection to reciprocal mentoring. Critical race theory was the theoretical framework backing the exploration of the topic.

Following data analysis, the researcher uncovered six different codes in connection with the interview responses. Academics, college experience, extraneous dialogue, logistics, mentoring, and personhood were the six primary codes that emerged in the researcher's analysis. (pp. 54–59). Using a secondary qualitative tool that the researcher termed, "Letter to my son," the researcher discovered six other codes that emerged in the written dialogue from the

participants. All 12 codes the researcher discovered in this mixed methods study closely

resembled or were identical to those found in the current study. For example, the codes of

characteristics and culture closely resembled the theme of characteristics of mentors, and the

code related to shared identity in the current study.

In the current study, both faculty/staff and student participants discussed the importance

of shared identity in terms of race as a significant contributor to effective mentorship

relationships between faculty/staff and Black male students. Several of the participants indicated

the need for students to be able to find faculty/staff members or other informal mentors who

"look like them," which was a trait that the participants linked to empathy and shared

experiences. Additionally, the faculty/staff participants indicated having other faculty/staff

members who "looked like them" would help increase Black male students' sense of inclusion

and comfort within the university.

Factors of Persistence

In a quantitative case study, Heaney and Fisher (2011) discussed the factors that

contribute to the persistence of 1st-year conditionally-admitted students at a public university (p.

66). The researchers' study included 139 participants and spanned 18 months. For data

collection, the researchers used survey data to explore the persistence of the students surveyed.

The survey tool utilized was the College Persistence Questionnaire.

> The CPQ is a tool for identifying and planning early intervention for students whose
>
> scores indicate they may be at greater risk for departure, and it collects data around six
>
> factors: Academic Integration, Social Integration, Supportive Services, Degree
>
> Commitment, Institutional Commitment, and Academic Conscientiousness. (Heaney &
>
> Fisher, 2011, p. 66)

The survey tool was used to test the characteristics students have that may create a lack of persistence and retention for the students (labeled as input characteristics) as well as environmental factors within the higher education environment that could contribute to diminished persistence and retention (labeled as environmental characteristics), and students' outcomes and personality factors following experience within the higher education environment (pp. 68–70). In terms of the input characteristics, the researchers' findings showed students' reasons for entering college played more of a role in determining their persistence than did their individual characteristics (p. 69). Regarding the environmental factors, student interactions with faculty, coursework facilitating advancement toward students' goals, and students' use of academic resources were among the contributing factors to facilitating persistence for students (p. 70).

Palmer and Maramba (2012) explored the conditions that are conducive to academic persistence for Black males in a historically Black college or university (HBCU). The researchers used a qualitative approach, interviewing four participants involved in the student affairs department of the HBCU in question. All of the participants involved in the study were Black and three of the students were female (p. 101). "Collectively, they had more than 46 years of experience working in student affairs, with a special interest on student retention and persistence" (p. 101). All of the participants involved in the study participated in one primary interview followed by a secondary phone interview for clarification purposes.

In terms of their findings, the researchers uncovered two major themes in the analysis of the interview responses. The themes were "authentic caring" and "engagement matters," which encompassed engagement outside of the classroom and non-academic engagement in the classroom (p. 104). The overall purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of the

participants regarding the factors that contribute to their feelings of mattering and overall engagement within the university. The abovementioned themes were the primary themes uncovered that related to the conditions the student affairs participants felt were most important to creating such conditions in the university.

In relation to the present study, the findings from Palmer and Maramba (2012) closely aligned with the findings in the present study. In particular, in the current study, faculty/staff and student participants all cited authenticity and caring separately as factors that contribute to a positive experience and effective mentorship for Black men. The faculty/staff participants in the study discussed the importance of engagement, both in and out of the classroom, as pertinent and vital to overall academic engagement with Black male students as a facilitator of academic persistence. Therefore, the findings from Palmer and Maramba's qualitative study confirmed and supported the findings in the present study, lending more credence to the perceptions regarding effective mentorship and the importance of the aforementioned factors of persistence.

Another study that was significantly influential in the design and method of the present study was that of Simmons (2013). The researcher used a qualitative case study to determine the factors involved in the persistence and retention of African American men involved in a student organization at a predominantly White institution (PWI; p. 65). The researcher used a semistructured interview process to determine the perceptions from two African American students involved in the student organization to explore the factors that facilitate their persistence and retention in the program and the university as a whole. The researcher also used supplemental data including notes and observations while attending meetings with the student organization in question as well as data from the university's website pertaining to the student organization.

Following data analysis and coding, the researcher discovered four specific themes inherent in the interview responses from both students interviewed. Those themes were "college preparedness, high aspirations and goals, social connections and relationships, and growth through student organizational commitment" (p. 66). In summation, one of the participants felt the college preparedness efforts from their high school were lacking while the other participant felt the college preparation from their own school was not lacking. Both participants in the study discussed having high aspirations for themselves once they graduated from their respective degree programs. Additionally, both participants cited social interactions within their university as highly important to facilitate persistence for themselves. Equally important to both participants were their participation in the student organization as a whole in facilitating their persistence (pp. 67–70).

The findings in this qualitative case study helped inform the qualitative methodology and the topics of discussion in the interview process to determine the effects of mentorship on persistence and the factors that contribute to that persistence for Black male students in the university. Overall, with the exception of the findings related to transitional preparedness from high school to college, the findings in Simmons's (2013) study were consistent with the findings in the present qualitative case study. All of the participants interviewed in the present study noted the importance of interactions with faculty/staff and students as vital to their persistence and engagement with the university. Consequently, their persistence and engagement would, according to the participants, result in stronger academic performance because of the interactions available to them.

Faculty/Staff Engagement

The results in Heaney and Fisher's (2011) study were partially consistent with the findings in the present study. Faculty/staff members and students both cited interactions with faculty/staff and facilitating goal achievement as the major factors in which mentorship played a significant role. The influence of students' reasons for entering higher education on academic persistence were less consistent with the results of the current findings. While some students did cite the importance of the reasons for entering higher education, the significance of such decisions was less important in comparison to the mentorship efforts and the overall resources available to the students in the university. Consistent with the current study, the findings related to personal characteristics not having an effect on student persistence were also indicated in the interview responses of the present study.

Determining the perceptions of faculty/staff engagement in the current study and its effects on student engagement, persistence, and success were heavily influenced by Harrison and Palacios's (2014) quantitative assessment study. In this study, the researchers analyzed data from the Community College Survey of Men, "an institutional-level needs assessment tool employed by community colleges to examine factors affecting the success of historically underrepresented and underserved men" (p. 137). The researchers used the assessment tool to gauge faculty-staff engagement as a contributing factor to academic persistence. In particular, the researchers were focused on the level to which faculty conveyed a welcoming demeanor, facilitated a sense of belonging, and facilitated welcomeness outside of the classroom.

Regarding the findings of their study, the researchers noted, "When faculty members create conditions where students feel welcome to engage in the class by asking questions, responding to queries, and inquiring about their progress, then students will engage with faculty" (p. 141). Additionally, when faculty members are genuinely interested in student interactions outside of the

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classroom and facilitate feelings of belonging in the classroom, it helps facilitate student engagement inside and outside of the classroom (p. 141). These findings were significantly influential in the overall design and the findings of the present study.

In the present study, faculty/staff members and students alike cited the importance of engagement between faculty/staff and students in order to facilitate student welcoming. The student participants in the present study stated it was extremely important that faculty/staff members showed genuine concern for their feelings and their overall position in life and showed genuine interest in their lives. This engagement also extends to outside of the classroom as most of the faculty/staff participants cited examples of how they personally, as well as other mentors across the campus, go out of their way to interact with and otherwise engage with students outside of the classroom. This includes having lunch with students and generally engaging in welcoming and friendly conversations unrelated to academic performance or academic standing. All of the participants articulated the importance of caring both from the standpoint of the faculty/staff members and the students alike. Both groups stated showing caring and expressing an overall welcoming demeanor from mentors as well as general faculty/staff members was highly conducive to helping the students' persistence and academic engagement within the university.

Case Study Design

The findings in Holley and Caldwell's (2011) qualitative case study exploring the challenges of designing a mentorship program for doctoral students and the effects of mentoring for doctoral students helped inform the research design for my study. The researchers designed the study to explore the ways mentorship programs can be developed and enhanced across an entire institution to benefit a larger contingent of the university population (p. 244). The researchers explored a preexisting mentorship program known as the Tide Together program. According to the researchers, "the program targets students from underrepresented minorities

(African American, Hispanic, or Native American), female students enrolled in STEM disciplines, and first-generation college graduates" (p. 246).

In terms of the findings in this study related to faculty/student interactions, Holley and Caldwell (2011) found "individual characteristics such as race, gender, age, or family relationships also strongly influenced the relationship between students and faculty mentors" (p. 248). The researchers also explored peer-to-peer mentoring relationships and discovered they occurred in a more formal fashion in that more advanced students served as mentors to less advanced students in the same program. Additionally, students equal in terms of advancement through the program served as mentors and helped each other whenever possible. Regarding the challenges to designing and implementing mentorship programs for doctoral students, the researchers found the challenges to such an endeavor are depending on several factors including student and faculty willingness to participate as well as the financial capabilities of the institution attempting to develop such mentorship efforts.

One particularly noteworthy detail in the researcher's study was the fact students could request mentors of the same gender, race, or academic program as themselves. This is something that both faculty/staff and students mentioned would be beneficial regarding mentorship at the Texas university used in the current study. Although the current study did not focus on doctoral students, many of the findings in Holley and Caldwell's (2011) study aligned with the findings in this qualitative case study. The interview questions in the present study explored the perceptions of both faculty/staff members and students regarding the benefits of several types of mentorship including peer-to-peer mentoring and formal mentoring types such as one-on-one and distance mentoring. Many of the respondents in both groups named peer-to-peer mentoring as one of the most effective forms of mentoring due to the equality inherent in such mentor/mentee

relationships with the connection being that both participants are students of the same university. One-on-one mentoring was also named as one of the more beneficial forms of mentoring for Black male students in particular, which also aligns with the findings from Holley and Caldwell.

Snowden and Hardy's (2012) ethnographic case study investigating the effects of peer mentorship on student learning informed both the decision to focus the present study on the effects of mentorship as well as explore the effects mentorship has on a specific population involved with such mentorship efforts. In the ethnographic case study, the researchers used various qualitative methods including interviews and journaling to explore the topic of the effect of peer to peer mentoring on student learning. Although the findings from this study pertained to peer to peer mentoring in educational systems in the United Kingdom, the findings were still relevant and useful for informing the present study in terms of mentorship and its effects on student learning efforts.

The findings from Snowden and Hardy's (2012) study revealed students who have support from a peer mentor had a higher score in assessments of performance in a health and social welfare course in the university compared to those students who did not have peer mentor support. Furthermore, the researchers found the mentors also benefited from the peer mentoring efforts as their scores in the same assessments were higher in comparison to both the mentees and students without mentor support (pp. 80–81). Where the ethnographic study did not align with the current study was in the area pertaining to the reasons why mentorship plays a role in enhancing students' learning. The present study focused entirely on the perceptions of mentorship, that is, whether or not mentorship was effective.

Many of the interview responses that the researchers presented in explaining the results of their study closely reflected similar thoughts and ideas in the interview responses in my

qualitative case study. For example, two of the participants in Snowden and Hardy's (2012) study stated they felt their mentor played a significant role in helping them to feel motivated and provided a means by which to discuss ideas (a sounding board), which was beneficial to the mentee. In my qualitative case study, both the faculty/staff respondent group and the student respondent group espoused that mentorship is capable of providing a sounding board for students to discuss ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and mentors help to provide advice when necessary. As such, the results in this ethnographic study supported my findings regarding the effects of mentorship on Black male students' academic engagement and performance.

The quantitative longitudinal study developed by Wood and Palmer (2013) was also influential in the design of the current study, particularly with regard to the sample population and the topic of analysis. The researchers used information gleaned from the use of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, "a national study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the purpose of understanding the experience of students in postsecondary education" (p. 226). Using participant data from 2,200 respondents consisting of minority males across 380 public 2-year colleges (p. 227), the researchers analyzed the personal goals of Black male students in 2-year colleges as a means to aid in Black male students' academic and psychological development (p. 222).

According to the findings of their study, the researchers compared the personal goals of Black male students in comparison to non-Black males. Their findings showed 67.2% of Black men in one cohort deemed community leadership as an important goal while 40.6% of non-Black men in the same cohort deemed the same goal as important. Furthermore, 88.1% of Black men in a separate cohort deemed being helpful to others as an important goal compared to 75.6% of non-Black men in the same cohort (p. 230). The findings regarding Black male personal goals

were very similar to those discovered in my study. In the analysis of the interview responses, the student participants often discussed the effect mentorship has on developing self-efficacy and goal setting as well as facilitating the opportunities to achieve the goals the students set.

While the sample population used in Wood and Palmer's (2013) study was influential in determining the sample population for this study, the specific focus on personal goals differed as did the comparison of Black male student goals with non-Black male student goals. The focus on personal goals did, however, become a component of the present study, therefore making the researchers' findings pertinent to help develop the present study. This study also influenced reflections on recommendations for future research, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 1, time constraints remained a significant limitation in this study with regard to the amount of time available for data collection and analysis. With more time available to conduct this study, results likely may have been more in-depth in comparison to the current results. The small sample size for the individual groups involved in the study is another limitation that could have been avoided by including a larger sample per group. Additionally, the results of this study may have benefited from developing a multi-case study as opposed to the single case study design that was used. However, given the limitations in access to universities where I could have further conducted this study, the single case study design was the only viable design for this research study.

An unexpected limitation occurred in the faculty/staff participants in this study. When this study was initially designed and developed, it was with the intention of including faculty and staff members regardless of race or gender. The initial thought process was to design this study in an attempt to garner responses from different perspectives both in terms of gender and race

compared to the Black male students involved in this study. However, the participants to whom I was referred were all Black faculty/staff members, which subsequently altered the scope of the study and also altered the expectations of this study as well.

As previously discussed, the single case study design for this study resulted in limitations with the generalizability of the results from the data analysis. Because the study took place at a single Texas university and used a small sample size of 10 total participants, this limits the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study also precludes generalizability. However, this limitation was somewhat circumvented given the wide range in experience levels of the faculty/staff members involved in the study and the age groups of the student participants.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The findings from this study provided insight into the perceptions of effective mentorship for Black male students and the role that effective mentorship has on Black male students' academic engagement, persistence, and success in higher education. There are implications from the results of this study with regard to developing and enhancing mentorship efforts as well as instituting mentorship programs specifically geared toward Black male students. The implications for theory pertaining to the study of mentorship in connection to academic engagement, persistence, and success for Black male students are also discussed in this section of the chapter.

Implications for Practice

The most valuable implication from the results of this study is that it provides insight into the minds of the Black male students directly impacted by current mentorship efforts in the specific university where the study took place. As such, the results from this study hold

implications for enhancements or alterations to current mentorship efforts for Black male students at the specific university based on the desires and concerns that the Black male students discussed in the semistructured interviews.

Additionally, implications exist for mentorship across postsecondary educational institutions in general. The results from this study may inform other mentorship programs outside of this specific university in order to help develop effective mentorship for Black male students in other universities. These implications extend to other areas of the educational sphere as well, including secondary education as some of the participants in this study indicated mentorship early in Black male students' educational careers would be extremely beneficial for them to establish a set path for the student. Some of the participants indicated junior high is one grade level where students may be most receptive to mentorship efforts; therefore, the results from this study may carry implications for that grade level as well.

Implications for Policy

The results from this study have implications in a broader sense compared to the implications for practice. In terms of the implications for policy, the most valuable implication derived from this study is policy with regard to implementing mentorship programs in higher education for Black male students. This not only refers to enhancements or alterations as discussed above, but implementation of complete mentorship programs geared toward helping Black male students develop effective techniques for academic engagement, persistence, and success, as well as developing the skills and responsibilities necessary for success beyond the academic field. The results from this study demonstrate areas where both faculty/staff members and students feel current mentorship efforts lack and areas in education in general that are lacking mentorship efforts entirely. Thus, the findings in this study create opportunities for

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policy to establish mentorship programs based on the necessities and requirements directly from the students.

Implications for Theory

The main theory this study used was that of social capital theory as a basis of analysis and discussion in the semistructured interviews. Social capital theory was used as the lens of analysis to determine faculty/staff and Black male students' thoughts and perceptions of mentorship and its successfulness on academic engagement, persistence, and success. Despite the academic focus of this study, the results indicated a strong connection with social capital aspects including reciprocity and the positive and negative effects for both mentor and mentee (Griffin, 2013). However, while participants noted effective mentorship takes time and effort, none of the faculty/staff members indicated this was a detrimental aspect of the mentor/mentee relationship. It was simply a necessary aspect of that relationship.

The connection between mentorship and academic foci still existed, as participants indicated effective mentorship and assistance for things outside of the classroom will ultimately play a role in a student's performance inside the classroom. This coincides with Gaddis (2012), who found that "the longer a match with a mentor is and the more time spent together, in terms of number and length of meetings, the greater the positive effect on change in GPA" (p. 1251). Although the results indicated a connection between mentors and mentees interacting and a positive effect on academic performance and indicators (such as GPA), there was no correlation between those indicators and the length of time the mentor/mentee relationship was maintained.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Research</div>

A number of recommendations occurred following the completion of this study and the resulting findings. While this study focused on Black male students, further research could be

conducted to determine the perceptions of mentorship from Black female students in the same institution or in another institution altogether. Although the frequency of the emergent codes was discussed in this study, the qualitative nature of this study prevented further exploration into the level of viability and the level of importance each theme had for the participants. Therefore, quantitative studies could be conducted to determine the strength of perceptions from the faculty/staff members and students of mentorship. Correlatively, quantitative studies could be conducted to determine the level of effectiveness of mentorship for Black male students as opposed to focusing on qualitative perceptions.

Several of the participants also mentioned the lack of engagement from faculty/staff members. Both of the participant groups noted limited faculty/staff engagement at student events and student-run organizational meetings. Therefore, an area of study could pertain to perceptions, factors, keys, effectiveness, and quantitative levels of faculty/staff engagement.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the results of the single case qualitative study focused on exploring the perceptions of mentorship in relation to academic achievement and persistence for Black male students. This study also investigated the importance and effects that mentorship have on the academic engagement, achievement, and persistence of Black male students in the higher education setting. The results from this study indicated mentorship extends beyond academic engagement and encouragement and delves into social engagement and encouragement in order to facilitate effective and positive relationships between students, faculty, and staff.

The implications of the results of this study indicate a stronger connection between social engagement and development and academic achievement, persistence, and success, particularly for Black male students in higher education compared to direct academic foci from mentorship

efforts. The information obtained from the qualitative responses from the interviewees in this study may also help to bridge a gap in current literature regarding the specific perspectives of Black male students on mentorship from faculty and staff in higher education. The primary goal of this study was to potentially assist educators, faculty, and staff members in universities enhance available mentorship efforts to focus on mentorship for Black male students.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Do you have experience with mentorship programs outside of the college experience? (ex: athletics, church, career assessment, etc.)

      Yes   No

2. Would you be open to having a mentor/being a mentor for educational purposes?

      Yes   No

3. Do you think there is added pressure to succeed in college for minority students?

      Yes   No

4. Do you think mentorship programs could help ease the pressure that minority students face?

      Yes   No

5. Do you think a mentorship program would be beneficial for minority students to progress through their educational endeavors?

      Yes   No

6. How important do you think mentorship efforts are for students IN GENERAL to succeed in college?

      Very Important   Somewhat Important   Not Very Important   Not Important

Appendix B: Universal Interview Questions

Topic: **Perceptions of Mentorship**

1. Do you think mentorship would increase success in college? Why or why not?

- Skills/experience more important than age/grade level/seniority?
- What kind of skills/experience necessary?

2. What do you think is the most effective form of mentorship for students? (peer mentoring, group mentoring, one-on-one mentoring, distance mentoring, etc).

- Other forms still useful? Less useful?
- Different skills required for each type?

Topic: **Faculty and staff Involvement**

1. How important (if at all) do you think it is for faculty and staff to be involved in students' academic efforts (aside from teaching/instruction)?

- Besides instruction, what more can faculty/staff do?
- Outside of the classroom?

2. Do you think the daily presence of faculty and staff at the college would increase the consistency that students ask for help/mentorship?

- Other factors involved in student interaction?
- Requirements for effective faculty/staff involvement?

Topic: **Social Capital Theory**

1. Do you think it's important for both mentor and mentee to have an equal stake in an effective mentor/mentee relationship?

- What should be required from mentors & mentees?
- Should they use reward system or is mentoring connection sufficient?

2. As a student/faculty member, what are you willing to contribute as a mentor/mentee?

- What would you require from a mentor/mentee for equal, effective mentor/mentee relationship?

- What mutual benefits would you look for?

Topic: **Factors of Persistence**

1. Do you believe mentorship will help promote consistency throughout college (creating goals, challenges, positive reinforcement)?

- Beyond college? Workforce?
- Is it necessary *prior* to college?

2. How important is guidance, of any kind, for Black male students in terms of continuing college until graduation?

- More important for minority students?
- Are there proven benefits (as best as you know)?

Topic: **Student Engagement**

1. Do you think mentorship programs are useful to create connections between students, faculty, and staff?

- Other factors involved in student engagement?
- Does race/gender/anything else play a role?

2. What on-campus resources or activities provided by mentors have enhanced innovative ideas when participating in mentorship programs?

- What resources are most important?
- How can they be improved?

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Greetings,

My name is JaVaski McDonald, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education at the Concordia University–Portland. I am pursuing a Doctoral degree in Higher Education. I am currently working on my dissertation discussing the effects of mentorship on academic persistence, engagement, success, and completion for Black male students.

I am looking to interview current [university name redacted] students to discuss collegiate experiences, and I am reaching out to ask if you would be interested in volunteering for my study. As a participant, you will participate in one 60-90-minute interview with me in a private space on the [University name redacted] campus. With your prior permission, I will be recording the interview and transcribing it. I will then provide you with the transcription so that you may review it and check for accuracy. I will NOT be using your name in any of the recordings. Instead, I will use a numbering system so that there is no personal information in the report.

Additional information for participants of this study:
   • Participation within this study is completely voluntary: you don't have to participate in the study and after volunteering, you may withdraw at any time without consequence.
   • Your responses during the interview process and in the written questionnaires will remain anonymous and confidential and will be in my sole possession until such time as I scrap any and all information associated with this study (approx. 3 years after this study is concluded).
   • The data collected from the interviews will be used for research purposes only and under no circumstances will I disclose the information for any other reason.
   • There are no known risks for participants in completing this study.

If you would be interested in helping with my study or have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me at [email redacted].

Best,

JaVaski McDonald, Doctoral Student
Dept. of Education

Dr. Edward Kim, Department Chair and Professor
Faculty Chair, Concordia University–Portland

Study Title: The Mentor & Mentee Perspective: Mentorship from Faculty and Staff for Black Male Students in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: JaVaski McDonald
Email: [email redacted]
Phone: [phone number redacted]

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Edward Kim
Email: [email redacted]
Phone: [phone number redacted]

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about the effects of mentorship on the persistence and academic success of Black male students in higher education. The information gathered will be used in a thorough analysis of the perceptions of Black male students as well as faculty members regarding the effects of mentorship on academic persistence and academic success. You are being asked to participate because you are among the population of students (Black male students currently active in a mentoring program) who fit the criteria necessary for this study.

PROCEDURES

1. If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in the following:
   - One 2-minute questionnaire for background and participant data.
   - One 60- to 90-minute interview about your perceptions on mentorship and its effects on your academic persistence and success.

We will set up a time for you to meet the investigator in an available private space on the University campus. You will first complete the questionnaire and then participate in the interview for a total of 60 to 90 minutes of participation.

2. If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one brief interview to be conducted at a time that is convenient to you. Each interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. During the interviews, you will be asked questions that pertain to your engagement with the campus and its faculty members, your perceptions of mentorship efforts on campus, and your perception of having faulty members active in a mentoring relationship with students. The interview will be audio-recorded, and the researcher may take notes as well.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will not be used in the study, and you will be provided an anonymous identifier to obscure your identity. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a secret code to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

In the event that some of the survey or interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time. Should you feel discomfort after participating and you are a [University name redacted] student, you may contact the University Health Services for counseling services at list.

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES
There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team, and the [University name redacted] Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION

There will not be any payment or compensation for participation in this study; participation in this study will be strictly voluntary.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, JaVaski McDonald: [phone number redacted] or [email redacted].

This project was approved by the [University name redacted] on [date]. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair or to IRB Regulatory Manager

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Study Participant   **Signature** of Study Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

Appendix E: Concordia University Consent Form

Research Study Title: Persistence and Success Through Mentorship from Faculty and Staff for Black Male Students in Higher Education
Principal Investigator: JaVaski McDonald
Research Institution: Concordia University, Portland, OR
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Edward Kim

Purpose and what you will be doing:
The purpose of this questionnaire is to interview Black male students to determine their thoughts and perceptions on and effectiveness of mentorship efforts in community college. We expect approximately ten volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on February 1, 2019 and end enrollment on February 25, 2019. To be in the study, you will respond to questionnaires and participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. Doing these things should take less than 60 to 90 minutes of your time.

Risks:
There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will not be used in the study, and you will be provided an anonymous identifier to obscure your identity. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a secret code to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:
Information you provide will help to shed light on what is important to you as a student regarding mentorship as you work to complete your degree program. You could benefit this by sharing your experiences regarding mentorship and possibly create conversations on how to make mentorship efforts better for students in a comparable situation to you (students entering community college).

Confidentiality:
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. Interviews will be recorded; all recordings will be deleted immediately following transcription and member-checking. All other study-related materials will be kept for 3 years from the study conclusion and then destroyed. The only exception to this is if you tell us about abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, JaVaski McDonald at [email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, [name redacted] (email [email redacted] or call [phone number redacted]).

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

JaVaski McDonld
_____   10/6/2018
Participant Name   Date

_____   10/6/2018
Participant Signature   Date

Edward Kim
_____   10/6/2018
Investigator Name   Date

_____   10/6/2018
Investigator Signature   Date

Investigator: JaVaski McDonald
Email: [redacted]
c/o: Professor Dr. Edward H. Kim, Ph.D.
Concordia University–Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221

Appendix F: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically informed, rigorously researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

_*JaVaski McDonald*_____
  Digital Signature

__JaVaski McDonald_____
  Name (Typed)

__August 11, 2019_____
  Date