

ABSTRACT

SENEGAL, PAMELA GIBSON. A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Community College Program. (Under the direction of Dr. Tuere Bowles.)

This research is a qualitative case study exploring the experiences of African American male mentoring community college students. Such programs have proliferated throughout higher education, over the past 20 years, in an effort to improve the retention, performance and goal attainment of African American males. The theoretical framework shaping the study was Critical Race Theory, which acknowledges the centrality of race in every aspect of culture in the United States, including higher education. Three research questions guided this study: (1) How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College? (2) What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program? (3) What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

In the case study tradition, I delved into the program extensively through a review of program related documents, program staff interviews, focus groups with mentoring participants, multiple participant interviews which included narrative biography, and expressive photography regarding their mentoring experiences. The educational journey findings revealed that participants described that experience as being emotionally uplifting, as a source for gaining access to critical knowledge, and as an avenue for personal development. The cultural identity findings indicated that there was little deliberate movement through Cross's Racial Identity Development model but that through examination of other cultural signifiers including expressive attire, participants grew in their perception of

their unique culture. The academic progress findings showed that students benefited from positive interactions with BEAAM staff members and from several of the program's structural elements.

There were three overall conclusions based on the research. The first conclusion was that participants learned navigation strategies that offset encounters with institutionalized racism. The second conclusion was that participants embraced affirming counter narratives as part of growth in their cultural identity. The final conclusion was that the program's staff and structure functions in an interest convergence capacity in that it was a means for establishing racial equality for students by enabling them to attain their educational goals. At the same time the program met the larger community's need to have this population contribute to the community through increased levels of education and employment.

A Case Study of a Southeastern African American
Male Mentoring Community College Program

by
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DEDICATION

To my Lord and savior – thank-you for providing the strength to finish this race. To my husband for his faith, his strength, and his unwavering support of this dream. To my mother for inspiring me by going before me and proving that this can be done. To my sister for reminding me to take periodic breaks, and then to get back to work. To my dad for being a wonderful role model of what it means to be a good son and father, without your influence, I would not be the woman I am today. To my step-sons and son – thank-you for reminding me of all the wonderful possibilities for African American men. I love each of you dearly.

BIOGRAPHY

Pamela Gibson Senegal is a step mother and mother to three African American males and the wife of a conscious African American male who for many years helped to run a Rites of Passage program for African American male youth. She is the daughter of a mother who spent years as a public school counselor, transformed herself into a public school administrator, retired and within six months formed an educational consulting business. She is also the daughter of a father who is a retired military commander, a self taught early computer technologist, and loving son who cares for his ailing mother in his home. She is the sister to a loving, generous spirited sister who offers me unconditional love and support.

Pamela has spent the past eleven years working in North Carolina community colleges, in a variety of roles from continuing education to intrapreneurial programming, and career and technical education. Pamela also enjoys teaching a college success course for new students. She has been involved in numerous civic and community organizations, serving on the boards of Charlotte Sister Cities, Dress for Success, the Dispute Settlement Center of Orange County, Professional Women's Network, and the Ronald McDonald House of Durham. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her family. She also enjoys reading, cooking, traveling, biking, and hiking North Carolina parks.

Throughout her life, mentors have played both formal and informal roles, guiding and ordering her path. Participating in a formal mentoring program upon relocating to this area several years ago, eased her transition back into professional and personal affiliations. This research presented a wonderful opportunity for Pamela to delve into an aspect of her life that is increasingly important - African American male success.

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PROLOGUE

I was never thought of as college material by anyone at my high school, even though I was a really good student. I guess I didn't look the part. But you know what's funny? I didn't really see myself at college either. I figured I'd find a job, maybe run a little hustle on the side. But all that changed when my mom got it in her head that I was going to college, even though she didn't go, and we didn't have any money. So one day she drove me to the college that was closest, which happened to be this community college. While we were figuring out where to park, she was talking to a campus security officer and he told her all about this mentoring program for minority males. Honestly, I didn't want to join anything. I thought that joining clubs was for punks. But to make my mom happy, I went to a meeting, and was surprised at what was going on. They were talking about how to pay for college, about how to present myself, and they were even offering paid internships so I could keep some money in my pocket. And what I really liked is that they weren't talking down to me. I could tell they cared about what they were saying, cause they kept telling us about mistakes they'd made or things that had happened to them, but yet they finished college. Most of them had Master's degrees. I realized that I needed what they were offering. There was so much I didn't know about college and I didn't want to end up like some of my friends: dead or in jail. And now, after four semesters in the program, it feels like not only do I have the knowledge to succeed here and go get my bachelors, but I also have a family; a group of people who look out for me and who I can go to with any kind of problem. I'm glad I'm part of this mentoring program.

This constructed composite from data collected over the course of this research epitomized the complex, varied stories of African American males in higher education. It exemplified the potential outcomes when mentoring programs are delivered in a structured format with caring staff.

That the term mentoring is a commonly understood term is both a strength and a weakness of such named programs. Because it is widely understood, but not clearly defined, it is a concept that is easily embraced throughout all levels in society, including education. The weakness in this common understanding is that it is a term that has not received the critical analysis it deserves, particularly at the community college level, with African American males as the focus. For purposes of this research, the term mentoring will be used to describe a formal program characterized by the deliberate matching of a mentor and mentee, the establishment of outcomes for the relationship, and specific programming to enhance the program's goals.

Pseudonyms and Acronyms Employed in This Study

AAMM – African American Male Mentoring

AAS – Associate of Applied Science

AA – Associate of Arts

AS – Associate of Science

BEAAM – Brothers Empowering African American Males

CRT – Critical Race Theory

GULP – Giving Up Life's Pressures

HBCU – Historically Black College and University

IT – Information Technology

PWI – Predominantly White Institution

Richard Hooks – Local Program Director

SCC – Sussex Community College

TC – Training Coordinators

Tyler Height – State Mentoring Director

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is an old concept. It was first seen in ancient Africa, with its extensive kinship systems and rites of passage initiations that helped guide the young in the distinctive ways of a particular culture. “These rites, arose from the societies’ sacred history and traditional customs” (Warfield-Coppock, 1992, p. 473). The peculiar institution of slavery practiced in the United States interrupted that process of passing along language, cultural norms, history, and traditions for the African American community. Without guides to aid in these life transitions, important aspects of culture were lost and novice community members were left to make their own determinations about what it meant to be a member of the African American culture. A new narrative, largely negative, originated from the dominant culture was designed to dehumanize Africans in support of capitalism and its system of slavery. Instead of the historical narrative of Africans recounting ancient empires, which would have instilled pride and confidence, the dominant culture launched a pernicious campaign to portray Africans as savages, as less than human, and as a form of property to be owned and traded. Through legal, social, and cultural practices, these messages were firmly established. Today, African Americans continue to be haunted by this crusade, despite the formal removal of barriers that established those cultural myths. Constitutional changes, precedent setting legal cases, Presidential Executive orders, Civil Rights legislation, and integrated day-to-day practices make it clear that African Americans have the same rights as other citizens to, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Yet the stains of those original claims of African American inferiority have not yet faded away.

Systems of higher education mirror the traditions of society at large. It is no surprise then that the historical and philosophical foundations of African American adults and higher education echo the same racial tensions found in the broader community. Formal mentoring programs in higher education have been utilized to help African Americans navigate “ostensibly race neutral structures like education” (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999, p. 4). Mentoring is a process of guiding another (Levinson & Darrow, 1979) that results in the journey being made easier through the insights of one who has traveled a similar path. Mentors provide tangible proof that not only can the voyage be successfully navigated (Daloz, 1999), but that it is possible to do so in a way that preserves the essence of one’s being. Mentoring has a rich tradition in our general society and its importance is paralleled in the historical and philosophical foundations of African American adults and higher education.

The persistence rate of African American males in higher education lags behind that of their counterparts in every racial category. The Postsecondary Education Opportunity (2001) noted that “African American men had the lowest retention rates (33.8 percent) among both sexes and all racial and ethnic groups in higher education (Cuyjet, 2006). At community colleges, where African American males are most likely to begin their higher educational journeys (Phillippe, 2000), there are many factors associated with these poor rates of retention. Hagedorn, Maxwell, and Hampton (2002) described the issue by noting that “at community colleges, /the majority of/ students commute, have employment and/or family responsibilities, and are generally poorer than traditional four-year college students” (Tinto, Russo, & Kadel, 1994, p. 244). As a result of these broad economic based issues for

community college students, Hagedorn et al, went on to note that ultimately, “many community college students, especially African-American males, do not achieve their educational goals” (p. 244).

Mentoring programs at four-year institutions have generally been put into place as a means to increase retention and ultimately improve student graduation rates. College rankings, perceptions of the institution’s ability to meet student needs, and resources are at play when college graduation rates are lower than peer institutions (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003). As a result, in higher education, mentoring has taken on an important role in improving institutional rates of attainment and maintenance of critical measures of success.

Research over the past 50 years provides ample evidence of the value of formal mentoring for students in four-year higher educational settings largely through the development of a positive identity (Jacobi, 1991) and through increased engagement (Tinto, 2006). Some of the literature indicates that this type of mentoring may be more effective during the adolescent period, between the ages of 17 and 22 due to the developmental stage of the protégé (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006; Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006; Levinson & Darrow, 1979), which corresponds to the age of formal mentoring participants of color studied at four-year predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Bakari (1997) believed that the development of a positive racial and cultural identity for students of color is critical for their overall student development. There is even evidence of the power of these programs to buoy persons of color towards higher rates of persistence from four year institutions (Cuyjet, 2006).

Knowing that formal mentoring programs seem to improve the persistence of African American males and other students of color in four-year institutions potentially leads one to the conclusion that the same intervention should have a similar benefit for this population at community colleges. However, there are several important differences in the African American male populations at four-year institutions versus community colleges as noted in Table 1, African American Males at 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions. African American males at community colleges differ in significant ways from their four-year university peers in terms of age, socioeconomic status, levels of secondary preparation, self-efficacy, familial support, connection with a peer group, increased familial responsibilities, and a poor history of previous educational success (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2009; Jacobi, 1991) to name a few.

Table 1
African American Males at 2 Year and 4 Year Institutions

Characteristics	2 Year Institutions	4 Year Institutions
Age	Older	Younger
Socio Economic Status	Lower	Higher
Number of hours of outside employment	20+	10 or fewer
Secondary preparation level	Lower	Higher
Familial responsibilities	Higher	Lower

These differences are compounded by Levinson & Darrow’s (1979) work, supported by a ten year longitudinal study of the lives of ten men, including four African Americans, which indicated that mentoring may have little impact in the latter stages of a man’s life. Other researchers found that older, non-traditional aged students often did not connect to attempts at socialization in the same way that their traditional aged peers did. “Older students, who have already developed self-control and values typically identified with maturity, are less susceptible to socialization than their traditional counterparts” (Bean &

Metzner, 1985, p. 488). Similar results were found in a study of non-traditional aged mentoring participants at Empire State University. That research (Langer, 2008) showed that minority students were less likely to reach out to mentors for guidance or advocacy. Another study about mentoring non-traditional aged students (McLean, 2004) found a high level of apprehension on the part of mature students to be mentored by younger, traditional aged students. Such evidence indicated a need to serve non-traditional aged students through mentoring programs in a substantially different manner than used for traditional aged students. Formal mentoring programs at the community college level have experienced considerable growth over the past ten years (Crisp & Cruz, 2009), yet little research exists to describe the ways in which formal mentoring programs affect those participants.

Statement of the Problem

Because mentoring programs had such positive effects on other students (women, other minority groups) at four-year institutions, it was thought that it would have the same buoying effect on African American males. “Evidence shows that when black men have been given the opportunity to participate in higher education, and when well-conceived and formalized support systems are put into place to promote achievement, black men have been successful” (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997, p. 43). There is limited research to suggest that these support systems, conceived as formal mentoring programs, will have a similar effect on African American males at the community college level, because they differ in significant ways from their counterparts at four-year institutions.

Through an analysis of a particular African American Male Mentoring program, the problem this study addressed was to bridge the gap in our understanding of how community

college mentoring participants described their overall educational journeys. Participants also described the ways in which the program impacted their cultural identity development, and their academic progress. Gaining insight into the particular ways participation impacted this population will add to the collective understanding of this important intervention.

Purpose of the Study

Hence, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants experience their community college educational journeys and how their perception of a cultural identity shapes those experiences. It is anticipated that through their narratives, we will gain insight into the ways in which a mentoring program provides a structure for successful navigation through a particular higher education institution. Research questions guiding this work are as follows:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

Gaining insight into these questions will be best accomplished through a qualitative research design. A quantitative approach would leave a void in this complex story regarding the potential ways in which participation in mentoring programs influences the educational journeys, cultural identities, and academic progress of African American male community college students. The use of qualitative research prevents "context stripping and exclusion of

meaning and purpose” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 106) which separates the findings from their context, thereby limiting its relevance and presence within broader environments. In this manner, the research approach will yield rich, descriptive insights into the experiences and perceptions of African American male mentoring participants.

Conceptual Framework

The case study approach overlaps generously with some of the tenets of critical race theory (CRT), the theoretical frame that will be used to enclose this research. This frame allows the study to acknowledge the centrality of race when examining the experiences of African American males in formal mentoring programs in the community college system. CRT also provides an outlet to look at the participation of African American males in formal mentoring programs in a broader context that includes the intersection between race, gender, and class. Through storytelling and counter narratives, the often-marginalized voices of African American male community college students will have the opportunity to be heard.

The four tenets of CRT include: a) centrality of race, b) challenge to dominant ideology, c) importance of storytelling and experiential knowledge, d) commitment to social justice. By using the tenets of CRT to critically examine the mentoring program, it will be helpful as an analysis tool for a program that exists within educational structures that abound with structural inequities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998).

CRT begins with the assumption that race and racism are normal aspects of the culture. As such, critical race theorist, Matsuda noted that persons of color, while having unique experiences “have all undergone the *initiation into racial victimhood*” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 315). This commonality amongst participants in AAMM programs at the

community college level will inevitably come through in the narratives of their experiences within the context of their particular educational structure. Participants will use storytelling to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado, 2000, p. 12).

AAMM participants will share their interpretations of their experiences in the mentoring program. These stories will help to “provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 15). During the interview process, a semi-structured method will be used to allow African American males to tell their stories. Additionally, conducting focus groups will encourage students to recall their own experiences in being mentored. The very act of storytelling in a group setting (through the focus group) will enable them to reflect on their individual experiences and provide a shared space to analyze them, which will augment their capacity for psychic preservation (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999).

Case Study

In addition to a qualitative orientation for this research, case study methodology will also be utilized. Case study is “an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon, utilizing a variety of sources of data” (Jupp, 2006, p. 20). Case study will enable me to “develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program” (Merriam, 1988, p. 30). Through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant observations, and an analysis of available program documents, this research will

gain insight into the research questions, building our overall understanding about the ways in which formal mentoring programs impact the educational journeys of a diverse group of marginalized students – African American males. Merriam (1988) noted, “Case study research, and in particular qualitative case study, is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2).

Epistemology

Baptiste (2001) suggested that qualitative researchers make explicit their epistemology, or “the nature, sources and processes of knowledge and knowing.” Following his model, this section will attempt to briefly address those epistemological questions, in the context of the research purpose of understanding AAMM participant educational journeys, cultural identities, and academic progress. His first question focused on “what will be considered as appropriate and inappropriate sources of knowledge.” For this research, the primary source of knowledge will be the voice of the participants. It is their perspectives that this research seeks to better understand. As a secondary source of knowledge, the voice of the coordinators and themes/sub-categories that emerge from a program document analysis will also be considered. Inconsistencies among these sources will be important to note, while privileging the voice and perspective of the students over all other sources.

Baptiste (2001) next asked researchers to consider in what way will their own behavior function as a source of data. I intend to function in the way that Meyer (2001) described as a “participant-as-observer, who forms relationships and participates in activities, but makes no secret of his or her intentions to observe events” (p. 340). Functioning as a pure

observer for this particular research has the potential to have participants regard me with suspicion, and thereby limit what they share with me in the course of interviews and focus group discussions. By instead forming relationships and participating in activities, it will further establish my trust and credibility with this audience, who likely harbors suspicions of outsiders conducting research in light of the history of such abuses within the African American community. As a researcher of color with experience building trust and credibility amongst persons of color, I will have an ethical responsibility to present the findings in a way that is representative of the African American male voices in this study.

Statement of Significance

This study matters for a number of reasons. The most important is to provide insight into formal mentoring programs from the voices of African American male community college students, who differ from the voices of participants at predominantly white four-year institution formal mentoring programs. Because African American males in community colleges fare the worst of all ethnicities in terms of their ability to navigate the educational system and persist to graduation (Phillippe, 2000), educators, administrators, and policy makers need greater insight into an intervention that is receiving increasing attention and support. The number of formal mentoring programs in existence at community colleges nationwide has seen incredible growth over the past decade (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

Additionally, this study will inform theory, practice, and policy. Because African American males in community colleges fare the worst of all ethnicities in terms of their ability to navigate the educational system and to persist to graduation (Phillippe, 2000),

educators, administrators, and policy makers need greater insight into an intervention that is receiving increasing attention and support. The number of formal mentoring programs in existence at community colleges nationwide has seen a considerable increase over the past decade (Jacobi, 1991). Current theory about improving the persistence of African American males through formal mentoring programs is largely based on research at four-year institutions despite the fact that the majority of African American males begin their educational journeys at community colleges. This research effort will add to our collective knowledge base as qualitative researchers about the experiences of a particular group of AAMM participants.

From a practical perspective, this research will not provide a blueprint for other administrators to use when establishing similar programs at their institutions. It does, however, have the potential to make those administrators more sensitive to some of the experiences of AAMM participants in their educational journeys. For policy makers, this research, along with the works of other Critical Race Theorists, will continue to build awareness of the underlying dynamic of race and racism in our educational structures. The very need for such programs to exist should serve as a reminder that our institutions are not race neutral and that until all students are able to successfully navigate, there is additional work to be done.

This study will examine one particular Southeastern Community College's African American Male Mentoring program. Learning from the narratives of these particular students will not only complement the qualitative intent of this research by providing rich, thick-

description of their experiences, but it also supports the Critical Race Theory (CRT) conceptual framework of utilizing storytelling as a means of affirmation of experiences. African American Male Mentoring programs deserve such a critical analysis from the perspective of those who experienced it over the course of their educational journeys.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants experience their community college educational journeys, how their perception of a cultural identity shapes those experiences and in what ways it contributes to their academic progress. This research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

Participation in these programs has the potential to influence students in numerous ways, some potentially positive, others negative. To better understand the context of this problem, there are five literature strands that will be reviewed: critical race theory in education, African American males in higher education, student development theory, formal mentoring programs and program planning.

The intersection between these bodies of literature begins with the way in which race and racism are inextricably bound in understanding the overall experiences of African American males in higher education. Largely perceived from a deficit perspective, African American males face challenges to successfully navigate through higher educational systems. One particular intervention, formal mentoring programs, helps to guide African American

male students through and along the way has the potential to promote the development of a positive cultural identity, a protective factor towards persistence. Because this research uses the program as the overall unit of analysis, how these programs are set up, by whom and for what ultimate purpose can be better understood through analyzing program-planning literature.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theorists acknowledge the centrality of race in every aspect of culture in the United States. In particular, they challenge the notion that educational institutions are somehow “race-neutral” settings, free from racialized tensions that are a normal part of all other aspects of American society. Through this perspective, it is possible to examine the success rates of African American males through a different lens that challenges commonly held assumptions while seeking an organizational-level understanding of the challenges persons of color experience within these settings.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged from a splinter group of disaffected Critical Legal Studies scholars in the 1970s. They were dissatisfied with the slow pace of change for African Americans and other people of color via legal remedies (Tate, 1997). CRT theory has manifested itself into many different communities. This literature review will focus on the adult education perspective. Although CRT does not have one single set of rigid beliefs, there are a number of guiding tenets that unite adherents to this theory. One such tenet is the centrality and normality of race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998) as part of United States culture. Marable’s (1992) definition of racism describes it as “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-

Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color” (p. 5). This particular definition of racism makes explicit that the issue of power between the dominant group and other groups emanates from the institutional level. It also highlights that although CRT focuses on the experiences of people of color, it is a relevant theory for any human being who has been marginalized or othered in some way.

Another common tenet for CRT is the need to challenge dominant ideology (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998) through the examination of universal truths, particularly where they have resulted in commonly accepted negative perceptions of people of color. The third common tenet of CRT is the use of counter-narratives or counter-storytelling based on the lived experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998) as a means to examine and present oppositional thinking regarding cultural stereotypes.

Some CRT theorists build on these common tenets and layer additional scaffolding as they conduct research designed to bring about social justice. One of these important concepts is that of interest convergence, which originated with CRT founder and adult educator, Derrick Bell (1980). Bell drew on Marxist theory to develop this concept that he defines as when the “interests of blacks in achieving racial equality have been accommodated only when they have converged with the interests of powerful whites” (Taylor, 1998, p. 123).

To Critical Race Theorists, *Brown* was an example of interest convergence in several ways as DeCuir and Dixson, (2004) noted:

Citing the limited and precarious gains of the *Brown* decision, Bell argues that losses in terms of human capital by way of the dismissal of scores of African American teachers and administrators, school closings in Black neighborhoods, and the limited access to high-quality curricula in the form of tracking, inflated admissions criteria and other factors, have made the so-called ‘gains’ from *Brown* questionable. (p. 28)

The impact of the Brown decision, while celebrated at the time, is today controversial in historical hindsight for many of the aforementioned reasons. It did, however, bring into focus issues of inequality within the nation’s educational system. It set the groundwork for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which served to make a wider range of possible higher education choices available to African Americans. Despite this increased access, African Americans have not seen proportional increases in socioeconomic status, degree attainment, or median wealth measures (Jaynes, 1989).

In what ways did Brown and the Civil Rights Act meet the needs of African Americans in higher education? The benefits to African Americans have largely been a double-edged sword. On the one side, we can enjoy the benefits of unrestricted access and movement to public locales with little fear. On the other side there is the lack of success in higher education as experienced by the poor graduation rates of many African Americans students, particularly for African American males. “For African American students...of one hundred ninth graders, just forty-nine will graduate from high school on time. Only twenty-seven will go directly to college, and of those twenty-seven, only nine will graduate” (Hale,

2006, p. 178). These disheartening numbers are an indicator of the depth and complexity of the problems African Americans experience in higher education.

Because educational institutions are the primary transmitters of American culture, they utilize that power to require students of all races, classes, and backgrounds to conform to the dominant culture, to their interpretation of historical and cultural events, even requiring conformance to their expected norms. “Dominant culture retains the institutional authority to enforce its view of what is right, good, normal, useful, or best” (Guy, 1999, p. 96). For students of color, particularly African American males, this forced conformance creates a cultural dissonance (Gordon, 1999) that manifests itself in counterproductive ways that will be explored in greater detail in the section about the history of African American males in higher education.

Critiques of Critical Race Theory

CRT has been criticized for research that overly focuses on racist stereotypes of African American males, driven by the dominant ideology that they are somehow pathologically damaged. Few CRT theorists focusing on African American males chose to situate their CRT studies exclusively in the voices of successful African American males. The effect of this choice is that the very theory that is designed to help to bring about social justice for marginalized persons, actually perpetuates their marginalization by not bringing greater numbers of non-stereotypical images of African American males forward through their research.

Another critique about this body of research is that with few exceptions, most of the studies lacked what Ladson-Billings (1998) referred to as the “framework for educational

equity /which/ means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it. We will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions” (p. 27). Additionally, because CRT privileges the experiences of persons of color, intra-racial critiques are not fully considered. bell hooks (2004), a noted Black feminist scholar notes for example that “Anti-intellectualism abounds in the culture as a whole. Because of this, black folks, especially those who lived in a segregated world where access to education was not simple, who were educated, were predisposed to be suspicious of educated black people” (p. 43). Leaving out the voices of oppositional positions on concepts like black intellectualism feeds into one of the major critiques of CRT, that it paints all Blacks and Whites with a single brush, when the reality is that while we share overall experiences, we are each uniquely constructed based on our life experiences.

In that same manner, CRT consistently presents an oppositional view from the dominant thinking about African American males; it instead offers perspectives that fail to fully acknowledge the complexity of the intersection between race, class, and gender in the analysis of study participants. It is important to use both race and gender when discussing African American males, because similar studies of African American women do not show the same level of exclusion and disenfranchisement experienced by African American males (Howard, 2008, p. 965). In this same article, Ferguson (2001) observed, “We do not experience individuals as bearers of separate identities as gendered and then raced or vice versa, but both at once. The two are inextricably intertwined and circulate together in the representation of subjects and the experience of subjectivity (as cited in Howard, 2008, p. 966).

Other critiques of CRT often focus on three areas: lack of explanatory powers for predicting behavior because it is based on a belief that racism is inherent in the US, it is off-putting to Whites, and it paints both Whites and Blacks with a singular stroke. Taylor (1998) noted, “For many, both black and white, CRT may be criticized as too cynical, nihilistic, or hopeless. Indeed, its assumption of the permanence of racism and its prediction of continued subordination of blacks can be read as excessively negative” (p. 124). However negative CRT may be perceived, it is an even more powerful prism through which to challenge dominant ideologies and institutional power structures that disproportionately have a negative impact on African Americans, males in particular.

African American Males in Higher Education

From the intersection of critical race theory and African American males in higher education, it is not surprising that mainstream society headlines such as “More Black Males in Jail Than College” and “The Black Male – An Endangered Species” might lead one to arrive at the conclusion that the story of African American males in higher education is largely based upon a negative narrative. Such a story line goes on to indicate that African American males are academically low achieving and disengaged students. Collected empirical data in the literature supports this thinking through the over-reporting of dismal rates for African American males in nearly every measure collected - retention, suspension, expulsion, academic achievement, grade attainment, school attendance, and participation in extra-curricular activities (Garibaldi, 1992). When these statistics are viewed from the assumption that education is a race-neutral setting, it furthers the thinking that African

American males are simply not able to be successful, largely due to individual characteristics. The reality is that the current narrative of African American males in higher education is steeped in a complex, multi-faceted history that is inextricably linked to the very founding of our nation.

Historical Perspective

When taking a historical overview of the experience of African Americans in higher education in the United States, themes of race, power, and divergent needs for education emerge. Questions about the ways in which higher education have served or not served African Americans throughout our 400 year history are important to consider as they form the basis for today's educational arena.

During the time from 1619 – 1850, the United States practiced a peculiar system of slavery in which African captives were entered into this system for life, and were legally considered property, not human beings. In the early stages of slavery, Neufeldt and McGee (1990) noted that “adult education for slaves took shape on two levels: the training of skilled workers and the teaching of reading, writing, and other elementary subjects” (p. 3). There are accounts of Southern slave masters with limited access to manufactured goods selecting slaves for apprenticeships in artisan practices needed to maintain a farm. These slaves, although small in number, experienced a greater measure of freedom than did their field bound comrades through the realization of these skills. This effectively established the linkage between educational attainments, albeit through informal means, and freedom. Neufeldt and McGee (1990) further argue that during slavery time, the teaching of artisan

skills to male slaves and basic literacy for Christian conversion served as mechanisms for economic profit and control.

Whose needs were primarily served through these limited examples of education during the time of slavery? At one level, slaves benefited. Slaves who were literate and who had specialized skills had more options, even within the constricting confines of slavery. At another level, slave owners benefited. Artisan slaves could be hired out, and they could be sold at a higher price than slaves without such skills. Additionally, teaching slaves a subservient version of Christianity reinforced the myth that their captivity was part of a natural order, thus making them easier to control. At the societal level, limited education of slaves reinforced an economy built on their free labor, and on the superiority of the dominant group.

Skipping forward in time to the years of the Civil War, beginning in 1861 and ending in 1865, the United States having freed slaves, now had to reconsider its prior social order to incorporate these new citizens. During the war, Neufeldt and McGee (1990) noted

The Union Army started schools for black men for a practical reason – to teach the black soldiers to read and write...The Army's contribution to black adult education was significant because nearly 180,000 black men served in the military during the Civil War. (p. 37)

After the war, the federal government continued to occupy southern states for reconstruction purposes and also to protect the rights of the newly freed African Americans. During this time, education was directed by the efforts of the Freedman's Bureau, augmented by

churches, missionary groups, and previously freed blacks. Hale (2006) interpreted this time for Freed slaves (both men and women) by writing:

The freedman had an inexhaustible passion for education and viewed it as the chief vehicle of liberty, justice, upward social mobility, self-realization, citizenship, wholeness and fullness of humanity, and full participation in the mainstream of American life, culture and destiny. (p. 3)

While the enthusiasm of former slaves focused on gaining the education and skills to fully participate as citizens, the tension between them and former slave masters that had such clear boundaries prior to slavery were now being challenged. What remained unchanged from slavery into this reconstruction age was dominant thinking about the innate inferiority of “negroes” as illustrated from the language of the textbooks distributed by the Freedman’s Bureau. These materials, Neufeldt and McGee (1990) observed,

portrayed the Southern black adult community in negative, stereotypic racial images, and contrasted its imputed habits with the graces and sensibilities presumably practiced by whites, both Northern and Southern. Intended to mold consciousness and behavior along racially, economically, and politically conservative lines, the messages this material gave to African Americans emerging from racial slavery was unlikely to promote independence or power. (p. 51)

Even in the midst of this tension, an unprecedented number of African Americans participated in some level of education during this time. This brief historical review of the Civil War and Reconstruction periods again illustrates the tension between this country’s

often divergent needs for education. At one level, African American men benefited from literacy training during the Civil War. Those soldiers returned to communities with a critical commodity for full citizenship – literacy. At the same time the Union army needed African American soldiers to win the war, and making them literate helped them to be better soldiers. During reconstruction, the Freedman Bureau schools provided funding and curricular support to educate all newly freed slaves, which were a powerful change agent. At the same time, the nature of the educational curricula served to reinforce negative thinking from slavery regarding the intellectual abilities of African Americans. The emergence of separate educational systems for African Americans and the dominant group served to reinforce a social hierarchy of separate, but not equal (Bell, 1980).

Harlem Renaissance.

From 1920 to 1945, African Americans experienced an explosion of creativity that has come to be known as the Harlem Renaissance (Jaynes & Williams, 1989). Adult education during this time was firmly established with largely segregated institutions of higher learning, supported by numerous groups such as the NAACP, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), African American fraternities and sororities, and religious organizations, all working towards the goal of the betterment of the race, although they each chose different strategies to achieve that goal (Peterson, 1996). One of these groups, UNIA, led by Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey, focused his organization on the development of cultural pride which Peterson (1996) notes that he, “framed within his philosophy of African Fundamentalism, based on the seven basic values of African society: umoja (unity),

kujichagulia (self-determination), ujima (collective work and responsibility), ujamaa (cooperative economics), nia (purpose), kumba (creativity), and imani (faith)” (p. 53). His thinking was in contrast to the NAACP’s strategy of integration through legal means (Peterson, 1996). Another voice that supported cultural awareness as a key component of empowering African Americans was Alain Locke. He was “a proponent of African American adult education.../who/ expressed the importance for African Americans to understand their history and contributions to world civilization” (Peterson, 1996, p. 124).

It was also during this period that additional Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) opened their doors to further the aspirations of African American men and women. The emergence of these institutions coincided with a conversation taking place in the broader society about what should be the purpose of higher education – liberal arts or vocational preparation (Denton, 1993). W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington took up that debate on behalf of the African American community. Guy (2002) summarized their points of view as follows:

Washington’s argument essentially was that vocational education was a way of developing practical skills needed to overcome racism. DuBois argued that to forsake liberal education was to forego the development of the best talents in the race, resulting in a stunted development which would keep African Americans perpetually in an inferior status. (cited in Peterson, 2002, p. 94).

In a relatively short period of time, a multitude of voices including scholars, leaders, and educators revealed a genuine diversity within the African American community

regarding how to best meet their educational needs (Johnson-Bailey, 2006). Some advocated assimilation, with the logic that, Johnson-Bailey (2006) noted,

We must be like the previous immigrant groups, we must fit in, and we must not be the White man's burden. Finding their way to better social skills and better job skills through education was thought of as the trustworthiest way to make it in this land of opportunity. (p. 106)

Others pursued the route of cultural survival, which involved espousing the inextricability of the fate of African Americans with the overall fate of America. It also involved, "feeling a sense of pride in the accomplishments of the racial group and in its cultural norms, folkways and mores" (Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 110).

During this time period, the concept of interest convergence is largely based upon strategies to keep the races (blacks and whites) separate, but not equal (Bell, 1980). In this manner, particularly as it related to education, access to certain types of education was privileged to monied whites. The Civil Rights Era sought to change that.

Civil Rights era.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) is considered the seminal legal case during this era. While it focused on education at the secondary level, it had implications for African Americans in higher education as well. To Critical Race Theorists, *Brown* was also an example of interest convergence in several ways. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) observed that

Citing the limited and precarious gains of the *Brown* decision, Bell argues that losses in terms of human capital by way of the dismissal of scores of African American

teachers and administrators, school closings in Black neighborhoods, and the limited access to high-quality curricula in the form of tracking, inflated admissions criteria and other factors, have made the so-called ‘gains’ from *Brown* questionable. (p. 28)

The impact of the Brown decision, while celebrated at the time, is today controversial in historical hindsight for many of the aforementioned reasons. It did, however, bring into focus issues of inequality within the nation’s educational system. It set the groundwork for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which served to make a wider range of possible higher education choices available to African Americans and European American women. Despite this increased access, African Americans have not seen proportional increases in socioeconomic status, degree attainment, or median wealth measures (Cuyjet, 2006; Jaynes & Williams, 1989).

In what ways did Brown and the Civil Rights Act meet the needs of African Americans in higher education? The benefits to African Americans have largely been a double-edged sword. On the one side, we can enjoy the benefits of unrestricted access and movement to public locales with little fear. On the other side there is the lack of success in higher education as experienced by the poor graduation rates of many African Americans students. “For African American students...of one hundred ninth graders, just forty-nine will graduate from high school on time. Only twenty-seven will go directly to college, and of those twenty-seven, only nine will graduate” (Hale, 2006, p. 178). These disheartening numbers are an indicator of the depth and complexity of the problems African Americans experienced in higher education. The overall tension of divergent needs between educational institutions and

capitalistic employment needs continues to be problematic. In order to support our hegemonic, capitalist society, there is a need to have a continual source of cheap, uneducated labor. In many ways, African Americans, males in particular because of dominant stereotypes of them as being physically powerful, represent that source of uneducated labor. In order for African American males to move forward, they must challenge that dominant ideology and demonstrate their dual capacity for intellectual endeavors as well.

One of the prisms to begin addressing the challenges African American male college students have towards improved persistence is to consider the manner in which they experience and engage in higher education. Showing promise towards improvement of these challenges are formal mentoring programs. Freeman's (1999) study of high achieving African American students found that they identified mentoring as an institutional factor that was helpful in their ability to adjust to the higher education setting. This adjustment is made more complicated for African American males because of stereotypical perceptions that surround them. The next section explicates the depth to which these perceptions have permeated all levels in education, from K-12 to higher education.

CRT and African American Males in Education

Current literature strands about African American males in school largely comes from one perspective – that they are somehow deficient, low achieving, and incapable of achievement. A search of the literature revealed few studies from a CRT perspective focused on African American males from either a qualitative or quantitative perspective. Major databases, including GoogleScholar, ERIC, and others were consulted, access to proprietary

databases were even purchased, and still only a few articles used CRT as the framework to analyze the state of African American males in education. Searched terms included the following constructions; black/AA males and CRT, at risk-males and CRT, low-income males and CRT, interest convergence and black/AA males, black/AA males and storytelling/counter narratives, along with many other permutations of key CRT terminology. It is noteworthy that without the additional filter of CRT, hundreds of articles about black males in education emerged. It is clear that targeting my research using this particular filter will help to extend our understanding of an important area of research; African American males in the community college setting.

CRT in education enables us to analyze educational practices in many ways: from theory, to curriculum, and to policy. The literature in this area primarily connects to CRT in four ways: they provide a means to examine the connection between racism and racial inequities (Howard, 2008, p. 963); they challenge notions of “universal truths;” they theorize about the intersection of race and other forms of subordination; and they utilize counter storytelling as the means to challenge dominant ideology.

At the collegiate level, the experiences of African American males can be critically analyzed through CRT. For example, in Singer’s (2005) study about understanding racism through the eyes of African American male student athletes, the students again identified the concept of interest convergence. They noted that there was an extensive program in place to recruit African American male athletes, but there was not a similar structure in place to assist them towards graduation. They perceived that, unlike their White counterparts who were

encouraged to not only play football and graduate, African American male athletes often found themselves being advised to take just enough classes to remain eligible to play. The athletes in this study attributed this difference in treatment to underlying racism that not only did not view them as intellectual beings, but only saw them for their athletic prowess. The students also noted the lack of opportunities for other African American males to be in major decision-making roles in their sport, despite the high number of African American male athletes. Again, they attributed this difference in opportunity to the racist perception that African American males lack the intellectual faculties to call plays and make on-field adjustments like their White male counterparts were capable of doing.

Harper (2009), the lead researcher on the National Black Male College Achievement Study completed, “the largest-ever empirical research study of Black male undergraduates...collected from 219 students at 42 colleges and universities...focused on African American males who are successful in higher education” (p. 704). Harper made a conscious choice to transform the study of African American males towards a more empowering model than other CRT framed studies. Harper’s approach was to create five composites to demonstrate the resistance strategies employed by successful African American males. Additionally, he made several stinging recommendations at the conclusion of his study, which echoed the original frustration of the Critical Legal Scholars splinter group that ultimately became CRT. The Critical Race theorists felt as though the pace of change through the courts was insufficient and not sweeping enough to drive the changes needed for social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Harper advocated a cease and desist

order be placed on additional studies which focused on the problems and deficits of African American males. He believed that there was sufficient documentation of those issues and further emphasis on this manner of perceiving African American males was nothing short of racist (Harper, 2009, p. 708). Additionally, Harper reminded us that “not all Black men are the same” (Harper, 2009, p. 709) despite the universality of how they are presented in the literature. He further recommended,

greater castigation of educators who persistently stereotype and hold low expectations for Black male students in schools and colleges....those who *do* racist things to Black males...should be subjected to the same social scrutiny as those who publicly *say* racist things. (p. 709)

A group of researchers compiled a recent qualitative study documenting the experiences of men of color in the community college setting. Although this study did not exclusively utilize the CRT framework, it contains several important implications regarding the racialized experiences of African American males in that particular locale. “These men identified low expectations and negative stereotypes based on their race, ethnicity, and gender as salient elements of their experiences (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, & Castro, 2010, p. iii). The cumulative effect of this research indicates that there is clear overlap between the tenets of CRT and the experiences of African American males in higher education, even at the community college level.

Student Development Theory

Miller and Prince (1976) described student development as “the application of human development concepts in postsecondary settings so that everyone involved can master increasingly complex developmental tasks, achieve self-direction, and become interdependent (cited in Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 4). More specifically, McEwen, Roper, Bryant and Langa (1990) recommend that the following several elements be considered before incorporating the developmental issues of African Americans into traditional paradigms for student development: 1) interacting with the dominant culture; 2) developing cultural aesthetics and awareness; 3) developing identity; 4) developing interdependence; 5) fulfilling affiliation needs; 6) surviving intellectually; 7) developing spiritually; 8) developing social responsibility (p. 429).

Psychological Nigrescence

There are several racial identity development models, which will be explored in this section. Charles Thomas developed the earliest model of psychological nigrescence that described the process of becoming black in a cultural-psychological sense. “The Thomas model begins at the point where the black person has already begun to change (Cross, 1977).” Thomas’s model has four stages and ends with an internalization process that is similar to the process later developed by Cross. Cross developed his model of Psychological Nigrescence in the 1970s, and modified it in the 1990s with input from other scholars and it became known as the Cross Racial Identity Development model. Like the models of Phinney and Helms, Cross’s model provides racial and ethnic identity formation insight, which is an

intricate process (Evans, Forney, Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Evans, et al. (1998) describes Cross's Racial Identity Development model as a "resocializing experience in which the healthy individual's identity is transformed from one of non-Afrocentrism to Afrocentrism to multiculturalism" (p. 74).

The most current version of Cross's model is a four stage model, and the first stage of it is Pre-encounter. People who are in this phase do not think that race is important; they want to be treated simply as "human beings" (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Colley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Cross maintained that this "deracinated" viewpoint influences the person's behavior socially, politically, culturally and psychologically. Essentially, a person in this stage thinks and acts in a way that is anti-black and pro-white; to a person in this stage, the ideal racial status is white.

The second stage of Cross's (2001) model is Encounter, and in this stage, some event or events happen that ultimately destroys the person's identity. It may not be a single event; it can be a several small events that come together to change the person's view. The dissonant encounters can be either positive or negative, but it leads the person to explore their situation in order to see if their old identity is appropriate. As the individual searches to find a new identity, black identity surfaces. Cross went on to indicate that coming out of this stage, the individual is full of energy and tries to find information about this new black identity (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Colley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001).

The third stage of the Cross Racial Identity Development model is Immersion-Emersion. In this stage, the individual rejects aspects of their old identity and works toward

personal change. A person that has recently entered this stage is extremely interested in their new identity and its symbols such as clothing and hairstyle (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Colley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). These individuals also tend to withdraw from contact with people from other ethnicities. The Immersion-Emersion stage has two sub-phases; anti-white, and intense Black involvement. Cross (1991) described the Immersion-Emersion stage as, “the most sensational aspect of Black identity development, for it represents the vortex of psychological nigrescence” (pp. 201-202).

The fourth stage of Cross’s model is Internalization. This state “marks the beginning of a resolution between the old identity and the new black worldview” (Evans, 1998, p. 75). Individuals in this state begin to develop security and self-confidence in being black. In this stage, there is also a decrease in hostility and emotional turmoil; persons in this stage can be recognized by their psychological openness and secure demeanor. “Blackness becomes one of several (biculturalism) or many (multicultural) saliences” (Evans, 1998, p. 76). Essentially, people in this stage become more open to dealing with other ethnic groups while continuing to embrace their own unique culture and identity.

Phinney’s Theory of Ethnic Identity Development

Phinney proposed another model of racial identity development. Phinney’s (1990) theory of ethnic identity development made the claim that identity development was a process contingent on the context of individual and group experience, both imposed and internal, and prone to change over time and age. She proposed a progression in the following three stages: 1) An unexamined ethnic identity in which an individual (usually a youth) has

not been exposed to ethnic identity issues and therefore has no reason to contemplate the concept 2) A period of exploration of one's own identity as a result of a significant and revealing experience (conversation with others, reading literature, seeing a cultural event) that forces one to reflect one's identity internally and as the world sees the individual 3) Ethnic identity achievement—a clear confidence and clarity about one's ethnicity, which may or may not include high levels of ethnic involvement. How ethnic identity achievement is exhibited in action and behavior may vary by individual (Phinney, 1990). Measuring involvement as an indicator for ethnic identity achievement is problematic, as it does not account for the individual experience and perspective (Phinney, 1990). Phinney also compared the formation of ethnic identity to ego identity formation, in that a similar process occurs as individuals make decisions about the role of ethnicity in their lives as they age (Phinney, 1990).

Phinney's (1990) review of research for ethnic identity in adolescents and adults made a strong argument that more scholarly attention should be given to devising reliable and valid measures of ethnic identity; not only for young children but for adolescents and adults and the transition that occurs from child to adult. According to Phinney, the study of ethnic identity is important because promoting such understanding will contribute to a decrease in prejudice and racism in our increasingly democratic and diverse world. Scholars must also be keenly respectful in their studies of the myriad of unique complexities that ethnic identity encompasses—which makes this concept harder to generalize across

individual cultures and experiences but is crucial to world knowledge nonetheless (Phinney, 1990).

These two models of racial identity development are important for consideration as a framework for formal mentoring programs for African American males are considered. The next section discusses formal mentoring programs.

Formal Mentoring Programs

One of the prisms to begin addressing the challenges African American male students have towards improved persistence is to consider the manner in which they experience and engage in higher education. Showing promise towards improvement of these challenges are formal mentoring programs. “Mentoring has been identified as one of the institutional factors (structures, individuals, and programs) that assist high achieving African American students in their adjustment to higher education” (Freeman, 1999, p. 16).

From the lack of a welcoming environment, to not understanding the culture, to feeling marginalized and isolated and not having family and friends who understand the nature of your journey, a mentor can help make the transition to college easier. Freeman (1999, p. 17) noted that “logically and intuitively, mentoring as a service can be particularly important to individuals who are in an environment that is culturally different from theirs.”

When formal mentoring programs are exclusively for one particular group, they run the risk of further isolating those members by creating a single race peer group. At the same time, such groups also provide a safe space for members of that group to share common experiences that they may not feel comfortable doing in a mixed race setting (Bakari, 1997; Freeman, 1999).

Informal Mentoring at HBCUS

African American students attending HBCUs graduate at higher rates than those who attend four-year PWIs. The staff and faculty of HBCUs have written with pride about what PWIs can learn from their success in graduating African American students (Hale, 2006). One such scholar, Davis (2006), indicated that HBCUs, by their very organizational structure are designed to help students succeed. He identified five aspects of the HBCU experience that lead to improved graduation rates: 1) an extended family setting where a personal interest in the welfare of the student is expected 2) cultural immersion in having a residential setting focused on education 3) self-esteem enriched through participation in numerous campus activities 4) universal inclusion based on a common heritage and 5) individual interaction with teachers and staff in and outside of the classroom. Another HBCU scholar, Craig (2006) wrote that one of the greatest success factors for African American students is access to models and mentors who, “In addition to fostering pride, inspiration, and encouragement, ... expand hope and confidence by students’ association with achievers” (p. 103). The overall ethic of caring, and opportunities to build the self-esteem of students are evident in the organizational fabric of HBCUs. Though this mentoring takes place on an informal basis, it appears to have a buoying effect on the ability of African American students to successfully complete their educational journeys. These attributes differ from informal mentoring in that they typically involve a relationship that occurs naturally, without the intervention of a third-party, they lack specific goals, and can occur anywhere.

Formal Mentoring Programs at PWIs

Formal mentoring programs in adult and higher education are characterized by being college sanctioned and supported, by the deliberate matching process for mentors/mentees, and for establishing individual goals linked to overall program objectives of increasing college engagement and improved enrollments. In both two and four year PWIs, there are generally not enough faculty and staff of color to recreate an informal kinship system based on a shared heritage for African American students (Wright & McCreary, 1997). As a result, PWIs have had greater success in replicating that sense of belonging through the formation of formal mentoring programs. LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs (1997) argued that

Application of mentoring proves to be an effective tool in providing the support necessary to overcome the barriers that prevent many African American men from successfully completing college. Mentoring is vital in contributing to the survival and empowering of African American men, and it also enhances their ability to make plausible gains in the higher education milieu. (p. 52)

These mentoring programs are characterized by a “focus on guidance, nurturing, and support of individuals perceived to be disenfranchised by gender, skill, or ethnicity: these are common elements of most mentoring programs” (Cuyjet, 2006, p. 96). A national franchise model for African American male mentoring, called Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe recommends the use of peer mentors because they are “more abundant, more empathetic, and they increase accountability to one another” (Cuyjet, p. 100).

The structure of formal African American mentoring programs varies widely. Models include counseling based group therapy approaches (Wright & McCreary, 1997); learning communities where African American male mentoring participants take general education courses together in a cohort (Cuyjet, 2006); Afrocentric identity development models (Harris, 1999), and other versions. They all share the common goal of helping African American male students improve persistence and graduation rates. The specific strategies utilized should be informed by the specific needs of the local constituency. Sometimes access to the program-planning table is limited, and as a result the formal mentoring program is established without African American male input. The next section will outline various program-planning models and the challenges with each.

Program Planning

Based upon my research questions, a CRT framework, and a working definition of formal mentoring programs, I set about reviewing the program planning literature base to identify the conceptual models most appropriate for designing such programs. Three broad categories of design emerged based on a content analysis of program planning literature conducted by Cho and Kim (2004) that are helpful filters for understanding the various alternatives: traditional approaches, political negotiation approaches, and integrative approaches. Each approach asks markedly different questions during each phase of design, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, these categories engage participants in different ways, they have different types of anticipated outcomes, and they acknowledge the contextual setting of the program to varying degrees.

Traditional program planning approaches to establishing an AAMM program would treat the planning process as a value neutral one, despite general acknowledgement today that institutional actions reflect the influence of a particular set of values, though they may not be explicit. This approach to program planning for formal mentoring programs would likely result in an effort that does not meet the actual needs of targeted participants. For such programs aimed at minority groups for example, it would be unlikely to take into account the cultural context of the participants, which might result in naming or marketing it in a way that is paternalistic or demeaning. Guy (1999) denoted the following:

Consequently, adult education practitioners who serve racial, ethnic, or linguistically marginalized learners often are forced to either reexamine their assumptions about learners or impose their prejudices and biases on learners. This is reflected in the language used to refer to learners who are often viewed from a deficit perspective: lazy, incapable, unintelligent, unmotivated, and so on. These assumptions serve to disempower learners and to reproduce educational and social inequality. (p. 97)

This level of insensitivity would undoubtedly impact participation, resulting in less than desired outcomes, which may be perceived in a way that causes additional harm to the perception of such groups.

Another approach to program planning for formal mentoring programs is one that focuses less on the technical aspects of program planning, and instead focuses on the “people work of planning” (Cervero & Wilson, 2006, p. 4), or a political negotiation approach. Power is an inherent aspect of planning programs within organizations in this method. The politics

associated with who has power and how that power is wielded causes the planner to continually consider the ethical issue of, “To whom are they responsible to for the educational programs they construct?” (Cervero & Wilson, 2006, p. 249). Planners play a critical role in the process of negotiating interests.

A planning approach that recognizes the intersection of power, interests, negotiation and responsibility would seem to be ideally suited for the development of formal mentoring programs in higher education. This approach requires a tremendous amount of faith in the expressed, ideal, and real interests (Cervero & Wilson, 1994) of the planner juxtaposed against the divergent interests of those at the planning table. In addition to balancing a multitude of interests, it also requires that the planner quickly develop keen insights into the structural, political, and cultural context of the actors during the negotiation. The planner must use their “contingent exercises of power” (Cervero & Wilson, 1994) in the process to ensure change focused outcomes. It fails to provide enough guidance for the planner to negotiate truly divergent interests in a manner that is consistently aligned with education’s purpose of social justice. In the absence of such guidance, formal mentoring programs, particularly when focused on minority students, are doomed to the whimsy of planning table members who may or may not seek social justice for this audience, irrespective of their presence at the planning table.

One other program planning approach that combines aspects of traditional and political negotiation systems is the integrative method. In addition to the standard program planning structure, this method includes consideration of the sociopolitical domain which “is

concerned with questions about the human dynamics of planning including interests involved, the power relationships at play, and what they mean for planning” (Sork, 2000, p. 185). This model’s relevance for designing and implementing formal mentoring programs are quite strong. It offers the flexibility critical for working with a program that is inevitably complex and layered. It offers planners who are willing to invest the time and energy a broad framework of probing questions, the answers to which will provide the insight needed to develop thoughtful, meaningful programs that have the potential to lead to social justice.

The strength of this model is also its weakness. Planners may quickly find themselves overwhelmed and unable to identify themes and insights specific to the program plan amongst all of the data this process has the potential to generate. For more seasoned program planners, their intuition regarding where to probe for additional information will serve them well using this model. It will also prevent them from feeling obliged to use overlapping questions from the general characteristics and domain aspects of the model.

In summary, formal mentoring programs can learn a great deal from the structure associated with various program-planning models. While each of the models sought to bring about change, all approached it in a slightly different manner. Tyler’s model was largely rooted in behavioral change, while Cervero and Wilson (1998) and Sork (2000) sought more emancipatory and social justice based changes for participants.

Another basis for comparison of the various models involved the engagement of the participant in the planning process. Not surprisingly, Tyler’s model (Boone, 2002) does not focus on this aspect of program planning, instead choosing to rely on inputs from teachers,

and planners about the needs of the participants. Both Cervero and Wilson (1998) and Sork (2000) believed that participant input into the program planning process is critical. Cervero and Wilson used the concept of the “planning table as a metaphor to focus attention on what matters in educational planning: namely, the fact that people make judgments with others in social contexts about specific program features” (Cervero & Wilson, 2006, p. 6). Each model has its limitations when applied to the design and implementation of formal mentoring programs, in particular those designed for minority groups. Additional research is needed to determine the efficacy of such models in environments where historical, cultural, and political interests intersect.

Best Practices for Formal Mentoring Programs

The literature also describes what are considered best practices for formal mentoring programs. They include the recruiting process, the training of mentors, the matching process for mentoring dyads and engagement activities (Cuyjet, 2006). During the recruitment process clear messages regarding what both mentees and mentors should expect as participants in this program should be made clear (Jacobi, 1991). Unclear messages or messages that contradict actual practices have the potential to begin voluntary mentoring participation on shaky ground. Training provided to mentors is critical in helping them to understand their role and how to encourage the establishment of goals with the mentee that are both attainable and challenging (Levinson & Darrow, 1979). Formal mentoring programs are distinguished by the formalized matching of mentor/mentee dyads (Allen & Eby, 2007). The basis on which these matches are made is critical from both perspectives. A balance of

care, empathy, role modeling, and encouragement are some of the ideal characteristics of mentors (Allen & Eby, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Finally, the types of engagement activities that are part of the formal mentoring program calendar also impact the kind of relationship that will exist. The three aforementioned programmatic elements of formal mentoring programs will be used to filter African American male participant responses to interview questions associated with the second research question about their experiences with various formal mentoring components.

Chapter Summary

The literature strands involved in this review tell the story of African American males in higher education largely through the lens of critical race theory. It also examined formal mentoring programs, drawing on the success of HBCUs in serving the needs of African American males through an overall climate of informal mentoring contrasted with formal mentoring programs at four-year PWIs. Additionally, racial identity models for formal mentoring programs were examined to reveal the way in which they might be organized to deliberately bring about development of African American male mentor participants. Finally, best practices from practitioners regarding the overall structure of formal mentoring programs were also briefly discussed. Each of these components provided insight regarding the complex, multi-faceted nature of the research problem. This research seeks to bridge the gap in our understanding about how African American male community college students describe how mentoring program participation shapes their educational journeys and their perceptions of their cultural identity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants experienced their community college educational journeys and how their perception of a cultural identity shaped those experiences. Through their narratives, insight was gained into the ways in which a mentoring program provided a pathway for successful navigation through this particular higher education institution. Three overall research questions guided the sample selection, data collection process, measures of trustworthiness, and data analysis:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

This chapter outlines the overall research approach, the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Additionally, there are discussions integrated throughout this chapter that address strategies that were employed to ensure the overall trustworthiness of the design, collection, and analysis.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research is ideal for research efforts that represent complex problems (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 1995, 1988) situated within intersecting layers of gender, class, and power. The rich, thick description that was generated through this

qualitative effort lends itself to enabling researchers to better understand the multiple realities experienced by study participants. African American male students at the community college steer through their educational journeys by navigating through a complex web of structures (Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001).

Gaining insight into the ways in which participants made meaning of their experiences is a qualitative tradition that acknowledges that “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not the fixed single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that is assumed to exist in a positivist, quantitative foundation of a socially constructed world-view” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). Merriam (2002) went on to describe other ways in which case study research distinguishes itself from other types of research. Many of these distinctions were employed by the researcher and will be described in greater detail. First, I served as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. This enormous responsibility not only required that I continually monitored my subjectivities through field notes and memos, but it also required a high level of intimacy with the data to ensure that anomalies or subtleties were not missed. Merriam further admonished us to utilize rich, thick description to describe what was learned about the phenomena. Guba and Lincoln (1981) noted that such description in qualitative research prevents “context stripping and exclusion of meaning and purpose” (p. 106) which would separate the findings from their context, thereby limiting its relevance and presence within broader environments.

Formal mentoring programs in higher education have grown at an incredible pace over the past ten years, and utilize a variety of designs and orientations. As a result of this rapid

growth and variability in program design, there is a dearth of insight from the voices of participants, particularly at the community college level regarding how this intervention influences their educational journeys, cultural identities, and academic progress. Without hearing from these voices, formal mentoring programs will continue to proliferate in a vacuum that lacks participant insights to inform our understanding of their influence. A quantitative approach would have left a void in this complex story regarding the influence of mentoring programs on African American male community college students. That approach would belie the textured experiences of these unique students, reducing them to tables and charts of thin description.

Case Study Methodology

Case study is “an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon, utilizing a variety of sources of data. A ‘case’ can be an individual person, an event, or a social activity, group, organization or institution” (Jupp, 2006, p. 20). Case study works well for this research effort because the objective was to, “develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program” (Merriam, 1988, p. 30). Through structured interviews, focus groups, direct observations, and an analysis of available program documents, this research gained insight into the overall research questions, building our overall understanding about the ways in which formal mentoring programs influenced the educational journeys, cultural identities, and academic progress of a diverse group of marginalized students – African American males.

Merriam (1988) noted that, “Case study research, and in particular qualitative case study, is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational

phenomena” (p. 2). The African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) program at a particular community college in the Southeast represents the educational phenomena under study. Stake (1981) claimed that knowledge learned from case studies are, “different from other knowledge in four important ways; concrete, contextual, developed by reader interpretation, based more on reference populations” (pp. 14 - 15). It is these characteristics that influenced the decision to utilize case study for this research effort.

Counter Narratives and Storytelling

My framework for this study was Critical Race Theory (CRT), which despite not having a universal set of rigid characteristics, is firmly rooted in four key characteristics: 1) centrality of race, 2) challenge to dominant ideology, 3) importance of storytelling and experiential knowledge, and 4) commitment to social justice. By using the tenets of CRT to critically examine the mentoring program, it was helpful as an analysis tool for a program that exists within an educational structure that abounded with structural inequities (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998).

In CRT methodology, because the underlying assumption is post-modernist in that the truth depends on who tells the story, the voice of the participant becomes enormously significant. During the research collection process, storytelling or counter narratives were used to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 12). In this manner, African American male participants were able to share their interpretations of their experiences in a program designed for their benefit. The power of these stories was to “provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling,

and interpreting” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 15). Without African American male personal stories, I might have interpreted mentoring experiences in a way that assumed race-neutrality within educational institutions. During the interview process, a semi-structured method was used to allow African American males to tell their stories. Additionally, focus groups were conducted, which encouraged students to recall their own experiences in being mentored.

CRT reminds us that race shapes all social relationships and is often a tool to reinforce the existing hegemonic power structure. One such tool is the concept of interest convergence. CRT theorists, might for example, classify the development of AAMM programs at four-year or two-year higher educational institutions as an example of interest convergence. The interests of the higher educational institution are to improve overall graduation rates and earn the maximum amount of FTE per student. The interests of African American male students are to attain a certificate, diploma or degree for employment or transition to a baccalaureate institution. The needs of both groups converge around an African American Male Mentoring program which serves both the institution and the individual by earning the college additional FTE, and enabling the students to reach their educational goals. Questions about why and what motivated the institution to begin and sustain an AAMM program were posed to the director of the mentoring program in an attempt to better understand where interest convergence might be a factor at this particular community college.

Because I am using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework for this study, some may question the lack of explicit reference to race and racism in the research questions. CRT begins with the assumption that race and racism are normal aspects of the

culture. As such, critical race theorist, Matsuda noted that persons of color, while having unique experiences, “have all undergone the initiation into racial victimhood” (as cited in Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 315). This uniqueness with some common elements amongst participants in AAMM programs at the community college level came through in the narratives of their experiences within the context of an educational structure steeped in dominant ideology. It is unnecessary to insert additional concepts of race and racism into the research questions because the lives of African American males are shrouded in those concepts in every setting in which they participate. Higher educational institutions are not race neutral settings for students of color (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Cross’s Racial Identity Development theory was utilized as the primary vehicle to understand the cultural identity of mentoring participants because it focused exclusively on how African Americans conceptualized their race, a frequent unifying characteristic of African American culture. Racial identity is defined as a social construction, which “refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Cultural identity is also socially constructed; however, it is a larger frame in which individuals are united by, “common purpose, need or similarity of background” (Lee, 2006, p. 180). Cross’s Racial Identity Development theory along with the exploration of counter narratives, and coding of participant responses will provide the structure for conclusions regarding participant perception of their cultural identity.

Sample Selection

The data collection process will begin with the purposeful selection of a site for research. Patton (2002) noted, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth” (p. 230). He further encouraged researchers to choose sites that are best suited for the overall research questions and purpose. In that manner, typical case sampling will be the strategy utilized for further identification of the research site. “When typical site sampling strategy is used, the site is specifically selected because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (p. 236). Criterion sampling complements this typical site selection strategy by a review of cases that meet some pre-determined criteria. “Furthermore, the goal of criterion sampling is to ensure that cases are likely to be information-rich” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Using a mixed sampling selection strategy makes it more likely to yield a case that yields the intense and deep level of description sought after.

Multiple criteria were utilized in this decision. Selection of the site was based upon an analysis of all of the mentoring programs in the Southeastern state of study based on four factors: number of participants (in order to have a potentially large and diverse demographic pool to engage), and evidence of overall, cultural, and academic programmatic components. These four criteria related directly to my research questions. A list of five potential sites were identified and ranked from that analysis. During the individual interview with the Southeastern system director, background information about the origins of the mentoring programs in the state was provided and additional insight was sought regarding which

program best met the research criteria, resulting in a slight re-ranking of the five potential sites of study.

A phone call and email were then sent to the number one school on my list of ranked institutions, (see Appendix A) and after successfully completing their vetting process, and having an approved IRB from NCSU, data collection began. The local program director was interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the data collection in a face-to-face interview, which was digitally recorded and again at the end of the process via a telephone interview. Field notes were made after each site visit, then transcribed and added to the overall pool of data collected. Following the initial interview with the program director, an open electronic invitation was sent to all current mentoring program participants meeting the selection criteria (see Appendix B), describing the research focus. Volunteer participants were selected based upon the following criteria: self-identifying as an African American male, at least 18 years of age, having participated in the mentoring program at least one previous semester, and being a current active member. Participants were then divided into two focus groups by traditional age (18 – 23) and non-traditional age (24+). From the focus group participants, between three to six participants were chosen for second stage in-depth interviews. The criteria for selection of second stage participants was designed to provide a broad range of experiences based upon the following: number of semesters in the program, age, academic program of study, focus group statements indicating cultural awareness (or lack of cultural awareness), and enrollment status. Five second stage participants were selected and they each completed two hour long face-to-face interviews, which were digitally recorded, a narrative poetic biography, and expressive photography which documented their thoughtful, creative

and expressive interpretations of their mentoring program experiences. Detailed constructed narratives of each second stage participant were created, including their basic genealogy, along with timelines identifying transformative life milestones as part of the data analysis.

A comparative case study method was used to examine the research questions from the perspectives of the two groups of students, based on age, from within the program. These age groupings are based on what literature describes as typical traditional and non-traditional age brackets (Justice & Dornan, 2001).

Data Collection

Case studies from a CRT perspective have an increased obligation to bring forth participant voices via storytelling and counter narratives. In this tradition, focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded, with selected students and program directors as the primary basis of data collection. Multiple interviews were conducted with the program director. The first program director interview provided biographical information about the person considered to be a key factor in the success of a formal mentoring program (Cuyjet, 2006; Pope, 2002). As part of the invitation to participate in this research, the program director was asked to facilitate invitations going out to all self identified currently active African American male mentoring program participants, so that they would each have an equal opportunity for selection (see Appendix A). The program director also provided background information about specific programmatic elements found in the program's structure. Additionally, the program director provided insight into the ways in which he believed that participation in the program impacted the educational journeys of participants, their perception of cultural identity, and indicators of their academic progress from a broad

perspective. A follow up interview was conducted with the program director at the conclusion of data collection efforts at the site. During this interview, clarification about various programmatic elements or other questions about the overall program structure were sought. Throughout the research collection process, interactions with the program director were critical for gaining access to students.

Participant Interviews

Multiple interviews were conducted with second stage mentoring participants. Prior to beginning the interviews, students were invited to participate and given a consent form (Appendix C) for consideration. They were interviewed a total of two times for one hour each session in a face-to-face format. The first interview was a biographical interview that established life context for their experiences in the mentoring program and also included the usage of a narrative poetic biography exercise (Appendix F). The second interview focused on their unique mentoring experiences, cultural perceptions, and included an exploration of their expressive photographs. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix E. All interviews were digitally tape-recorded, and transcribed. Transcripts were sent to participants for review, accuracy, and revisions via hard copy mail. Once transcript changes were made, they were entered into Atlas.ti 6.0 for analysis and interpretation.

During the interview process, a semi-structured interview method was used to allow students the space to tell their stories. This use of storytelling and counter narratives was an effective mechanism by which I was able to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 12). In this manner,

African American male participants were able to share their interpretations of their experiences in a program designed to produce more successful students. The power of these stories was to “provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 15).

Focus Groups

A third level of data was also collected through two AAMM participant focus group sessions by age. Focus groups were an important data source for, “learning about the thoughts and experiences of others” (Jupp, 2006, p. 121). Additionally, conducting focus groups encouraged students to recall their own experiences of being mentored and to build on the mentoring experiences of others. The additional benefit of this method was that it was “socially oriented” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 114). The very act of storytelling in a group setting enabled participants to reflect on their individual experiences and provide a shared space to analyze them, which augmented their ability to experience psychic self-preservation (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999). Participants had the opportunity to share their stories with one another and reflect on this experience collectively. This session was digitally recorded for later transcription and analysis. Students were asked to complete a brief demographic survey, found in Appendix D, during the focus group, for potential contact as a second stage participant. A focus group protocol can be found in Appendix E.

Documents

To provide additional insight into the ways in which the program elements were designed and implemented specifically for African American males mentoring participants, a review of program related documents was conducted. Reviewed data included:

organizational mission/charter, student handbook, recruitment materials, mentoring training materials, agendas from meetings or programs, and an organizational structure chart. A document review provided the opportunity to “provide contextual information and insights into ‘material culture’” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 195). Appendix E provided a protocol for tracking insights gleaned from analysis of various program related documents.

Data Analysis

AAMM participants were analyzed based on a number of general demographics, the most important being traditional (18 – 23) or non-traditional (24+) age at time of first encounter, which were the focus groups. The following table indicates the manner in which this information was cataloged. This information was collected from all participants (those interviewed and those who participate in the focus groups).

Table 2
Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Semesters in AAMM	Semesters attending CC	Major
1	18	3	4	Business
2	23	2	2	Transfer
12	43	3	4	Nursing

From the biographical interviews, additional elements for comparison of participants were analyzed (marital status, formal education, employment status, etc). Participants in the focus group were used as the pool from which second stage participants were chosen and later interviewed. In addition to analyzing basic demographics, participant profiles were also developed for each student interviewed. “Analysis of individual cases enables the researcher to understand those aspects of experience that occur not as individual ‘units of meaning’ but as part of the pattern formed by the confluence of meanings within individual accounts”

(Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003, p. 873). In this manner, I reviewed the interview transcripts using a qualitative analysis tool to identify categories, sub-categories, metaphors and turning points to gain insight into the collective experiences of the mentored participants.

Once these previously stated steps were completed, I continued to immerse myself in the data through a priori coding, reviewing the transcripts three to four times each, continually refining the listing of emerging codes. Documents were also analyzed for similar codes, categories, and themes. “Codes are the building blocks for theory or model building” (MacQueen & McLellan, 1998, p. 31). From the open coding process, a codebook with a brief definition, full definition, when to use, when not to use, and an example (MacQueen & McLellan, 1998) by code were developed using Atlas.ti 6.0 software to aid in the analysis and management of data.

With a draft codebook in place, I began the process of cross-case analysis, looking initially at the data primarily by age and for other meaningful categories that emerged from the data. “Data are recontextualized as they are reintegrated into themes that combine units of like meaning taken from the accounts of multiple research respondents” (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003, p. 872). Cross-case analysis enabled me as the researcher to strengthen my understanding of the variables at play within the data. I developed several matrices that described participants by age, by ways they have indicated participation has impacted their educational journeys, by activity participation, and by assignment to a stage within Cross’s Racial Identity Development theory. “Across-case comparisons were ... used primarily to ensure that the essential structure accounted for everything that was significant from the

original accounts and did not impose an interpretation on an individual case that had not occurred within the original account” (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafel, 2003, p. 874).

I also created other matrices that displayed the data by participant and age correlated to experience with the matching process, establishment of goals, and programming. Critical reflection on what participants wanted others to know about the ways in which participation in the AAMM program has influenced their educational journeys was also a critical aspect of the overall data analysis process.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To test my understanding of the data collected, a number of strategies were put into place to ensure the integrity of the process and findings. During the process of collecting the data, it was continuously analyzed and member checked with the assistance of an African American male debriefer employed by the institution of study. The African American male debriefer was chosen based upon the following criteria: African American male in higher education with a significant background in this research topic as evidenced by presentations made, employment in the field, familiarity with qualitative data analysis techniques, and a willingness to spend significant time (four to six hours) reviewing initially coded transcripts. The African American male debriefer assisted me in reviewing the initial data set and coding it to see if our coding structure was comparable. The debriefer served as a valuable check on my interpretations of the data in light of my overall research questions. Utilization of these multiple methods of data collection effectively triangulated the findings.

Data was collected and stored in a dedicated locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic files were saved to my personal laptop, which has two levels of security built into its general access. Back ups of electronic files were routinely made to an external back up drive located in my home. All research materials will be deleted and/or after three years after the conclusion of the research project. Participant confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved through the assignment of a pseudonym for each participant at the outset of data collection efforts. The listing of actual names by participant was stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

In addition to these efforts during the actual research project, triangulation through the use of multiple data collection methods (interviews with both the director and participants, focus group, document review, and observation), along with opportunities for each group to review their transcripts and offer feedback were other ways that ensured the trustworthiness of the data.

Researcher Subjectivities

Unlike quantitative research, where the biases and assumptions of the researcher are imagined to not be a factor, in qualitative research, because the researcher is the primary data instrument, it is critical to understand what assumptions that person brings to the research effort. As such I wrote a Researcher Identity Memo (Maxwell, 2005) in Appendix I, which allowed a, “reflection on your own goals and their relevance for your research, can also be used to explore your assumptions and experiential knowledge” (p. 39). This process helped me identify what I expected to learn from this research study – that mentoring does indeed

have a wide-range of benefits to the participants, many outside of the educational experience. Knowing that this is what I expected to learn from this process helped me structure data collection and analysis in a way that minimized researcher bias towards confirmation. Having an African American male debriefer also helped to minimize the likelihood of my biases overshadowing the voices of the participants.

Methodologically, based on my experience assisting in data analysis and coding of a faculty member's data set, it is clear that I have a tendency to early code. This tendency has developed over time as my intuition about the meaning of a comment or action has grown more accurate in my roles as an administrator, a consultant and as a freelance writer. In both settings, not only was time of the essence, but conclusions had to be drawn without the benefit of a great deal of reflection. I structured my data collection chronology to allow for significant reflection time, engaged in member checking with focus group and second stage participants, along with the statewide director and the local program directors to offset this particular tendency.

Study Limitations

The amount of time that was spent in the field was limited due to research constraints. Another constraint of this study is that it focused on one particular case. Limiting the focus to one rich depth-filled case within which there are opportunities to compare student participant experiences by age will offset that particular limitation. The research methods, with multiple methods of gathering data produced rich, thick description in the qualitative tradition. Other study limitations included a limited budget, and limited time for analysis. Budgetary

constraints are largely a function of the researcher's personally limited funds. Key costs (travel and transcription) were identified. Time for analysis occurred on an on-going basis as the data was collected, and occurred in a more significant way during educational leave from my primary place of employment, which enabled me to immerse myself in the data analysis portion of the research effort. Transcripts were generally transcribed within one week of the interviews and or focus groups, and sent out for member checking within three to five days of transcript completion. Field notes were immediately taken after each data collection effort and transcribed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined my overall research approach, research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Additionally, there were discussions integrated throughout this chapter that addressed strategies that were employed to ensure the overall trustworthiness of the design, collection, and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE OVERVIEW AND CONSTRUCTED NARRATIVES

The participant narratives from the African American Male Mentoring program at Sussex Community College (a pseudonym) could not be adequately described using a solitary paragraph. Their stories, and that of the mentoring program they participated in, deserved to be presented in the rich, textured tradition of a qualitative research case study. As such, this chapter will offer an overview of the mentoring program, a synopsis of its participants, and will conclude with constructed profiles of five-second stage participants. These second stage participants were chosen from the pool of focus group participants based upon the goal of presenting a wide range of experiences and perspectives on the program. Additionally, they were selected based upon the number of semesters they participated in the program, on their potential cultural identity stage, their program of study, enrollment status and age. By using these criteria, a wide-ranging portraiture of experiences was made available for data analysis. Details regarding the program, participants, and profiled members are filtered through the study's guiding research questions, which are as follows:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

All participant names, places, and institutions have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of those who participated in this research study. Participants were

given the opportunity to name themselves and selected the pseudonyms by which they would be referred throughout this research project. Only one subject's pseudonym was changed to better protect his identity, because the original name chosen was quite similar to his actual name.

Case Study Setting

Historically, the state's support of African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) programs within the community college system was originally driven by available grant dollars outside of education that were available in exchange for a focus on drug, alcohol, and gang prevention amongst this population according to Tyler Height, the state director. Today the mentoring program has evolved into a program that focuses more on improving the retention and persistence rates of African American and other minority males. By offering financial support to the programs, community college campuses have been able to augment lean staffs that work in support of these programs. The state dollars also enabled AAMM programs to offer workshops and other experiences designed to ultimately lead to improved persistence and retention rates. One of the newer aspects of the state support model was to offer periodic workshops for the local coordinators of the programs so they could learn from one another. Sussex Community College (SCC) has consistently received funding from the state system to augment their mentoring program efforts. A significant recent infusion of dollars from an outside grant enabled them to leap frog other state mentoring programs (see Table 2) and to offer a more robust mentoring program, which will be described in greater detail in this chapter.

At the local level, upon first visiting SCC, it was clear that the Brothers Empowering African American Males (BEAAM) program was important. On nearly every hallway in several of the buildings I entered, there were huge oversized color posters splashing the program's logo, an oversized graphic of professionally attired men. The posters announced the meeting dates of a variety of activities, and the myriad ways students could connect with the program. Even a bulletin board dedicated to their upcoming national accreditation affirmation process made the connection between elements of the BEAAM program and the college's chosen topic. It was as though the program sought to permeate the very psyche of all the males on campus, offering these subtle encouragements to participate.

Program Design and Structure

The BEAAM program is set up primarily to enhance and improve the, “success, retention, graduation, and transfer rates of African American male students,” according to the program’s marketing literature. In terms of reporting structure, it is outside of the academic function of the college and is instead a part of the college’s grant and fundraising arm, which reports directly to the President. Due to the stipulations associated with the award of a recent high dollar grant, combined with directives from the state’s system office, the BEAAM program not only serves non-African American males, but it also serves women who express interest. Despite these audience modifications, the program makeup at SCC continues to be overwhelmingly composed of African American male participants at a rate of nearly 90% (Program documentation, 2010). The impact of serving this broader audience will be discussed in the findings chapter, along with relevant recommendations in the final chapter.

While the BEAAM program is able to serve a broad audience, the focus of this research was exclusively on the experiences of African American male participants.

The BEAAM program started out at SCC as the added responsibility of a staff member and offered few programmatic elements. Its membership was small; it averaged no more than a dozen members annually. At the time of data collection, the program evolved into offering nearly 20 unique programmatic elements and an active membership of more than 125 participants annually. Staffing grew from one part-time position to more than four dedicated full-time staff members and more than a dozen part-time paid student mentors.

The program was open to all male students enrolled (full-time or part-time) at the college, including students in high school completion programs. To officially be a BEAAM member, students were asked to complete an initial application that gathered demographic information, educational goals/challenges, and schedule information to customize tutoring availability. Students were then assigned to a Training Coordinator, who became their primary point of contact at the college. Through their Training Coordinators, students received early advising and registration assistance, and were required to check in regularly throughout the semester. These check in sessions served as a significant way to convey information about upcoming BEAAM and campus-wide events. It also enabled the Training Coordinator to review academic monitoring reports that the majority of faculty sent in on BEAAM participants every three weeks. It also provided a space for the students to check in about any issue that was potentially impeding their academic progress. Training Coordinators played a critical role in engaging and recruiting students to become and remain members of

the BEAAM program. According to the program director, Richard Hooks (a pseudonym), Training Coordinators are charged with an enormous responsibility, which includes:

/Taking/ cohorts of men, monitoring them, interacting with them, befriending them, building close alliances with them, understanding their gaps, their needs, their challenges. Making it personal. Learning about their families, their siblings, their road to the college. Understanding how they got here and the challenges they've had. And then what it will take to overcome them. And then at that point, they developed something called a needs assessment, because we decided that we needed to find out what we didn't know about participants.

The individual needs assessment then drove the level of monitoring each BEAAM participant received from their Training Coordinators and influenced the particular experiences the Training Coordinator encouraged participants to join. Supporting the Training Coordinators were a cadre of paid student mentors who were typically students previously enrolled in the BEAAM program. BEAAM staff selected these student mentors primarily because they were considered role models for the other participants. Student mentors were assigned a smaller group of BEAAM participants to check on regularly and reported their progress to the full-time staff. Complementing that structure were community volunteers who agreed to provide additional mentoring to individuals or groups of students.

New BEAAM participants were strongly encouraged to enroll in the program's academic learning community, which included a college success course, developmental mathematics course, and one additional general education course. The BEAAM learning community met daily during the first semester. BEAAM participants were also informed

about the availability of laptops for loan, and about the computer and tutoring lab where SCC math faculty volunteered two hours each week to assist BEAAM participants. BEAAM participants who worked through this tutoring center were able to retest and potentially earn higher grades in math courses. The retest option was engineered by the director of the BEAAM program, Richard Hooks, in conjunction with the math department chair. This plan became a priority because math classes had typically been a stumbling block towards degree completion for many of the BEAAM participants. Hooks reported that between math and English tutoring in the BEAAM lab for Fall 2010 semester, there were 600 visits (duplicated headcount), which represented a nearly two-fold increase over previous years. Other academic aspects of the BEAAM program included educational workshops designed to enhance academic performance, and internships that were often in the student's area of study.

In addition to the academic components of the program, BEAAM also offered students access to programmatic elements that helped them address non-academic aspects of their lives. One of the most popular non-academic elements were the weekly "Giving Up Life's Problems" (a pseudonym) support sessions for men only, where they could discuss whatever issue might be impacting their lives in a confidential session facilitated by a BEAAM staff member with clinical counseling experience. Wright and McCreary (1997) noted that "in a support group, African American male students are relieved of the burden of needing to explain their experience; they need only share their experience in order to receive meaningful acknowledgement and support" (p. 49). Hooks observed that these sessions created a safe space where a variety of themes were explored from personal identity issues, to

legal or academic problems. He described these sessions as an opportunity to focus on personal identity, where participants do not fear having things repeated. It is also the space where they attempt to weave positive image discussions into the fabric of the conversation, even broaching how to bring about behavioral changes. Having this aspect to the program supported the contention that the statewide director, Tyler Height (a pseudonym), espoused; that many of the barriers to academic success for this population of students were actually non-academic issues. He affirmed, “These men face much greater challenges than academic support. And if you try to go in and only give them academic support, you are short changing what it takes for them to become successful in your environment.”

In response to participant requests, BEAAM added physical and wellness aspects to the program as well. These aspects included a gospel choir, a weight lifting group, and three on three basketball tournaments throughout the year. BEAAM also provided its members and the college community at large a series of workshops designed to enhance their personal, professional, and community service outlook. In the personal area, topics such as self-sufficiency, independence, spirituality, life-style choices, and assertiveness were covered. In the professional segment, students were provided with detail about how to present themselves, how to make career choices, and were offered paid internships. As part of a commitment to community service, participants were encouraged to volunteer, to participate in community events and to mentor others. Students also had the opportunity to develop leadership skills by serving in one of half a dozen student leadership positions that facilitated monthly student meetings, and conveyed student concerns about the program to staff.

Because the BEAAM program focused primarily on serving African American males, it exclusively offered programmatic elements designed to explore that particular cultural identity. BEAAM attempted to help participants better understand their African American cultural identity through regular visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), through engagement in community service work, through participation in an annual African American male summit and by interlacing elements of spirituality and brotherhood into many of their activities. Student cultural identity development was further enhanced through nationally renowned speakers being brought to campus, and through an induction ceremony conducted each semester that recognized and celebrated the academic and personal accomplishments of members. Bakari (1997) indicated that:

for African American students, racial and cultural identity are an integral part of student development. The development of a positive racial identity helps create a positive attitude and confidence in one's ability. Therefore, a positive racial identity is critical for the academic success and personal development of the African American student. A student is more likely to remain in college when he or she has a positive racial identity and knowledge of self" (p. 2).

Many of the previously mentioned programmatic elements served multiple purposes, including non-academic, academic, and cultural identity. For example, regular contact with the Training Coordinators served all three components. Training Coordinator's checked in with students about their academic progress, about non-academic factors that might impede their progress, and they organized workshops and trips where cultural identity could be explored. While this research is exclusively focused on the cultural identity development of

African American participants through Cross’s lens of Racial Identity Development, the intersection of student’s other identities is clear from student focus groups and from individual in depth interviews. Uncovering the patterns and themes associated with those intersections represents an opportunity for future research, and will be discussed as such in the final chapter.

In summary, the BEAAM program contained elements connected to each research question, including non-academic, academic and cultural identity development components. Table 3, below, describes those program activities by type. This table highlights that there were a similar number of academic and non-academic activities, but that there were fewer cultural identity development aspects by comparison. The impact of those programmatic choices will be discussed in the findings chapter.

Table 3
Program Elements

Activity Type	Activity
Non-Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight Lifting • Leadership development • Community volunteering • Community banquets • Conference participation • Overnight trips • 3-on-3 basketball tournaments • Internships • Gospel choir • GULP sessions • Regular interactions with BEAAM staff • Personal workshops • Clothing closet • President discussion forums
Cultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Visits • Community volunteering • Community banquets • Conference participation • Overnight trips • Gospel choir • GULP sessions • Regular interactions with BEAAM staff • President discussion forums

Table 3 Continued

Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College Visits• Tutoring• Conference participation• Internships• Lap top check out• Overnight trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GULP sessions• Regular interactions with BEAAM staff• Educational workshops• Personal workshops• Learning community• President discussion forums
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It should also be noted that many of the programmatic elements served participants in multiple ways. For example, overnight trips were considered an element that touched all three-program aspects. They were academic in the sense that participants were not able to take part unless they earned a specific GPA. They were non-academic in that they offered students an opportunity to travel outside of their county of residence, to participate in something for enjoyment such as a professional football game. They were also considered as builders of cultural identity, because the trips often included visits to historic sites, such as the Black Wax museum or the Congressional Black Caucus conference.

In terms of academic components, major segments of the BEAAM model were Training Coordinators who were the primary point of contact for students, along with paid student mentors and community volunteers. The Training Coordinators, along with Hooks, oversaw everything from tutoring, academic update reports, workshops, internships, laptop loans, and trips to a variety of regional and national events. While the role of the Training Coordinator was critical in terms of direct interaction with students, the person directly responsible for coordinating all of these efforts was the Program Director, Richard Hooks, whose profile follows.

Program Director Profile

Richard Hooks was instrumental in the evolution of the BEAAM program into the structure observed during data collection. Hooks shared a cultural identity and some common experiences with the primary audience the program served. Over the several months that I visited the school, Hooks and his staff were consistently attired in professional clothing in a self-described attempt to model the importance of personal presentation for BEAAM participants.

At our first meeting, he sat behind a messy desk covered in data reports, program announcements, emails, and other artifacts of the BEAAM program. His walls were adorned with his own fraternity paraphernalia alongside one of the same BEAAM posters advertising the program I had seen throughout the campus. He sported a nattily tied bow tie, and smudged rounded glasses. As we established rapport, he asked me a series of questions designed to test my cultural consciousness as a researcher. At the conclusion of that initial meeting, my cultural identity was deemed appropriate, because he agreed to approve my request to conduct the research study at his institution. In the parting moments of our meeting, he casually mentioned his initial apprehension at working with me after our telephone conversation because “[I] sounded like a White girl.” Since this is a comment I have heard throughout my life, I recognized that it came from a limited perspective regarding what and how African Americans are supposed to be, and not as a personal indictment regarding my cultural allegiance. Although the comment stung, I managed to shake it off, and it inspired me to reflect and write a poem that is found in Appendix H.

Outside of this comment, it was evident through subsequent interactions with Hooks, his staff, and the students that he brought a certain level of cultural consciousness to this program. He regularly saw evidence that the program was having a profound effect, not just in academic ways, but in other respects that included benefits to participant families and the larger community that SCC served. Hooks shared a powerful story about the transformative power of the program when asked to recall a particular situation where the BEAAM program had an impact on a student's life:

This one guy had done jail time. Mostly petty larceny, some drugs, some alcohol. He was someone we'd gotten from one of our community recruiting efforts when one of the Training Coordinators went to this community organization. The student felt like everyone had given up on him. The Training Coordinator walked this guy through everything, helped him deal with issues day by day, and now his life is turning around. He's back living with his children's mother, instead of being homeless, and he even has her back in school! He's going to be able to take care of himself now, but he needed that kind of treatment from us to make it.

The program's ability to be the catalyst for such transformations is an important source of renewal for Hooks as the local director. Although Hooks had little in common with this specific participant, he believed that several elements in his background made him particularly effective in his role as director of the program. Like the BEAAM participants, he grew up in a rural area with parents who did not finish high school. He was also a first generation college graduate. Additionally, he came to focus on African American males after interacting with a community non-profit. That particular organization was focused on ending

homelessness, and helped him see first-hand how personal issues left unchecked can spiral out of control, thus preventing those with great intellect and potential from breaking out of whatever cycle prevents them from being successful. He further observed that although he grew up poor, he had a distinct advantage over many BEAAM participants: he grew up in a two-parent household, and had a strong relationship with his father. His familial upbringing instilled in him a sense of cultural pride, religion, a work ethic, and a moral compass about right and wrong that set him apart from his peers in college, earning him distinctions as a reluctant leader.

As the director of the BEAAM program, he was reflective about his life experiences as an African American man, coupled with knowledge from his community work and attempted to offer a program that met the needs of the participants. He recalled an incident from his youth attending a predominantly black high school, with only white counselors, which shaped his every interaction with BEAAM participants:

I remembered walking into the counselor's office one day asking about college and her saying, 'There are some catalogs. Just look through them and tell me what you might be interested in doing.' So I think I stayed ten minutes. I've labored about what was missing in that relationship... I felt like I needed more support than someone saying just stay in that room and figure this out on your own.

This particular incident planted a seed in his mind about how he would do a better job supporting first generation students differently if he were ever in such a position. From personal experiences as a first generation college student, he knew that he would need to address educational knowledge gaps such as selection of an academic program, financial aid,

and study skills in order for participants to compete academically. Performing well academically and graduating often requires the kind of assistance the BEAAM program offers. The state director believed that the real benefit of a formal mentoring program goes beyond academics:

I think it's important because it provides support. A support system...or what I call background issues, or...personal issues for students. What I've seen is a lot of students, minority males, particularly African American males, they need someone to show them. They need someone to guide them through the education process. And to give them support and back up for what they do.

Overall, Hooks demonstrated what mentoring literature considers to be some of the most important characteristics (LaVant & Tiggs, 1997) for a leader of formal mentoring program for African American males: He showed a genuine commitment to a formal mentoring program; He garnered support for the program throughout the institution; He was energetic, compassionate, and dedicated. He hired similarly minded staff persons to serve as the Training Coordinators. That the BEAAM program placed a greater emphasis on academic and non-academic activities, with a lesser emphasis on cultural identity development reflected the lack of salience race had on the overall educational success of both the state director and the program director. Resultantly, from both levels, the program focuses primarily on academic and personal issues for participants. While those structural elements are built into the program, additional insight was sought as to the actual experiences of participants using the three overall research questions as a filter. An overview of program

participants in general, followed by a summary of each focus group will provide some of that insight.

Overview of BEAAM Focus Group Participants

Focus groups were conducted with two distinct age groups; traditional aged (18 – 23) and non-traditional aged (24+) participants focused on understanding their overall experiences with the mentoring program through the context of the research questions.

While the majority of participants in the BEAAM program shared a common racial and male gender assignment, their academic programs, backgrounds, experiences, understanding of their cultural identities and level of engagement varied greatly. In general, amongst those who participated in the two focus groups, all but two self-described their race as being either African American or Black, with one calling himself, “Black, proud, and strong.”

Table 4, highlights some of the other ways in which the participants described themselves using basic demographic information collected at the outset of the focus groups. With roughly equal numbers of participants in both groups, the average age was 36, with the range of ages between 18 and 60.

Only one student indicated that they were enrolled at SCC on a part-time basis, while the others indicated that they were full-time, most even indicating that “student” was their current occupation. The average number of semesters enrolled at SCC was three, while the average number of semesters as a participant in the BEAAM program was slightly lower at two semesters. In terms of grade point average (GPA), from participants who were able or willing to provide their GPAs (10 of 27 did not provide this information), came out to an average of 2.2. Choice of academic majors ran the gamut from nursing to advertising and

graphic design. Approximately half of the selected majors were considered to be “university transfer” degrees, which means that upon awardance of either their Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree, the participants will have the option to transfer that degree seamlessly to a state college towards the completion of a four-year baccalaureate degree. The other half were working towards terminal degrees in a variety of areas that prepared them to go directly into the workforce upon completion of their programs of study by earning an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.

When asked to share their ultimate goal for being enrolled at SCC, ten indicated a desire to work and earn money. Others indicated a desire to transfer to a four-year institution, with the remaining respondents providing responses ranging from attainment of a master’s degree (one), to helping others (one), and becoming a business owner (three). While these averages and descriptions of the participant demographic components revealed the complexity of those served by the BEAAM program, their words and insights to the research questions during the hour-long focus groups revealed much more, and will be expounded upon in the following findings chapter. Focus group participants were sent an invitation to volunteer from the local program director, using the recruitment script found in Appendix B. Upon determining that they met the eligibility requirements of self identifying as an African American male, were over the age of 18, enrolled in the program for at least one semester, and a current active program participant, volunteers were assigned to a group based on their age. Brief descriptions of each focus group will follow to highlight some of the variation amongst the groups.

Table 4
Focus Group Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	# Semesters		Status	GPA	Major	Goal	Traditional/ Non- Traditional
			CC	AAMM					
1. Abnormal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Traditional
2. Adrien	20	Student	6	5	PT	1.9	Criminal Justice	Transfer	Traditional
3. Amp	33	Student	5	1	FT	2.8	Advertising & Graphic design	Transfer & work	Non- traditional
4. Aries	43	Student	3	3	FT	3.5	Networking Technology	Work	Non- traditional
5. Bo	47	Student	1	1	FT	n/a	Information Technology	Degree	Non- traditional
6. Breh	50	Student	1	1	FT	3.0	Medical office Systems	Work	Non- traditional
7. Bubba	27	Student	4	4	FT	3.5	Human Services	Work	Non- traditional
8. Cellus	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Traditional
9. Chuck	47	Student	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Non- traditional
10. Desn	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Traditional
11. Flyy	21	Student	6	6	FT	2.9	Nursing	Help Others	Traditional
12. Gerard/ South Beach	18	Student	2	1	FT	2.0	Associate Arts Transfer	Transfer	Traditional
13. Hammer	23	Student	4	4	FT	2.5	Welding	Work	Traditional
14. Jay	37	Student	2	2	FT	2.6	Networking Technology	Master's	Non- traditional

Table 4 Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	# Semesters		Status	GPA	Major	Goal	Traditional/ Non- Traditional
			CC	AAMM					
15. Juice/OJ	22	Student & PT	1	1	FT	2.7	Associate Arts Transfer	Transfer	Traditional
16. Keen	31	Student	4	4	FT	3.0	Advertising & Graphic design	Work	Non-traditional
17. Koofy Boy	20	Student & PT	3	3	FT	2.7	Associate Arts Transfer	Transfer	Traditional
18. Lil Justin	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Traditional
19. Lou	20	Student	1	1	FT	n/a	Business	Entrepreneur	Traditional
20. Mally G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Traditional
21. Mike Mike	21	Student & PT	3	1	FT	2.0	Automotive	Entrepreneur	Traditional
22. Quick	37	Student	4	3	FT	2.5	Pre-dental hygiene	Work	Non-traditional
23. Rick	51	Student	3	3	FT	2.0	Human Services	Work Counseling	Non-traditional
24. Sage	18	Student & PT	2	2	FT	2.3	Medical Lab Technician	Work	Traditional
25. Tank	21	Student	1	1	FT	n/a	Automotive	Entrepreneur	Traditional
26. Vince	60	Student	2	2	FT	n/a	Paralegal	Work	Non-traditional
27. Worm	45	Student & PT	4	4	FT	n/a	Automotive	Work	Non-traditional

Note. Students in grey were identified to participate in the second stage of the research; Students in orange arrived late to the focus group, and resultantly only filled out the consent form, but not the follow up contact form. Most, if not all of the members in this group also departed early, as evidenced by their limited contributions towards the end of the focus group on the transcript.

Traditional Aged Focus Group

Researcher field notes about this focus group indicated that the energy level amongst the participants was quite high, with a light hearted mood that was consistent throughout the meeting. Even before the focus group started, there was lots of talking, laughter, and camaraderie exhibited by the members. There were more than half a dozen instances of laughter among participants noted on the focus group transcript. There were a total of 15 participants, 10 of whom chose to provide demographic information. The average age of the traditional age group was 20. Traditional aged participants were enrolled at the college the same number of semesters they participated in the BEAAM program, which was nearly two semesters. The majority listed their occupation as “student” and only three of those indicated that they also held part-time employment. All but one indicated that their enrollment was full-time, and their average GPA was 2.5. The majority of this group indicated that they were pursuing terminal degrees that would lead directly to employment, while the remainder indicated an interest in transferring on to complete a four-year degree. Their indicated goals corresponded with their academic programs of study, with the same number indicating a desire to go to work or have a business as were pursuing terminal degrees.

Non-Traditional Aged Focus Group

The overall tone of this focus group was in complete contrast to the traditional aged group, according to my researcher field notes. Instead of an air of joviality and enjoyment, participants were quite staid and reserved by comparison. I observed them as they talked quietly amongst themselves, noting that a number of participants chose to not engage with their peers at all, focusing instead on reviewing their consent forms and completing the

requested demographic information. This air of solemnity continued throughout the focus group, where participants were passionate in their responses, with many remaining after the formal end time for the focus group. From a demographic perspective, the average age of participants was 44, with all students listing their occupation as “student,” and only one indicating that he was engaged in part-time employment. These participants were enrolled at the college one semester longer than they had been BEAAM participants. Their overall GPA was higher at a 2.8. The majority of the non-traditional aged students were pursuing terminal degrees, with the ultimate goal of going directly into the workforce. While the traditional age group members all described themselves as some version of African American, two participants in this group indicated a mixed heritage of Hispanic and American Indian in addition to African American. The findings from these focus groups will be shared in the following chapter.

Participant Profiles

The following are constructed narratives of five-second stage BEAAM participants, selected from the pool of 27 focus group participants. A profile of these five participants can be found in Table 5. They were chosen to provide the widest range of academic programs, personal experiences, and engagement with the BEAAM program. These participants, also called second stage participants, were asked to complete two hour long interviews with the researcher. Additionally, they were asked to complete a narrative biography exercise as part of the first interview, and were asked to take “thoughtful, expressive, and creative pictures” that represented their experiences in the mentoring program. Second stage participants who completed all facets of the research design were given \$25 gift cards to Walmart. Table 6

also provides details gleaned from the various data sources regarding the specific program elements each participant engaged. The following are brief constructed narratives of those five-second stage participants in alphabetical order with the aim of providing enough context to situate their unique findings.

Table 5

Second Stage (in-depth interviewees) Participant Overview

Participant Name	Age	Parental Involvement	Judicial Involvement	Sibling with College Experience	Group	Cultural Identity Level	Participation with BEAAM program	Previous College Experience	Previous Work Experience	High School Experience
Adrien	20	Single Mother and Grandparents	None	No	Traditional	Pre-encounter (Miseducation)	Low	No	No	Positive
Aries	43	Single Mother and Grandmother	None	Yes	Non-Traditional	Internalization (Bicultural)	High	Yes (junior college)	Yes – (Worked as Probation officer for 18.5 years)	Neutral
Koofy Boy	20	Married Mother and Father	None	Yes	Traditional	Pre-encounter (assimilation)	High	Yes (four-year college)	Internships	Positive
Quick	37	Single Mother	Yes	No	Non-Traditional	Internalization (Multiculturalist Inclusive)	High	Yes (community college)	Yes - (pipe layer, welder)	Neutral
Sage	18	Single Mother, and Grandparents	Yes	No	Traditional	Encounter (Miseducation)	Low	No	Some - Internship	Negative

Table 6

Second Stage (in-depth interviewees) Participant Involvements

Code	Activity Type	Description	Adrien	Koofy Boy	Sage	Aries	Quick
O, C	Banquets	BEAMM members invited to sit at college table at civic and business events (example NAACP, Chamber of Commerce).	X	X	X	X	X
O	Clothing Closet	Closet stocked with professional attire for BEAAM participants to receive as needed when working at internships either external or internal to the institution.					
A, C	College Visits	Visits to 4-year colleges, often to HBCUs where cultural elements are infused into the experience.	X	X			X
O, C	Community volunteering	Community engagement work, often to the benefit of members of the African American community.		X		X	X
O, C, A	Conference Participation	Annual African American male summit, annual mentoring statewide conference for staff and students, and other conferences as available.	X	X	X	X	X
A	Educational workshops	Workshops for BEAAM participants open to all, covering topics such as time management, career selection, study skills, financial aid.		X	X	X	X
O, C, A	GULP sessions	Giving Up Life's Problems – weekly sessions designed to allow participants to release whatever pressure may exist in their lives in a safe environment.	X	X	X	X	X
O, C	Gospel Choir	Group of BEAAM and other students organized a singing group focused on performing traditional African American Christian music.	X				
O, A	Internships	Paid work experiences funded through BEAAM build professionalism and often complement academic program.		X	X		X
A	Lap Top Check out	Laptops loaded with internet access, and the latest MS software available to be checked out to participants.					
O	Leadership development	Holding a leadership position within BEAAM (officer or committee chair).		X			X

Table 6 Continued

Code	Activity Type	Description	Adrien	Koofy Boy	Sage	Aries	Quick
O, A	*Learning Community	A cohort of BEAAM students required to take the same courses in college preparation, developmental math, and another general studies course during their first year of enrollment at the college.					
O, C, A	Other Trips	Visits to other historical sites (Black Wax Museum, Congressional Black Caucus, professional football games). Students must have a certain GPA to be eligible to participate.	X	X	X	X	X
O, A	Personal development workshops	Workshops for BEAAM participants, open to all, covering topics such as healthy relationships, financial management.			X		X
O, C, A	President Discussion Forums	Forums hosted by the President of the college, an African American male. He chooses the overall topic of discussion, which have ranged from anti-sagging, to spiritual development, and other topics.	X	X	X	X	X
O, C, A	Regular contact with TCs	Check in with Training Coordinators regarding academic alerts from faculty and any issues that might impede their academic progress.	X	X	X	X	X
O	Three on Three Basketball Tournament	Basketball tournaments where BEAAM members play in three member teams through a bracket to win a small cash prize.	X	X			X
A	Tutoring	Weekly tutoring in a computer lab available to BEAAM participants in math and English.	X		X		X
O	Weight Lifting	Group of BEAAM participants meet weekly to lift weights on campus.					X
	TOTALS		10	13	10	9	16

Note. O = overall educational journey; C = cultural identity development; A= Academic engagement

^a Shaded participants are non-traditional aged.

* Was not available during participant first year of enrollment

Adrien. Is a naïve 20-year old with a 100-watt smile and a respectful manner that any parent would be pleased to have had a hand in producing. Adrien is the only second stage participant enrolled part-time, self-attributed to his inability to complete the development (pre-college level) math course sequence connected to his Criminal Justice degree. He dreams of becoming a parole officer and was the only participant who specifically mentioned a desire to be married one day. He enrolled at SCC upon the advice of a high school counselor who suggested that starting at the local community college would be a smarter and more economical way for him to pursue higher education. He described himself as smart, handsome, loveable, and funny. He is the oldest of a collection of stepbrothers and sisters, and acknowledged his responsibility to set a good example for his siblings. Considerable amounts of his free time are spent with family members who admonish him to “stop being silly” and that “you know right.” He considered his grandfather to be one of his greatest influences and continued to spend time with him even as a young adult constructing a variety of structures, hunting, and engaging in church activities.

Adrien joined the BEAAM program ironically upon the recommendation of a female SCC student, and has selectively participated in a number of activities. His low overall engagement with BEAAM is due primarily to his part-time enrollment status, transportation challenges, and often not being aware of activities that he would normally find out about from regular interactions with his Training Coordinator. In terms of overall BEAAM activities, he has attended community banquets, participated in the annual African American male summit and other program trips, and plays an instrument for the BEAAM gospel choir. He even participated in a three-on-three basketball tournament.

Using Cross's Racial Identity development model, Adrien seemed to be at the Pre-Encounter stage, where there is a, "lack of interest in race, embracing color blindness and a race-neutral notion of humanity" (Harper, 2007, p. 129). It was his belief that he managed to avoid encountering racism because he simply "always got along with folks." From this cultural framework as a BEAAM participant, Adrien participated in a number of activities designed to spur cultural identity development, such as trips to historically black venues, the annual African American male summit, the gospel choir, contact with his Training Coordinator, and Presidential forums.

From an academic perspective, Adrien's high school experiences were self-described as affirming. Although he did not indicate what kind of grades he earned at the secondary level, he did mention enrollment in technical education courses and having overall positive memories of that experience. In addition to his secondary background, Adrien also did not have any member of his immediate family with college experience to offer additional insights about how to be academically successful in that environment. At SCC, as a member of BEAAM, he has participated in math tutoring, attended a few GULP sessions, and sporadically checked in with his Training Coordinator. He admits that his less than a 2.0 GPA was the result of choices that he made despite available tutoring.

Yes, I had took tutoring, it's just I still just needed more tutoring but I just stopped going for some reason. I don't know. They say I was playing around in school and stuff, even though I think I wasn't. Then again maybe I was because, ummm, I wasn't going to class. I be at home, be tired, didn't want to go to class and stuff, but now I

know the consequences and what I need to do, so I decided, you know, to just keep coming to school.

Adrien grew up in a rural area, surrounded by family who poured love and energy into him. His enrollment at SCC, through the exclusive financial assistance of his family, is a testimony to their commitment to his education. His engagement with the BEAAM program has largely impacted his overall educational journey, making it richer than it otherwise might have been.

Aries. A 43-year old, third semester student and BEAAM member, he repeatedly referred to a critical juncture in his life that altered his life's journey. That he referenced this incident repeatedly during our interviews, with shoulders slumped and a depth of regret that was palpable in his voice each time he recalled it was telling. It was clear that he wished he could rewind that time in his life and deliver a different set of lines. The incident occurred when he was a cocky, 18-year old football player on scholarship at a junior college. He made the mistake of getting into an argument he could not win with his coach about a starting position. He was so overwhelmed at his perceived injustice of that event, that he left college after only one semester, effectively changing the trajectory of his life. Upon leaving that junior college, Aries went to work for the next 18 and a half years laboring as a Corrections officer at one of the prisons in the county of study. At the time, it was one of the better paying jobs in the area that only required a high school diploma.

When an on the job injury forced him to have back surgery and endure a year of painful physical rehabilitation, he was unable to return to his primary source of income for

nearly two decades. Instead of simply living off of a disability check, he instead recalled his dream from an earlier time, and decided to head back to school to reclaim it.

Aries was largely shaped by his single mother, grandparents, and uncle, recalling that they consistently encouraged him to always treat people the way you want to be treated and to always remember where you come from, realizing that you are not above or beneath anyone. Those words echo in his head as a returning older student whose main goal is to reach just one young person and help them navigate systems he had to pilot on his own.

In terms of his overall educational journey, Aries enrolled at SCC after a nearly 20-year gap in academic work. An admittedly mediocre student in high school, he has surprised himself with a 3.5 grade point average as he works towards his degree in information technology. Aries has also been a selective participant in the overall program. He attended the GULP sessions, and regularly checked in with his Training Coordinator and other members of the BEAAM staff, appreciating that they often offered him a push through words of encouragement to do his best work. He did not take advantage of some of the more common academic components of the program such as tutoring and laptop check out, preferring instead, to figure things out on his own.

Aries has also participated in a number of activities related to the development of cultural identity. Using Cross's Racial Identity Development model, he seemed to be at the final stage of internalization, which is characterized by "acceptance of one's own culture while acknowledging other cultures as well" (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, & Cross, 2001, p. 179). He attended the African American male summit, educational workshops, and participated in trips to venues with historical significance. A trip to Washington, DC helped

to fill in some historical knowledge gaps regarding the participation of African Americans in the House of Representatives post-reconstruction.

Overall, Aries background of having previously attempted higher education, combined with two decades of work in correctional facilities where he learned about the impact that class has on sentencing, irrespective of race, have combined to make him a significant contributor to the BEAAM program.

Koofy Boy. Is the 20-year-old baby boy of a married mother and father who were not highly educated, but who worked together to provide guidance, direction, and high expectations for their son. His older sister set the standard by graduating from a four-year college, and so he began his journey in higher education, not at SCC, but at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). That experience ended after only one year that was filled with homesickness, lack of a support network, and fear for his personal safety due to a series of racially motivated events that occurred on campus. A cousin who works at SCC not only helped him enroll in a transfer program of study after that disappointment, but she also insisted that he participate in the BEAAM program.

He entered the program with a bruised ego, self-described as being kind of shy and not very outgoing. As additional opportunities to participate in the community through service projects that were brought to his attention by his Training Coordinator, Koofy Boy participated, noting that he understood that by doing so, it would, “help him get better as a person.” As a student who received academic honors in secondary school, Koofy Boy did not have to enroll in any developmental courses at SCC, and has earned a 2.7 GPA in university transfer with a concentration in information technology (IT). He has participated in several

internships in IT, which augmented his understanding of the field he will ultimately enter. Koofy Boy chose to not take advantage of the tutoring offered through BEAAM, but benefited from the program's system of early alerts. He recalls that a little push from his Training Coordinator about grades that were below what was expected was sufficient to help him refocus and earn grades more in keeping with his abilities. "The Training Coordinator is that enforcer. They stay on you about slacking off...it pretty much keeps me on track."

Koofy Boy emerged into adulthood with a relatively healthy, constructive sense of himself as an African American male. For now, Koofy Boy wants to stay within his community, as evidenced by his intent to transfer to a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). "I know I will have to deal with the races in the world. But, I just feel like, I would be more comfortable in an area that's more predominantly black than in one that's more predominantly white." Using Cross's Racial Identity Development theory stages, it seems as though Koofy Boy is at the Immersion-Emersion stage, which is characterized by "intense black involvement" (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, & Cross, 2001, p. 177), reflected in the numerous ways in which he consumes and spends his free time within the African American community.

Overall, being a participant in the BEAAM program benefited Koofy Boy in a number of ways. By being an active participant in the BEAAM program until his studies were complete for transfer to a four-year institution, he grew and stretched in ways he had not imagined and served as a role model to other members of the program. Koofy Boy took advantage of many of the program's activities and as a result grew more mature and more

confident in his abilities. He also became more aware and knowledgeable about culture and his community.

Quick. Is a 37-year old, non-traditional aged student who has started and stopped his pursuit of higher education many times throughout his life for a variety of reasons. Quick had a fairly uneventful secondary experience. Immediately after graduating from high school, he worked manual labor jobs and attempted to enroll at a local community college to support his mother who had recently lost her job. He found that balancing those obligations was too much, and he quit school. During that same time, he found himself engaged in what he described as “doing wild things” throughout his 20s. Some of those activities landed him in jail, where he served a brief sentence. Upon his release, Quick worked a series of jobs, helping others avoid some of the poor choices he made. Eventually, he, his girlfriend, and his mother relocated to the county of study for a fresh start. As he and his girlfriend began to have children, Quick continued to play the role of provider for his family and found employment in manual labor plentiful. When the rural economy in the area began constricting, Quick was thrown out of work and had to change direction in order to continue to be the provider for his family. He looked to the health care industry and decided to enroll at SCC.

He began at SCC on a full-time basis in the pre-dental hygienist program with hopes of securing a career that would allow him to support his three daughters. His first semester at SCC, he did not engage in any campus activities, wanting instead to focus on earning good grades. He began to reflect on why previous attempts at higher education were not successful and determined that one of the factors was the lack of a good, positive support network that

he had missed growing up as the only child of a single mother. Through active participation in BEAAM and other campus activities, he created a family from amongst his BEAAM participants. Quick was one of the most active members of BEAAM. Of the 21 unique program elements, he participated in 15 of them. He attributed his academic success of having a 2.5 GPA, and his growth in other areas to be directly related to being engaged in the BEAAM program. Once he completes the program at SCC, he will have another two to three years to complete his career preparation. Quick felt as though he had to make the most of this time at SCC, largely because of his age, joking about how he is going to look as a 40 year old on a four-year campus. He felt an urgency to obtain his degree and believed that his approach, with the support of BEAAM, is what will make the difference where he experienced failure previously.

In terms of his cultural identity, Quick recalled growing up as one of the few African Americans in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in upstate New York. That experience of being the outsider, combined with being picked on as a child because of severe asthma, has greatly impacted the way he views matters of race. Using Cross's Racial Identity Development model, he seemed to be at the final Internalization stage, characterized by "acceptance of one's own culture while acknowledging other cultures as well" (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, & Cross, 2001, p. 179). He firmly believes that while being an African American male is replete with stereotypes that one must continually confront, overall it is a wonderful thing because of their charisma and style. At the same time, he embraces his Southern and Northern heritage, continues to make connections with other races, and in general acknowledges that every culture has value.

Overall, Quick played the role of provider in his personal life and that carried over to the role he plays with the BEAAM program as a mentor and active participant in nearly every aspect of the program.

Sage. At only 18-years old, this young man, with the countenance of a much older person, has learned that wisdom is an expensive asset to acquire. He gained wisdom from a series of life events; losing an older sister at the age of seven, watching his mother become disabled, being homeless for a brief time, and spending three months, four weeks and two days in jail. Sage understood the price he has paid for his wisdom and his eyes reflected an alternately weary and optimistic appearance. His experiences within the BEAAM program were filtered through and inextricably tied to this challenging background.

After relocating to the region of study several years ago, Sage found himself permanently expelled from secondary school and finishing his GED at the age of 16 at Sussex Community College. He then stayed and decided to pursue his dream of becoming part of the medical field. With a practicality borne from necessity, he chose the field of medical technology, a terminal degree that he will complete in two years, with a current GPA of 2.3. After graduation, he plans to work at one of the many local health facilities in the region, and continue his education, ultimately reaching his goal of entering the field of forensic pathology.

Raised without the benefit of lessons from his biological father, Sage is now the oldest to two younger siblings, whom he spends considerable time guiding and molding. Familial obligations and his belief that he has gotten what he needed from the BEAAM program has limited his level of involvement with the program's various elements. Since

joining the BEAAM program two semesters ago, he has consistently held a paid internship through the program, because not only does it help give him insight into scientific matters, but it keeps money in his pocket that would be difficult to earn with a full-time academic load. He has also participated in tutoring, some local community events, workshops, and consistently checks in with his Training Coordinator.

Sage's outlook on matters of racial identity was rooted in his life experiences. He revealed that, "being a black male doesn't mean anything to me." He further explained that growing up, he met people from a variety of backgrounds, and that divisions based on race were actually the reason, "the world is pretty much messed up now." Using Cross's Racial Identity Development model, Sage seemed to be at what he described as the "pre-encounter stage," characterized by a "lack of interest in their race, embracing color blindness and a race-neutral notion of humanity" (Harper, 2001, p. 129).

In some ways, Sage seems like a loner who would be an unlikely candidate to participate in BEAAM. His mother's chance meeting of a campus staffer who knew about the program and suggested that her son might benefit from it changed his stance on participating. He is wary of making connections with people in general, and yet because of the genuine ethic of caring demonstrated by many members of the BEAAM staff, he has continued to engage and has benefited from the program in many ways.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the case study setting, followed by a detailing of the overall design and structure of the BEAAM program, including a brief narrative of the program director. It also briefly introduced the BEAAM participants through data gathered

during focus groups for traditional and non-traditional aged students. Finally, it concluded with detailed constructed narratives of five selected participants, framing their personal backgrounds and outlining the ways in which they have engaged with the program. The next chapter will discuss the findings from these various data collection methods, synthesizing the overall categories and sub-categories by research question.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of participants in an African American Male Mentoring program at a Southeastern Community College. The purpose of this research was to gain insight from the voices of those engaged in mentoring programs that are proliferating across higher education including community colleges nationally. Campbell found that “recent statistics support the use of formal mentoring as an increasingly popular strategic intervention. The long list of mentoring programs on the National Education Association (NEA) website is an indication of the prevalence of student mentoring programs at colleges and universities in the US” (as cited in Allen & Eby, 2007, p. 387). The following research questions guided this research:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College’s mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

The lives of African American community college men are complex. Harper and Quaye (2007) noted that “there are several important within group variations in the experiences of African American undergraduate students...yet few /research efforts/ have focused specifically on African American men” (p. 128). For those African American males attending community colleges, there is a dearth of information about their specific overall experiences. These findings will synthesize the overall case study through document

analysis, interviews with the state and local directors of the program, focus groups with traditional and non-traditional aged participants, as well as in depth interviews with five participants, who completed a narrative biography exercise, took expressive photographs regarding their overall experiences in the program and were each interviewed two times.

The first research question focused on the overall experiences of participants and found three major findings. Participants considered the program to be emotionally uplifting, in terms of creating a sense of brotherhood, a desire to mentor others and the ability to share common experiences. It was also found that the program provided a bridge to critical knowledge that students needed. They were able to access both tacit norms and explicit knowledge while developing strategies to overcome personal and educational obstacles.

The second research question focused on the ways in which program participants perceived their cultural identity through participation in the mentoring program. Recall that racial identity is defined in this research as a social construction which, “refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Cultural identity builds on that definition, using a wider lens to capture individuals who are united by “the basis of some common purpose, need or similarity of background” (Lee, 2006, p. 180). Resultantly, “culture can be inclusive of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender...” (Lee, Burnhill, Butler, Hipolito-Delgado, Humphrey, Munoz, & Shin, 2009, p. 48). Cross’s Racial Identity Development theory, counter narratives, and participant responses regarding other cultural unifiers served as the scaffolding for these findings. The majority of participants seemed to be at either the pre-encounter or encounter stages, with few participants progressing through

to the latter stages of immersion-emersion and internalization. That so many participants were in the earlier stages of their racial identity development, speaks to the relatively few deliberate opportunities built into the program's framework for such progression. Those participants at the latter stages of their racial identity development typically brought life experiences which propelled them into those phases. In addition to noting where participants seem to be within Cross's model, it was also important to note other signifiers of cultural identity that emerged from the data. The most often noted cultural identity indicator was the significance of expressive attire. Participants and staff clashed over their interpretations of what sagging clothing or expressive attire represented in terms of cultural identity. Although this clash was not resolved amongst staff and students, it was clear that for many participants it was an important way of identifying themselves as African American men. BEAAM staff overwhelmingly advocated avoidance of such dress styles fearing that it would limit student opportunities. Instead, they encouraged more professional, traditional attire as a metaphor for dismantling stereotypes of African American males (perceived as being represented by sagging attire) which they hoped would propel internal changes to participant mindset.

The final research question focused on which programmatic aspects participants found important in their academic progress. Overwhelmingly, staff member treatment of participants, who displayed a caring ethic with their routine questions about academic and personal issues, and their intrusive questioning of student progress served as a motivating force for many students. It was also found that the structured framework of the program contributed to academic progress, in particular the availability of tutors, regular grade

monitoring and assistance with goal setting along with accountability for meeting those goals were the most helpful aspects of the program's structure.

This chapter will describe these findings in greater detail, utilizing relevant data to expand on the categories and themes/sub-categories that emerged from the research, guided by the research questions previously outlined. The following are the overall findings of this research study, summarized in Table 7:

Table 7
Data Display Summary of Findings
 Research Question #1: Description of Overall Journey

Categories	Sub-Categories
Emotional uplift	Providing sense of brotherhood Desiring to mentor others Sharing common experiences
Bridge to critical knowledge	Accessing tacit norms Understanding formal education information Developing strategies to overcome obstacles
Avenue for personal development	Progressing towards maturity Enhancing leadership capabilities Exposing to atypical experiences

Research Question #2: Perception of Cultural Identity

Categories	Sub-Categories
Pre-encounter (Cross)	Lacking interest in race Conforming to stereotypes and anti-black attitudes Being miseducated about black history and culture
Encounter (Cross)	Experiencing dissonant event Having feelings of anger, frustration, or confusion
Immersion-Emersion (Cross)	Acknowledging existence of racism Becoming aware of black history and culture Unfolding self-pride
Internalization (Cross)	Evolving multiculturalist perspective Increasing community engagement
Expressive attire	Signifying cultural identity Symbolizing internal changes

Research Question #3: Academic Progress Contributors

Categories	Sub-Categories
Staff member treatment	Displaying a caring ethic Motivating participants to excel
Structured framework	Tutoring availability Monitoring of grades frequently Establishing accountable goals

Educational Journey

The first research question sought to gain insight into the ways in which participants in the mentoring program described their overall journeys at this particular institution. Mentoring participants at Sussex Community College were found to describe their educational journeys as being emotionally uplifting, as providing a bridge to critical information, and as avenue for personal development. Literature reinforces those findings with an indication that there is a link between emotionally driven characteristics such as self-esteem and academic resilience. Finn and Rock (1997), in a study of more than a thousand minority secondary students from low income homes found that resilient and academically successful students exhibited positive self views and had opportunities to reinforce those behaviors in various school related engagement activities. Reinforcement of a positive self view and modeling those behaviors seemed to have a protective effect which improved chances for student success despite membership in an at-risk group. Adult education literature also informs us that for first generation students, which is the category that the overwhelming majority of Brothers Empowering African American Males (BEAAM) participants fall into, that positive involvement on campus makes a difference in overall persistence (Tinto, 2006; Tinto, 1998; Craig, 2006). BEAAM participants found themselves becoming more resilient emotionally, intellectually, and personally as a result of their interactions with one another and with BEAAM staff.

Emotional Uplift

The first categorical finding within this research question identified three sub-categories. Those sub-categories are as follows: that participation in the program provided a

sense of community, kinship, and belonging with a positive peer group, it provided a platform for older members in particular to help and mentor others, and it created a safe space in which to share common experiences as African American men.

Providing sense of brotherhood.

The creation of a kinship group that could be called upon for personal, legal, spiritual, transportation, financial, and other life issues that stood in the way of enabling participants to focus on academic matters was the most important way in which participant's educational journeys were impacted. "The tendency for African American males to become deeply embedded within their peer group has been noted by a number of writers, including Kunjufu, 1986, and Taylor, 1989" (Corbin & Pruitt, 1999, p. 73). Ensuring that that peer group is a positive one, focused on the attainment of goals that will lead to academic and personal success are one of the programmatic elements BEAAM attempted to provide to participants. Having aspects of the BEAAM program that were non-academic, that served to deliberately create a bond amongst the BEAAM members and between BEAAM members and staff were absolutely critical to participants being able to navigate educational waters in which they might have otherwise drowned.

One traditional aged student, Sage, noted that although he was not looking for friends through BEAAM, he ultimately found that "these people kind of become like an extended family. So, you kind of take and listen to what they say and think about it." Having a sense of community is one of the factors for increased likelihood of persistence (Tinto, 1998). One traditional aged participant, Desn, specifically joined BEAAM to be a part of such a positive group. He joined BEAAM because, "it's like a brotherhood and I just like the environment."

Non-traditional aged students affirmed these same opinions as well. Amp, a 33-year-old participant shared the importance of this sense of community, emphasizing that, “The camaraderie you experience once you're a member of BEAAM, and you start interacting with the other members of BEAAM and the training coordinators, it makes it sort of like a community.”

Quick, a non-traditional aged student supported the importance of a kinship group through his expressive photographs. He identified images of fellow BEAAM participants as being the most significant in describing his overall mentoring experience. Without the program, he noted that he likely never would have met many of those he now considers his closest friends without the program, despite their shared racial identity. He now counts on several of his fellow BEAAM participants as extended family. He purposefully spends his weekends and free time with these older BEAAM members, surrounding himself in what he called, “their positive energy and greater life experiences.” He has even befriended the mother of one participant, and shared how she is now part of his support network of people who constantly encourage and support him. Also identified amongst Quick’s most significant photographs was one of a lone, half court, roughly paved basketball goal, where members of BEAAM, some BEAAM staffers and himself played a pick up game one evening after helping a member make a house repair. Being able to call on one another for support when needed has created a powerful kinship, or family relationship amongst some members of BEAAM.

For many of these students, as first generation college students, they often did not have familial support to stay the course and complete their education. By surrounding

themselves with others who have similar goals, as with their BEAAM participants, they often received a buoying effect in terms of their motivation. Cellus, a traditional aged student summarized the value of BEAAM and its ability to create a sense of kinship when he shared the following in one of the focus groups,

These programs really help because some guys hang around with the wrong people and do the wrong stuff, but it's actually not their personality, but by hanging with these other guys they'll do it. I think this right here just helps them get their mind focused to stay positive and to stay on the right track.

That sense of kinship extends beyond what participants receive from the program, but it also speaks to what they attempt to give to the program.

Desiring to mentor.

The desire to mentor others and share life experiences with younger members of the program resonated with a deafening persistence that was repeatedly echoed in the words of many non-traditional aged students. The literature refers to this phenomenon as “cross-age peer mentoring,” where the relationship is characterized by a connection to an older and wiser person, and the relationship is not task oriented (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006, p. 712). Aries, one of those non-traditional aged students, made this assertion about his ability to help those younger than himself by setting a specific goal: “I always say if I can reach one, if I can get to just one that's trying to understand and trying to do the right thing. Just one. And make a difference, I'll feel like I'm doing my part.” Another non-traditional aged student, Quick, had a similar perspective regarding his responsibility towards younger members of BEAAM noting that in his role as an assistant learning coach,

he felt a responsibility to “Every time I read something and I know I didn’t know it beforehand, I feel like I made an accomplishment and now I want to just get that information to somebody else.” Even during the non-traditional aged focus group, the theme of desiring to help others younger than themselves was evident. Consider the words of one of those participants, Breh, a 50-year-old BEAAM member discussed that he “joined the BEAAM program because a lot of young students around here and young guys in the community don’t understand how difficult parts of life are.” The need to share wisdom gained from life experiences of older participants was evident.

When traditional aged participants did mention a desire to mentor others, it had more to do with a desire to share academic lessons instead of life lessons. Additionally, traditional aged students efforts to actually follow through with that desire to mentor others was frequently thwarted by familial obligations or other life challenges. For example, Sage, a traditional age student, when asked if he was interested in mentoring others responded, “Yeah, I’ve thought about it. I’ve thought about it. I’ve thought about it a lot. But, I personally don’t have enough time to do it.” While the desire to mentor others largely resided among the non-traditional aged population, other emotionally uplifting aspects of the program were more widely held.

Sharing common experiences.

This theme emerged amongst both traditional and non-traditional aged students. Sage shared an experience that was an example of the subtlety of racism he experienced and how it served as a motivator to perform well academically:

In all of my science classes I can remember, it was probably like two, or three black people in a class. You know as soon as you walk in there it's like, 'Okay, why's he taking this class? He's probably not going to be able to keep up. I might as well not worry about him because he'll drop out anyways.' But when you stay there and pass, you change their mindset hopefully, sometimes.

Koofy Boy shared a similar experience, but in a broader sense, when he described the challenges of being an African American male:

I feel like it's more pressure, because a lot of people already see you as an individual that's not going to do anything. The numbers are already stacked against you... But, when you finally succeed and actually accomplish what you set out to do, it's like, oh, uh, I'm sorry, I didn't know that you could do that.

A recent report about the *Needs of African American Males in Higher Education* (Manning & Everett, 2008) supported Sage and Koofy Boy's fatigue at having to constantly prove themselves by documenting that "teachers often underestimate a person's full potential if the student is African American" (p. 5). Another way to describe participant experiences is with the term stereotype threat. Steele (1999) defined it as, "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm the stereotype" (p. 3). Being able to share experiences with racial

fatigue and stereotype threat with others who have or who are currently experiencing the same situation validates the experience for students. It also creates an opportunity to collectively develop positive strategies for handling such experiences, so that they do not derail students in their quest for academic and personal success. Having BEAAM staff members with clinical counseling experience facilitating the GULP sessions where many of these types of experiences are shared is another way that the program works to provide an emotional uplift for participants. “In a support group, African American male students are relieved of the burden of needing to explain their experience; they need only share their experience in order to receive meaningful acknowledgement and support” (Wright & McCreary, 1997, p. 49). During those same sessions and in the course of other BEAAM programming, participants are able to network with one another and gain access to information that ultimately helps them to be more successful.

Bridge to Critical Knowledge

The majority of participants in the BEAAM program are first generation college students. As such, there is an abundance of information that they need to become aware of for long-term success and retention. This finding, that participants perceived that the program served as a bridge to critical information is explicated by two sub-categories; the ability to access tacit and explicit knowledge and the ability to develop strategies to overcome obstacles.

Accessing to tacit norms.

“Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate” (Schön, 1983, p.

49). This very kind of tacit knowledge in higher education disadvantages those who are first generation college students. These are often the same students who fail to make meaningful connections with faculty and staff because they do not understand the value of such relationships. The result of not having access to the tacit knowledge that enables students to successfully navigate through the educational maze often results in premature exit prior to goal completion (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 1998). The BEAAM program has identified pockets of both tacit and explicit knowledge that were limiting the success of African American males in particular at their institution. Some of the explicit knowledge the BEAAM program attempts to impart to participants included topics such as, career exploration, financial aid, access to tutoring services, as well as academic and personal counseling to name a few.

One participant, Sage a traditional aged student, greatly benefited from his early days of being a BEAAM member. The program exposed him to a number of insights regarding how to navigate the college's educational system that he considered himself to be ignorant about when he entered the college at the age 16. He also realized that his set of knowledge regarding how to be successful in a higher education setting was further limited from not having had other family members complete college previously. He reflected on the role of BEAAM in building his educational and personal knowledge base "BEAAM taught me ways to be more professional in a work place around other people. Pretty much how to take care of myself. They also share experiences they had so we don't have the same problems and mistakes."

Being able to hear about the life experiences of other members and those of BEAAM staffers without actually having to go through that particular experience was critical to

successful navigation. Bo, a 47-year-old non-traditional aged participant shared his story of involvement with drugs and the impact that had on the trajectory of his life with fellow BEAAM participants during the focus group. While he shared this story, my researcher field notes indicated that the room fell completely silent, only broken by applause to support his statements, as the participants listened earnestly to the difficult words that Bo shared:

First of all we have to remember that we are African American men and we need this mentoring partnership. So I'm here to be mentored and to possibly do some mentoring. See BEAAM can bring something to me, but I can also bring something to BEAAM. Like the man said, we can share our experiences. My experience has been with drug addiction for the past ten years and now I'm eight months clean (sustained applause and cheers from the group). I can bring the message about drugs, a lot of people don't really talk about drugs. Or they think it's just about the drugs. But drug addiction is about more than drugs. It's about self... And I'm here to keep the focus on myself and to help others. And to keep the focus on myself, I got to give some of this away... I'm looking at everything positively. Now I've made it, I'm focused on the positive. It's about solutions.

On the surface, this message about the perils of drug addiction might seem unrelated to educational success, but the reality is that, casual drug usage among some African American males at SCC is far too common occurrence. The effect of having Bo share that he missed an opportunity to study engineering at a prestigious institution after high school graduation and instead fell into a world of drug addiction is a powerful witness that was delivered in an

extremely effective format. Having participants learn about what to avoid is part of the tacit knowledge they are able to share with one another.

Understanding formal education information.

In terms of explicit knowledge, in a recent report regarding the experiences of community college men of color, one of the conclusions the report came to was that notions of manhood and being self-sufficient often got in the way of African American male students accessing needed services and knowledge. Learning how to access financial aid, taking advantage of available tutoring, understanding the transfer process, are a few of the aspects of explicit knowledge that BEAAM participants needed to know about. Adrien, a traditional aged student, suggested that one of the benefits of being in the program had to do with what he learned, “BEAAM really helps you to do the things you know that you really need help in, like with tutoring and stuff.” Another participant, Hammer, a 23-year-old traditional aged student, expounded on that same concept, detailing how the BEAAM program helped him:

When I first started coming to SCC, I didn't know anything about college or anything like that. BEAAM brought me to this place, walked me to this place, told me to go here, helped me get signed up over here, helped me get started, and what places can help me out with certain things...And they're still behind me today helping me out.

They haven't given up, just like I haven't given up.

Overall, participants provided these and numerous other examples of how the BEAAM program filled in critical knowledge gaps of both tacit and explicit information participants needed in order to successfully navigate SCC's educational environment.

Developing strategies to overcome obstacles.

Providing participants with specific strategies to conquer obstacles that stood in the way of completing their educational journeys was essential. Often that information came from the experiences of fellow BEAAM participants. Quick, a non-traditional aged student, expressed how he personally learned from others experiences and how there was a general benefit to this process of sharing, “Somebody in BEAAM has been through the same thing we have been through, the ones that are here. There's another group that's gone and come through and done that same thing.” That same sentiment was echoed in the words of Vince, a 60-year-old non-traditional aged participant, who indicated that irrespective of the obstacle, BEAAM members and staff were resources consistently available to him and others “One of the things I really love about BEAAM is that they will support you, I don't care what it is. If it's on a personal basis, personal problems or whatever, or if you just need somebody to talk to, they are there.”

Traditional aged-students felt similarly about the role of BEAAM in supporting them through obstacles they encountered along their educational journeys. Cellus, a traditional aged student, affirmed the program’s role in overcoming obstacles when he commented in the focus group, “I just feel like they help you keep your head up. I know that sounds corny and stuff, but it doesn't really matter what challenge you're having, you can just bring it to this group and that's what I feel like BEAAM is for. To keep our heads on straight.” A different traditional aged student, Sage, agreed and intimated that overcoming obstacles was not just about solving specific problems, but it was also about enabling participants to solve problems themselves through personal transformation. He remarked, “I feel that the BEAAM

program is showing us stuff and they try to help us out of binds. But they are also trying to like change our mind set. It's really not the problems themselves, or the stereotypes, it's all about the mindset.”

Sharing strategies for overcoming obstacles did not always guarantee that participants would follow that advice. For example, one participant, Aries, a non-traditional aged student recalled that when he was 18 years old, he had a mentor who encouraged him to not quit school when he ran into problems with his football coach. Unfortunately, at the time, he was not ready to listen to the sound advice his mentor offered him, and he has spent the last twenty years wondering how different his life might have been had he heeded that advice. Because of that experience, Aries and many of the non-traditional aged students, along with the BEAAM staff, attempted to deliver information about overcoming obstacles in a variety of ways, in the hopes that it was delivered in a way that could be heeded by participants who were ready to hear such advice.

While the program makes strategies for overcoming obstacles readily available to students, through workshops, GULP sessions, meetings with Training Coordinators, and in Presidential forums, the reality was that every participant was not at an advanced enough personal development stage for the information to permeate their psyches. There were, however, indicators of growth in personal development based on statements from a variety of participants. Some attributed growth in their characters to being a BEAAM participant. One participant, South Beach, an 18 year-old-traditional aged student, furthered this finding when he shared the effect the program has had on him. “You don't have to make it on your own and if you need help or something then the BEAAM program is a place with some structure,

and so when you come to school, it'll build your self-esteem.” The words of this participant serve as an important summary regarding how the program served to help himself and others develop strategies to overcome obstacles that might impede their educational progress.

Avenue for Personal Development

The finding that the program assisted participants in their overall personal development was not surprising. That it enabled many participants to become more admittedly mature, that it enhanced their leadership capabilities, and that it exposed them to atypical experiences which impacted them in a variety of different ways was revelatory.

Progressing towards maturity.

Participants indicated that they felt as though being a part of BEAAM helped them mature in areas such as confidence, financial management, professional presentation, and becoming more responsible to name a few. The manner in which participants defined maturity is consistent with the explanation of the term as noted by a team of psychologists, Sheldon and Kasser (2001) who connected maturity to the pursuit of goal-based measures and seeking of well-being behaviors. Participants not only sought to develop and accomplish academic and professional goals, but generally desired to conduct themselves in a manner that ensured their overall well-being. They were assisted in this progression towards maturity through the individual goal plans that were established with their Training Coordinators. As a result of those plans, Training Coordinators regularly looked out for opportunities for participants to enhance a particular skill or to develop new ones. Some of the skills take the form of tangible abilities like public speaking, while others are subtler, such as mindset changes that are signifiers of maturity.

One participant, Quick, a non-traditional aged student, credited the BEAAM program with helping him decide to focus on a health career option with greater long term earning potential, instead of working towards a degree that he could have completed faster, but that would have netted him fewer employment options. “I was thinking in the short term. I wasn’t thinking long term. I wasn’t thinking about what would be more beneficial in the future career-wise. I had gotten some good advice on that from BEAAM staff.” Quick also recalled an incident when he was forced to resign from a college wide position, and suffered a bout of low self-confidence and was second-guessing his abilities. He was later elected to become the new President of BEAAM, a position that helped to restore his confidence, and reminded him of an important life lesson: “You do have your down times, but you know that you have to change that and the only person who can change that is yourself.” Learning to become resilient in the face of adversity is another way in which this particular participant progressed in his maturation process.

Another participant, Koofy Boy, a traditional aged student, surprised himself and found his previously self-described shy manner being altered as he was thrust into roles through BEAAM that forced him to improve his public speaking abilities. “I guess it's another way, I feel like, that's another a way of working on myself, cause I'm really not that big on public speaking. But, I mean, I realize I might have to do it anyway, why not practice on it through these activities that BEAAM offers?”

A second stage participant, Adrien, took an expressive photograph of his cousin sitting at the kitchen table completing her homework. When asked how that connected to the BEAAM program, he responded that he was mentoring her in the same way that BEAAM

staff mentored him; through encouragement to do his work and asking if he needed help. He now plays that same role of mentor for his fifth grade family member, one of the ways in which he is exhibiting signs of maturing and taking on responsibility for nurturing others.

Enhancing leadership capabilities.

The BEAAM program provided many opportunities for participants to serve in formal and informal leadership roles. Koofy Boy acknowledged the positive peer pressure he felt during his tenure as President of BEAAM: “I try to lead by example and basically not slack off. I'm pretty sure, /the other participants/ would be like, well, he's the president, why is he slacking? So, it's like, kind of kept me on my game, being top dog.” Offering a slightly different perspective on how the program enabled him to develop leadership capabilities came from Sage, a traditional aged student. When asked about an important piece of wisdom he learned from the program, he reflected that it showed him “Ways to be a leader and the true effect it has on other people.” He went on to talk about how although he was not serving in an official leadership position, from observation of his Training Coordinators, he had learned a lot about leadership. About the importance of how to talk to people, about the importance of how you present yourself, and other lessons, all from hearing about the positive and negative life experiences they shared with him. Adrien, a traditional aged participant indicated that he attempted to run for an office within the BEAAM program unsuccessfully, but that he will continue to try again, because he wants to develop his leadership capabilities and seemed optimistic about the opportunity to serve the organization.

Exposing to atypical experiences.

The program and system director both noted that many mentoring program participants have had limited exposure to many things that others might consider “normal” such as traveling, attending banquets, conferences, and visiting museums. Exposure to such extracurricular activities has been shown to promote positive psychosocial development, which in turn correlates positively with overall satisfaction with the student educational experience (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, & Castro, 2010, p. 38). Because the previous life experiences of so many of the BEAAM participants involved never having left the county of study, creating these opportunities to grow were critical. Such exposure had the effect of enabling participants to develop a greater appreciation of their unique identities and at the same time set the stage for them to dream about what they could become. Koofy Boy, who credited the BEAAM program with broadening his access to new places, acknowledged that the mentoring program, “actually helped me get to the places that I was eventually going to...I kind of got there faster, because I was planning on going to Georgia and I actually went to Georgia through BEAAM last semester.” His acknowledgement that the program accelerated his exposure to atypical experiences was a common sentiment expressed by many participants.

Another example of this atypical exposure happened at an annual conference where mentoring participants from across the state are invited to a formal conference. Tyler Heights, the state director of mentoring programs, described the disorienting feeling that he observed many participants experiencing during the event:

TH: That's the first time that a lot of African Americans have seen other African Americans dressed up other than at church, in a professional manner. It's the first time someone actually talks to them about what they want to do with their future. Even on the campuses, it's the first time someone has talked to them about this. And this program has allowed that to happen.... For some, they don't know how to eat. They're apprehensive. You may see a guy at the table not eating and he says he's not hungry. He probably is hungry; he's just out of place.

PGS: Yeah. He may not know which fork to use.

TH: Exactly. I think that's something we really need to focus on and take advantage of with these guys.

PGS: You mean role modeling and access to experiences?

TH: Yes. Even etiquette. Some people come to the program and they've never been to the beach. Some live only an hour away from the beach, and have never been to the beach.

Participating in the annual conference, and taking trips to various locales all served to broaden BEAAM participant awareness of other role models and other ways they could live beyond the rural setting of the county of study.

Another atypical experience participants spoke of often were the internships. These experiences provided them with professional, academic, career and financial enhancements. Interns were expected to treat the experience like a typical job where one must report at a certain time, accomplish job-related tasks, and complete paperwork in order to be paid. While the internships were often the reason participants joined, they quickly found that the

experience provided more than just income. Koofy Boy had an opportunity to gain insight into his chosen career field, despite having only taken one computer related class at SCC. Through a series of internships in the Information Technology (IT) field, he was able to not only earn money, but he also learned first hand what being in IT support actually means, an understanding he previously did not have.

Cultural Identity Development

The second research question sought insight into the perceptions of cultural identity through participation in the mentoring program. Through Cross's Racial Identity Development model, participant counter narratives and analysis of other cultural signifiers noted by participants, findings related to this research question were explored. Critical Race Theory (CRT), as the theoretical framework guiding this study, posits that racism is a normal, not aberrant aspect of US society. Resultantly, it should be acknowledged that such a tenet in some ways limits the scope of the findings as they relate to the overall construction of the world. CRT has been criticized as being "too cynical, nihilistic, or hopeless" (Taylor, 1988, p. 124). Even with these limitations imposed by utilizing CRT, the findings around participant perception of their cultural identity development are engaging and meaningful.

"Since the introduction of Cross's (1971) model of Black identity development, the importance of racial identity as a contributing factor to psychosocial wellness among African American has been well documented in the social science and education literature (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 127). Although few of the programmatic aspects of the BEAAM program are designed to deliberately move students through Cross's stages of racial identity development for African Americans, there was overlap between the program objectives and

elements of the Cross model, which were explored in detail. In addition to the four elements of Cross's revised model, of pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization, one other finding arose from the data. That finding is around attire as a signifier of cultural identity, which will also be explored in detail.

Pre-encounter Stage

This stage is characterized by “a lack of interest in their race, embracing color blindness and a race-neutral notion of humanity” (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 129). Persons at this stage often find themselves engaged in one of two coping strategies, which are either assimilation, where “white culture is idealized and a greater group orientation is found around being an American” (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001, p. 175). The other coping strategy involves anti-black behaviors where hatred of self is the result of extreme miseducation about the value and role that African Americans have played throughout history and into the current age.

Lacking interest in race.

Few participants indicated absolutely no interest in their race. The closest incident to showing a lack of interest in race occurred during the traditional aged focus group. One traditional aged participant, Desn, attempted to make the case that many of the issues raised during the focus group that were being attributed to African American males could actually be applied to White Americans as well. He said,

I'd like to speak on behalf of the white people. When we say black people, I know white people who have had to deal with tragedies. I know some white folks who are

looked upon as being black. There are some white folks who are looked at like they're black. You know what I'm saying?

While as the facilitator of the group, I thanked Desn for his observations, I also reminded him that the focus of my particular research was exclusively about the experiences of African American males. Desn went on to share with the group that race is an arbitrary indicator, applied by society, thereby attempting to limit what one group can or cannot do. He ended his comments by reflecting that BEAAM, in serving all races, was showing the membership that those limiting constructions of race, which typically have African Americans on the losing end, do not have to bind their potential. My researcher notes indicated that other participants nodded in agreement with his assertions about the role BEAAM attempted to have in reshaping attitudes about what it means to be an African American.

Conforming to stereotypes and anti-black attitudes.

When respondents were asked about what it means to be an African American male, answers were largely framed using negative imagery accompanied by few positive words. For example, Amp, a 33-year-old-non-traditional aged student shared the duality of being an African American male; “It's a two-fold thing. On one side of the spectrum you got yourself coming from a people who are very proud. And then on the other side of the spectrum, you come from a group of people who are looked at as being one of the lowest forms of human life.” Quick, another non-traditional aged participant made a similar observation:

I think African Americans are the only race that has been mis-abused from every direction. Black, White, Chinese, and even within ourselves. We always try to down each other. We try and do good, someone will try and make that bad. We got some of

us trying to get educated, trying to do right, trying to act a certain way, and other fellas try to bring them down. Then you got those who think they are better. They try to take the other ones, instead of bringing them up, they steady keeping them down. It's that crab in a barrel thinking. I think we are the most mis-abused race in the world.

During the focus groups, when participants were asked what it means to be an African American male, the responses ranged from being proud and strong to criminals of whom most people were fearful. One participant, Flyy, a traditional aged student summarized the conundrum associated with being an African American male:

I think our generation is disgraceful. That all black men have to resort to rap, basketball, football, or athletic scholarships. Those are the only fields where they expect for a black man to be. If you're going to be a black man, you can be a hair dresser, but you can't be a doctor. They don't want you to believe that you can be something other than those that they give us. We're strong for the simple fact of look what we've been through and we're still coming up. We've got a black president.

Things have changed, but to me they haven't changed too much.

Some even noted that the foundation of many of the challenges within the African American community were largely due to self-hatred. Consider the words of Rick, a 51-year-old non-traditional aged student when he shared how being in BEAAM is helping him and others move away from those anti-black feelings that seem to fester when left unchecked.

We are looked on very poorly, which I think really does need to be changed... Being in BEAAM, this has given us an opportunity to become role models for other

people...I don't know how the other brothers in here feel, but this gives us a chance to be able to come together and learn how to socialize in a positive way. I know when I'm out here in the community, if I wasn't aware of who that brother was (pauses, nodding amongst members of focus group). Black brothers when they see other black brothers it's like they are sizing you up or it's just a feeling that you get. It's like, well who are you? Who do you think you are? All that kind of stuff. It's not really positive. You know what I mean? At least here we're being able to communicate around each other and know one another. Because of having such a negative attitude towards one another. I think one of the reasons there's so much black on black crime is because I think we hate ourselves to a certain degree.

This anti-black attitude was reflected in many of the descriptions provided by participants in response to the question about what it means to be an African American man, irrespective of age group. Vandiver et al.,2001, believed that the source of such attitudes is largely due to extreme miseducation about one's culture and history. Again, the BEAAM program attempted to address these stereotypes and anti-black attitudes in particular through the deliberate development of bond of brotherhood through shared rituals at meetings that emphasize their interdependence on one another. Stereotypes are also addressed during the weekly Giving Up Life's Pressures (GULP) sessions, at the Presidential forums, and at workshops. It is clear that chipping away at these stereotypes, many of which have been internalized, and instead replacing them with more positive holistic images, is one of the program's greatest challenges.

Being miseducated about black history and culture.

A huge part of participants being at the pre-encounter stage is due to extreme miseducation about African American history and culture. Take for example, the words of one of the participants regarding Martin Luther King Jr.'s contributions, "He had a dream, and his dream came true about us blacks, all of us blacks and, you know about slavery, stopping slavery and stuff, his dream saying that one day we're gonna be free. And now we're all free." That he mangled two distinctly unique times in the history of African Americans, and of US history in general is a reflection of the level of miseducation that the program seeks to overcome. Another participant, Aries, a non-traditional aged student, noted that being part of the program helped him to "Learn more about our heritage, understand who you are, understand things that your ancestors went through or everybody else went through for us to be where we are right now." For Aries, having opportunities to counter the inaccurate history that he had been taught which frequently left out of the accomplishments of African Americans was a critical component of developing pride in himself as an African American man.

Encounter

This stage is characterized by, "persons experiencing an incident or dissonance of some sort that awakens consciousness of their race, which ignites feelings of anger, frustration, shame, or confusion" (Harper, 2007, p. 129). Participants not only experienced dissonant events in and out of the academic environment, but they were also combated the associated range of emotions through lived accounts of those events.

Experiencing dissonant event.

Nearly every participant experienced at least one dissonant racially motivated event, an occasion when there is a jarring incongruity between how one believes one should be treated and how one is actually treated due to one's race. These events force persons to acknowledge that they may not always receive equal treatment because of their race. One-second-stage participant, a 20 year-old-traditional aged student, Adrien was unable to recall ever being treated differently because of his race. He went on to say that, "I never had nobody, no one treat me wrong as to, you know, as to the color of my skin... I ain't never had no one discriminate against me because of my skin color. I always get along with folks. All people, even the blacks, Jews, Asians and all."

In contrast to Adrien's lack of a racial wake up call, Koofy Boy described an incident that was more reflective of the overall narratives of BEAAM participants. He chronicled a series of football games he played in during high school where he attended a predominantly black school and the outcome of games played against schools that were predominantly white. When playing white schools, he observed that the majority of the referees were from that school's district. As a result, obvious penalties that should have been called against the white team were overlooked, while every penalty or field position call always went in favor of their white opponents. "It just felt like, it was, an unfair advantage. They were playing more men on the field than we were. It made you feel like you had to play against the clock, the team, and the refs. It just made you think more. It made you have more mental errors because you were so worried about what the refs were going to say instead of just actually playing your game." Unfortunately, according to Koofy Boy, that same kind of

disadvantaging of African Americans was routine in other areas of life, including higher education.

Another non-traditional aged participant, Quick experienced a disorienting event when confronted with graphic images of how African Americans were treated during a visit to BEAAM sponsored trip to an historical African American museum. Although he expressed an awareness that African Americans throughout history were not treated well because of their race, seeing the level of senseless, cruel violence inflicted on an African American couple who lived in a white neighborhood evoked feelings of anger that even months after visiting the museum surfaced during the interview. Aries shared a more personal incident that occurred in the past decade that was a relatively recent reminder to him that his race still matters. He experienced treatment so unfair at the hands of an employer that he was forced to seek legal redress. In reflecting on that incident, he is now constantly on alert for similar mistreatment in this educational setting, because he now feels empowered to address these situations in a way that he did not as an 18 year old faced with an incident ripe with racial undertones in which he was unable to seek a remedy. When his white coach chose an inferior starter for the football team who was white over him, at 18 that incident left him feeling angry and frustrated. The incident that occurred in 2000, because he was able to receive some measure of justice actually left him feeling satisfied and empowered that despite institutional racism, he was able to mete out some level of justice.

Having feelings of anger, frustration, and confusion.

These are some of the words participants used to describe how they felt after having gone through a dissonant event based on their race. The BEAAM program's weekly Giving

Up Life's Pressure (GULP) sessions were a tremendous source of pressure relief for those types of feelings. Worm, a 45-year-old-non-traditional aged student described the sessions in this way:

You might have something on your mind that is aggravating you and you don't have anyone to talk to. Once you step into the room amongst ourselves, there's no one looking down upon you if you cry, or if there's something heavy on your mind that you need to get off your chest, you can say what you need to say. You got a time for that. As a member of BEAAM, they have time for that. That has helped me along too.

Sage, a traditional aged participant experienced feelings of anger over the harsh words that were directed at him by an African American judge during the sentencing process for weapon and drug charges prior to enrolling at Sussex Community College (SCC). He recalled that every time he attempted to respond to a question from the judge, the judge would instead overtalk him and utter phrases like, "I don't understand how y'all black kids these days do these types of stuff." For Sage, with a disabled mother, two younger siblings, and limited money coming into their household, he made a choice to earn money by selling drugs, which the judge never had the opportunity to learn about. As a person of color in a position of power, he was also likely the victim of the same media deluge that characterizes African American males as threatening and prone to criminal behaviors. The anger Sage felt towards the judge combined with the disappointment his mother expressed were enough to redirect Sage's energy towards more positive ventures, like being a part of BEAAM and working an on-campus internship which enables him to have access to funds while focusing on his academic work.

Immersion-Emersion

This stage is characterized by two potential outcomes: intense black involvement and/or the development of anti-white attitudes. For those who become intensely involved in their blackness, they typically consume and embrace all things related to their race, in some ways to excess, and to the exclusion of other races and cultures. Those who exhibit anti-white behaviors have a tendency to denigrate whites and white culture, and often daydream of inflicting pain or harm to whites (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, et. al, 2001, p. 177).

Acknowledging racism.

Nearly every participant was able to identify some way in which racism had impacted his life directly or indirectly. However, because of the varied backgrounds of the BEAAM participants, their reactions to such incidents varied widely. Wright and McCreary (1997) in a study of an African American male support group noted that same response variation; “Not all members experienced racial incidents as equally traumatic, nor did racial incidents have equal impact on a student’s functioning” (p. 54). One participant, Lou, a 20-year-old-traditional aged student, affirmed the existence of racism in his statement regarding the plight of many African American males; “It seems like /the world/ wasn't really made for us to succeed, like we have to really push ourselves.” Another traditional aged participant, Cellus, offered similar comments acknowledging the existence of racism in their lives, but framed his words in a broader context. He reminded participants that as young people they have not had to deal with the same level of racism their parents experienced. He went on to state that even with an African American president in the White House, President Obama cannot be the

only success story among African American males, and that there is still much work to be done to eradicate racism.

Amp, a 33-year-old-non-traditional aged student, summarized the role of racism in participant lives by describing how it impacted his thinking, and yet how the BEAAM program helped him move beyond racism's limiting frame.

This is what you're supposed to do because you're from here. Or this is what you're supposed to do because you ain't this. Or from a sorry bracket. You know what I mean? Or this is how much ya'll make? Oh, ya'll poor. Naw. This program shows that no matter what age or race you are, you can actually do something with yourself.

They promote that. Regardless of financial upbringing, or whatever, they promote that you can be somebody. You can be something. And that's one of the main things I love about this program.

That participants were able to reflectively speak about the role of racism in their lives and talk about the ways in which the program attempted to help them move beyond an aspect of life that they had little control over was encouraging. Participants also found that becoming more aware of their own history and culture helped them flourish and not succumb to stereotypes.

Becoming aware of black history and culture.

Many of the trips that the BEAAM program sponsored had the primary goal of serving as a motivator for academic success, because participants had to earn a certain GPA to participate. These trips, however, ultimately delivered a positive externality of enabling participants to become more aware of their history and culture at the same time. One

participant, Aries, a 43-year-old-non-traditional aged student found himself having gaps in his knowledge of African American history filled in during a BEAAM trip to Washington, D.C. During the visit he simultaneously felt excited and perturbed to learn about the role of African Americans in Congress.

Aries: I found out a lot of things that I had been told differently about history...I pride myself on black history, and I found out this year that there's a lot of stuff I didn't know. I had to stop and listen to this guy because I was like I'm pretty good with black history, and this guy was letting me know some things that I didn't know.

PGS: What was one of your biggest new insights about black history from that trip?

Aries: That during the 1700s there were six US senators and...

PGS: They looked just like us!

Aries: Uh-huh.

PGS: That's right.

Aries: In the 1700s.

PGS: And they were virtually all from Southern states.

Aries: Yes, they were from the South. Mississippi, Alabama. There were two from Mississippi, which was shocking.

PGS: You found that out at on the BEAAM trip?

Aries: Yes. We met a man and his wife there who had done amazing research...

Quick, 37, another non-traditional aged participant had a similar experience on a BEAAM sponsored trip to the Black Wax Museum where he had a chance to learn about both positive and negative aspects of his history and culture.

Quick: I saw some stuff that I didn't... I mean I knew things went on in the past, but to actually see how graphic it was.... How we were mistreated in the past because of our color. How we were prejudged because of our color.

PGS: Give me an example of something you saw that was disturbing to you.

Quick: There was a /black/ husband and wife, I don't remember the year... apparently the wife was making reports to the police and the people in the neighborhood... the Caucasians in the neighborhood found out about it, and of course they took that anger out and killed her husband /in the worst way possible for a man/...then they cut his legs, his ankles, his feet...Then they hung him up, not by his neck but they just hung him up by his arms...he wasn't dead yet... his wife was pregnant at that time... they cut her open...and took two kittens and sewed her stomach back up in front of him...

PGS: Wow...

Quick: I saw that stuff first, but it wasn't just all negative. On another side, it did show /positive aspects of our history/. It showed some of the accomplishments, some of the goals we've committed our self to and have done. They showed black doctors, lawyers, educators, politicians... it showed both sides.

Becoming aware of the overall history of African Americans is often both gratifying and disturbing. Both Aries and Quick and others who participated in these BEAAM trips developed a greater appreciation for what other members of their race endured on their behalf. For these two particular participants, it also seemed to create a desire in them to learn more about their history and to do everything in their power to not live their lives in a way

that gave credence to the present day stereotypes of African American males. They instead wanted to lead lives filled with pride.

Unfolding self-pride.

If one lacks confidence in where they are from, if they lack a plan for getting to a better place, or they have never been told to be proud of themselves, they are very likely to lack confidence or pride in themselves. Many participants talked about being in just those types of situations prior to joining BEAAM, and how their opinion of themselves and of other African American males were evolving to a higher level. Through BEAAM's vision statement, the program attempts to help every participant develop "a sense of one's own proper worth, stature, and dignity." They integrate this thinking into nearly every workshop, presentation, and interaction with participants. For example, Mally G, a traditional aged student noted during a focus group that African American men with education are actually quite powerful. Sage, an 18-year-old traditional aged participant reinforced the importance of a sense of pride for African American males when he commented, "I strive to be, to pretty much have a purpose. I don't want to die without having accomplished something." 37-year-old Quick, a non-traditional aged participant responded to the narrative biography prompt of I am (the words I use to describe myself) with words that reflected the pride he has developed about himself through active engagement in BEAAM:

I am a confident adult learner.

I am /the kind of man/ who when I set my mind to something, I will accomplish it.

I am a critical thinker.

The development of pride in one's self is a difficult characteristic to develop because it requires ridding one's self of negative imagery while adopting new information that is not necessarily reinforced through cultural media. As participants work to develop pride in themselves, some of them move on to the final stage in Cross's model, internalization.

Internalization

This stage is characterized by, “/sloughing/ off the stereotypical and unjustified pro-race and anti-race attitudes once held. Being comfortable with their Blackness frees individuals to concentrate on issues beyond the parameters of a person sense of Blackness” (Vandiver, Fhagen, et. al., 2001, p. 180). While there are other aspects to this stage, only the ones for which participants expressed evidence of are presented here.

Evolving multiculturalist perspective.

Few participants showed evidence of arriving at this stage as a direct result of their engagement with the BEAAM program. Potential participants who are already at more advanced stages were not seen among focus group participants (N = 22), nor among those identified for in-depth interviews. The few identified as being at this stage seemed to have brought that level of awareness with them to the program, and so the program provided opportunities to enhance that particular state of being. This aspect of the internalization stage was described by Cross as an awareness of a variety of cultures while retaining an appreciation for one's own culture. When Aries, a 43-year-old-non-traditional aged student shared what he would tell others about being a participant in the BEAAM program, it was representative of his internalization status:

It's a good program. I would, if any young man, black or white would come to me and ask me about the BEAAM program, I would tell them to join. Because there's an experience to get. But you're only going to get out of the program what you put into it. If you don't put no effort into it and learn something, you won't get nothing out of it. And that's the same thing with life. If you don't put nothing into life, you won't get nothing out of it.

That Aries was able to acknowledge the opportunity to grow by being a BEAAM participant for more than African Americans was a telling sign that he has a multicultural outlook. Further evidence of Aries being at this stage was his assessment of the role that class, and not necessarily always race, played in the sentencing process of inmates he observed during his 18-year tenure as a prison officer:

Aries: ... But, everybody locked up is not guilty. I found that out to be true.

PGS: Did you find that race was a factor in whether or not people were found guilty?

Aries: In some cases, yes. But it worked both ways. It's not just the African Americans. It worked both ways. There were a lot of the Caucasians who were also not guilty, but there again....

PGS: Was it class that was a greater determinant over anything else?

Aries: Yes. I think a lot of it is class. Mostly lower class people. A lot of people living in let's say projects or low-income housing areas.

Being able to empathize and understand issues beyond one's own culture is a hallmark of multiculturalism. Another participant at the internalization stage was Quick, a 37-year old who grew up surrounded by a variety of Latin American cultures, where he, as an

African American was in the minority. Now, as an adult reflecting on that experience, he felt that it was important that he now work to “respect peoples' beliefs, culture and ideas.”

Although Koofy Boy, a 20-year-old traditional aged student was not fully at the internalization stage, he acknowledged the importance of needing to develop this same kind of outlook. Through his internships outside of SCC, working at a predominantly white owned and operated company, he has learned that he must become the kind of person who is “more outgoing and /willing/ to talk to different people now /instead of/ just one race or, just like one group of people. Like if there's a job full of nerds or something like that, or straight business people. I'm more open to talk to different people now.” Few participants expressed any evidence of an awareness of any culture other than their own during my interactions with them; however, many of them expressed a desire to help their community, which includes people from a variety of races, cultures, and backgrounds.

Increasing community commitment.

This aspect of the internalization stage is defined as, “expressing a willingness to work on behalf of others who have been discriminated against” (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, et. al., 2001, p. 176) is another element of the internalization stage. Numerous opportunities were created for participants in the program to engage in a variety of community work from canvassing door-to-door for a local official running for office to speaking to middle and high school students about the importance of doing well academically. One non-traditional aged participant, Worm, 45, was even inspired to begin a program outside of SCC because of the encouragement and awareness he developed through the BEAAM program.

Worm: I've starting running a community mentoring program for young males. Got about 30 guys myself that I'm mentoring. I meet with them on a regular basis and we talk, and I'm planting seeds of hope in them.

PGS: Is that something you're doing as part of BEAAM or is it something you're doing in the community?

Worm: No it's something I'm doing in the community, but without the BEAAM program, I wouldn't have adjusted my mind to do this. The BEAAM program inspired me to do this.

Community commitment also enabled students to participate in community events that helped to build their networks and to see role models of successful African American entrepreneurs, doctors, and other professionals. Aries, a 43-year-old non-traditional aged student recalled the value in attending a local NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) banquet:

Aries: I'm hoping this year again I get a chance to /attend/ the NAACP convention. That was a good experience last year. It was very nice.

PGS: What was so significant about attending the NAACP event?

Aries: I'd never been to one and a lot of people don't know in this area that we do have NAACP representation so it is important to know who these people are.... But, in reality, as we were talking... we give back to your community, we give back to the people that may be willing to help you.

Acknowledging a community's interdependence upon one another to resolve a community's issues is one of the ways in which Aries demonstrated his commitment to and understanding of the need for community commitment.

Expressive Attire

From the program's logo with professionally attired men, to several educational workshops focused on an "anti-sagging pants" campaign, the BEAAM program believes that students must dress for success. The program director, Richard Hooks, described the program's strategy in addressing this particular issue:

Early on we had a lot of discussions about...why is professional appearance important? What is it about dress that lifts you up, that gets you opportunities that other people don't? What is it about hairstyles? Is it fair? We talked about some of those issues...Why do people see hair that way? Is it your right to wear your hair that way? Is it their right to hire you if you do? Is it okay to sag in every environment? Is there something you can do in some environments and why is it acceptable in some places and not in others? Is there something you can do in some environments and why is it acceptable in some places and not in others?

From the President of the college, to members of the BEAAM staff, there is agreement amongst those running the program to promote participants wearing more professionally styled attire instead of a more contemporary look. The contemporary look frequently includes wearing pants that sag low enough for the wearer's underwear to be shown. However, for many participants in the program, they believed that wearing just such contemporary clothing while attending classes was not only appropriate, but a reflection of

how they saw themselves – as members of the hip hop culture expressing themselves through their clothing. BEAAM participants across age ranges felt differently about this topic that generated rich disagreements and strong perspectives. Although it is not an element in Cross's Racial Identity Development model, it was mentioned frequently enough as a signifier of culture to be included in the findings.

Signifying cultural identity.

There are several narratives regarding what, if anything, one is saying based upon the way one chooses to dress themselves. During an “anti-sagging” presentation offered through BEAAM, it was declared that this fad is actually “a form of victimization, that society and the media have perpetuated it as the fad for African American males.” The presentation went on to characterize this fad as “a symbol of anger and low self-esteem, leading to foul language to support the swagger of wearing such clothing.” The presentation went on to suggest that wearing such clothing might also be a response to feelings of alienation within the larger culture. This is the college's official perspective regarding this distinct clothing trend.

In light of that viewpoint, it might be helpful to understand how and where this fad began and evolved. It originated in prison attire according to a 2007 New York Times article. “Oversized uniforms were issued without belts to prevent suicide and their use as weapons. The style spread through rappers and music videos, from the ghetto to the suburbs and around the world” (Koppel, 2007, p. 1). Like other clothing trends throughout the ages he went on to note, such as the Zoot suits of the 1930s, worn predominantly by minority males, that attire reflected a subculture that did not conform to what was considered traditional

culture attire. He also reminded readers of the hippie movement of the 60s characterized by males wearing their hair long, which was seen as disrespectful and unpatriotic during a time of war. The ire that the sagging trend generates, however, in some ways seems to be racially motivated as it originated and is predominantly worn by African American males. A recent report about the experiences of minority males at community colleges in the US noted that some students felt as though college faculty and staff did not give them the same consideration as students who were attired in more traditional ways (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin & Castro, 2010). The report went on to absolve that treatment by saying that, “In fairness, it is possible that some faculty and staff felt intimidated by the students’ style of dress” (Gardenhire-Crooks, et. al., p. ES-9). That the BEAAM staff has been so adamant about moving participants away from this style of clothing is an indicator that similar thinking exists among the faculty and staff at SCC.

One participant, Bubba, a 27-year-old non-traditional aged student shared his thoughts about the program’s emphasis on anti-sagging during the focus group:

I definitely agree with you all that appearance means a lot. You should be presentable and neat and all that. But that ain't right to judge someone based strictly on if they have dred locks or something like that. If you judging him, you're wrong, we're not supposed to judge. And at the same time, this man who has the pants hanging off of him, it might not look appropriate, its hard and at the same time, the man with the three piece suit on might be out to get you. I think they should take more time to give people a chance to transform. It ain't no overnight thing if that's their style or if no offense, if that's all the kind of clothes they got. To be a member of BEAAM,

everybody got their own reason for why they dress the way they do. (lots of murmurs of agreement and disagreement to these comments).

Another non-traditional aged participant, Aries, 43, saw sagging attire in much the same way as the administration did, as a sign of disrespect:

I think it's a matter of respect. If you want someone to respect you, then you have to show respect for yourself. And walking around with your pants hanging off your butt isn't showing respect for yourself. It may be cool or fashionable, but it's not respectful. So it's all about respect. Every day, I wear my pants around my waist, and they're not tight.

One traditional aged participant, Koofy Boy, 20, actually felt as though his improved attire was one of the most significant ways he had changed since becoming a member of the BEAAM program, noting that “I have changed up my style a little bit more, because of the trips that we have been taking, like, to /Washington, DC/. And other places that we have visited, too.” Another traditional aged student, Sage, 18 Sage acknowledged that the BEAAM program has helped him better understand the role that his attire has in how others, particularly faculty perceive him. He summarized the rationale for focusing on attire in a meaningful way when he expressed the following thoughts:

They /BEAAM Staff/ pretty much tells you to do your best. Look your best. Do everything your best... You know, dress, try to dress at least once or twice a week. And how we talk, and when you walk in to a room, always greet the teacher, make eye contact, shake their hand, do the things that make you seem more professional. Once you do it so much, it becomes normal.

Normalizing professional attire and the success characteristics the BEAAM staff have attributed to such clothing segues into the other finding about attire as a signifier of identity. It is designed to promote internal changes as well.

Symbolizing internal changes.

Program staff believe that when students dress in a way that reinforces stereotypes that their opportunities will be limited. BEAAM provides a professional clothes closet and gives out clothing to students who lack the means to purchase such items, or for whom professional clothing is required to participate in a particular activity. They readily acknowledge that because of the pervasive nature of African American male stereotypes, and that by encouraging them to dress against those common attributes, they are potentially chipping away at those pre-conceived notions, which reside in the participant's mind. There was also the hope among SCC and BEAAM staff that these exterior changes might lead to internal changes marked by enhanced self-perceptions. While the clothes one wears seem trivial, for African American men at this particular community college, it was a source of great controversy, particularly amongst traditional aged students. BEAAM staff acknowledged that addressing attire was often a touchy subject, as they did not want to turn potential participants away from the other benefits of associating with the program over clothing.

Participant perception of their cultural identity was marked by connecting them to various stages in Cross's Racial Identity Development model, through their counter narratives of stereotypes associated with African American males, and through other cultural

signifiers, the most important of which emerged as the meaning associated with the wearing of expressive or hip-hop attire.

Academic Progress

The third research question focused on gaining insight into which aspects of the mentoring program contributed to student academic progress. At a high-level, students who choose to participate in BEAAM do so with some level of understanding that the program is designed to improve their chances of being academically successful. “What is critically important ... is the need for African American males to receive continuous reinforcement for academic progress and success” (Corbin & Pruitt, 1999, pp. 77-78). Through nurturing staff members, and a structured framework, the BEAAM program worked to attain that program goal.

Staff member treatment

Throughout the BEAAM literature, the program states that it will improve retention rates and overall satisfaction of participants through the development of “close relationships with a BEAAM training coordinator, faculty, and support staff.” In particular, the Training Coordinators are the foot soldiers for the program. They are responsible for everything from marketing, to being emotional counselors, to program planners, to academic advisors and everything in between that participants might need in order to be successful.

Displaying a caring ethic.

The Training Coordinator’s are critical to every aspect of this program from recruiting to marketing, to creating a bond with their assigned group of participants. Document analysis reveals that Training Coordinator’s are formally responsible for

“Academic support, performance monitoring, professional development, and higher education transition/completion.” From the interviews with the program director, to the focus groups and at every second stage interview they all noted the critical role Training Coordinators play in pushing and demanding accountability from BEAAM participants. Even the local mentoring director demonstrated a similar ethic through what Bailey (2004) described as general criteria for effective African American male mentoring staff that perfectly details his willingness to demonstrate, “high levels of energy, unending patience, and determination” (p.15).

One participant, Sage described this ethic of caring through the metaphor of expressive photography. He took two pictures; one of a tree and another of a dead leaf. He described their significance as a metaphor illustrating the ethic of caring BEAAM members demonstrate for one another. “Because in BEAAM, we’re that tree when we’re together--we help each other. We’re pretty much alive and doing well and helping each other and branch off and make more but then we leave, or mature and walk away.” Another participant, Koofy Boy, a traditional aged student, shared the same words that many others used to describe the role of the training coordinators, whose role it often is “To be that, that enforcer, and stay on us without slacking off... So, it pretty much keeps me on track.”

By requiring that participants check in regularly with their Training Coordinators, it offsets what one report described as gendered and racial predisposition towards self-reliance, which often precludes African American males willingness to ask for help (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin & Castro, 2010, p. 41). Take for example Adrien, a traditional aged

participant's perspective about the role that his Training Coordinator and the entire BEAAM staff have played in his academic endeavors:

PGS: In what ways do you think being a part of the BEAAM program is helping you get through SCC?

Adrien: Well, they stays on me.

PGS: Is it your training coordinator? Who is it that's staying on you?

Adrien: Well, all of them, all the training coordinators (names them all)

PGS: So it's not just the one training coordinator you're assigned?

Adrien: No.

PGS: It's all of them?

Adrien: All of them.

This intrusive, almost parental like engagement with BEAAM participants was appreciated and welcomed by other participants as well. Flyy, a traditional aged student admitted as much when he commented on the downside of the program: "The downside is that there are always people in the program getting on you if aren't doing well. But I don't really think that's a bad part."

This bond of kinship between participants and Training Coordinators seemed to transfer amongst BEAAM participants themselves. South Beach, a traditional aged student, remarked that because he is part of the program, "I don't have to make it on my own and if I need help or something then the BEAAM program is a place with some structure." Another incident where the BEAAM participants showed this caring ethic for one another occurred during the non-traditional aged focus group. After Amp, a participant who had recently been

released from jail, shared that information with the group, he was engulfed in positive affirmations and encouragements to continue on his current path. One of his fellow participants remarked, “This man here is going to make it (pointing to Amp). And he ought to.” These kinds of affirming remarks made by peers model the relationship the Training Coordinators attempt to have with each participant.

Staff also helped non-BEAAM staff members and faculty at the college to develop a level of demonstrable caring for participants. “It is important for young African American males to see other African American males demonstrating the integration of educated and cool behaviors, and be able to build relationships with those individuals in a non-threatening manner” (Corbin & Pruitt, 1999, p. 81). Through their most recent grant, the program has made dollars available to faculty and staff “to help faculty adapt teaching and instructional strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body... and that will promote a deeper understanding of the impact culture has on behavior, learning and teaching styles, and instructional strategies.” The director of the program did indicate that few faculty or staff had taken advantage of those funds.

Motivating participants to excel.

Positive peer pressure to perform academically, celebrating academic successes beyond the traditional dean’s list and president’s list are ways in which the program sought to motivate participants to perform well academically. A review of the program documentation revealed a deliberate focus on this element built into the program’s structure in several ways. One of those ways was through the annual initiation into a reserved sub-group of the program’s membership when certain criteria were met, including incremental gains in

participant GPA (for example from a 2.1 to a 2.3). The logic for including such an element was explained by the program director Richard Hooks,

We have different levels of academic success. You can have a 3.0, but if you have a developmental (remedial, non-college credit) class, you're not on the dean's list. What we've tried to do is help these men celebrate and experience a level of reward and recognition for their efforts.

Such acknowledgement of these accomplishments serves as a motivator for participants to continue their academic efforts. Another way in which program staff encouraged participant motivation is through the learning community established during the participant's first semester enrolled at Sussex Community College and as a participant in the mentoring program. Because the learning community meets daily each week with the same group of students and faculty, there is an opportunity for peer encouragement, to be accountable for their presence in class each day, and for their overall academic performance.

Motivation to perform well academically is also built into the program in other ways that were deemed as particularly encouraging to students; the opportunity to travel on special trips (some academic, some for social engagement) based on current GPA. During the focus group with traditional aged students, they overwhelmingly described being able to participate in the trips as the best part of the program. What participants may not have been cognizant of is that because program staff recognized that the desire to participate in these trips was high, it provided the ideal catalyst for shaping academic behavior by having that be the threshold for attendance.

South Beach, a traditional aged student, noted the value of having BEAAM as a general motivator that ultimately impacts academic progress when he stated, “The biggest thing I've received is rejecting all the negative focus on young black males. It gives us up close motivation, especially if you don't have a father figure. It gives you the motivation to keep your head on straight and stay focused.” Another non-traditional aged participant, Rick reiterated that same benefit of being a part of the program: “BEAAM has helped me out, being an older gentleman, in terms of coming back to school. It's helped me reconnect with coming back to school. Guiding me, and making me feel welcome, helping me and showing me the way. You know, I felt like they encouraged me.” This overall sense of being induced to do well was palpable amongst all participants who were part of this research effort.

Structured Framework

Another finding related to factors that promote academic progression was the structured framework the program provides. Through tutoring, grade monitoring, and individual goal setting, participants who actively engaged in the BEAAM program had an opportunity to be part of a structure that increased their likelihood of academic success.

Tutoring availability.

Some participants specifically mentioned joining BEAAM to take advantage of the tutoring. The program staff have arranged for tutoring to occur with an additional incentive to participate for BEAAM members. BEAAM members requesting tutoring in math courses from SCC math faculty are allowed to retest and earn higher grades. Tutoring is also available in other core subjects, including developmental (pre-college or remedial) courses. In addition to providing an academic boost to participants, it also creates an opportunity for

BEAAM members who have successfully completed appropriate courses to earn money as paid tutors.

Bo, a non-traditional aged student was emphatic about the importance of tutoring for him as an older returning student. “Well, I been out of school nearly 30 years, so I didn't know anything about computers. But because of this program, we got a room, where I can go and work on the computers. I can also get English tutoring. I can get math tutoring. I can get all that from BEAAM.” According to the program director, usage of the tutoring facilities has increased dramatically from the previous year to the current year, largely due to promotion of its availability to participants. Another non-traditional aged student, Worm, expressed the value of tutoring availability as a corrective measure when he sometimes falls behind in his studies. A review of the traditional and non-traditional aged focus groups revealed that across ages, students mentioned this service as a characteristic of the program they greatly appreciated.

Among the five second stage (in-depth interviewees) participants, three of the five obtained academic tutoring through the BEAAM program. Sage, a traditional aged student and Quick a non-traditional aged student found this service particularly helpful for them in what they described as challenging science related courses. Adrien, another second stage participant who is traditional aged, sought tutoring for a developmental math course that he ultimately did not pass. He attributes that course failure to his lack of attendance in class due to transportation challenges and to his lack of academic focus and not to the quality of the tutoring that he received. The two other second stage participants, Koofy Boy (traditional aged) and Aries (non-traditional aged) were aware of the availability of tutoring but chose

not to take advantage of it. The commonality between these two participants is that they each believed that they understood the material, and that with additional effort on their part their grades could be brought up without additional assistance. Their expressed preference to not seek help may be an indicator of a similar finding based on a study of the experiences of minority males at community colleges. “The men in the study felt that asking for help from others was in direct conflict with their notions of being their ‘own man’ – independent, self-reliant” (Gardenhire-Crooks, et al., 2010, p.46). Regardless of age, or preference for seeking or not seeking help, overall, BEAAM participants believed that the availability of tutoring was a critical programmatic aspect for academic progress. The high number of overall mentoring participants actually taking advantage of tutoring services reinforces that assertion.

Monitoring of grades frequently.

Instead of waiting for final grades, every three weeks, BEAAM made arrangements with the majority of each participant’s faculty members to report their grades to the staff. Richard Hooks the local program director described how this particular aspect of the program works:

It’s an early warning and intervention piece. We call in students who earn grades less than a C, or who are missing class as the criteria for early warning. We meet with them, because we want them to know that we're watching what they are doing.

This regular reporting of academic progress allows for early intervention. Koofy Boy recalled how in spite of being self-motivated to earn grades good enough to transfer to a four-year university, having the grade monitoring was a helpful program element. Hearing his

Training Coordinator tell him that, “Well, we got an alert for you, your grades are a little bit low, but you're not failing. You just need to pick it up...Sometimes a little push will help.” For Koofy Boy, a goal oriented individual, the warning and prodding from his Training Coordinator was sufficient to make him refocus and work to earn better grades.

The other positive aspect to having frequent grade monitoring is the buoying effect such accountability is having on the culture of the college campus. On the surface, faculty who only give out a handful of assignments over the course of a semester and none within the first three weeks of class seems to be a race neutral activity. The reality however, is that such a practice puts at risk students (those who have familial responsibilities, who work more than 20 hours each week, who placed into three or more developmental courses, who have a low SES, who attend part-time, etc.), irrespective of race, at greater risk for academic failure. When at risk students do not receive feedback on their academic progress until the mid-point of the semester, there is little that can be done at that point to prevent course failure. Requesting that faculty ensure deliberate, frequent feedback to students in a timely fashion has been shown to be a best practice for improving academic progress of students in higher education, including at the community college level. Studies have found that such an early alert system results in higher end of semester student retention compared to those institutions without such safe guards in place (Pérez, 1998; Tinto, 1993; Laden, 2004).

In addition to the formal grade monitoring, informal grade monitoring and focus on academic progress occurs as a result of staff members recognizing participants wherever they might encounter them on or off campus. My field notes revealed numerous instances of observed interactions between the training coordinators and BEAAM participants asking

about grades and personal matters, outside of the context of a formal program meeting.

Creating this environment where grades are discussed frequently has had a positive influence on the academic progress of BEAAM participants.

Establishing accountable goals.

One of the overall focus areas for the BEAAM program is to help students attain their educational goals. As part of the intake process into the organization, goals for graduation and for other experiences that would enhance the participant's overall college experience are established collaboratively between the Training Coordinators and BEAAM participants.

Participants were asked to complete a goals sheet that asked them the following items; intended program of study, intended educational/career goal, interest in transfer. The form went on to ask participants to identify areas in which they would like to receive assistance in, including areas such as academic skills, career planning, transfer assistance, personal counseling and/or technology assistance. During subsequent regular meetings with participants and Training Coordinators, this goal sheet is reviewed and updated, thus keeping the end goal of graduation at the forefront for participants. Students found to not be making appropriate progress towards attaining their goals were coached in strategies to re-focus on established goals.

BEAAM participants noted that they were able to establish goals for themselves and stay focused on attaining them through the continued reinforcement of them from program staff. During the traditional aged focus group several participants commented on their shared focus on graduating with a degree. Lou stated, "I think that at this stage it's really important that we actually do something with ourselves. Right now, I'm working towards my degree,

and the BEAAM program is really here to help me reach that goal.” Another traditional aged student, Koofy Boy came to Sussex Community College with clear goals regarding what he wanted to accomplish academically. Having previously attended a PWI, he not only decided that he instead wanted to attend an HBCU, but after talking with his Training Coordinator, decided to stay at SCC for an additional year to earn an Associate of Science (AS) degree that would enable him to transfer as a junior upon enrollment.

In addition to setting and attaining academic goals, participants also developed personal goals that the program helped them work towards. Amp, a 33-year-old non-traditional aged student vocalized his aspirations to transform himself through participation in the program:

Since I got out of prison, and now joining the BEAAM program, they're showing me and I'm learning that there's more to life than what the stereotypes are. We have better opportunities. We can be more than drug dealers, hustlers, gangsters, and pimps. We can be lawyers, doctors, intelligent men that actually have some force in the neighborhood versus being the menace of that neighborhood. And the BEAAM program has actually opened up my eyes to that.

Such life transformations were made possible for many participants through the structure provided by the BEAAM program. An important element of that structure was helping participants design academic and personal goals for themselves for which they were held accountable for attaining.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this case study identified a variety of findings related to each specific research question. The first research question, exploring how participants described their overall educational journeys through participation in the mentoring program revealed numerous instances of emotional uplift, access to critical knowledge, and acting as a platform for personal development. The second research question centered around participant perception of their cultural identity through participation in the mentoring program. Findings related to this research question were filtered through Cross's Racial Identity Development model, through participant counter narratives and through other participant indicators of cultural signifiers. Participants were observed at all four stages of Cross's model, though the participants seemed generally at the lower stages. Additionally, expressive attire as a signifier of cultural identity and as a symbol of internal changes were gleaned from the participant data. Finally, the third research question sought insight into which specific program components contributed to their academic progress. The findings revealed that staff member treatment and the program's structured framework were the most important contributors to academic progress.

Building on the understandings highlighted through these findings, the following chapter will provide a study summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This purpose of this study was to gain insight into the overall educational experiences, the cultural identity development, and the academic progression of participants in an African American Male Mentoring program located at a Southeastern Community College. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do African American Male Mentoring students describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College?
2. What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?
3. What particular aspects of this Southeastern Community College's mentoring program contributed to student academic progress?

This chapter contains four sections. The first section provides a brief summary of the study. The second section discusses the conclusions derived from the findings, which are rooted in the data analysis and related to the literature. The third section provides implications for theory and practice specific to the numerous audiences that might benefit from this research. The final section offers recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

A qualitative case study methodology was utilized framed by the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory. A total of 27 students participated in the focus groups, 15 in the traditional aged group and 12 in the non-traditional aged group. During the course

of the focus groups, participants were invited to share demographic information, Appendix D, and contact information for potential follow up, or second stage (in-depth) interviews.

Transcripts from the focus groups were analyzed along with the provided demographic information. From the pool of focus group participants, second stage participants were then purposively chosen based upon the number of semesters of program participation, and in an attempt to have a variety of experiences, (gleaned from participant focus group comments) academic programs, and a range of ages represented in this group. Second stage (in-depth interviews) participants were ranked based on that criteria and contacted, with a total of five agreeing to continue in the research process. In addition to the above referenced primary data sources, a number of secondary data sources were consulted to provide an overall understanding of the site setting. First, a review of the college's mentoring website was conducted, which produced more than 200 unique pages of information about the program, and historical information regarding activities and processes related to the mentoring program. A complete listing of all data sources utilized can be found in Appendix G, Data Analysis Tools.

Utilizing Atlas.ti 6.0, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software package, all data were transcribed and entered into this system. Marshall and Rossman (1999) encouraged researchers to follow a process for data analysis that includes six phases: "(a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understandings; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report" (p. 152). This process was followed as data elements were first analyzed through a priori coding, then general recurring patterns were identified which generated a list

of more than 80 concepts. Concepts from sub-families of traditional aged student transcripts and non-traditional aged student transcripts were created and examined for variation, looking for alternative interpretations of the emergent themes or sub-categories. In the narrative tradition of case study research (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafel, 2003; Merriam, 1988) those 80 concepts were then pared down to a shorter listing of 10 categories and 26 themes/sub-categories, which are represented in my findings. Those categories included the four stages of Cross's Racial Identity Development model.

Focus group participants ranged in age from 18 to 60, and their average age was 36. Second stage participants ranged in age from 18 – 43, and their average age was 28. Overall, their average GPA was a 2.5, with traditional aged students GPA at a 2.3 and non-traditional aged students higher at a 2.8. The majority of the participants indicated that they were pursuing degrees that would lead to direct employment, with some expressing a desire to become entrepreneurs. Among the second stage participants, only two indicated a desire to transfer to a four-year institution, while the others were pursuing terminal degrees. There were three traditional aged students and two non-traditional aged students among the group of second stage participants.

Various data revealed findings related to the three guiding research questions. From the first research question, mentoring participants described their educational journeys as being emotionally uplifting in that they felt a sense of brotherhood amongst participants within the BEAAM program. They further described their journeys as being a source for gaining access to critical knowledge and as an avenue for personal development. The second research question identified that some mentoring participants perceived growth in their

cultural identity development through experiences external to the program, and yet still found that the program created an effective counter space, largely through discussions about expressive attire. The third research question findings revealed that mentoring participants attributed their academic progress to positive BEAAM staff member treatment and to the overall structure of the program.

Conclusions and Discussion

The findings of this study are rooted in the experiences of the mentoring participants, the theoretical framework, and subsequent analysis. Resultantly, I have identified three overall conclusions: 1) Participants learn navigation strategies that offset encounters with institutionalized racism; 2) Participants embrace affirming counter narratives as part of their cultural identity; and 3) The program's staff and structure function in an interest convergence capacity.

Conclusion One: African American Male Mentoring participants learn navigation strategies to offset encounters with institutionalized racism.

The mentoring program aids in participant ability to navigate the educational structure of this particular institution despite encounters with institutionalized racism. The history of African American males in higher education is on the one hand a testimony of persistence and diligence based on the numbers that successfully graduate each year. On the other hand it is also the story of a group of students with the lowest rates of persistence among all racial groups (Cuyjet, 2006; Mason, 1998; Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2001). The impact of institutionalized racism, or a systematic disadvantaging of a group of people based on specific characteristics, which result in patterns of inequity seen over time

(Lee, Burnhill, Butler, Hipolito-Delgado, Humphrey, Muñoz, & Shin, 2008) results in “at least six different types of racism-related stress” (p. 171). The effect of such stress manifests itself in a number of different behaviors, many of which are counterproductive to successful navigation of educational systems (Gardenshire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, & Castro, 2010).

That institutionalized racism exists at this particular educational setting aligns with the first tenet of Critical Race Theory that acknowledges the centrality and normality of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Harper, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Transcending the effects of institutionalized racism towards the attainment of academic goals is more likely when students of color become engaged at the institution and when they create a support system during their journeys (Tinto, 1994, 2006). Data from the 2004 College Student Experiences Questionnaire as cited in Strayhorn (2008), disaggregated responses of African American male participants and found that “any opportunity that provides students a chance to establish important relationships with major socializing agents is potentially powerful in terms of altering student outcomes” (p. 31).

Having mentoring relationships that span across generations of various ages, and relationships that empower instead of fostering dependency are characteristics of this particular program. Mentoring programs when matching participants with mentors generally operate under “The assumption that a mentoring relationship is one in which a mentor with status assists a protégé in need, surprisingly, is not well received by many protégés” (Haring, 1999, p. 7) Haring goes on to indicate that such relationships fail to empower protégés. The BEAAM program has created a layered mentoring team for each participant, including a Training Coordinator, a community mentor, a student mentor along with encouragement to

seek out mentors from amongst the membership of BEAAM. Through this layering, participants were less likely to succumb to one of the major downfalls of typical mentoring programs – being matched with someone with whom the protégé is incompatible.

Participants in the program also have opportunities to interact with a wide age range of African American males through the weekly GULP (Giving Up Life's Pressures) sessions, at the monthly President's forums, and in the course of fieldtrips to various locations. That traditional aged students indicated a willingness to learn from other participants with greater life experience speaks to the power of the connections established amongst members. That non-traditional aged students indicated a need to connect with younger members for their greater technological savvy and more current insight about accessing college resources was an indicator of respect amongst participants. Both represent ways in which the mentoring relationships enabled participants to learn additional strategies not only to surmount encounters with racism but to enhance their ability to successfully navigate the educational waters at SCC.

Brothers Empowering African American Males (BEAAM) members indicated that their overall educational journey was marked by positive, familial-like, and encouraging surroundings, which contradicts much of the current literature about the typical experiences of African Americans in higher educational settings. “Too often, the experiences of African American students attending predominantly White colleges underscores a general institutional ambivalence toward their educational needs, a lack of appreciation for their cultural heritage, and callousness towards values other than those held by the majority population” (Bakari, 2006, p. 2). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), in a CRT driven

qualitative research study about the campus racial environment for undergraduate African Americans at PWIs, found that students described their experiences as often being characterized by a “very tense racial climate on the college campus” (p. 65). This same study went on to identify an effective counter measure to such an environment; for students to become part of “academic counter-spaces” (p. 70). Such spaces, “serve as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial environment can be established and maintained” (p. 70). Freeman (1999) in a study about the experiences of African Americans transitioning to college observed that “mentoring as a service can be particularly important to individuals who are in an environment that is culturally different from theirs” (p. 17).

We see additional support for this conclusion through noting that participants expressed the importance of having access to information that aided in their ability to navigate an educational terrain that was unfamiliar to them. In an article about the factors that promote academic success for community college male students, Perrakis (2008) recommended that because, “male students are less likely to solicit assistance or engage with counselors on campus, direct outreach efforts targeted at male students would be beneficial” (p. 21). The mentoring program being targeted specifically for African American males reflects an actualization of such thinking. Male participants had the opportunity to learn about campus resources such as the process for applying for and maintaining financial aid, which was repeatedly referenced as being transformative for participants in terms of their ability to be continuously enrolled. Additionally, participants were also able to access more

subtle aspects of successful academic navigation which included concepts regarding making connections to faculty, personal presentation, and asking for help.

Even participants who self-described as being middle class, having two parents or an immediate family member who successfully earned a college degree found that they encountered difficulties successfully navigating educational structures. Such structures are not race neutral settings. They are instead reflective of the experiences of the majority culture, with a unique set of social and cultural cues that are transmitted largely by economic class. Lamont and Lareau (1988) noted that working and lower class students are at a disadvantage when entering majority culture educational settings because they must quickly earn sufficient social and cultural capital to be successful. Cultural capital is a term that refers to “knowledge of high culture” (Lamont & Lareau, p. 153) and “consists of informal academic standards...These standards and attributes are: informal knowledge about the school, traditional humanist culture, linguistic competence and specific attitudes, or personal style (e.g., ease, naturalness, aloofness, creativity, distinction and "brilliance") (Lamont & Lareau, p. 155). For many participants, the mentoring program provides a structured way for them to gain access to such capital.

Through the creation of kinship connections, knowledge sharing, transformation of personal identities, and gaining access to social and cultural capital, participants were able to navigate Sussex Community College’s educational system despite encounters with racism. BEAAM participants overall described their educational journeys as being positive, encouraging and familial like, which is a departure from typical African American higher educational experiences.

Conclusion Two: African American Male Mentoring participants embrace affirming counter narratives as part of cultural identity.

The second major conclusion is that the BEAAM program aids participants in the development of affirming counter narratives. Counter narratives or counter storytelling creates an opportunity for the sharing of personal experiences with racism from the lived experiences of persons of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998). Much of the common narrative about African American males in higher education revolves around the stereotypical thinking that they are not fully capable, academic and intellectual beings (hooks, 2004; Zamani-Gallaher & Polite, 2010). These negative perceptions of people of color can be counteracted through the use of counter narratives that offer more representative perspectives about their experiences.

Speakers brought in spoke against the common narrative of African American males. Participants began to shed internalized stereotypical perspectives of themselves and became open to examining new ways of seeing themselves. One manifestation of that change for many participants was through the deconstruction of messages associated with wearing hip-hop attire. There was however, an abundance of affirmations that the program's emphasis on transforming the exterior dress of participants from hip-hop inspired sagging pants, ball caps, and ostentatious jewelry wearing towards more business-like attire became a platform for dismantling internalized stereotypes of what it meant to be an African American male. This focus on exterior changes as a catalyst to internal changes begins with some assumptions that are significant. It assumes that wearers of such attire also conform to other stereotypes associated with African American males. Repeatedly, participants expressed an awareness of

the origins of the hip-hop attire, and even acknowledged that in certain settings such attire was inappropriate. However, traditional aged students in particular felt as though they should not have to conform to majority standards of acceptable attire when attending class or in informal settings. Non-traditional aged students largely chose more traditional attire to avoid backlash of stereotype threat, “the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm the stereotype” (Steele, 1999, p. 3)

At this particular institution, the catalyst for an increased focus on attire occurred more than a year prior to data collection. A document review of local media articles about the program and subsequent internal presentations indicated that a visitor to the college observed a young male student’s pants sagging such that his underwear showed and wrote a letter to the majority local newspaper about it. In this letter, the writer was critical of the institution’s request for community support of its’ African American Male Mentoring program and yet not demanding an accompanying, more appropriate dress code for this audience. Subsequently, African American BEAAM college staff held workshops on the topic for students, where such attire was branded as, “a symbol of anger and lack of self-esteem, wherein foul language is part of the talk as the swagger is part of the walk.” Some BEAAM participants differed on their interpretation of the attire trend, with non-traditional aged students generally seeing it as a sign of disrespect, while traditional aged students generally saw it as simply a clothing choice that was appropriate in some settings, but not in others. Perhaps because of the greater life experiences of some participants, they understood the unintended consequences their peers would experience when showing up for class wearing

such attire, due to the fact that racism is a normal part of the fabric of US society, a critical race theory foundational tenet.

Critical race theory encourages adherents to challenge dominant ideology, through the examination of universal truths, particularly where they have resulted in commonly accepted negative perceptions of people of color (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1998). Because educational institutions are an important transmitter of American culture, they can utilize that power to require students to conform. “Dominant culture retains the institutional authority to enforce its view of what is right, good, normal, useful, or best” (Guy, 1999, p. 96). This institution utilized its power to encourage participants to consider that wearing such attire was potentially an attempt at manipulation from the media to define who African American males are and subsequently limit their potential as intellectual beings with great potential. Some participants described the parallel transformation of their clothing along with a change in mindset about greater expectations they now hold for themselves.

While attire was the catalyst for dismantling stereotypes about African American males, there were other programmatic elements that contributed to growth in terms of cultural identity. Anti-black attitudes are one of the characteristics of Cross’s Pre-encounter stage, primarily the result of extreme miseducation. This miseducation caused many participants to experience cognitive dissonance, holding one set of attitudes and beliefs about themselves as individuals (mostly positive) and another set of beliefs about African American males in general (largely negative). Some participants felt as though African American males held negative opinions of one another, the result of self-hate, but that the

program was shattering such thinking by bringing participants of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences together, reminding them of their shared cultural identity.

When using the stages of Cross's Racial Identity Development model, there were few insights that the cultural specific aspects of the program propelled participants through many, if any, of the stages. Like other developmental theories, in Cross's second stage, Encounter, persons "experience an incident or dissonance of some sort that awakens consciousness of their race, which ignited feelings of anger, frustration, shame, or confusion" (Harper, 2007, p. 129). The mentoring program, through 19 unique program aspects attempted to create an environment in which participants might experience that kind of disorienting event. Participants vividly recalled the impact visits to cultural sites and interactions with role models in the community had on their awareness of their cultural history.

The Cross model provided a framework to examine the racial development of participants in the mentoring program. It largely revealed that participants came to the program at a particular stage, which in turn became the filter through which cultural development experiences were perceived. Participants at different Racial Identity Development stages used those different stages as filters for what they gained through engagement in program activities. For example participants at the pre-encounter and internalization stages respectively, who attended a conference of African American legislators described it in completely different ways. Those at the pre-encounter stage focused on the travel and entertainment aspects of the trip, while those at the internalization stage focused on the insights they gained about the role persons of color and women played in the nation's history that they did not previously know about.

It is possible, however, that exposure to these cultural activities left an indelible mark on participants that will not be evident until some time in the future. Mentoring participant engagement in these activities may indeed be the foundation for movement through Cross's Racial Identity Development model stages in the years to come, when coupled with additional life experiences. It was clear, however, that the repeated, deliberate focus on change in attire was forcing participants to deconstruct societal messages about stereotypes associated with being African American males. Those conversations aided participants in becoming more critical consumers of media imagery so that they could make informed choices about their attire selections and about how they viewed themselves and others with whom they shared a racial lineage. Additionally, other community events and field trips to cultural establishments created opportunities for participants to have a disorienting event and move through their racial identity development process than they would without the benefit of those experiences. The program provided an effective space for the creation of affirming counter narratives for African American males to dispel associated negative perceptions through various programming aspects.

Conclusion Three: African American Male Mentoring program functions in an interest convergence capacity.

The third major conclusion is that the mentoring program's staff and structure functions in an interest convergence capacity, a concept originated from Derrick Bell (1980), a founder of CRT and an adult educator. Interest convergence occurs when the, "interests of blacks in achieving racial equality have been accommodated only when they have converged with the interests of powerful whites" (Taylor, 1988, p. 123). In this setting, the area of

interest for blacks are to obtain higher levels of education and greater socioeconomic status, while the interests of whites are to increase the number of available workers and to reduce overall human capital losses (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). With the infusion of government funding to support the BEAAM program because it represented a priority focus area for a system that primarily benefits members of the majority culture, an opportunity was created to develop the program in such a way that both parties benefited. Through caring staff and deliberate structural elements, African American male participants benefited through an increased likelihood of attaining their academic goals, which will ultimately make them more employable. The government benefits from supporting the program by increasing the pool of eligible workers critical to the overall health and prosperity of the country, which depends on having a high proportion of its citizenry being employed, and paying taxes.

Although the designs of mentoring programs for this audience are not universal, there are certain aspects of such programs that make it more likely to achieve program goals. One of those areas is around program funding. In a review of mentoring programs for minority students in higher education, Haring (1999) noted that “many mentoring programs do not persist over time, and mentoring programs often stall after an initial, enthusiastic start” (p. 6) largely due to “understaffing and the absence of significant funding” (p. 7). At this particular setting, initially the mentoring program followed the trend that Haring found of having, “a faculty or staff member be given the assignment of implementing a mentoring program as a labor of love or, perhaps, with some released time” (p. 7). When the BEAAM program initially began, it was the added responsibility of a member of the college’s counseling staff. With the equivalent of less than a part-time person assigned to the mentoring program, it

languished and resultantly had only a dozen participants on an annual basis. Tasking one person with responsibility for creating a program plan rich with components that meet the needs of participants, communicating with participants on a regular basis, and then tracking individual and program outcomes are unrealistic. By securing significant funding, SCC was able to re-launch their mentoring program with a dedicated director, training coordinators, administrative support, and means to provide other mentoring related services and activities for participants. With the infusion of funding they are able to serve more than 100 participants on an annual basis. Funding from the larger community to benefit the needs of African American males is yet another example of how the program functions in an interest convergence capacity.

The BEAAM program has more than half a dozen structural components in place to support the academic endeavors of participants. It was not those aspects, however, that participants mentioned more than 30 times over the course of focus groups and interviews, it was instead the verbatim use of the term “pushing” by participants when describing the encouragement received by Training Coordinators and other BEAAM that had the greatest impact on their overall academic progress. Strayhorn, in a 2008 study about the role of supportive relationships for African American male college student’s academic success concluded that, “Such support often is found through meaningful relationships with others on campus, including one’s peers, faculty members, and staff persons” (pp. 29-30). In the same article he went on to note the relationship between that support, overall satisfaction with the college, and likelihood of exiting prior to educational goal attainment. “Without support, these challenges tended to compromise the academic achievement of Black men and often

lead to dissatisfaction with college. Dissatisfaction is an important predictor of and precursor to leaving college” (Bea, 1982; Tinto, 1993), as cited in Strayhorn (2008). This support provided by the Training Coordinators reinforced the educational goals many program participants established for themselves. Having BEAAM staff members who consistently held participants accountable for taking the necessary actions to attain those goals was critical until they were self-directed enough to manage that function on their own. Empowering participants to become self-monitoring was a significant outgrowth of the care demonstrated by BEAAM staff that further contributed to member academic progress.

BEAAM staff worked with participants to create an educational goal plan, which included concrete time frames for educational goal attainment, was found to be one of the structural components that reinforced overall persistence and academic progress. In a study of the environmental factors that contributed to the persistence of African American male community college students, Mason (1998) identified educational goal establishment as a critical variable. “The clearer the students were about what they wanted to be or to achieve, and the greater their depth of goal internalization, the more likely they were to persist” (p. 757). The establishment of attainable goals with an action plan for African American males was often in contrast to previous experiences with educational systems, where they were often the victims of, “low expectations by teachers and communities” (Zamani-Gallaher, & Polite, 2010, p. 281). There were numerous examples of participants expressing internalization of the goals that were established in concert with program staff.

Generally, academic progress was widely attributed by participants to the support and genuine care that BEAAM staff, in particular the Training Coordinators displayed. Through

that encouragement, participants not only took advantage of academic elements of the program, but they also began to internalize some of the messages frequently delivered by the staff which empowered them to become more self-directed in their academic progress. Participants appreciated that BEAAM staff constantly encouraged them to do their best, even recalling that their words became part of their personal lexicon when dealing with challenging situations. The combination of support from both staff and structural perspectives, including significant funding which provided adequate staffing, and resources for program activities, often had the impact of leading to internalization of educational goals and measures necessary for academic success by participants.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study offer numerous implications for both theory and practice from an important voice not often represented in the literature: African American male community college mentoring participants. From a theoretical perspective, it will add to the body of knowledge around Critical Race Theory. For praxis, this study provides acumen to a variety of audiences including college administrators, student support service personnel, higher education faculty and staff, community partners, and students.

The general study findings implied that at this particular institution, mentoring participants engaged with the program, the staff, and one another in ways that positively impacted their overall educational journey, helped challenge common negative discourses about African American males, and through encouragement, reinforced more self directed behaviors that benefited their academic progress. Those implications have increased our understanding of the ways in which this group of African American males experienced being

participants in this mentoring program at the time of data collection. This mentoring program was able to achieve such positive outcomes largely due to the depth of programmatic elements as a result of significant funding, which was designed to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the students served instead of treating them as a monolithic group, “ignoring important within group differences” (Harper, 2008, p. 1). With an age range that spanned more than four decades, from 18 to 60, each participant brought with him a unique background, life experiences, and goals that impacted the ways in which they chose to engage with the program. Creating a sense of connection amongst this disparate population, only united by racial lineage, is a challenge not addressed in traditional program planning literature.

Implications for Theory

Drawing on the tenets of Critical Race Theory, the theoretical framework for this research effort, I anticipated seeing markers of the centrality of race and racism at both the institutional and individual levels at the institution of study. Study participants spoke at length about the existence of such conditions in the external community of study and to a lesser extent at Sussex Community College. Participants shared several narratives describing interactions with SCC faculty and staff that reflected negative attitudes towards African American males. I also expected to find mentoring programmatic elements that would challenge dominant ideology, especially when they resulted in negative perceptions of people of color. The program addressed such thinking through the metaphor of hip-hop attire, encouraging participants to be critical consumers of such media driven imagery. Additional CRT tenets include the utilization of counter narratives as a means to examine cultural

stereotypes. The BEAAM program did so through the weekly Giving Up Life's Pressures open forums, and through workshops and meetings where dialogue and sharing of experiences was encouraged. The final aspect of CRT I expected to find were examples of interest convergence. Evidence of such was found through the overall program federal funding source, which has an interest in producing a greater number of tax paying citizens. At the local institution, interest convergence was represented through negotiations made between the BEAAM program staff and SCC's math department which altered its re-test policy to produce a higher number of successful completers of classes that had been identified as barriers toward academic goal attainment.

Implications for Critical Race Theory are numerous. CRT in a higher education focuses on, "working towards the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 261). Examining seemingly race neutral policies and practices for their potential impact on students of color is one of the responsibilities BEAAM staff undertook. One such policy that was addressed through the existence of the program was the establishment of an early alert system that provides early warnings of academic problems so that interventions can be utilized to prevent course failure, another factor that places students at greater risk for not completing their academic goals. An example of a practice with implications for students of color was clarifying and sharing social and cultural cues for success in their particular academic environment. Through the sharing of strategies for success from BEAAM staff and other mentors, African American male mentoring participants were better be able to navigate their educational journeys. Without access to such social and cultural capital based on majority practices, participants

often found themselves at a loss about how to interact with faculty, staff and administrators and lacked knowledge about available resources designed to aid them. Using a CRT lens, these examples demonstrate how the theory can be utilized in a community college setting, an area where there is a dearth of research situated.

Using the CRT prism also creates the potential for, “new ways to think about the failure of schools to properly educate minority populations” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 267). When solutions to improving the success rates of African American males are examined from an institutional basis, instead of attributing such failure to individuals, institutional practices that contribute to such failures can be examined and changed. Without affirmation that racism is built into the structure of all educational institutions, meaningful solutions for poor retention levels for African American males will not be found.

Implications for Practice

College administrators, student support service personnel, higher education faculty and staff, community partners, and students can glean implications for practice from this study’s findings. If the data at a particular institution indicate that African American and/or overall male persistence, performance, and goal attainment lag those of their counterparts, then implementation of a formal, structured mentoring program is an important step to begin addressing that set of challenges. The establishment of a robust, multi-faceted program that reflects the varied backgrounds of the African American male population it will serve requires dedicated staff to ensure that such programming occurs on a consistent basis.

Funding for such support staff, along with access to additional funding to pay for mentors, training coordinators, and other programmatic elements are also important if the

program is to be scaled to serve a large audience, and for the overall effectiveness. Although grant funding might be sought to initially start such a program, building community support (through donations and mentors) will be an integral aspect of the long-term survival of such a program since community colleges are routinely lacking student support services funding. Indeed, significant funding for such programs is an exemplary practice that enables the mentoring programs to have transformative power in the lives of participants. Without such funding, Haring (1999) noted that mentoring programs are destined to fall prey to one of the most common non-exemplary characteristics – that of understaffing. Programs should also partner with the internal fund raising office of their respective institution to identify potential financial sponsors of the program.

The mentoring program needs advocates for the program throughout the institution who can explain why the program is needed and help to challenge commonly held stereotypes about this population, even after the initial excitement of launching a new effort wears off. Sork (2000), a program planning researcher and practitioner, reminds us of the importance of this sociopolitical domain in which mentoring programs must live. Such an environment is concerned with, “questions about the human dynamics of planning, including interests involved, the power relationships at play, and what they mean for planning” (Sork, 2000, p. 185). The BEAAM program modeled institutional wide support in a number of ways. Monthly Presidential forums with mentoring participants afforded participants access to the highest ranking employee at SCC, which reinforced the importance of such a program. Institutional wide support was further demonstrated through the BEAAM staff’s success in challenging and negotiating changes to policies that negatively impacted students of color.

Institutional wide support was also seen through faculty willingness to utilize the early alert system to make success a more likely outcome for participants. Without such institutional-wide support, the program planning efforts of BEAAM staff would be limited in their impact. By engaging with a wide range of faculty and staff not only is the program working to bring about social justice on behalf of participants, but it also sets the stage for the dismantling of racism in the broader community.

For student support services staff, where mentoring programs are generally housed, partnering with internal research staff to consistently assess program and individual level outcomes will provide valuable information to those administering the program about the effectiveness of the program's efforts. This cycle of continuous improvement is an aspect of program planning that is often forgone, due to limited time and resources. Politically, gathering such data will also hopefully prove the case that this particular intervention is having the intended effect. Additionally, Wilson (2009) advocates that an important strategy for creating a welcoming environment for African American mentoring participants to having increasing the number of African American male staff members available to work with students. While advocates for mentoring participants can come in any race and either gender, his research indicates that it is a factor that contributes to the likelihood that participants will seek out the services of the mentoring program. Based on feedback from student participants at this particular institution, the fact that BEAAM staff mirrored themselves in terms of cultural identity and gender was a contributing factor to their belief that program staff truly understood their concerns and could therefore offer meaningful advice and strategies for resolving participant issues.

Participants also thought that it was important to vary the meeting topics, frequency, and formats so that whether participants are in the first or fourth semester in the program, they will gain something from engaging with the program. “Findings from evaluations of mentoring programs indicated that those that have either ongoing training, structured activities, parent involvement, or clear expectations about the frequency of meetings yielded significantly higher effect sizes than did those for programs that did not have those components” (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006, p. 719). The BEAAM program consistently produced monthly activity calendars that varied to engage participants in meaningful ways.

While the personal experiences of program staff helped them to have insight into the challenges the participants might face, it also potentially blinded them to experiences of African American males that fall outside of what is considered to be a typical African American male experience. There is a need to go beyond the experiences of staff members and look for creative ways to acknowledge the uniqueness of each student and develop corresponding program strategies to reach them. Becoming more deliberate about the way in which rapport is initially built and then sustained over time between participants, mentors and BEAAM staff was of critical importance to the program director. He introduced several strategies including professional development in rapport building for his staff, participant tracking forms, and required weekly interactions. Such actions are important for practice because far too often it is assumed that all members of a particular cultural group have had monolithic experiences. The BEAAM staff repeatedly emphasized the need to value the

unique individual experiences of participants against the backdrop of a common cultural heritage.

For community partners, participants felt strongly that energy should be put into striking up ways to expand similar mentoring programs to younger populations of males throughout the community. Not only will this create opportunities for all age levels within the mentoring program to mentor others, but it will create a broader sense of community outside of the limited higher education setting. Consider the example in place in the Cumberland County College System in New Jersey where they have a system of recruiting African American males from low SES, pairing them with college mentors with at least a 2.0, and compensating them an hourly rate and making them responsible for weekly contact with their mentees (Stolar, 1992).

Students of all races benefit from having an African American Male Mentoring program on one's campus. Everyone is adversely impacted by the prevailing common discourse about African American males. It limits benefiting from our common experiences because the stereotypes of African American males are so embedded in our nation's history and culture. Having such a program encourages African American males to be more than a stereotype. It encourages them to fully engage in the college experience. It creates an opportunity for other races and genders to hear about their racialized experiences and to potentially create advocates of other races to promote social justice advocates of other races to promote social justice (Johnson-Bailey, Baumgartner, Bowles, 2010).

This research study has provided a myriad of implications for a variety of potential stakeholders of African American Male Mentoring programs. The implications ranged from

the theoretical to those for practice. Theoretical implications included the opportunity to build upon CRT within the community college as a means for bringing about change to end policies and practices that disadvantage students of color. Implications for theory went on to note how programmatic aspects contributed to the same social justice goal by encouraging participants to become more critical consumers of imagery that presents African American males from a deficit perspective. Implications for practice ranged from the need for institution-wide support to encouragement to identify program staff with a common cultural heritage as participants, while acknowledging that each individual has had a unique set of experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many participants identified the need to better understand how to access standard components of navigating educational systems such as changing programs of study, choosing a career field, accessing financial aid, time management, study habits and personal presentation. This study did not focus on all the specific areas of knowledge students needed to better navigate their educational journeys, but exploring that area in greater depth would provide a rich source of information for institutions for orientations and or for learning communities aimed at this audience. Additionally, participants felt strongly that many of the issues they were addressing as college students began much earlier in their lives. They repeatedly indicated their belief that a similar program for younger males would have had a tremendous impact on the trajectory of their lives and has the potential to similarly impact young people's lives. Studying a program that links a higher education mentoring program

with one at the middle school or high school level and then exploring the outcomes associated with such community engagement would be a worthy area of future study.

A focus on which programmatic aspects were actually used by the various age demographics and why might provide additional insight for practitioners working with similar populations of students. While there is not a universal design for mentoring programs for African American males, there are exemplary practices, the most significant of which is the need for funding that enables staffing and resources for programming.

Additionally, this research focused on one particular identity – that of being an African American male. Even that identity has two distinct aspects - one cultural, the other gender based, which were not explored uniquely, in some ways because they are so intertwined. It ignored the reality that participants all have multiple identities that may at various points in time have a greater or lesser impact on participant overall educational journeys. However, other significant identities such as Southern and rural identity, class, sexual orientation, disability (physical or mental) may be other dimensions by which this information needs to be analyzed to develop findings that are richer and provide additional insight regarding the educational journey of African American male mentoring participants.

Another direction for future research should be to replicate this study at other community college mentoring programs to see the role that program structure has on participant overall experiences. Yet another direction for additional research would be to compare the educational experiences of mentoring participants to non-male participants to see what differences and similarities emerge amongst those populations. It would also

provide the opportunity to find out what strategies could be employed to encourage greater program participation from the perspective of non-participating students.

The literature in this area needs to focus to a greater extent on mentoring programs within the community college context. Because community colleges deal with such a wide variety of students the lessons learned from research on mentoring programs for this audience from four-year institutions are not necessarily applicable. The other major area where the literature needs to expand is in recent applications of Cross's Racial Identity Development model to ensure that it is still appropriate for current populations of African American students. Using the CRIS (Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001) assessment tool is one of the ways in which this model could be validated. Under the mantle of cultural identity, the other area that needs additional exploration is the impact of faculty perceptions of African American males based upon attire. While BEAAM staff encouraged participants to dress conservatively to avoid stereotype threat, such a premise is flawed in that it assigns responsibility for changing the majority normative standard of attire on those who are least able to change it. Such a strategy is problematic. While Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin and Castro (2010) noted that faculty admitted to feeling intimidated by students wearing such attire, responsibility for changing internalized messages regarding the threat of persons attired in hip-hop attire cannot easily be changed, faculty and staff must deconstruct such thinking and learn to interact with students individually.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented three major conclusions based on the findings identified in chapter five. It was revealed that participants of all ages found that the program aided in their

navigation of the educational structure despite experiences of institutionalized racism. The second conclusion identified that the program provided an effective venue for development of counter narratives that served to dismantle negative stereotypes that are part of the common narrative about African American males. The final conclusion was that the program served as an example of interest convergence through the goals of its key funders and through challenges to seemingly race neutral policies at the local level. Discussion of each conclusion was supported by evidence from the study and from the literature. Implications for theory and practice were also outlined in addition to opportunities for future research.

Participants were asked to share their overall thoughts about the program with me at the conclusion of the final interview. Responses ranged the gamut. One participant expressed that he learned to always do and give his best. Another participant talked about being grateful for having had the opportunity to learn more about his cultural history. Several participants admonished those following in their footsteps to become active participants in the program. Their responses reflected the uniqueness that each of them brought and took away from the program. However, there was a common theme to their remarks that brings this study full circle - the program was a positive experience for them and that they were glad to have been a participant.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – INVITATION LETTERS

System Director Invitation Letter

Dear Mr. _____ (System Director Name)

I am Pamela Gibson Senegal, a doctoral student in Adult and Community College Education at North Carolina State University. I am writing to invite you to volunteer to participate in a research study about a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring program that I am beginning to conduct for my dissertation. My topic is: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys, how they perceive their cultural identities, and what specific aspects of the mentoring program contributed to their success. You have been identified as a resource for the overall context of these programs.

This research is significant because most of what we know about formal mentoring programs is based on research conducted on traditional aged students (18 – 23) who are enrolled in four-year universities. As a critical stakeholder in the organization of these mentoring programs throughout the community college system, you have important insights regarding this mentoring experience.

I would like to conduct a one hour-long face-to-face interview with you at a location of your choice. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed. After the interview is transcribed, I would like to send you a copy of the transcript of our conversation for your review (via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return) that may take an additional hour to review. To protect your privacy, your name will not be used in the transcript or in the research report, nor will the state in which this research is being conducted be identified in reports.

If you are interested in participating in this research effort, please let me know by return email and I will contact you to review the consent form, and the selection of a date, place and time for the interview that best fits your schedule. For your convenience, I have included my contact information at the end of this letter.

Please be assured that your responses during the interview will be held in the strictest of confidence. The identity of the community college system and your individual identity will be kept confidential when published in any reports. All data collected during this process will be stored and locked in my home office when not in use.

I would appreciate your response by _____ 2010.

For questions regarding the rights of research participants, any complaints, or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the NC State University's Office of Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance at (919) 515-4514.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Pamela Senegal (###) ###-#### - cell pgsenegal@gmail.com	Dr. Tuere Bowles (919) 513-4871 tuere_bowles@ncsu.edu
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Program Director Invitation Letter

Dear Mr. _____ (Program Director Name)

I am Pamela Gibson Senegal, a doctoral student in Adult and Community College Education at North Carolina State University. I am writing to invite you to volunteer to participate in a research study about a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring program that I am beginning to conduct for my dissertation. My topic is: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys, how they perceive their cultural identities, and what specific aspects of the mentoring program contributed to their success. You have been identified as the primary point of contact for the Minority Male Mentoring program at your institution.

This research is significant because most of what we know about formal mentoring programs is based on research conducted on traditional aged students (18 – 23) who are enrolled in four-year universities. As a critical stakeholder in the organization of these mentoring programs throughout the community college system, you have important insights regarding this mentoring experience.

I would like to conduct two hour-long face-to-face interviews with you, at a location of your choice. With your permission, the interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. The first interview will focus on your role as the director of the mentoring program, while the second interview will be conducted towards the end of data collection and will serve as a follow up to any outstanding questions generated. After the interview is transcribed, I would like to send you a copy of the transcript of our conversations for your review (via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return). Your name will not be used in the transcript or in the research report, nor will the state in which this research is being conducted be identified in reports.

I would also appreciate your assistance in recruiting students for the focus groups, using a researcher provided script, as well as your assistance in gathering mentoring program related documents. The gathered materials may include but are not limited to the following: organizational mission/charter, student handbook, recruitment materials, calendar of events, mentoring training materials, program level aggregate retention data , including overall GPA of enrolled African American male students versus overall GPA of African American male mentoring participants, agendas from meetings or programs, budget, organizational structure, and/or recruitment materials.

I anticipate that the recruitment will take approximately one hour, while gathering program documents may take an additional two to three hours. You will also have the opportunity to review transcripts from our interviews, which may take an additional hour per transcript to review. I anticipate that the total potential time commitment over a six month period will be between six and eight hours. Your name will not be used in the transcript or in the research report, nor will the institution at which this research is being conducted be identified in reports.

If you are interested in participating in this research effort, please let me know by return email and I will contact you to review the consent form, and the selection of a date, place and time for the initial interview that best fits your schedule. For your convenience, I have included my contact information at the end of this letter.

Please be assured that your responses during the interview will be held in the strictest of confidence. The identity of the community college and your individual identity will be kept confidential when published in any report. All data collected during this process will be stored and locked in my home office when not in use.

I would appreciate your response by _____ 2010.

For questions regarding the rights of research participants, any complaints, or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the NC State University's Office of Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance at (919) 515-4514.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Pamela Senegal (###) ###-#### - cell pgsenegal@gmail.com	Dr. Tuere Bowles (919) 513-4871 tuere_bowles@ncsu.edu
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Thanks for your time, and I hope you will decide to be a part of this study.

Mentored Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Mr. (Student Name),

I am Pamela Gibson Senegal, a doctoral student in Adult and Community College Education at North Carolina State University. I am writing to invite you to volunteer to participate in a research study about a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring program that I am beginning to conduct for my dissertation. My topic is: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys, how they perceive their cultural identities, and what specific aspects of the mentoring program contributed to their success. You have been identified as a mentoring program participant. Participation in this study is voluntary and your choice to participate, or not, will not impact your standing or relationship with the Mentoring program.

This research is significant because most of what we know about formal mentoring programs is based on research conducted on traditional aged students (18 – 23) who are enrolled in four-year universities. As a participant in the African American Male mentoring program at your community college, you have important insights regarding this mentoring experience.

There are two potential levels of participation:

- 1) As a focus group participant – the focus group will take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a time, date and location that is convenient for you.
- 2) In-depth interviews and other procedures – a subset of focus group participants will be recruited by the researcher to participate in two interviews lasting one to two hours each, to complete a brief biography exercise, and to take expressive photographs which will take approximately an additional two to three hours. Participants who complete the focus group, the interviews, biography exercise and photography will receive a \$25 Walmart gift card at the conclusion of the second interview.

With your permission, the focus groups and interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. After they are transcribed, I would like to send you a copy of the transcript of our conversation for your review (via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return), which may take an additional hour or more to review. To protect your privacy, you will choose a pseudonym that will be used on your focus group comments and on your interview transcripts. In this manner, your individual identity will be confidential and will not be included in written final reports. Additionally, neither the state nor the specific college at which this research is being conducted will be identified in reports.

If you are interested in participating in this research effort, please let me know by return email and I will contact you to review the consent form. You will be asked to return the saved consent form, complete your name and date and return it to me via email. Once received, I will conduct a brief demographic survey via telephone with you, and will then identify potential dates, place and times for additional follow up.

Please be assured that your responses during the interviews, and focus group will be held in the strictest of confidence. You should be aware, however, that confidentiality of your focus group

responses cannot be guaranteed because I do not have control over what group members may discuss outside of the group. The identity of the institution and your individual identity will be anonymous. All data collected during this process will be stored and locked in my home office when not in use.

I would appreciate your response (including the survey) by _____, 2010.
For questions regarding the rights of research participants, any complaints, or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact NC State University's Office of Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance at (919) 515-4514.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Pamela Senegal (###) ###-#### - cell pgsenegal@gmail.com	Dr. Tuere Bowles (919) 513-4871 tuere_bowles@ncsu.edu
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Thanks for your time, and I hope you will decide to be a part of this study.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Mentored Participant Flyer

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

**Looking for
African American Male Mentoring Participants
to be a part of a Focus Group**

You may be eligible to participate in a small group discussion on how being part of a mentoring program has impacted your educational journey.

Must be:

- **18 years or older**
- **Currently enrolled**
- **African American male**
- **Mentoring participant for at least one semester**

FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT

###-###-####

or

Email pgsenegal@gmail.com

Program Director Student Participant Recruitment Script

Used for: E-mail, phone call, or verbal invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, “A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program” through North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys, to gain insight into how their perceptions of cultural identity impact that journey, and what aspects of the mentoring program they believe contributed to their academic success.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your choice to participate, or not, will not impact your standing or relationship with the Mentoring program.

There are two potential parts to participating in this study: 1) focus group; and 2) focus group followed by two one-on-one in-depth interviews and other activities.

The focus group, which is a small group of other mentoring participants who will be led through a series of questions by a researcher, will take an hour, along with another hour to review a transcript of the session.

If you're recruited by the researcher to participate in the in-depth interviews, she will also ask you to complete a short biographical exercise and to take expressive photographs of your mentoring program experiences. The additional interviews, biography exercise, photographs and review of your transcripts will potentially take another five to seven hours. For those who complete the focus group, interviews, biography and photographs, she will provide you with a \$25 gift card to Walmart at the end of the second interview.

You may decide to stop participating at any time without penalty. It is your right to refrain from answering any question you do not want to answer during any part of this research effort.

The benefit of your participation is largely around having the opportunity to share and reflect on your experiences as an individual participant in the African American Male Mentoring program. The potential risks of this study are that there may be a chance that during the focus group participants may become anxious or embarrassed in answering questions. Participants will be reminded during the discussion of the focus group protocol that they may choose to not answer any question, which will reduce the likelihood of emotional risks.

If you are interested in being a part of this focus group as a part of this research, please contact: **Pamela Senegal at (###) ###-#### or via email at pgsenegal@gmail.com.**

Recruitment Script for Mentored Participant Interviews

Used for: E-mail, phone call, or verbal invitation

You have already participated in a focus group for a research study entitled, “A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program” through North Carolina State University. The purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys, to gain insight into how their perceptions of cultural identity impact that journey, and what aspects of the mentoring program they believe contributed to their academic success.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your choice to participate, or not, will not impact your standing or relationship with the Mentoring program.

Based on your focus group responses, and your demographic information, I think that learning more about your experiences will provide valuable insights for this study. I would like you to consider participating in the second part of this research process by allowing me to interview you two times.

The first interview will take an hour; the second interview will take two hours. Review of transcripts post interview will take approximately three hours total.

Prior to the first interview, I will ask you to complete a short biographical exercise that consists of seven prompts designed to learn more about your background. It will take approximately one hour or less to complete this exercise.

I will also provide you with a disposable camera and consent forms at the end of our first interview. You will be asked to take (and collect consent forms) thoughtful, creative, and expressive electronic pictures with a camera that represent your experiences within the mentoring program. It is expected that the taking of these photographs will take an additional two to three hours.

At the conclusion of the two interviews, the biography exercise, and the photographs and review of your transcripts, I will present you with a \$25 gift card to Walmart at the end of the second interview.

You may decide to stop participating at any time without penalty. It is your right to refrain from answering any question you do not want to answer during any part of this research effort.

The benefit of your participation is largely around having the opportunity to share and reflect on your experiences as an individual participant in the African American Male Mentoring program. The potential risks of this study are that there may be a chance that during the interviews of becoming anxious or embarrassed in answering some of the questions. You’ll be reminded prior to the start of the interviews that you may choose to not answer any question, which will reduce the likelihood of emotional risks.

I’d very much like for you to be a focused participant. If you are interested in being interviewed as a part of this research, please contact:

Pamela Senegal at (###) ###-#### or via email at pgsenegal@gmail.com.

APPENDIX C –CONSENT FORMS

Program Director Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*

Principal Investigator: Pamela Gibson Senegal

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Tuere Bowles

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to describe the experiences of African American male Mentoring (AAMM) participants. Additionally, this research will also seek to learn about their perceptions of cultural identity, and which mentoring program elements contributed to their success.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in two one hour-long face-to-face interviews at the location of your choosing. The location should be a place that is private and you feel comfortable speaking without being overheard. I am requesting that you allow me to audiotape this interview. If more information is needed after the interviews, I may ask you follow-up questions via telephone and/or email. Additionally, I will seek your assistance in recruiting mentored participants for this research, as well as in obtaining written documents about the mentoring program. After the interviews have been transcribed, I will send you the transcript via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return and ask you to review the transcripts for accuracy. The interviews will be conducted during the Summer and Fall 2010 semesters. Time commitment will involve two hours total for interviews (one hour per interview), and may require an additional two hours to review and make additions/changes to typed transcripts. Additionally, time spent assisting in recruitment efforts, and gathering of mentoring program documents may take another two to three hours. Total potential time required will range between six and seven hours.

RISKS

Although risk for you as a participant is minimal, I will be asking questions about your work and personal questions about yourself. These questions may generate some emotional reactions. I will remind you before we begin the interview that you can stop at any time or skip any questions you do not want to answer. It is also possible that something said by yourself or by mentored participants about the program could be “professionally” damaging should those statements get out. Efforts to minimize such a breach have been added to the research protocol which include not mentioning the name of the state or college where the research will be conducted in any of the written reports. Additionally, pseudonyms will be used in the written report for all parties involved. To ensure confidentiality of your responses, your name and any other identifiers associated with you personally will not be used, nor will the name of the state and the specific community college being studied be mentioned in written research reports. As stated before, you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure your thoughts and words express your intent due to the potentially sensitive nature of your responses regarding your work efforts.

BENEFITS

This study will provide context for this particular institution’s minority mentoring program. Your insights will broaden our understanding of the ways in which participation influences African American male mentoring participant’s overall educational journey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Transcripts will not contain your actual name, only an assigned code. Only my faculty dissertation committee members and myself may participate in a review of these transcripts and my initial coding structure to ensure the accuracy of the findings. All audio and transcript files will be stored in a locked storage facility in my home office. Files will be kept for three years and then destroyed. I would also ask you to refrain from using identifiable names during the interview and if full names are used, they will be replaced with pseudonyms during the transcription process.

COMPENSATION

You will not receive anything for participating.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela Gibson Senegal, at pgsenegal@gmail.com or (###) ###-####.

If you feel that you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, (919) 515-7515.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and is not part of your work requirement. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Mentored Participant Interview and Data Procedures Consent Form
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*

Principal Investigator: Pamela Gibson Senegal

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Tuere Bowles

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to describe the experiences of African American male Mentoring (AAMM) participants. Additionally, this research will also seek to learn about your perceptions of cultural identity, and which mentoring program elements contributed to your success.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in two in-depth, face to face interviews, complete a short biography exercise, and to take photographs of meaningful mentoring experiences. If more information is needed after the interviews, I may ask you for a follow-up interview. After the interviews have been transcribed, I will ask you to review the transcripts (which will be sent to you via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return) for accuracy. The interviews will be conducted during the Summer and Fall 2010 semesters.

Interviews – The first interview will take an hour, the second interview will take two hours. Review of transcripts post interview make take an additional three hours total.

Biography – The biographical exercise consists of seven prompts designed to learn more about your background that you will be asked to complete prior to the first interview. It will take approximately one hour or less to complete this exercise.

Expressive photography – You will be asked to take (and collect consent forms) thoughtful, creative, and expressive electronic pictures with a camera provided by the researcher that represent your experiences within the mentoring program. It is expected that the taking of these photographs will take an additional two to three hours.

RISKS

I anticipate potential risks for you to be minimal as a participant in this study. I am aware that during the interview, some sensitive information may be revealed. Your name and any other identifiers associated with you personally will not be used, only a self-selected pseudonym. I will remind you before we begin the interview that you can stop at any time or skip a question you do not want to answer. As stated before you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure your thoughts and words express your intent.

BENEFITS

Although there may be no direct benefit for your participating in this study, it will document your experiences as a participant in the African American Male Mentoring program at your community college. Your insights will broaden our understanding of the ways in which participation influences your overall educational journey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Transcripts will not contain your actual name, only your self-selected pseudonym. Only my faculty dissertation advisory members and myself may participate in a review of these transcripts and my initial coding structure to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

COMPENSATION

At the conclusion of the two interviews, the biography exercise and the photographs, participants will be given a \$25 gift card to Walmart. Participants not completing each aspect of the research will not receive any compensation.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela Gibson Senegal, at pgsenegal@gmail.com or (###) ###-####.

If you feel that you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, (919) 515-7515.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

System Director Consent Form
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*

Principal Investigator: Pamela Gibson Senegal

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Tuere Bowles

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to describe the experiences of African American male Mentoring (AAMM) participants. Additionally, this research will also seek to learn about their perceptions of cultural identity, and which mentoring program elements contributed to their success.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in one hour-long face-to-face interview at the location of your choice. The location should be a place that is private and you feel comfortable speaking without being overheard. I am requesting that you allow me to audiotape this interview. If more information is needed after the interview, I may contact you again and ask you follow-up questions via telephone and/or email. After the interview has been transcribed, I will send you a copy via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return and ask you to review the transcript for accuracy, which may take an additional hour to read and mail changes back to the researcher. The interview will be conducted during the Summer of 2010. The interview will last approximately one hour at a location of your choosing.

RISKS

Although risk for you as a participant is minimal, be aware that I will be asking you questions about your work and personal questions about yourself. These questions may generate some emotional reactions. I will remind you before we begin the interview that you can stop at any time or skip any questions you do not want to answer. To ensure confidentiality of your responses, your name and any other identifiers associated with you personally will not be used, nor will the name of the state being studied be mentioned in written research reports. As stated before, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript to ensure that your thoughts and words express your intent due to the potentially sensitive nature of your responses regarding your work efforts.

BENEFITS

This study will provide context for the state's minority male mentoring programs. Your insights will broaden our understanding of the ways in which participation influences African American male mentoring participant's overall educational journeys.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Transcripts will not contain your actual name, only an assigned code. Only my faculty dissertation committee members and myself may participate in a review of these transcripts and my initial coding structure to ensure the accuracy of the findings. All audio and transcript files will be stored in a locked storage facility in my home office. Files will be kept for three years and then destroyed. I would also ask you to refrain from using identifiable names during the interview and if full names are used, they will be replaced with pseudonyms during the transcription process.

COMPENSATION

You will not receive anything for participating.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela Gibson Senegal, at pgsenegal@gmail.com or (###) ###-####.

If you feel that you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, (919) 515-7515.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and is not part of your work requirement. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Mentored Participant Focus Group Consent Form
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: *A Case Study of a Southeastern African American Male Mentoring Program*

Principal Investigator: Pamela Gibson Senegal

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Tuere Bowles

- **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this qualitative research study is threefold: to understand the ways in which African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) participants describe their educational journeys at a Southeastern Community College, to gain insight into how their perceptions of cultural identity impact that journey, and what aspects of the mentoring program they believe contributed to their academic success. Approximately 24 fellow mentored students will participate in two focus groups, based on membership in either a traditional aged group (18 – 23) or non-traditional aged group (24+). Be aware that you may know individuals in the group based on participation in the mentoring program.
- **Procedures to be followed:** Prior to the focus group, you were asked some basic demographic questions about your occupation, length of participation in the mentoring program, and details about your enrollment and GPA. You will be asked some questions which can be answered and discussed with others in the focus group. The session will last one hour and will be audio-digitally recorded. I will transcribe the tape recordings, using only the pseudonyms you have selected. You will have the opportunity to review the focus group transcript you participate in and make modifications or changes. A copy of your focus group transcript will be sent to you (via US Postal Service, along with a postage-paid envelope for its return). Modifications can be sent via return mail to the researcher at the address on the return envelope. I will store the tapes in my home office and will destroy the tapes after three years. These are standard procedures for focus groups.
- **Participation is voluntary:** Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any or all questions, and you are free to leave at any time.
- **Discomforts and risks:** There may be the chance that you may become anxious or embarrassed when answering questions, which is a minimal risk because you can choose not to answer any question. However it is not anticipated that the discomfort associated with answering these questions will exceed that which you might experience in everyday life. Participants are encouraged to keep confidential what they hear during the discussion. Your identity will be kept confidential in the transcripts and in the written research report. Additionally, neither the state nor the specific community college where the research is being conducted will be listed anywhere in the research report.
- **Benefits to me:** Although you will not receive any monetary compensation for participating in this focus group, it will provide an opportunity to share and reflect on your experiences as an individual participant in the African American Male Mentoring program. Focus group participants who also complete in-depth interviews, a brief biography exercise and take expressive photographs will receive a \$25 gift card to Walmart at the conclusion of the data collection.
- **Time duration of the procedures and study:** The focus group lasts one hour. If people wish to continue the discussion longer than one hour, we will continue but also provide the

opportunity for participants to leave after one hour. Review of the focus group transcript may take an additional hour of your time.

- **Statement of confidentiality:** Every attempt will be made to ensure that your responses are kept confidential, however absolute confidentiality cannot be assured since I do not have control over what group members may discuss outside of the group. A master list linking your name to your pseudonym will be created and stored off-site in my home office and will be destroyed after three years. All transcripts and research reports will only utilize your self-selected pseudonyms.
- **Questions:** If you have questions about the study, you may write to Pamela Gibson Senegal at pgsenegal@gmail.com or call ###.###.####. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, (919) 515-7515.

CONSENT

I have read the information on this form. All of my questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I will be given a copy of this signed form to keep for my records. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant: _____ Date: _____, 2010

Investigator: _____ Date: _____, 2010

Consent Form for Adults Who May Appear in Photographs

May I Take Your Picture?*



Has this project been approved?

Yes. This project has been approved by North Carolina State University's Institutional Review Board on Research involving Human Participants.

Who can I contact if I have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela Senegal at pgsenegal@gmail.com or ###.###.####. If you feel you have not been treated the way this form reads, or your rights as a participant have been violated during this research project, you may contact:

Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, 919.515.4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus 919.515.7515.

If you are willing to have your picture taken, please read the following statement very carefully. Then please sign and date this form and return it to me. I will give you a copy of this form for your own records. **To receive a copy of this photograph, please print your name, street number, street name, city, state, and zip code below:**

Agreement Statement:

By signing this consent form, I agree to have my picture taken. I also understand and agree that unless otherwise notified in writing, that North Carolina State University assumes that permission is granted to use my pictures for projects, related discussions, exhibits, presentations, and publications.

Your Signature and Date

Photographer's Signature and Date

If you would like a copy of your picture(s), please sign here: _____
They will be mailed to you.

* Form based on the work of Dr. E. Lopez of Florida State University for the original form design, and on the work of Heather Jean Robertson, NCSU doctoral student, 2008.

Consent Form for Minors Who May Appear in Photographs

May I Take Your Picture?*



Has this project been approved?

Yes. This project has been approved by North Carolina State University's Institutional Review Board on Research involving Human Participants.

0-5 years old – requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative

6 – 10 years old - requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative and verbal assent from the minor.

11 - 17 years old - requires signature of both minor and parent/guardian/legal representative

Who can I contact if I have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela Senegal at pgsenegal@gmail.com or at ###.###.####. If you feel you have not been treated the way this form reads, or your rights as a participant have been violated during this research project, you may contact:

Deb Paxton, NC State University's Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus, 919.515.4514 or Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus 919.515.7515.

If you are willing to allow the minor to have his/her picture taken, please read the following statement very carefully. Then please sign and date this form and return it to me. I will give you a copy of this form for your own records. **To receive a copy of this photograph, please print your name, street number, street name, city, state, and zip code below:**

Agreement Statement:

By signing this consent form, I agree to have the minor in my guardianship's picture taken. I also understand and agree that unless otherwise notified in writing, that North Carolina State University assumes that permission is granted to use my pictures for projects, related discussions, exhibits, presentations, and publications.

_____ Minor's Name	_____ Minor's Signature
_____ Parent/Guardian/Legal Representative Signature and Date	_____ Photographer's Signature and Date

If you would like a copy of your picture(s), please sign here: _____

They will be mailed to you.

* Form based on the work of Dr. E. Lopez of Florida State University for the original form design, and on the work of Heather Jean Robertson, NCSU doctoral student, 2008.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated! Please fill out the survey questions below.
Be aware that the information from this survey is confidential and will only be used as part of this research study.

1. My age is _____. [If participant indicates that they are not at least 18 years old, stop the data collection. Tell them that you appreciate their interest in the research study and thank them for their time. Explain that this particular study is limited to those who are at least 18 years old.]
2. Occupation _____.
3. Number of semesters attending this community college _____.
4. Number of semesters participating in the African American Male Mentoring program_____. [If participant indicates that they are not a participant in the male mentoring program for at least one semester, stop the data collection. Tell them that you appreciate their interest in the research study and thank them for their time. Explain that this particular study is limited to participants in the male mentoring program.]
5. I am currently enrolled _____ (part-time or full-time).
6. Current overall GPA _____.
7. Program of study _____.
8. Primary goal for enrolling in Community College _____.
9. My race is_____. [If participant indicates that they are not African American, stop the data collection. Tell them that you appreciate their interest in the research study and thank them for their time. Explain that this particular study is limited to African American male mentoring participants.]
10. I am a male. YES/NO [If participant indicates that they are not a male, stop the data collection. Tell them that that you appreciate their interest in the research study and thank them for their time. Explain that this particular study is limited to African American male mentoring participants.]

I will contact you shortly with the possible dates that these focus groups will be held and to determine times you would be available to attend. In addition, I will also email or mail you directions to the focus group location. Can I have your physical and email address?

Participant name: _____

Participant email: _____

Telephone number: (____) _____

Mailing address:

Do you have any questions?

Thanks so much for being a part of this important research that will help build our understanding of how participation in a formal mentoring program can influence student educational journeys.

*Based on Sample Survey for Demographic Data found in Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, p. 202.

APPENDIX E – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

	Research Question 1 How are the educational journeys of African American males shaped by participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community college?	Research Question 2 What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?	Research Question 3 How do African American males participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community College perceive that specific aspects of the program contributed to their academic success?
System Office Director of Mentoring Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself • Why do you think these programs are so important? • In what ways do you believe that they influence the educational journey of African American males in particular? • What are some of the challenges in having a program that serves a wide range of cultures, ethnicities, and ages? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about the ways in which the programs encourage the development of a positive cultural identity. • For you, what does it mean to be an African American man? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you defining academic success? • Tell me about the ways in which program elements specifically contributed to the academic success of AAMs. • In what ways might an 18 year old experience the mentoring program differently from a student who is 30? • What are some of the essential components of a mentoring program? • In what ways does the System office support these program?
Program Director Interview 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself. • How did you come to be the director of the AAMM program? • In what ways does the program help AAMs navigate this educational system? • What challenges are there in serving multiple races through the mentoring program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe yourself culturally? • In what ways does the mentoring program encourages the development of a positive cultural identity? • What motivated the college to begin the program? • What makes them sustain it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you defining academic success? • Which aspects of the AAMM program do you think are most beneficial toward participant educational goal attainment? • Reflecting on the AAMs in the program, what differences have you noted in how traditional age/non-traditional age participants engage or participate in the program. • What (if anything) would you change about the way the program is organized?

	Research Question 1 How are the educational journeys of African American males shaped by participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community college?	Research Question 2 What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?	Research Question 3 How do African American males participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community College perceive that specific aspects of the program contributed to their academic success?
Program Director Interview 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what concrete ways do you believe that the program is making a difference in the lives of the participants? Tell me about a particular AAM participant who was transformed in some way largely due to this program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you think most participants would describe their culture? Is there anything else I should know about the program? 	
Participant Demographics	Age, race, culture, length of time as participant in program, major, occupation, GPA, cell phone (with or without camera capabilities)		
Participant Interview 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe your educational journey up to this point. What was the turning point in your life that made you pursue education? What inspired you to be a part of the AAMM program? What did you expect to gain from the program? In what ways do you think that being a part of the mentoring program has helped you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is there a need for this program? Share with me a story about how what you learned in the mentoring program helped you deal with a barrier, challenge, or problem in pursuit of your educational goal. In what ways might there be a difference in the words you use to describe yourself versus how others who don't know you as well might describe you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me what academic success means to you. Describe for me the types of activities you have participated in as part of the AAMM program. What do you like about the program? What do you dislike about the program?

	Research Question 1 How are the educational journeys of African American males shaped by participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community college?	Research Question 2 What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?	Research Question 3 How do African American males participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community College perceive that specific aspects of the program contributed to their academic success?
Participant Interview 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the most important pieces of wisdom you have gained from participating in this program? • In what ways have you changed as a participant in the program? • Choose up to five photographs that best represent your overall mentoring experiences. • Why these particular photos? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the common beliefs, attributes, and characteristics of African American men? • Share with me the first time you realized that your race was different from others. • How did that experience make you feel? • Tell me about an experience at this institution that you think was influenced by your race, gender, or class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways has being part of this program made you more likely to reach your end goals? • In what ways has the mentoring staff contributed to your academic success? • Is there anything else I should know about the mentoring program?
Participant Narrative Poetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which people influenced your personality and character? • What are some of your family sayings? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where from? • What kinds of food eat? • What words do you use to describe yourself? • What words do others use to describe you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I dream of becoming....
Participant Photographs	What photographs thoughtfully, creatively, and expressively describe your educational journey?	What photographs thoughtfully, creatively, and expressively describe who you are?	What photographs thoughtfully, creatively, and expressively describe your experiences in the mentoring program?

	Research Question 1 How are the educational journeys of African American males shaped by participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community college?	Research Question 2 What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?	Research Question 3 How do African American males participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community College perceive that specific aspects of the program contributed to their academic success?
Documents	<p>The following is a list of <i>potential</i> documents that may be gathered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall GPA of AAMs vs. AAMM participants (if available from college research archives or from program director) • Age average, median, N in non, N in trad/vs. program • Organizational mission, purpose, vision • Student handbook • Recruitment and marketing materials • Agenda from meetings and programs • Budget • Organizational chart • Mentor training materials 	Evidence of deliberate aspects of programming that might lead to development of cultural identity.	Which words come up the most frequently in program documents? Which words are missing?
Focus Group 1 (18 – 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourselves. • Share with me how being part of the mentoring program has impacted your educational journey? • In what ways could the program be arranged to better meet the needs of younger members like you all? • Reflect on your time so far with the mentoring program, what have you gained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about some of the ways that your cultural identity has impacted your educational journey? • Describe for me some of the reasons why a mentoring program is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advice would you give to other African American males that might increase their likelihood of success? • Tell me about which aspects of the program are the most meaningful to you and why. • Would you like to add anything?

	Research Question 1 How are the educational journeys of African American males shaped by participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community college?	Research Question 2 What do African American males perceive as their cultural identity through participation in a Southeastern Community College mentoring program?	Research Question 3 How do African American males participating in a formal mentoring program in a Southeastern Community College perceive that specific aspects of the program contributed to their academic success?
Focus Group 2 (24+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourselves. • Share with me how being part of the mentoring program has impacted your educational journey? • In what ways could the program be arranged to better meet the needs of members your age? • Reflect on your time so far with the mentoring program, what have you gained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about some of the ways that your cultural identity has impacted your educational journey? • Describe for me some of the reasons why a mentoring program is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advice would you give to other African American males that might increase their likelihood of success? • Tell me about which aspects of the program are the most meaningful to you and why. • Would you like to add anything?

Focus Group Protocol*

**Good (morning/afternoon/evening) and welcome to our session.
I'm Pam Gibson Senegal, a doctoral student at North Carolina State University.**

Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion about how being a participant in the African American Male Mentoring (AAMM) has impacted your educational journey. I also want to learn about how you perceive your cultural identity and which aspects of the mentoring program have most contributed to your academic success.

Before we get started, I'd like to hand out a sheet for informed consent. Please take a minute to read it and, if you're comfortable signing, please do so and hand it back to me. If you do not wish to sign the form or do not want your comments taped for research purposes, you are free to leave and no information will be reported about you.

There are no right or wrong answers, because everyone experiences things differently. I am interested in hearing about the full range of experiences, so please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said.

DISCUSSION GROUP GROUND RULES

Before we begin, let me suggest some guidelines that will make our discussion more productive.

- Please speak up—but only one person should talk at a time. We're recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. If you have trouble hearing any of the comments, please let the group know.
- In the discussion, we'll be on a first-name basis, using the self-selected pseudonym written on the name tents in front of you. In later reports no names will be attached to any comments. Your name will be kept confidential. Please refer to one another by the names on the cards during the course of the discussion.
- My role here is to ask questions and to listen. I'll also be summarizing information on the white board at times. I won't be actively participating in the conversation, only guiding it. I want you to feel free to talk to the group and not just to me. I'll ask questions about the impact your mentoring program experience. I'm interested in your stories, but because this is a research project, it is important that you link your comments back to the questions. I'll move the discussion from one question to the next to try to keep us on track so that we can finish by [*insert time*].
- There are just a few other things that I want to let you know. First, I'm passing around extra copies of the informed consent form. I would like for you each of you to keep one for your records.
- I'm also going to encourage each of you to keep confidential what you hear today during the discussion.
- Sometimes, people in focus groups think of things they want to say after the discussion has moved on to other questions. If you would like to add to your comments after the group, I will be around to talk with you privately.
- Any questions before we begin?

Begin asking Focus Group Questions found in Appendix E.

* Focus Group Protocol based on work included in the Patient Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) Network Study Protocol, 2010.

APPENDIX F – NARRATIVE POETICS EXERCISE

Respond to the following prompts using the words that first pop into your head after reading it. Some responses may be longer than others. If you are not clear what a prompt means, make your best guess.

Narrative Poetics Exercise

Adapted from an Exercise originally developed by Beverly Tatum

I am (physical places from your early years).

I am (foods eaten by your family origin).

I am (people who shaped your personality and character).

I am (family sayings).

I am (the words I use to describe myself).

I am (how others who may not know me describe me).

I dream about (what you hope to become in ten years).

APPENDIX G: DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

Data Type	Description	Nmb'r	Method of analysis	Length of Time
Document Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzed all mentoring programs in state looking for evidence of an active program (more than 20 members), and program components related to research questions (some overall activities, some cultural activities, some academic components) Program related documents on website Site study chamber of commerce and related employment information State-wide assessment report of mentoring programs 	N/A	Recurring words, themes related to research questions	200+ pages of materials
Expressive Photography	<p>Provided a camera to all second stage participants, asking them to take, “expressive, thoughtful and creative” pictorial representations of their experiences in the program.</p> <p>Second Stage Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional aged students Non-traditional aged students 	<p>5 total</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p>	Recurring words, themes related to research questions	Discussion incorporated into second interview
Field Notes	Post each visit to the campus, wrote notes describing my initial thoughts about the visit.	10	Recurring words and themes	3 – 5 hours
Focus Groups	<p>Facilitated meetings of participants by age group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional aged (18 – 23) Non-traditional aged (24+) <p>TOTAL</p>	<p>15</p> <p>12</p> <p>27</p>	Recurring themes by group, related to research questions	<p>1 hour</p> <p>1 hour</p>

Data Type	Description	Nmb'r	Method of analysis	Length of Time	
Interviews	System Director	1	Recurring words, themes related to research questions	1 hour	
	Program Director	3		3 hours (three hour long sessions)	
	Second Stage Participants:			4 hours	
	• Traditional aged students	3			
	• Non-traditional aged students	2		2.5 hours	
Narrative Biography Exercise	A series of prompts designed to illicit information about participant background and guiding influences.		Recurring words and themes related to research questions	Completed as part of first interview	
		Second Stage Participants:			
		• Traditional aged students			3
		• Non-traditional aged students			2
Observations of:	Interactions amongst PD and TCs.	4	Recurring words and themes	Throughout time in field.	
	Interactions amongst TCs and participants.	6			
	BEAAM participants engaged in the general population.	2			

APPENDIX H: RESEARCHER REFLECTIVE POETRY

Stop Saying That I Sound Like A White Girl

By Pamela Gibson Senegal

I am a proud African American woman.

I am intelligent.

I am committed to bettering my community.

I consider myself to be conscious. I advocate for persons of color within my sphere of influence that need my assistance.

I am married to a conscious African American man.

I am the proud step mother and mother to three strong, confident African American young men.

I pledged an African American sorority.

I consciously attempt to spend our discretionary money with African American business owners.

I am a member of an African American church and I pray constantly.

I love my mother and father dearly.

I believe in the power of voting largely because of the struggle we went through during the Civil Rights Movement. I have only missed voting in one election since I turned 18.

I used to be able to dance my butt off.

I can quote the lyrics to many Public Enemy songs (before Flava Flav sold out and had 18 children).

I know my history from Before the Mayflower through slavery and on into modern times.

I enjoy the occasional fried chicken or smothered pork-chop dinner.

I love my mother's sweet buttery cornbread.

I have even sister-locked my hair.

I love black people through and through.

So why are grown black folks still telling me that I sound like a white girl?

Is it because I'm not splitting verbs that shouldn't be split?

Is it because in order to remember some of these difficult, never heard before, doctoral level words, I occasionally try to use them in the course of every day conversation?

Or is it that we're confused about what it means to be black?

I'm just not buying the myth that white = smart, and therefore black = dumb. That's ridiculous!

Just once, I'd like for someone to say that I sound like Shirley Chisholm or Barbara Jordan or Charlayne Hunter-Gault or Constance Baker Motley. Just once.

That's who I think I sound like.

Stop being surprised that I'm articulate! I'm fourth generation college educated. It would be a travesty if I couldn't speak proper English.

Stop dismissing me as a sistah because I don't sound like you think I should sound.

I sound like me.

APPENDIX I: RESEARCHER IDENTITY MEMORANDUM

To: Pamela G. Senegal

Re: Researcher Identity Biases

Date: February 2, 2010

This memo is written to help reveal how my personal goals, assumptions, and biases may impact this research effort. Started this process by asking myself a series of questions, revealed below.

<p>Q1: How did you first become interested in this topic?</p>	<p>Began in high school with introduction to Jawanza Kunjufu's book – <u>Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys</u> in high school.</p> <p>When met husband nearly 15 years ago, he was running a Rites of Passage program for African American males, designed to counteract some of the experiences described in Kunjufu's book.</p> <p>Began working for Durham Technical Community College (DTCC). We received Achieving the Dream (ATD) funding, which forced us to disaggregate our retention data. In that process, it revealed that African American males were not persisting at the rate of their peers.</p> <p>As an administrator at the college, began research to determine whether or not our data was an outlier. It was not. Our data reflected a national trend of abysmal rates of persistence among African American males.</p> <p>Had the opportunity in a program planning class to investigate phenomena of AAMM program. Discovered that mentoring programs are often organized with good intentions, but without the knowledge of deliberate program planning. Problematic insight, particularly at the community college level, where student development resources are always anemic.</p> <p>Additionally, as the step-mother and mother to three African American sons, grew concerned about their likelihood of future success within current educational arena. Also, as the Dean for Career and Technical Programs, we see a disproportionate share of African American males in our programs. It's clear I need more insight into their experiences and to the potential of mentoring.</p> <p>Intuitively see benefit of mentors. Levinson & Darrow's work has convinced me of their value in particular to men of a certain age, but the other structure of mentoring programs is less clear. Need insights. Need to know more.</p>
<p>Q2: Why is this topic important to you today?</p>	<p>We need every group functioning at their highest level. Factory jobs are gone. Can't afford to keep dismissing 15% of our population without education beyond high school. It's decimating our communities. Who will my nieces marry?</p>
<p>Q3: Why do you</p>	<p>Some structural issues – the overall culture creates dissonance for many African</p>

<p>think African American males are not more successful at CCs?</p>	<p>American males.</p> <p>Faculty perceptions – because so few, rely on popular culture to create our perspective of African American males. Rappers, athletes and criminals. Other African American males, like Obama are the “exception.” Combination of low expectations and fear do not create an atmosphere where learning and trust occur, which are essential for African American males.</p> <p>Individual challenges – low self esteem from previous negative educational experiences plague African American males as they enter CCs/HEIs. First obstacle reinforces that education is not good and they exit.</p> <p>Lack of role models – throughout secondary mostly white female teachers. Same at CCs.</p> <p>Lack of peer group – particularly when first generation, need help navigating educational culture. Also need positive peer pressure to off-set cultural perception that being smart equals being white.</p>
<p>Q3: Why do you think African American males are not more successful at CCs?</p>	<p>Some structural issues – the overall culture creates dissonance for many African American males.</p> <p>Faculty perceptions – because so few, rely on popular culture to create our perspective of African American males. Rappers, athletes and criminals. Other African American males, like Obama are the “exception.” Combination of low expectations and fear do not create an atmosphere where learning and trust occur, which are essential for African American males.</p> <p>Individual challenges – low self esteem from previous negative educational experiences plague African American males as they enter CCs/HEIs. First obstacle reinforces that education is not good and they exit.</p> <p>Lack of role models – throughout secondary mostly white female teachers. Same at CCs.</p> <p>Lack of peer group – particularly when first generation, need help navigating educational culture. Also need positive peer pressure to off-set cultural perception that being smart equals being white.</p>
<p>Q4: Why should educators and researchers care about this topic?</p>	<p>Most educators want ALL students to succeed, but can’t unravel own prejudices to make practical, tactical changes. Most of us don’t even understand what a job the media has done in convincing us about the predatory nature of African American males. How can you connect with someone you fear?</p> <p>Plus, African American males won’t extend themselves until they have that sense of trust. Without it, they won’t reveal problems they are running into, or reach out for help.</p>

<p>Q5: What do you expect to find out about mentoring programs?</p>	<p>That they are overall a tremendous good for African American males who take advantage of them.</p> <p>Aren't participants the very students who are more motivated to persist anyway?</p> <p>The real question becomes how to get more African American males to take advantage of the collective wisdom to be shared as part of a formal mentoring program.</p> <p>I expect to find that programmatic elements are largely in place for convenience or budgetary reasons, instead of being rooted in an assessment of the actual needs of African American males.</p> <p>I expect to find that program directors lack either an Afrocentric perspective or a counseling or psych background to truly assist the most challenging African American males.</p> <p>I expect to find that students overall all feel a strong connection to the mentoring group.</p> <p>I expect to find that the benefits of the network that students create as part of the mentoring program go beyond the educational journey.</p>
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