

DON'T FALL BY THE WAYSIDE:
HELPING ADOLESCENT AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES
VALUE EDUCATION THROUGH MENTORING
IN A THREATENING ERA

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ABSTRACT

The greatest and most persistent lag in academic achievement in the United States is between African American males and all other groups of students. This study was designed to investigate one possible approach to ameliorating the gap: a school-based mentoring program that helps African American males internalize a positive racial-ethnic identity regarding their academic-self competency and possible future-selves. This study 1) examined the quality of 6th grade African American young males experience in a school-based mentoring program, 2) examined the impact of the program in terms of participants' racial-ethnic identities in their grade point averages, academic achievement, behavior, academic self-efficacy, and possible future selves. Qualitative findings showed the mentees enjoyed the mentoring program as it allowed for meaningful interactions with guest speakers and co-learning with classmates. Academic self-efficacy findings revealed the mentees grew in their understanding that academic work may be rigorous, but persistence is key. For possible future-selves, the mentees were motivated to pursue different career-paths, believed that more things were possible in life, along with being prompted to take school more seriously. Quantitative results showed there were positive increases in the mentees' perception of their racial ethnic-identity and grade point average. There was also statistically significant data in the academic self-efficacy and possible future-selves. The results of an ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference in the mentees' academic self-efficacy. The results of an ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference in the mentees possible future-selves. Additionally, the mentees' possible future-selves Cohen's d test showed a large effect size.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Lyrics of Now

My life, though made up of what at times seems to be totally non-related components, has led me here. I believe in purpose, calling and destiny. The narrative of my journey toward conceptualizing my personal identity, along with my life as an educator has converged to this intersection. I cannot ignore this intersection. I cannot ignore what is in my power to change.

Untapped Potential

There will be thousands upon thousands of adolescent Black males that will fall by the wayside of not reaching their full potential because of a lack of embracing and valuing education; the consequences of this have been catastrophic. On average African American males are more prone to school failure more than any other ethnic group or gender (Neblett, Chavous, Nguyễn, & Sellers, 2009). Students' dropout rates of inner-city public school are alarming, one every nine seconds, and this statistic is disaggregated for Black males specifically within these schools. Furthermore, the dropout rate continues to increase and sometimes it even exceeds their graduation rates (Houston, 2007). Current high school cohort statistics show that African American male students' graduation rates lack significantly when compared to those of white and Latino males (McFarland et al., 2018).

African American Males Lagging Behind

Much of the literature suggests the greatest and most persistent gap is between Black males and all other categories of students (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; McFarland et al., 2018). Reasons that may add to the academic failure of many African American male students are both the unique structural and environmental influences they face such as racism, poverty, higher rates of violence, crime, unemployment, drug abuse, lack of public health, teenage childbirth, single-parent homes, deplorable school conditions, lack of funding, less qualified teachers, larger

numbers of teacher vacancies filled by substitute teachers, insufficient or outdated classroom materials, inadequate learning facilities, low representation in gifted programs, high representation in remedial and special education programs along with numerous other variables that all contribute to their unprecedentedly low academic outcomes (Neblett, et al., 2009; Noguera, 2003, 2004; Gorski, 2008; Ford & Moore, 2013; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Battle, 2002; Kafele, 2012; Darensbourg & Blake, 2010; Altschul, 2006).

While I am not a conspiracy theorist, there is a very plausible and legitimate argument that there are structures in place that derail and continually marginalize young, poor Black males from succeeding at large in this country, especially when comparing both the school and life trajectories of Black males. For instance, young Black males are both the leading perpetrators and victims in homicides; they also lead the nation in suicide, and unfortunately, their incarceration and arrests rates are the top among most states within the United States (Noguera, 2003).

Within schools, African American students are still relegated to deplorable conditions. Poor Black students are less likely than their peers to attend schools that have adequate funding for textbooks and technology, and they are also more likely to have fewer teachers with experience and teaching certifications (Noguera, 2004; Gorski, 2008). Gorski (2008), states the structural inequities that African American students within urban schools confront:

Black students are more likely to suffer from cockroach or rat infestation, dirty or inoperative student bathrooms, large numbers of teacher vacancies and substitute teachers, more teachers who are not licensed in their subject areas, insufficient or outdated classroom materials, and inadequate or nonexistent learning facilities, such as science labs. (p. 3)

And while these structural inequalities are legitimate reasons for the disparities in educational outcomes, it falls short in explaining the phenomena that African Americans experience when

compared to counterparts of their same social class, Black males on average are continually outperformed (Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2003; Reardon et al., 2017). While Whites outperforming African Americans within the same socioeconomic status is not a new phenomenon, what is shifting is the attributional relationship that research is giving to the deleterious effects of a stereotype that threatens the academic achievement for African American males of any social class.

Reclaiming Identity

Stereotype threat is when one believes, embraces and personalizes as a self-fulfilling characteristic, the dominant culture's negative portrayal or negative stereotype of the group in which that individual belongs. Steele and Aronson (1995) in their seminal research on stereotype threat, contextualize and define it as follows:

[Stereotype threat] focuses on a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely known negative stereotype about one's group. It is this: The existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. (p.797)

If an individual believes the negative stereotype as an inherent characteristic of him or herself, the individual is less likely to persist or initiate actions that oppose that stereotype. In my 12 years of educating children within inner-city urban schools, I have noticed that the psychological aspect of the problem is often times minimized in the wake of such gaping structural and environmental inequities. And while the inequities that result from environmental and structural disparities are very real and disabling, rectifying these are difficult and beyond my capacity as a school principal. However, as a principal, I have more of an immediate control over countering the psychological effects of stereotype threat and promoting a healthy racial identity.

Personally, I have dealt with stereotype threat, both from the vantage point of an educator, seeing its effects in many of my African American male students in urban districts, and also experiencing it within myself as a 1st-year graduate student at a research one university. Fortunately for me, but unfortunate for many others, because I had other examples of those with my ethnic group in which I identified closely with that valued the educational process and excelled in academics, I was able to persist through times of academic stress; this form of racial socialization counteracted the adverse effects of stereotype threat that may have hampered me from continuing in school.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is the process of reinforcing positive racial self-esteem (Jackson-Gilfort et al., 2001). Studies have shown, especially when dealing with African American males, that if significant adults socialize African American youth around the issues of Black cultural strengths, then the psychological outcomes are more positive in relations to self-esteem (Stevenson et al., 1997) and higher student achievement. Youth are impressionable; what they hear and see about the group in which their identity is tied to often has a lasting impact on what they believe is possible for their future selves. The more they see and hear about their group to which their identity is highly connected to, the more they believe that groups' portrayal is an individual self-characteristic of their own selves (Davis et al., 2006). For myself, seeing positive roles models of the group in which I identified, along with my group being positively stereotyped in regard to educational outcomes, helped me develop a self-confidence about my academic capabilities.

The Song of My Journey

I am the child of immigrant parents from Nigeria. Both my mother and father have numerous graduate degrees. Growing up during my adolescent years, I was exposed to many of my parents' friends who had terminal degrees and others who held professional white-collar positions. There was Dr. Sogonsia, who was a surgeon. Dr. Aina, a professor at a historically Black college. Also, there was Ms. Adeleye, a tax and immigration lawyer and Mr. Ashiru who was a certified public accountant. And my own father, Dr. Fadeyibi, had opened his private law practice, while my mother was working towards becoming a certified nurse practitioner. There were many others, but these few were consistently around.

Looking back, I realized there was a strong implicit racial socialization occurring during my upbringing. Kafele (2012) is correct in his notion that for Black male students to reach their highest levels of confidence and motivation, they need to see and identify with other Black males who have benefited from valuing their education. While my racial socialization may not have happened at a conscious level and may have been unrealized until later, I had older males, with whom I would one day identify. Because I identified with these older males who all had graduate degrees, some even with terminal degrees, I was able to see myself as capable of achieving whatever they had because of the common identification I held with the group. Although much of the literature agrees that racial socialization is transmitted through the explicit verbal communication about the strengths and accomplishments of one's' racial group (Neblett et al., 2009; Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Davis et al., 2006), for me it was not much of the verbalized racial socialization as much as it was my parents explicitly telling me about the value and accomplishments of my ethnicity and heritage; it was more so the living examples that were in

my presence. While there is a domain of racial socialization that is very verbal, explicit and direct, there is also an aspect of racial socialization that is non-explicit (Neblett et al., 2009), but still effective in ameliorating the negative effect of stereotype threat.

Identity in Crisis

In my early years, I had an identity crisis; it started when I about 8 years old. I embraced this identity of being African until my first day in 4th grade. My life then shifted to a racially charged middle and elementary school in Roxborough, a neighborhood in the outskirts of Philadelphia. My first day of class in this new school, I sat quietly in Mr. MacAfee's class. I only remember his calling role. He started off calling very common names like Robert, Tarique, Zachary, Samantha, Vanessa. But then I remember the big pause, his face slightly contorting, and the look of confusion mixed with what seemed like a mild disdain as he tried to pronounce my name. He said what sounded like "Ooga laaa flew me." The students in the classroom looked at each other and threw their hands up while responding in confused laughter. From that moment, the students started calling me "African Booty Scratcher." I had never felt so ashamed of my identity before shamefully saying that was me. "Never again," I thought to myself; at that point and thereafter, my Nigerianess became an unwanted identity. For, years, I suppressed anything that had to do with my Nigerianess.

For the next 15 years, I did everything possible to shift my identity from African to an African American. I studied the culture and did my best to assimilate. I changed my name to a more traditional sounding African American name. I had learned the nuances of speaking African American vernacular English also known as Ebonics (Rickford, 2004), and had embraced the hip-hop style of dress. While I lived in a mostly Caucasian neighborhood, I made

sure to spend as much time as possible in poorer African American neighborhoods with friends. By the time I was leaving high school, I had identified completely as an African American.

Crisis and Identity Reflection

While my identity as an African American male gave me a sense of competency in certain contexts, in other contexts it had an adverse effect on my perceived competence and esteem. In my first semester of graduate school, I struggled severely through a class that drew heavily on theoretical conceptualizations grounded in complex critical and sociological thought, regarding race and identity. I just could not grasp the material as much as the other students. So, for the very first time in all of my school experience, I began to question my intelligence. I wondered if people like myself (African American males), were smart enough for this type of class. Adding to my sense of insufficiency my friend, who was the only other African American male in the class was the only other visible person who seemed to be struggling. Not only did I think I was not smart enough, but because I saw my friend also struggling I began to think that African American males were not smart enough to achieve success in such classes and the misguided yet often believed notion that we primarily excel best as entertainers or athletes was true (Davis et al., 2006). What is alarming about stereotype threat according to Steele and Aronson (1995) is that the individual facing a situation in which their group has been negatively stereotyped can actually take on the stereotype as an individual self-characterization.

I went into a deep self-reflection about my academic abilities and I was stuck at a crossroad. Unfortunately, my identity as an African American male did not give me the academic self-concept to believe that I could persist through the intellectual rigor that this class was demanding. But, if I was going to put in the effort I would need to pass this class, I would have to believe that I was academically capable of passing the class. So, for the first time in 15 years, I

began to think about my many Nigerian many aunties and uncles. I began to remember how many of them persisted through graduate school and how others held terminal degrees. I began to think about both of my parents who also persisted through graduate school numerous times. I thought about my close friend Sola, a Nigerian male, who was getting his doctorate in oncology from a prestigious university in the area. Within some time, it dawned on me that a group which I had denied belonging to, excelled in academics, especially at the graduate level. So, after 15 years of disowning my identity of being Nigerian, I embraced the identity again.

Embracing my identity as a Nigerian, increased my academic self-concept¹. Simply defined, academic self-concept is the perception and evaluation that a student has or does not have about his or her academic abilities (Ordaz-Villegas et al., 2014). When I embraced my identity as a Nigerian, my confidence in my academic abilities surged in regard to being able to complete the course. In retrospect, if I had not experienced other Nigerians having accomplished their terminal and professional degrees then my re-identification as a Nigerian would not have boosted my academic-self competency. The confidence came because I witnessed other Nigerians excelling in academics. Hence, my rationale was, “Because they were Nigerian and were able to excel in school, then because I am Nigerian, I too will be able to excel in school.”

¹ Academic self-concept and academic-self efficacy are at times used interchangeably throughout some of the academic motivation literature (Bong & Clark, 1999). While there are very nuanced differences between the two concepts, both concepts center primarily around how the self perceives one’s own competency. Both concepts involve personal beliefs and draw from the body of literature that holds that individuals with positive views of themselves strive to succeed and overcome even the greatest obstacles in life. Both concepts have impact on student motivation and achievement. Even though the definitions of each construct often overlap one another, there seems to be agreement in the fact that academic self-concept refers more to how an individual perceives their own self- perceived ability within a given academic tasks, while academic-self efficacy refers to one’s self perceived confidence to successfully perform a particular academic task. While there are nuanced differences in the two constructs, because of the overwhelming similarities in concept, and interchangeable use with some of the academic motivation literature, academic-self efficacy and academic-self will be used synonymously within this study.

In the most turbulent times of my academic career, I had access to an identity that allowed me to adjust the way in which I perceived beliefs of my academic capabilities. As notions of my self-academic concept rose, my motivation and determination to persist through the course also rose. Regarding increased academic concept and student motivation, Ordaz-Villegas et al. (2014) write, “Students with high academic self-concept value their own abilities, accept challenges, take risks, try new things and create multiple cognitive strategies. Moreover, they possess a higher motivation to complete difficult academic tasks and set higher goals” (p. 119). Having access to an identity that enabled me to fortify the notion of my intellectual capabilities has allowed me to persist in overcoming numerous academic challenges that would have caused me to quit otherwise.

While I had academic role-models throughout the formative years of my life, many of the students that I have educated have not shared a similar experience; many did not have people in close proximity who had benefitted from or received college degrees. I theorize that if students had more role-models that persisted through undergraduate school, and belonged to a group with whom the students also identified as belonging to, then the self-academic concepts of students would increase. Students with strong academic self-concept are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, engage in the learning, value school, and persist through challenging coursework (McGrew, 2008).

Teaching, the Beginning Years

When I reflect on my first years of teaching I see how my lack of insight regarding inner-city sociocultural beliefs, structures, both inside and outside of schools, and along with the educational inequalities affected my attitude and subsequent practice (Spalding, Wang, Lin, &

Butcher, 2009). While I tried to teach to the best of my abilities, it seemed that very few students were interested in what I had to offer. During those years, there was very little learning taking place in my classroom; students would talk to one another, text message, play fight, curse, and yell while I was trying to give classroom instruction. So, I took the actions and attitudes of the students personally. Even though I did not verbalize my beliefs, I began to believe that the majority of poorer inner-city African American male students simply did not value education. And while there may have been “truth” to parts of my assumption, I did not ask why they did not value their education. I did not reason carefully on how I could be an agent of change. But then I taught a student who calibrated my lens.

The Devalued Education

Michael was my student. He lived on a street that consistently made the news as one of the top ten drug corners in Philadelphia. I met him when I taught summer school; he failed 9th grade English. He was going to tenth grade at the time. I was impressed when I saw him quickly volunteer to read out loud even though his reading skills were below grade level. He continued to volunteer to read and take risks in answering questions. As I encouraged him and reiterated to him daily that he was intelligent, he continued to try harder. It was a great cycle. He finished summer school with an 80 average, one of his highest grades ever in school. I experienced firsthand how a teacher’s relationship with a student could be a vital support in helping an African American youth improve outcomes (Murray & Zvoch, 2010).

However, the following semester, I had Michael for English II. He was doing okay in class, maybe a low C average. He did not have the same passion he had in summer school. I remember one day talking with Michael after school; I had brought him to Paley Library. I

wanted to give him an experience. I wanted him to see the seriousness of people focused in the library. I wanted him to see that there were other African Americans enrolled and committed to the educational process in college. When I dropped him home that evening from Paley library, Michael gave me an insight into his thinking. It was a short conversation that I will never forget:

Michael: Mr. Fadeyibi, I don't get the reason for all this school stuff.

Me: What do you mean?

Michael: No one in my family has ever worked...well had a legal job.

Me: Huh, really?

Michael: Nope, everyone has either got food stamps or sold drugs. No one has ever had a real job.

Paradigm Shifting: A Closer Look

Prior to my conversation with Michael, I believed many of my African American male students simply did not value an education, and that irked me personally. For the most part, it never dawned on me that someone's childhood experience could be so vastly different from my own. But when he said, "No one has ever had a legal job in my family," then I finally understood. I understand now that African American males, especially those coming from backgrounds of poverty, may never be given a reason to value education, and oftentimes do not have an individual to look to in understanding the benefits of education.

After teaching Michael, I began to pay closer attention to the dismal academic outcomes of my students. The trends I noticed disturbed me. Students who I had taught in the 9th grade, particularly the male students were not doing very well after 9th grade. Some students dropped out, and others were not promoted to the next grade level. Unfortunately, in the city where I taught, the graduation rate for Black males at the time hovered around 30 percent (Schott, 2015).

Those that did graduate were sometimes graduating without any post-secondary aspirations. Instead of jobs or school, most were finding themselves incarcerated or unemployed. It is saddening when you read about a systemic cycle of poverty and bleakness that negatively and disproportionately marginalizes a certain demographic of people, but it is numbing and surreal when you are experiencing first-hand what you are reading about.

Thinking back about on my experiences with Michael, and the many other experiences with students that were so precisely described by the literature regarding the lack of achievement among African American males, I knew I had to do more. While I had a great relationship with Michael and his grades in my class improved, his academic success was very short lived. As I looked at his 10th grade report, it was all F's except for the letter grade next to my class that was a B-. Towards the middle of the school year his grade in my class dropped to a C-, and he was still failing his other classes. His motivation and effort waned in my class, and other teachers were admirably surprised when they found out that he still even attended a class. By the end of the year, Michael had stopped coming to class and was later expelled when he was caught attempting to bring drugs inside the school building.

Many other male students who I have taught share the same characteristic as Michael did in the devaluing of their education. The longer I taught, the more students I encountered who cheapened the importance of their education. I knew that if I were to reach these students (similar to Michael), I would need to come up with an intervention that showed the value or the benefit an education could bring to the life of an African American male. Also, I needed to help these students believe in their academic capabilities. It is one thing for them to see the value that an education can bring to their personal life, it is an entirely different struggle to get these

students to believe that African American males are smart enough to persist all the way to college and beyond. If I could get the students to see the utility in being educated, along with increasing their academic-self concepts, then Michael or students like Michael may have had a better chance of persisting through school.²I knew that I needed to do something, and I also knew that these things that I needed to do could not be done with the regular instructional setting of a high school English class. Considering everything and seeing the need to help improve the academic outcome of my African American males, I decided to create a mentoring program.

The Beginnings of the Mentoring Program - A Pilot Study

I choose a mentoring program because I remembered the different positive outcomes that I had while being both a student and a teacher. As a student, I was motivated to meet the expectations my teachers expected of me. As a teacher, I saw students give extra focus and attention to both their academics and behavior. I also knew that the character traits I wanted to produce, and the format of my lessons would not align with the mandated curriculum that had been taught during the school day. Hence a mentoring program was my solution. Black et al.

(2010) describe the essential aspects of mentoring as:

Mentoring involves relationships that (i) occur over time between a mentor (i.e. a person who is older and who has greater experience than the mentee) and mentee, (ii) consist of an emotional bond founded on mutual trust and respect and (iii) function as a resource for support and guidance that is intended to facilitate the mentee's healthy development.
(p. 893)

² I do not want to trivialize the systematic forces that stifle and oppress the academic achievement of African-American males as compared to white males. There are systemic inequities in almost every level of the schooling process from per pupil expenditure to the amount of certified teachers within a school building, to accessible technology available to both students and staff. My current role, simply as a principal, does not allow me to address these more larger systemic inequities that are often prevalent in every urban district.

Creating a mentoring program would give me the ability to support students by creating a more personalized environment. The purpose of a personalized environment is to produce an atmosphere within a school that supports meaningful relationships and personal support from an adult staff member. A personalized learning environment, also known as personalization, refers to the “Structures, policies, and practices that promote and increase relationships based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and support between staff member and student” (Breunlin et al., 2005, p. 24). If I could increase the personal relationship between the students and myself, I theorized that they would give me access to themselves so that we could have honest, candid, and continuous dialogue about values, aspirations, and possibilities for their future selves. Hence, I would be able to help them understand both their potential and the benefits of pursuing academic excellence.

I began the program during the last week of March 2014. The school where the students attended was one of the worst schools in Philadelphia by all statistical data. It had one of the highest dropout and lowest graduation rates, our standardized test scores were among the lowest in the state, and the behavior was so violent we were named our district’s most persistently dangerous school for the third consecutive year. Hence, the majority of the boys attending our group would be deemed at-risk across numerous metrics.

Design of Pilot Study

The program was a naturally formed mentoring program. The students were not contacted and grouped through an outside agency, but instead through their own volition because of the relationship an individual had with a mentor (Black et al., 2010). Students were not mandated to attend and the choice to utilize the program was optional. I created a permission slip

that gave a one paragraph description of the purpose of the program and included a distinguished picture of Martin Luther King and another picture of African American high school male students sitting in a high school graduation ceremony. I held the program after school in my classroom. The sessions were held every Friday. My hook in getting 12 inner-city at-risk males was the use of the basketball court in the gymnasium after the mentoring sessions.

Only 9th-grade students were invited; this worked well because I was one of two English teachers in the 9th grade and I was able to have some sort of relationship with the students. The 12 boys that attended the program had numerous characteristics. They were all African American, came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, had multiple disciplinary infractions, low grades (albeit 1 student had a B average), multiple absences, and numerous marks for tardiness. It was my goal by the end of the intervention to reverse these trends by helping the students see African American males in a different light.

Theoretical Framework

During those three months, I attempted to erase stereotypes that often portray African American males as either criminals, athletes or entertainers (Lester, 1994; Steele, 1997; Kafele, 2012). I focused on positive racial identity by inviting professional African American males to speak with the students in hopes that it would convince the students that being a future professional is accessible and attainable regardless of color (Steele, 1997). Before the speakers interacted with the students, I asked them if they could share their personal narrative about the struggles of growing up as an African American male. Through this, I wanted the students to see that many of the speakers, did not grow up with a “silver spoon,” but instead had to persist in school while navigating through adverse life scenarios. I believed that many of the mentees

would identify with adverse life conditions because all the mentees lived in poverty and those growing up economically disadvantaged often face daunting challenges while pursuing academic excellence (Noguera, 2003). I also asked the speakers to incorporate how taking education seriously gave them opportunities in increasing their life trajectory. I needed the students to see that these professionals made it to where they were in their career by taking their education seriously. The more that adolescents hear about a specific message from a group they identify with, the more those adolescents will believe and attempt to create that experience within their own life (Steele, 1997).

In addition to the professional speaker series, we had roundtable discussions that centered around stories that showed the resiliency of African American males. Research posits that culturally relevant literature can help African American adolescent males respond better to their immediate contexts (Tatum, 2008); the themes of hard work, grit, and determination resounded throughout these stories. After the stories, we would discuss and extract the different strengths of the main character of each narrative and contrast them to ourselves along with speaking about the take-home messages. Thus, in exposing students to literature that centered on the life experiences of African American males who had persisted through difficult life situations during their adolescence, I theorized my students would be able to identify with these individuals who shared similar experiences. And as the mentees identified with these men, that the mentees would believe they were capable because the men in the stories showed themselves as capable of success.

The program lasted a total of 3 months and ended in June of that year. At the end of the program, which was the length of one marking period, I wanted to see if the program had an

impact and fortunately It did. In the pilot program, we only ran a statistical analysis on constructs related to academic achievement. The intervention group was made up of 12 boys. The intervention groups GPA was trending upward while the control group, the entire 9th grade, GPA was trending downward during the marking period of the intervention. Furthermore, the intervention group's previous GPA prior to the mentoring program was a 1.09. However, after mentoring intervention, GPA rose to a 2.09. Finally, 11 out of the 12 mentees had a significant increase in their GPA during the intervention. The results in each of these categories were statistically significant.

Limitations and Failures of the Pilot

I was pleasantly surprised by the growth over one report card period. When I started the program, it was not grounded in the strongest of theoretical frameworks - I just saw a need and I wanted to fulfill the need. But as quickly as the grades rose, the grades dropped once the mentoring intervention had ended. After the mentoring program finished at the beginning of the final marking period, by the time that report card period was complete, and school was over, the mentees grades had reverted to their prior GPA's before the program.

I pondered the results. It was exciting that a tangible impact could be made through a short intervention, but it was disheartening that as soon as the intervention ended the mentees resorted back to their past mediocre results. The same pattern that happened with the mentees happened with Michael. When both the mentees and Michael were in close proximity to me, there was growth in their academic outcomes. However, when I was not in proximity, their academic outcomes reverted. As a result, I realized that I needed to add something to the intervention that was more transportable.

I theorized that I needed a stronger racial socialization component that focused on providing more examples of successful African American males (Kefele, 2012). While the mentoring program did expose the mentees to resilient and professional African American males through the texts we read as a group, or in person via our professional African American male speaker series, the pilot mentoring program could have been more impactful by increasing the frequency of men that the students were exposed to (Cross & Markus, 1994). If the mentees were exposed to more professional African American males who valued and took their education seriously, I believe that the mentees would realize that there is utility in education along with realizing that African American males do take school seriously, go to college and graduate. The more the mentees see people who belong to their ethnic group, who have been successful in a specific domain, the more the mentees will believe that they can be successful in that similar domain (Kefele, 2012; Oyserman & Oliver, 2009; Oyserman, 2008; Oyserman et al., 1995; Noguera, 2003). Showing African American males as resilient and college graduates would guard the group against negative [academic] self-concepts and social identity threats (Davis et al., 2006). Racial socialization would be an identity-protective factor that would increase their motivation to both aspire and persist to and through rigorous academic challenges.

Along with providing more examples of successful African American males, I would have also focused on making the mentees aware of the racism that African Americans face in this society. Hence, I did not focus on the awareness of racism enough. At that time, I thought discussions about racism were synonymous with saying that white people were evil and were holding the African American males down. I should have made my group aware that racism still exists, but in different facets than the blatant discrimination and hate of the past. I did not speak

thoroughly about the inconsistencies of the media outlets that often portray Black males as criminals, thugs or athletes, instead of intellectuals or professionals (Brown, 2005; Diawara, 1993; Miller, 1998; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Katz, 2006; Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Iwamoto, 2003; Yousman; 2003; Ferber; 2007). If I had made my students aware that racism exists and is still prevalent, my students would probably have had a different notion of African American male masculinity. They may have understood better the media's culpability in endorsing the negative portrayals of African American males, and as a result, they would not be so easily molded into fitting the media's caricatures of African American males. I did not speak about the structural inequities in schools and prisons for minorities vs. non-minorities. Illuminating such staggering disparities may have caused the mentees to agree and believe that society is still as hostile towards African Americans and that upward mobility is nonexistent. In my personal journey, I have experienced first hand that Nigerians are intelligent. So, as I embraced that identity, I felt that I was capable. Immediately, my academic self-concept rose, which in turn gave me the motivation to persist through difficult academic situations, along with giving me the confidence to aspire towards challenging academic tasks. Regarding increased academic concept and student motivation to persist, Ordaz-Villegas et al. (2014) write, "Students with high academic self-concept value their own abilities, accept challenges, take risks, try new things (p. 119)." If I can raise the students' academic self-concept by persuading them to believe positive generalizations about the group of people with who they identify with, I can then increase their motivation, confidence, aspirations, and persistence. Thus, in the same manner that I embraced my Nigerianess, which translated to the increased motivation in all academic endeavors, the students seeing their ethnicity in an academic positive racially socialized manner may also increase the motivation and persistence through the entirety of their academic journeys.

Rationale for Action Research

My choice of doing an action research dissertation came from my life's work of improving academic outcomes for all students, especially for adolescents coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Action research has roots in social justice and is often initiated to solve problems in local settings that a part of larger problems (Herr & Anderson, 2014). And, the longer I taught in the classroom, the more I saw a need for improving the life-chances of my African American male students who were underachieving at an alarmingly low rate. While I thought of doing a more traditional dissertation, my commitment to improving the outcome of my mentoring program lead me towards action research. The aim of action research is "the understanding of practice and the articulation of a rationale or philosophy of practice in order" to improve practice" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 4).

My goal is not only to improve as a practitioner, but it is also to make a significant impact in the literature for improving academic and attitudinal outcomes for African American male students. Herr and Anderson (2014) write about the burden of an action researcher stating, "The double burden that the authors refer to is the concern with both action - an improvement of practice, social change, and the research (creating valid knowledge about social practice) (p.4)." Using an action research framework, I plan to generate new knowledge that can inform both researcher and practitioner (Herr & Anderson, 2014) in how to increase outcomes for African American males through racial socialization within the context of mentoring programs. Primarily, I want outcomes that lean toward higher academic achievement, gains in perceptions

of their academic self-concept, and fewer disciplinary infractions. More specifically, my dissertation addresses the following questions:

Research Questions

In collecting the evidence, responses through an action research framework will be obtained through the following research questions: The research questions are as follows:

1. What was the nature of the participants' experience in the mentoring program?
2. What impact did the program have?
 - a. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the racial-ethnic identity of its adolescent Black male participants?
 - b. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the academic achievement of its adolescent Black male participants?
 - c. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the behavioral outcomes of its students?
 - d. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster a racial-ethnic identity impact the academic-self-concept of its adolescent Black male participants?
 - e. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster a racial-ethnic identity impact the possible future self-concept of its adolescent Black male participants?

Key Terms:

- Racial Socialization - the process of reinforcing positive racial self-esteem.
- Racial Ethnic-Identity - the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs that an individual hold about his or her racial or ethnic group.
- Academic Achievement - (in the context of this study) a student's grade point average.
- Stereotype Threat - when one believes, embraces and personalizes as a self- fulfilling characteristic, the dominant culture's negative portrayal or negative stereotype of the group in which that individual belongs.
- Academic Self-Efficacy - the perception and evaluation that a student has or does not have about his or her academic abilities.
- Possible Future-self - a motivational theory that posits an individual will be more likely to persist into becoming or pursuing a future endeavor if they know that there is a possibility that what they are pursuing may become a reality.

- Embedded Achievement - a belief that [academic]achievement is a goal that is valued in- group or by the group a child identifies with. Provides a specific goal for motivation derived from the desire to enact group identity.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Problem Revisited

Schools in the inner cities that serve African American males are consistently the lowest performers when compared to schools with different demographics (Noguera, 2003). Even when African American males are compared to other males from different ethnic groups within the same social class, African American males consistently have the worst performance (Davis et al., 2006). We know that students who perform poorly in achievement are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior. When an individual lacks an education and does not have skills necessary for employment, crime, unfortunately, may become the only viable alternative for that individual. As a result of low chronic achievement, Black males have suffered; young Black males are the leading perpetrators and victims in homicides and they lead the nations in incarceration and arrests rates (Noguera, 2003). Sadly, despite popular and long attempted strategic educational reform interventions within urban schools like creating small learning communities within schools or focusing on teacher instructional quality through collaborative communities of practice, African American males still significantly lag behind (Noguera, 2003; Harper & Williams, 2014).

In my 12 years of experience as a classroom teacher, I observed that interventions that help students gain a predisposition for learning or increase motivation for learning are rarely or never implemented. I cannot remember one whole school-reform intervention that was aimed at increasing any motivational value construct on the part of the student. A general rule is that people will invest in what they value. Therefore, if we can help create a deeper value in traditionally unmotivated students towards acquiring an education, then there is a greater chance

that students will take a greater responsibility towards their learning and thereby increase their chances for higher academic achievement.

Media's Portrayal of African American Male Masculinity

Steele and Aronson (1994) asked the question “What are the consequences of exposure to an environment rich with devaluing stereotypes about one’s group?” (p.409). In the U.S. in 1915, the devaluing stereotype of African American masculinity became a rich source of entertainment to the American environment with the release of the first transcontinental box office hit, *The Birth of a Nation*. A salient theme in this film is the lustful, almost animalistic hypersexuality of Black men towards southern women during the reconstruction era in the South. By the end of the film, the Ku Klux Klan saves the day by lynching the Black men who were interested in White women along with the killing a multi-racial militia that was trying to occupy a town in the South.

Unfortunately, as many historians have noted, *The Birth of a Nation*, was probably the United States first ever blockbuster film. Smith (1965) writes about the movie’s grandeur and widespread viewing. He writes:

The film is described as “a first of its kind,” as well as being labeled the first “blockbuster” in that it overshadowed other films of its era with its huge budget and the size of its production. The film was a cinema spectacle, compared to contemporary films, and at special screenings Civil War-era themes prevailed and ushers and usherettes were dressed in civil war attire. The film was universally accepted and seen as an accurate dramatization of America’s past, as well as praised by film reviewers, historians, politicians, and the public at large. (p.1)

While the film helped foster the burgeoning the American Cinematic industry, the film re-wrote the history of the Reconstruction era by showing inaccuracies and distortions that appealed to southern sympathizers; it portrayed African American males as inherently physically strong, but animalistic, unintelligent, barbaric, and primarily rapists of white women (Brown, 2005). This

stereotypical portrayal of African American men led many people of that time period to believe that this behavior embodies how all, or the majority of, African American men conducted life.

Diawara (1993) writes about both the ramifications and the precedents that the film had on the space that African Americans would represent in cinema:

The Birth of a Nation constitutes the grammar book for Hollywood's representations of Black manhood and womanhood, its obsession with miscegenation, and its fixing of Black people within certain spaces, such as kitchens, and into certain supporting roles, such as criminals, on the screen. These stereotypes not only depicted a distorted view of African Americans' role during the Reconstruction, but they also influenced an entire industry, which reified these images in radio and later television. (p. 3)

I can relate personally to the reified images and pictures that characterized African American male masculinity both then and sometimes even now. During my adolescence, the most impressionable age when it comes to identity formation (Wallace, 2017), the media, especially between both the sports and hip-hop arenas gave my friends and I (about 10 adolescent African American males) an alluring perspective of African American male masculinity. Clark et al. (2016) argued that “Hip-Hop music can be regarded as the most influential media genre to shape the African American culture” (p. 14). Interestingly, what we saw or heard the hip-hop artist do, (the predominant ethnicity representing in the media representing African American masculinity on television and radio) we did because we identified (through physical attributes) with these males. Looking back at our lives, the media’s depiction may have been the strongest factor in shaping our conceptualization of what it meant to be a Black man.

Miller (1998), thinking about the power that the media has in reifying images and shaping identity, states that “The system operates in all aspects of commercial American cinema and, thus, defines how Blacks are portrayed on the screen which, in turn, defines how Black

audiences see themselves” (p.1). Belle (2014) writes “It is also important to take into account how much of these exploitative representations of Black male bodies in hip-hop culture are internalized by youth and other Black men who may be in search of an understanding of who they are” (p. 288). Because we saw ourselves in these Black men, and identified with these Black males in the media, we often tried to emulate their behavior and embrace their masculinity. What we saw on television about Black males, we tended to believe, and then tried to enact.

Mainstream rap music’s portrayal of manhood and masculinity became the ideal standard for myself and many of my African American male friends that were born in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Patton et al., 2013) Brook and Hébert (2006) generally define masculinity as “The set of images, values, interests, and activities held important to a successful achievement of male adulthood” (p.304). Since masculinity is a construct, we know that the benchmarks for masculinity vary across race, class, time and cultural contexts (Iwamoto, 2003; Belle, 2014; Quayle, et al., 2018). While there are many factors that add to masculinity identity-development, the scope of this section of the paper focuses on how the media currently portrays African American males.

The media’s portrayal of African American males are mostly negative or counter middle class mainstream American norms and values (Pimentel & Bussey, 2018; Royster, 2017). Black males are often depicted as criminal, hypersexual, aggressive, and deviant. When African American males are depicted in a positive light, it is often in regards as their capacity as athletes or entertainers.

Portrayals of African American Males in the News Media

Black males are often overrepresented as criminals in the news media (Pimentel & Busey, 2018; Hochschild et al., 2018). Katz (2006) argues that “Media coverage seems to

increase when Black males are the alleged perpetrators” (Ferber, 2007, p. 139). Studies have shown that Black men are continually overrepresented in media with images that label them as suspects more than any other group (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Hochschild et al., 2018). Gilliam and Iyenger (2000) write about how the news does not always accurately reflect reality. They write:

News stories about Crime dominate local news programming. Minorities are more likely to be depicted in the role of the suspect. Obviously, the particular racial cues present in television crime coverage are partly a reflection of the disproportionate representation of particular racial groups in criminal activity. The prominence of Blacks in crime news, for example, is not that much out of line with the actual Black arrest rate in Los Angeles County-although Blacks do not account for the largest number of murders. However, the medias near exclusive focus on violent crime distorts the real world in the following way. Clearly, the news is not an accurate reflection of the real world of crime. (p. 361)

More recently, Pimentel and Busey (2018) urge people to be careful when watching the news and other media in that the media can present racist narratives that often go unnoticed and without retort:

Moreover, it is important to consider how racist messages are reiterated over multimodal forms of communication, which can extend from Fox News and MSNBC to print media, Hollywood films, documentaries. Regardless of the mode of media, it cannot be overstated that these mediums have a significant influence on how people, and students in particular, perceive a particular topic or group of people. Both White students, as well as students of color, embrace hegemonic projections of race in media without opportunities to analyze evidence to the contrary. (p. 3)

As long as more Black males are overrepresented as criminals in news media, there is a chance that younger Black males, whether consciously or unconsciously will believe the representation that Black males have more of a proclivity for crime than other ethnic groups. If this inaccurate overrepresentation is embraced, then there is a potential that Black adolescent males could believe that their future self will revolve around criminality (Davis et al.,2006; Oyserman et al., 2007; Pimentel & Busey, 2018).

Portrayal of African American male masculinity in mainstream hip-hop.

Hip-hop music has had a profound impact on the shaping of African American male masculinity. Presently, Hip-hop is the highest grossing and largest consumed genre of music within the United States (Gunberg, 2017). Clark et al. (2014) write “Hip-hop music can be regarded as the most influential media genre to shape the African American culture” (p.14). Hip-hop music and culture started in New York in the late 1970s. It began as an underground culture that focused on the “Social, economic, political, and cultural realities and conditions of their lives, speaking to them in a language and manner they understand” (Alridge & Stewart, 2005, p.190). However, it was not until the early 1990s that hip-hop crossed from the underground audience to more of a mainstream audience. As hip-hop became more mainstream in the mid-1990s, the genre began to shift from a political consciousness to a misogynistic message (Belle, 2014).

The general theme in many of the images played throughout the videos shows men who are skilled on sexual prowess, sexual conquest, and sexual aggression (Iwamoto, 2003; Oosten et al., 2015; Belle, 2014; Clark et al., 2016). In the majority of mainstream hip-hop videos my peers and I watched during our adolescent years, the African American males in the videos were portrayed as men with strong sexual prowess. We were wowed by the types of music videos that showed Jay-Z in the video “Big Pimpin” (1999) on a yacht with half-naked beautiful women gyrating around him as he recited lyrics of his latest one-night stands saying “I don’t love hoes, but I F*#% them and leave them.” Or maybe it was 2Pac, in “I Get Around” (1994) in a lawn chair with 3 women all in bikinis feeling him up as recites lyrics talking about his promiscuous behavior. Or maybe it was P. Diddy featured in the Notorious B.I.G. Video “Big Poppa” (1994)

where Diddy is soaking in a Jacuzzi sitting with 4 attractive bikini dressed women as they toast champagne and get cozy. Clark et al. (2014) writes:

Women in hip-hop videos are often portrayed as sex-crazed objects willing and ready to do anything for money or the attention of a man, while men are power figures who use violence to gain power. Femininity and masculinity are defined, in part, by images of each that are portrayed in the media. Because of these images, boys and girls are taught to act in certain ways if they want to be accepted in society. (p.16)

Whether it was Diddy, Jay-Z, 2Pac or the plethora of other unmentioned rap artists, the recurring theme in mainstream hip-hop videos were African American males being depicted as a hypersexual. The more my friends and I observed the portrayal of Black male hypersexuality in mainstream rap videos, the more we embraced that ethic of thinking and behaving. Research has shown that boys exposed to higher levels of hip-hop are more apt to have attitudes that sexually objectify women (Oosten et al., 2015).

While portrayals of mainstream hip-hop artists have become more well-rounded since I was in high school, there is still a present portrayal of sexual prowess and hypersexuality in modern mainstream rap music. Belle and other contemporary scholars note that the messages in many mainstream videos still emphasize misogyny (Oosten et al., 2015; Belle, 2014; Clark et al., 2016). Belle (2014) writes “The overwhelming message in mainstream hip-hop music emphasizes misogynistic images of women in music videos and hyper-masculine behavior” (p. 291). While this paper is not here to philosophize on the ethics of hypersexuality in the portrayal of African American male masculinity, it does attempt to contextualize and link reasons why African American males lag behind other ethnic groups when it comes to academic achievement and academic success. One reason may be the portrayal of African American male masculinity as being hypersexual. This overrepresentation of hypersexuality may impact the

racial-ethnic identity of African American males by causing the children to believe that African American males generally do not pursue education or educational opportunities, but instead value and pursue hypersexual life patterns.

Along with African American males being portrayed as hypersexual in mainstream hip-hop, they are also depicted as violent and aggressive. Yousman (2003) writes, “Often, and importantly, the images that White youth consume most voraciously [from Hip-Hop media] are images of Black violence, Black aggression Black misogyny and sexism” (p.379). Bradley (2017) writing about the characteristics of mainstream hip-hop masculinity states “Hip-hop masculinity became limited to violence and sexuality, and the emergence of the hip-hop thug was born” (p. 147). In many of the most popular mainstream rap videos both past and present, the featured rapper is often portrayed as a gangster who is into committing acts of violence or selling narcotics. For my friends and I during our formative years, it was watching music videos like Eazy-E and Bone Thugs-n-Harmony’s hit “For the Love of Money” (1994) which climbed to number 41 on the American Billboard Music Chart. Throughout the video, the rappers are seen hiding narcotics, running from the police, and fist fighting other gang-rival Black males. These types of videos that portrayed African American males as violent, aggressive, and deviant characterized many of the mainstream hip-hop videos of the 1990s; however even today, presently, there is still a portrayal in mainstream hip-hop of African American male masculinity that is violent and aggressive (Bradley, 2017).

As with the 1990s and early 2000s, the current portrayal of African American male masculinity in mainstream hip-hop still has many elements of violence, aggressiveness, and antisocial behavior. Chief Keef’s music video “I Don’t Like” (2012) has over 150 million views on YouTube. Chief Keef, the main rapper is in a room with 5 other African American males,

who look to be in their early 20's. In some scenes, some of the males in the room are holding bags of marijuana, while in other scenes the young men are exhaling and blowing marijuana smoke into the air. The young men are not wearing shirts and have on either jeans or sweatpants with some pants sagging inches so far below their waistlines that you can see the entirety of their boxer shorts. As they dance to the beat, they recite lyrics that state “[I’m a] Pistol toting, and I’m shooting on sight” and “[I’m] with my niggas when it's time to start taking lives.” They “throw up gang signs” make hand gestures that reference shooting a gun at someone. In O.T. Genesis video, “Coco” (2014) that currently has over 232 million views on YouTube, the video begins by zooming in on a small kitchen table that has a Glock-9, hundred-dollar bills bundled together, and a small mound of cocaine sitting atop of the table. Throughout the video O.T. Genesis, who is an African American male in his late 20's, and 3 other older middle-aged African American males are in a small kitchen in what looks like a housing project apartment “cutting” cocaine and “rolling” blunts. In the video, they are seen selling cocaine to wholesale buyers. In different scenes, they take out their guns and point their Glock-9's at the camera while rapping lyrics like, “If you snitchin' (telling the cops') I go loco, Hit you (shoot you) with that treinta ocho (.38 Smith & Wesson).”

With mainstream hip-hop music catapulting to the most popular musical genre, it is important that we evaluate critically the messages that are being sent to the audience, along with how the message may impact the audience. For the nearly 70% of adolescent African American males, who are being raised by single parent mothers (Danforth & Miller, 2018) this portrayal of the African American male is troubling because it promotes a narrative of what it means to be an African American male, along with the ideals and behaviors are synchronous with being an African American male. If this is the prevailing and dominant image that African American

children and adolescents see of older African American men, then their sense of future possibility will be restricted by what they perceive older African Americans to be capable of regardless of whether the portrayal is accurate or not. While there is a plethora of negativity surrounding the portrayal of African American males in the news and hip-hop culture, all the portrayals in hip-hop culture are not negative. However, the breadth of this paper is not to address a full comprehensive portrayal of Black male masculinity in hip-hop music or culture. Instead, this review covers themes of African American masculinity that are often portrayed in hip-hop music and culture.

Because both the news and mainstream hip-hop have large amounts of viewership, their portrayal of African American males as maladaptive and anti-mainstream American norms can create a wide-stretching illusion to younger more impressionable adolescent African-American males that the images and presentations produced by the media are what it means to be an African American male (Clark et al., 2016). If Black males continually take in a portrayal or characterization about older Black males that reify images, character traits, and dispositions, younger more impressionable Black males may not only believe the portrayal to be authentic and accurate, but they may also embrace the portrayal as signifiers for who they are to be and what characteristics and attitudes that they are to value.

The African American Male Portrayed as a Natural Athlete

In addition to the representations of masculinity that news and hip-hop culture presents of African American males, African American male masculinity is strongly represented in the athletic arena. Unlike the many news broadcasts and hip-hop videos that often portray the African American male as antithetical to mainstream norms, sports may be the only space in mainstream media in which the African American male is not dehumanized or othered to a great

extent. Ferber (2007) writes, “Sports represents an arena where Black men have historically been allowed to succeed- in the entertainment and service industries (p.21).” In the sports arena, in which there is a strong representation of Black men, Black men are lauded and at times idolized for their skill sets, physical attributes, and their athletic prowess (Kay, Day, Zanna, & Nussbaum, 2013).

The media has been effective (whether intentionally or unintentionally) at creating a mythical idea that African American males are naturally disposed to be more athletic than other racial groups (Hughey & Goss, 2015). For instance, an analysis of over 300 college football broadcasts over mainstream media showed that when announcers spoke about African American players, the broadcasters emphasized their athleticism, however when the same announcers spoke about white players, they emphasized their intelligence (Moskowitz & Carter, 2018). However, despite biological and sociological evidence to the contrary, recent mainstream media has collectively and consistently advanced the proposition that Black athletic success is due to the biological difference between African Americans and other racial groups (Hughey & Goss, 2015). Ferber (2007) writes, concerning the idea of natural athleticism that:

There is a similar naturalization of racial difference in sports discourse, where Black men are often assumed to be naturally more athletic. This assumption follows from the historical stereotype of physically aggressive Black male bodies. Despite much evidence to the contrary, the myth that Blacks have more natural athletic ability is hard to dispel. (p.19)

Whether explicitly or implicitly, like analysis of broadcasters during college football games, the thought has been conveyed that African American males do better in sports because their genetics are biologically superior when it comes to athletic capability.

While African American men being portrayed as naturally athletic may not seem problematic in itself, it poses the risk of lauding a false representation of a biological theory as a

way of trying to explain away athleticism that often comes as a result of hard work and dedication for the countless African American males that become professional athletes. Moskowitz & Carter (2018) write about the implications of believing the biological fallacy about genetic superiority in regards to sports of the African American male writing, “While athleticism is a quality that is unarguably about the person, the person endorsing this stereotype attributes its origins not to the qualities of the individual athlete, but to external forces such as luck and breeding” (p.140). While the impact of African American athletes not receiving credit for the hard work and devotion towards their physique and athleticism can be angering or frustrating and the impact that this positive stereotype of a biological proclivity towards natural athleticism can be dangerous and constricting for adolescent African American males.

Positive stereotypes, in some cases may actually do more harm than good. Kay et al. (2013) write regarding good stereotypes “Positive stereotypes have been shown to increase the likelihood that the positive stereotyped group members will be pigeonholed in certain career and intellectual tracks” (p. 287). The more African American adolescents see other African American males in sports, the more they may believe that sports are one of the only options for a Black male to become a professional. Morris and Adeyemo (2012) write:

This paradox is rooted deeply in American history and remains an integral aspect of U.S. culture and society’s perceptions of and expectations for Black males. This paradox, springing from the perceived lack of opportunities that poor Black families and communities face in traditional or academic careers, undermines the academic achievement of Black male students by inflating athletic careers as a viable future. (p. 29)

With many African American males coming from abject poverty, underfunded and low achieving schools, the media may reinforce the thinking that sports are the only plausible pathway to a legal, respected and well-paying job available for African American males. Also,

the longer the narrative persists and remains about African Americans being naturally more athletic than other ethnicities, Black youths may believe that being a professional athlete might be a surer path to success because they unknowingly believe the falsehood that being athletic comes naturally.

Although the NFL (66% African American) and the NBA (82% African American) have a majority of African American, the reality is that only about 6 in 10,000 varsity high school players will become a professional athlete in those two sports. However, in career paths that are easier to succeed in (from a statistical chance perspective), like becoming a lawyer or medical doctor, African American males only represent 3 percent of lawyers and 2 percent of doctors.

I only persisted through my master's program and beyond after I remembered and embraced my Nigerian heritage. After the incident in 4th grade, where students laughed at my name and called me "African Booty Scratcher," I forsook my Nigerian identity and took on an African American identity. Years later, when my master's classes became too difficult, I needed something to help me believe that I had the ability or intelligence to succeed in that arena. Remembering my Nigerian heritage assured me of the potential that resided within me. Because I had seen others achieve who were Nigerian males, I knew that I was able to achieve also, because I too was a Nigerian male. Unfortunately, my identity as an African American male did not help me believe that I could persist through academia. More so, my identity as an African American male demotivated me to persist because portrayals of educated African American males in the media were almost non-existent during my formative years. While there may have been a few positive cases, the overwhelming amount of portrayals did not focus on the African American male character as being educated.

A Dream Deferred - Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat is when one believes, embraces and personalizes as a self-fulfilling characteristic, the dominant culture's negative portrayal or negative stereotype of the group in which that individual belongs (Steele & Aronson, 1995). So again, I pose the question originally asked by Steele and Aronson, "What are the consequences of exposure to an environment rich with devaluing stereotypes about one's group?" (1995, p. 409). For the African American male (myself included), it turns into the very silent, but extremely deafening belief that we are less likely to be successful, because we do not possess the right characteristics or intelligence, to make it in areas other than sports or the entertainment industry. Instead of media portrayals as doctors, lawyers, and engineers, we are often portrayed as criminal, hypersexual or violent men, and at best, athletes with natural athleticism. (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Noguera, 2003; Gause, 2005, Ferber, 2007; Yousman, 2003; Brown, 2005; Pimentel & Busey, 2018). Unconsciously and implicitly, many adolescent African American males have internalized the media's stereotype threat and believe that they lack the capacity to do well in school or believe that school is not a beneficial path to success for the African American male (Noguera, 2003; McGrew, 2008; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). As a result, it may cause many adolescent African American males to fail to strive towards their possible future selves and furthermore disrupt the attainment of high educational outcomes.

Hence in predominantly African American schools, the dropout rates are higher, graduation rates are lower, and the enrollment rates in institutions of higher education for African American males are among the lowest (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Darensbourg & Blake, 2010; Kafele, 2012; Ford & Moore, 2013). The ways in which the media have portrayed African American males masculinity has been profoundly damaging to the psyche and identity formation

for many Black male adolescents (Steele, 1997; Aronson, 1995; Noguera, 2003; Gause, 2005; Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Iwamoto, 2003; Yousman, 2003; Brown, 2005; Ferber, 2007; Belle, 2014; Oosten et al., 2015; Clark et al., 2016). For African American male adolescents to succeed at the same rate as their counterparts, it will take the portrayal and re-presentation of African American male masculinity; this new portrayal of African American male masculinity must be one that shows African American males as educated people who value the schooling process.

Past Attempts

There have been major educational interventions within public schools in the past 50 years aimed towards African American Males. While these interventions attempted primarily to increase the academic achievement for African American males, they failed because they did not include an identity component that helped African American males see themselves as capable in succeeding in academic contexts. As a result, the interventions never reached the success that many scholars had theorized. Though these interventions still exist and are used throughout schools today, if there is not a space within schools to help African American males develop a more positive identity (e.g., a mentoring program that fosters positive racial identity), the interventions will continue to fall short in increasing the academic achievement of African American males.

Within the past 50 years, there were two major interventions that were implemented (among others) in order to mitigate the low performance of African American males, especially those in urban areas. The first intervention centered around improving teacher pedagogical content knowledge through more communities of practice (Gajda & Koliba, 2008; Gallucci & Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2003; Buysse et al., 2003). The second intervention was the small school and small learning academy model (Schiller, 2009; Tajalli & Opheim,

2005; Wasley et al., 2000). While both of the shifts in school reformation had, and still have the potential to significantly improve the academic outcomes for African American males, without the addition of positive racial socialization, the attempts of these initiatives to improve outcomes will continue to fall short.

Communities of Practice

An intervention reform that began in the 1960s that aimed at increasing the outcomes of urban students was the creation of communities of practice (CoPs), also known as professional learning communities. CoPs have different purposes and can be used in a variety of ways,; however, the main purpose for which they have been implemented as restructuring tools in schools are to improve teacher instruction by the systematic examination and improvement of instruction in order to promote and increase student achievement (Gajda & Koliba, 2008; Gallucci & Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2003). Hence, communities of practice focused on strengthening the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers by bringing a collaborative ethos among teachers that would allow for a sharing of effective instructional practice.

CoPs are effective because teachers can procure information around improving practice more easily and frequently from one another in ways which are more efficient than with consulting with experts who are often harder to connect with. CoPs are instantaneous in dealing with individual problems teachers are facing at the moment. “In a community of practice [CoPs], shared inquiry, and learning center around issues, dilemmas, and ambiguity that emerge from actual situations in authentic practice settings as opposed to formal coursework that is content driven” (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 267). However, although among in-school factors, teacher

quality correlates highly with academic achievement, teacher quality is not enough for African American males who have become amotivated in valuing and persisting in their schooling.

One can be an amazing teacher, with the most relevant and cutting-edge instructional practices, but if a child does not value his education, then the pedagogical content knowledge garnered at a CoP will have little effect in improving the academic outcome of the amotivated child. If young people do not see how an education will benefit them in the future, then they will less likely persist in the educational process (Fuligni, 2007; Cross & Markus, 1994). If we are to persuade adolescent African American males that education can be a form of currency, then we must expose them to older African American males that have used education to increase their own life trajectory (Kafele, 2012; Noguera; 2003). It is only after students' value education, that teacher quality will begin to matter in increasing the academic outcomes of this group. While CoP's are dynamic restructuring interventions that have found some success in improving academic outcomes (Lomos, Hofman & Bosker, 2011; Schmoker, 2004), a precursor that must occur, if the quality of instructional practice will correlate to raising the academic outcomes for African American males, are instructing African American males who value education and are committed to the process.

Personalization Theory Within Small Learning Communities

Along with CoPs, another intervention reform was the smaller school movement. Smaller schools and small learning communities (SLC's) were created to establish a more personalized learning environment and remove the sense of impersonalization and alienation between teachers and students that were believed to influence low achievement in urban districts. The small school movement first began in New York in the 1970s. By the mid-1990s, larger

groups of small schools and SLC's began appearing in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other urban hubs (Schiller, 2009).

Small schools and SLCs were created in order to personalize the learning environment of a larger comprehensive high school. The goal was not simply to reduce class size and make the class smaller, it was also to create scenarios that would allow teachers to develop meaningful relationships with the students they taught. Personalized learning environments, also known as personalization, refer to practices that promote and increase relationships and rapport between staff member and student (Breunlin et al., 2005). The purpose of a personalized environment was to produce an atmosphere within the school that supported meaningful and personal relationships between teacher and students. In theory, a personalized learning environment involves every staff member; its essence is in the belief that each teacher, administrator, and staff member located in each specific SLC will have meaningful relationships with students that encourage and support them toward academic excellence and noteworthy post-secondary plans. Gregory (2000) argues:

If we are interested in serving students, we must also know about their filters, their individual interests and desires. To do that we need to design the environment in ways that maintain relationships over long periods of time so that a small group of teachers can come to know a particular student very well. That knowledge is key to the faculty's effectiveness. (p.13)

Hence, a teacher having a meaningful relationship with a student can be an extremely motivating force for the student. Rodriguez (2008) interviewed a student that spoke about the specific impacts of a teacher:

The teacher is my biggest motivator because he gets to know me as a person. I mean I can confide in him. I tell him my problems inside school and outside school and I feel better. I'll be more focused in class and he gives me so much encouragement like I know you can do it. It feels good for someone to know that you can do it! (p. 765)

It is often said that children will rise to the level of expectation. Though this statement is continually quoted, a more accurate statement would be that students will rise to the level of expectation of a caring adult.

While personalization theory at its base can be effective in the context of urban schools, it leans too heavily on the assumption that all staff, particularly teachers, will know how to create and maintain close personal relationships with students. Spalding et al. (2009) found that most public-school teachers in urban areas are white middle-class women from the suburbs. In most schools that are predominantly white and middle class, the ideology of personalizing the learning environment to bolster motivation is almost non-existent (Spalding et al., 2009); within these schools, teaching is often very formal and impersonal. As a result of schooling in a fairly homogeneous impersonal and formal environment, transitioning to a teaching model that promotes the relational, personal and affective domain is often difficult. Many of these teachers' experiences with students that had shaped their ideas of teaching and learning are incompatible with the characteristics and needs of a highly personalized school environment. While personalizing the learning environment, in theory, is a noteworthy idea, the reality is that many teachers in urban schools are culturally incongruent in developing the meaningful relationships that would serve as the vehicle in helping African American males meet their expectations.

However even if teachers were to create meaningful relationships that could cheer African American males forward, these students would still struggle to persist when the content material became rightfully challenging because adolescent African Americans males often believe that they are unintelligent. Therefore, whenever a concept is difficult, the student will become amotivated because of their perceived lack of competency (Oyserman, 2008; Cohen, 2008). If personalizing a learning environment in order for teachers to create meaningful

relationships with students is to be effective among adolescent African American male students in increasing academic outcomes, students must have a somewhat healthy academic self-concept that reinforces their ability to understand complex material. If that does not happen, regardless of how much encouragement a student receives, they may still shut down when they perceive something is difficult because they will not believe that they are capable of accomplishing the task.

I resolved to create a mentoring program that put a high priority on positive-racial socialization to impact the mentees' racial-ethnic identity. As the identities of the mentees were influenced, their beliefs about what was capable for their future selves changed. I hoped that this traditionally unmotivated group would grow towards greater degrees of motivation, which in turn would lead to higher student achievement.

Mentoring: A Plausible Solution

Mentoring is a relationship where a non-parental older figure takes a special interest in a younger and less experienced individual in order to help the younger person achieve certain goals, the mentor functions as a resource for support towards the mentee. In most mentoring relationships, the mentor has greater experience or wisdom than the mentee and offers guidance to facilitate the development of the mentee (Barber, 2005; Black et al., 2010; Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006; Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Baber, 2005).

Mentored children reported higher rates of high school completion, college attending college (Whitney et al., 2010). Black et al. (2010) write "School-based mentoring relationships can engage youth in school activities by promoting student learning, competence, self-efficacy, and academic adjustment" (p. 892). Mentored children have also reported higher rates of self-

esteem, psychological well-being, improved behavior inside and outside of school, and higher completion rates of high school graduation (Whitney et al., 2011; Tully, 2004; Fleming et al., 2008). In addition to influencing prosocial behavior, mentoring relationships had an indirect effect on decreasing risk behaviors through positive associations with school and youth avoidance of negative peer influences (Black et al., 2010; Fleming et al., 2008).

However, even though mentoring has had a significant impact in some settings, in other settings mentoring has had no conclusive impact, and in some settings, mentoring has had an adverse impact (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Royse, 1998; Rhodes et al., 2005). Rhodes et al. (2005) found that negative experiences were more likely to occur than were positive ones. Spencer (2007) found that over half of formal mentoring relationships end prematurely within the first 3 months and when these relationships end prematurely, the mentees are less likely to trust adults in general.

School-Based Versus Community-Based Mentoring

The two most common models of mentoring for adolescents are school-based mentoring (SBM) and community-based mentoring (CBM) (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). Both types of mentoring involve older adults helping younger adults achieve certain goals. The most salient difference between the two models is the location site that the mentoring program takes place within and the type of activities that each program usually offers. SBM takes place on a school's campus and often involves the critical staff members of a school. Teachers, counselors, and administrators are often involved in the actual mentoring or facilitation of the mentoring program (Herrera et al., 2000; Pryce & Keller, 2013). One of the most salient differences between CBM is that SBM program activities have more of an academic focus; the overarching

goals of the program are usually to improve proximal competencies. They focus on effecting results pertinent to school outcomes (better attendance, higher GPA's, less disciplinary referrals) and usually serve youth that are in danger of not meeting academic or behavioral norms (Herrera et al., 2000).

Some school-based mentoring programs show have shown statistical gains in helping students grow primarily in academic outcomes (Portwood et al., 2005; Lampley & Johnson, 2010). A meta-analysis from a mentoring program covering over 1,100 mentees in the Big Brother/Big Sister SBM program from grades four through nine showed that the mentored youth scored higher in academic performance than their non-mentored counterparts (Herrera et al., 2011; Wood & Mayo, 2012; Rhodes, 2008).

However, counter to intuition, when it comes to academic achievement more of the literature suggest that SBM programs are usually successful in increasing attitudinal or relationship measures but are mostly unsuccessful in increasing academic achievement (Gordon et al., 2013). Often, in many instances, SBM programs show no statistically significant difference in academic outcomes. These findings have been reaffirmed repeatedly in meta-analytic studies (Herrera et al., 2011; Wood & Mayo, 2012; Rhodes, 2008). A meta-analysis conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2009) which had over 2,500 participants in grades 4-8 found no statistically significant difference in academic achievement. However, while there was no statistically significant gain in academic achievement, gains were found in school connectedness. Another meta-analysis conducted by Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) procured results from over 4,000 school-based mentees found that there was no difference in academic achievement or school-reported misconduct between the intervention and control groups.

However, regarding self-esteem and relational connectedness with peers there was a statistically significant gain. However, improvements in self-esteem were not maintained. In only 6 months post-treatment, the statistical data revealed the gains had faded and that there was no difference in self-esteem between the intervention and control group.

Outside of SBM, community-based mentoring (CBM) programs are mentoring programs that often take place in spaces that are often already open to the public like churches, recreational centers, and libraries. CBM programs are more likely to serve youth who are court involved or youth who have been at risk for delinquent behavior (Herrera et al., 2000). Instead of prioritizing proximal results in academic achievement like SBM, CBM looks to increase prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior can be defined as beliefs, actions, and patterns of behavior that accord with legal codes and normative societal values (Cohen, 2008). Unlike school-based mentoring, where staff members within the school facilitate the school program, community-based mentoring is often times facilitated by private community-oriented groups or individuals. In addition to the different staffing models, CBM programs are also different in their activities and targeted outcomes. CBM programs engage in more social activities that are aimed at developing deeper emotional bonds. Instead of academic or school-based outcomes, CBM programs aim at affecting more distal social outcomes like developing conscientious individuals or preparing adolescent boys to one day become adult community leaders (Herrera et al., 2000).

The findings for CBM programs are also mixed. While some programs have shown no correlation to prosocial outcomes, CBM programs have shown promise. A meta-analysis conducted by Public Private Ventures found that The Big Brother Big Sister CBM had a positive impact in increasing prosocial behaviors. Hansen (2007) writing about the findings from the

meta-analysis found that prosocial behaviors were significantly higher among the mentored group:

This randomized, nationwide study involving over 1,000 youth found that Little Brothers and Little Sisters, compared to controls were 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27% less likely to begin using alcohol; 52% less likely to skip school; and 37% less likely to skip class. (p. 4)

Other domains that also improved were the students' confidence, communication with families, trust with parents, and better relationships with their peers (Hansen, 2007). In another meta-analysis surrounding CBM programs, Rhodes et al., (2000) found significant gains in one CBM program that mentored over 300 students in how much they valued school, scholastic competence, and attendance. However, when the group measured for academic achievement, there was no statistically significant difference between the control group and the mentees.

Both SBM and CBM mentoring programs have value. SBM programs in some instances have been shown to improve the academic achievement of students along with increasing school relational connectedness. CBM programs, though usually serving adolescents who have encountered legal system, have been shown at times to have a positive impact on prosocial behaviors.

Incorporating Community and School-Based Mentoring Components.

My mentoring intervention incorporated practices and structures that are common to both school and community-based mentoring programs. The mentoring intervention was held at my school site. While SBM programs have a strong focus on academic-oriented activities, the intervention had more of a community-based approach because it incorporated social activities, which centered on discussions, events, and ideas. Using a CBM approach helped create bonds

and was effective in helping mentees attain social goals and creating values for themselves (Herrera et al., 2000).

Mentees must first understand the value of education before they will be motivated in attaining their education. While there were mentor led discussions, writing prompts, and reading involved during the meetings, the goal was not to produce a singular academic product like most school-based mentoring (Herrera et al., 2000). Instead, the intervention created reciprocal and collaborative interactions that helped mentees develop a shared purpose around the importance of education (Karcher et al., 2010, p. 55). However, my mentoring program did operate as an SBM because the program was located within their school site. As a result, my mentees did have access to tutoring, and any other resources that could have enabled them to both understand and complete assignments. However, even though the mentees had access, there was not any part of the mentoring intervention that partnered students to academic tutoring.

Formal Versus Natural Formed Mentoring Relationships

Within mentoring relationships, the literature identifies two main types of mentoring relationships that occur; both types of mentoring have been noted to help children form and maintain prosocial behavior. The first type of mentoring relationship is a formal relationship. A formal relationship is defined as a mentoring relationship that is set in place with an outside agency. These relationships are initiated through some organizational program or initiative that assigns mentors and proteges together while facilitating and supporting these relationships for specific periods of time (Ragins & Kram, 2007 p. 250; Inze & Crawford, 2005, p. 36). The second type of mentoring relationship is a naturally formed relationship; these are relationships that exist authentically without the help of an outside agency (Black et al., 2010). These are the

relationships that happen naturally in the context of social spaces and interactions (e.g., A teacher taking an interest in a student because the student shows interest in attending the teacher's alma mater). The strength of the naturally formed relationship within mentoring programs is in the emotional bond which is founded on care and mutual respect between the mentee and mentor. Rhodes et al., (2005) write about the glue that maintains mentoring relationships:

The quality of the bond that is formed between a young person and a caring adult (such as in a mentor-youth dyad) is thus the core element in of relationship-based youth interventions. Only after a strong emotional connection has been established through consistent meetings, can the two participants proceed to achieving the objectives of the program in which they are involved. (p.149)

Most naturally forming mentoring relationships occur and form inside of schools.

Primarily these types of relationships involve school personnel, especially teachers and counselors. Even though these relationships happen between staff and students, they occur without external influences and are usually dependent on an emotional bond which is founded on mutual trust and respect (Black et al., 2010, p.894; Inze & Crawford, 2005, p. 35). Mentoring programs implement either a formal or naturally formed mentoring program or some mix of the two. While the results of their proven effectiveness vary, the literature points to design and interactional characteristics that make both the formal mentoring programs more likely to be effective. Two characteristics that improve the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs are giving the mentors training and choice (Allen, Eby, & Lentz; 2006).

Through training, the mentor is better equipped to deal with issues that may arise once the mentoring intervention begins. The better the training of the mentor, the more likely the mentor will persist in continuing as a mentor along with increased success (Cohen, 2008). Along

with training for the mentors, formal mentoring programs are more successful when the mentors have a say in the design of the mentoring intervention. Allen et al., (2006) write:

[Mentors'] providing more input into the mentoring process gives the mentoring participants more control. This is important in that perceived control has been related to favorable employee job attitudes such as perceptions of fairness and job satisfaction, better job performance, and enhanced self-esteem. (p. 128)

Because the mentors will realize that their own ideas are being implemented, more than likely they will be more vested to persist and engage in the mentoring intervention (Orsini et al., 2015).

In the same way formal mentoring programs have aspects that can increase program effectiveness, naturally formed mentoring programs also have aspects that increase effectiveness.

Because naturally formed mentoring relationships are already predicated on participants having an emotional bond, programs that create a space for social activities and discussion help in increasing and maintaining emotional bonds.

Herrera et al. (2000) write:

Conversations help relationships develop. Talking helps youth and mentors find common interests. Talking helps the mentor understand more about the child's needs and strengths. Several youth mentioned wanting to know more about their mentor, or proudly told us they know something personal about their mentors. (p.30)

When strong relationships are formed between the mentee and the mentor, both parties are likely to persist and invest more in the actual mentoring intervention (Orsini et al., 2015).

Incorporating Aspects of Both Formal and Natural Mentoring

My past mentoring intervention were a formally-formed mentoring program. While the literature on mentoring is clear that both types of mentoring are meaningful in improving positive outcomes, naturally formed mentor relationships tend to be more effective (Black et al., 2010; Whitney et al., 2010). One of the main reasons natural formed mentoring relationships prove to be more effective is because they are developed organically and often initiated by the

mentee, as a result the mentee is more vested in the relationship and likely to persist in the relationship (Carruthers, 1993; Orsini et al., 2010). However, because some of my former schools had African American male students who were in dire need of the unique support a mentoring relationship could produce, we couldn't wait to see if mentoring relationships, likely to be initiated by students, would form naturally. Instead, the students were selected by adults for participation in the mentoring program. Although the intervention was not naturally formed, space was created within the intervention that allowed the mentee and the mentor to engage in activities that typify the relational bond that characterized much of the interpersonal interaction that compels youth to seek out specific individuals as mentors.

One-to-One Mentoring

Finally, mentoring programs often fall under the category of either group or one-to-one mentoring. Traditionally, mentoring literature has focused on the one-to-one model. The one-to-one mentoring model findings are inconclusive; the findings in some studies had positive results, but in other settings, one-to-one-mentoring had no impact, and in other settings one-to-one mentoring had an adverse impact (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Royse, 1998; Rhodes et al., 2005). In this one-to-one mentoring model, a hierarchical relationship involving a non-parental figure, usually an older figure takes a special interest in a younger and less experienced individual in order to help the younger person achieve certain goals (Eby, 1997; Barber, 2005; Lawrence et al., 2008).

In this mentoring model, the mentor guides the mentee by aiding with both psychosocial and school-related needs (e.g., homework, studying for a test). Hence, the bedrock of this mentoring model lies in creating emotional bonds and reciprocal trust between mentee and mentor (Barber, 2005).

Herrera et al. (2000) write:

At the crux of the mentoring relationship is the bond that forms between the youth and mentor. If a bond does not form, then youth and mentors may disengage from the match before the mentoring relationship lasts long enough to have a positive impact on youth. (p. 28)

Characteristics of Successful Mentoring Interventions

While the effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring has varied in outcomes, the literature points to certain practices within mentoring programs that lead to creating stronger social bonds, which can lead to better outcomes. Three practices that are salient in the literature for improving the emotional bond are the amount of time spent with the mentee (Rhodes et al., 2005; Herrera et al., 2000; Barber, 2005), the type of activity the mentor and mentee engage in (Herrera et al., 2000; Pryce & Keller, 2013; and the degree of using a developmental approach (Rhodes et al., 2005, Herrera et al., 2000, Pryce & Keller, 2013).

The first characteristic has to do with the time spent with the mentee. The more consistent the time a mentee and mentor can spend together, the more possibility that the two will get to know each other in a more meaningful way. Rhodes et al. (2000) write about time spent between mentee and mentor saying:

Frequency and consistency of contact. Consistent contact is another feature of higher-quality mentoring relationships. Reliability is a cornerstone of trust, and for many youth who have experienced significant disruptions in important relationships (such as foster youth or youth whose fathers do not maintain regular contact), it can be critical to the formation of a lasting and meaningful bond with a mentor. (p. 35)

In the frequency and consistency of contact, the mentee and mentor will continue to interact in ways that bring down the walls. Here, they get the chance to establish trust and get to know one another. Once trust is established due to positive familiarity, the mutual emotional bond can occur naturally. For a one-to-one mentoring intervention to be impactful, frequent and consistent

meetings must occur between mentee and mentor. Through this, trust and a mutual bond can be established.

In addition to the time spent with mentors, the type of activities that the mentee and mentors engage in may be more important. Engaging in social activities has a significant impact on the closeness and emotional bond between mentee and mentor. Herrera et al. (2000) write:

We found that although spending more time with mentees is better than less time, even more, important is what youth and mentors do together during that time. In particular, engaging in social activities is key to developing close and supportive relationships. (p. 35)

Social activities are defined as activities that are non-academic. Most social activities involve discussions and often center around fun events or ideas. During social activities, the mentees and mentors get to “let down their hair,” and see one another outside of task-oriented activities. Here, both parties get to see the essence of one another. True personalization has begun to occur - a relationship based on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and support between the mentee and mentor (Breunlin et al., 2005). Now that the mentor has the trust of the mentee, the mentee will give the mentor access and a vulnerability that helps to mentor guide and shape the life and values of the mentee (Noddings, 2005). Herrera et al. (2000) reinforce the relational bond notion when they write, “Research indicates that the strength of the bond that forms between mentor and youth governs the degree of impact their relationship will have and that engaging in friendship-based activities is a key component of relationships that endure” (p. 9).

Along with the type of activities that the mentoring program implements, other characteristics of high functioning one-to-one mentoring programs are using developmental approaches. A developmental approach is a model where the two parties involved in an enterprise come together in order to make joint decisions about the structure of the activities

within an enterprise. This developmental approach goes against the traditionally implemented “prescriptive” approach, where only the mentor or organization makes the decision about the features of the mentoring program. Herrera et al. (2000) write “The strongest relationships are formed when the mentor takes a "developmental" rather than a "prescriptive" approach, allowing the mentee to take the lead and share in making activity decisions” (p. 9). When only the mentor or organizations create activities with mentee input, the mentees may be likely to engage because the program dynamics may not include aspects that interest the mentee. The developmental approach is mentioned as an effective characteristic because it allows the mentee to have autonomy, which is a critical component of many motivational constructs (Orsini et al., 2015; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016). If a mentoring intervention supports students’ autonomy, like student choice within a mentoring program, students are more likely to find the activity meaningful, take responsibility for their learning, and stay more engaged in the mentoring enterprise.

Finally, another characteristic of a high functioning one-to-one mentoring program is that mentors should have access to training. While training can have numerous components involved, an integral part of the training should give mentors meaningful strategies to connect relationally with students (which I have already referenced in the above paragraphs), along with helping mentors understand the people who they will be mentoring. Lawrence et al. (2008) detail the focus of a mentoring program that proactively implemented professional developments for its mentors on the psychosocial and sociocultural patterns of the mentored group:

Not only does the course solidify connection to the program, but it provides mentors with theoretical and practical knowledge about adolescent girls and best practices in mentoring. In the first semester, the three-credit class covers the principles of mentoring relevant to the population served, including: Engaging adolescent girls One-on-One and Group Mentoring: An Integrated Approach 3 • Race and ethnic identity development • Class issues during adolescence Course content also explores principles of adolescent

development with topics such as: • The teenage brain • Girls' development and the school setting • Peer relationships and adolescent risky choices. (p.2)

In order to be more effective in influencing mentees, mentees have to have a sense that the mentor is knowledgeable in understanding certain components of their adolescent lives and struggles. The more mentors can understand the components of the mentee's life, the more likely the mentor can give realistic and reasonable advice to the mentee. Hence, it will be more likely that the mentee will be more trusting and accepting of their advice (Lawrence et al., 2008).

Group Mentoring

Group mentoring differs in structure and program characteristics from one-to-one mentoring. Group mentoring is defined as a mentoring relationship of more than two people in which the interactions are simultaneous, collaborative and informal nature (Huizing, 2012). Group mentoring comes in four different models. Their models include peer-group mentoring, one-to-many mentoring, many-to-one mentoring, and many-to-many mentoring (Huizing, 2012). One-to-many is the most commonly used and often the most practical in many contexts. And while there are many forms of group mentoring that serve different purposes, the effectiveness of group mentoring as a whole is still inconclusive. Deutsch et al. (2017) write, "Research on group mentoring effects has been mixed and limited by small samples and a lack of comparison of program components" (p. 9).

Even though the findings of group mentoring are inconclusive, the literature on group mentoring provides some insight on program characteristics that can make group mentoring an influential model within the mentoring enterprise. Group mentoring spreads out the limited resources of mentors (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995; Huizing, 2012; Carvin, 2011), along with

creating cohesion and bonds among mentees that may not often be present in the one-to-one mentoring (Carvin, 2011; Kaye & Jacobson, 1995; Huizing, 2012).

One of the most practical reasons to implement a group-mentoring program is because of the scarcity of mentors. In many instances, there are simply not enough mentors to work with the mentees on a one-to-one basis (Huizing, 2012). Hence, group-mentoring models have become a more popular venue to spread and encourage a wider body of participants in an informal setting (Carvin, 2011). However, while group mentoring helps spread out the scarcity of mentors, there has not been a number that is optimal for the number of mentees within a group. Some research says between four to six mentees is optimal (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995); other research posits four to ten mentees are optimal (Deutsch et al., 2017). While the number of mentees may range, the dynamics that group mentoring can add to a mentoring intervention has been persistent within the literature.

Group mentoring can fill in the gap for mentees who have a hard time connecting relationally with mentors. While it would be amazing if every single mentee and mentor would connect meaningfully relationally, it would be both unrealistic and idealistic to think such will happen. This is especially helpful for mentees who have difficulty connecting to an older adult in a one-to-one setting. Carvin (2011) writes, “According to researchers, group mentoring provides a safe venue for mentees who are uncomfortable meeting one-on-one with a more senior leader. It eliminates problems relating to ‘personal chemistry’ (or lack thereof)” (p.50). The group mentoring design allows for mentees to form bonds between each other that can ameliorate the effect of a one-to-one mentoring mismatch. Deutsch (2017) writes “Group contexts may be beneficial in mentoring due to the presence of multiple peers - group mentoring allows for closeness, cohesion, and mutual support at both the dyadic and group levels, providing two

pathways for youth outcomes” (p. 294). If a mentee cannot connect relationally with the mentor, there is still a chance and likelihood that the relationship formed between mentees within the group can motivate that mentee to embrace the values and ideology of the mentor. Even though the mentee may not have synchronous communication with the mentor, the bond formed with his peers within the mentoring intervention may motivate the mentee to persist and continue in the mentoring intervention (Herrera et al., 2002); adolescents, more than any other age demographic are known to listen to their peers more than their parents or other authority figures (Cohen, 2008; Fleming et al., 2008).

Incorporating Both One-to-One Mentoring and Group Mentoring

My mentoring program included aspects of both one-to-one mentoring and group mentoring. Having both components of a nonparental mentor engaging in a one-to-one session with a mentee, along with sessions that involve group mentoring have been associated with positive outcomes (Deutsch et al., 2017). In my program’s one-to-one sessions, I tried to make sure that I structured adequate time to build deep relationships with my mentees (Rhodes et al., 2005). Instead of speaking a majority of the time about school-related activities, I tried to implement more social activities and conversations with my students in order to move the relationship to become more meaningful (Herrera et al., 2000). I also attempted to change the approach of the program. Before it was strictly hierarchical, but I made sure I added a developmental approach where the students were able to design some of the program - this increased the students’ onus and probably motivated higher levels of buy-in (Pryce & Keller, 2013).

For the group mentoring component, I remembered that group mentoring is not only used to reach more students when there is a lack of mentors (Huizing, 2012), but to create a group

ethos where mentees can carry the message to one another (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995). I realized that not every student in the mentoring program will feel comfortable dialoguing and opening up to me, so I kept in the forefront of my mind the concept of peer transference.

Racial Socialization and Improved Outcomes

Positive racial socialization is essential in the life of adolescence African American males because it helps combat the deleterious effects of stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is when one believes, embraces and personalizes as a self-fulfilling characteristic, the dominant culture's negative portrayal or negative stereotype of the group in which that individual belongs (Steele & Aronson, 1997). Positive racial socialization for specific ethnic groups stand against the negative impact that an environment rich in stereotypes that devalues a group can have on individuals within that group (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Marshall, 1995 Altschul, Oyserman & Bybee, 2006; Neblett et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2006). Research linking racism, racial socialization, anger, and depression shows that if parents and other significant adults socialize African American youth around issues of societal hostility and Black cultural strengths, this results in more positive outcomes for the adolescent (Jackson-Gilfort et al., 2001).

Racial Socialization and Academic Outcomes

One specific positive that researchers find of children who have been racially socialized is the increased academic outcomes of African American school-aged children (Neblett et al., 2009). Miller and Macintosh (1999) write, "Positive racial identity has been empirically linked to increased psychological adaptation and functioning, increased self-esteem and achievement" (p.324). Steele and Aronson (1995) found that:

Students who more strongly endorsed items suggesting that they had achieved an inner security and self-confidence with being African American or Black correctly solved more

items than those students who did not endorse [an inner self-confidence with being African American or Black]. (p.410)

Neblett et al. (2009) found that parents who racially socialize their children have children who are more motivated to do well in school and [are] confident in their academic abilities.

Definition of Racial Socialization

Traditionally, the terms racial or ethnic socialization has been applied in studies that examine how minority parents promote their children's ethnic-racial consciousness and prepare them for discrimination in the United States (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). However, more specifically, in the context of this study, positive racial socialization or racial socialization refers to messages and strategies used by African American parents to teach their children about Black American culture, instill racial pride, and prepare them for potential experiences with racism and prejudice (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). In the same vein (Neblett et al., 2009) conceptualize racial socialization as referring "To the process of socializing children about the significance and meaning of race. This process is thought to take place primarily through explicit and non-explicit messages that parents convey to their children about race" (p.247).

The Socialization Process

Racial socialization usually occurs between parent or guardian and child; it is the intergenerational transmission of messages that relate to personal and group identity, relationships between and within ethnic groups, and the ethnic group's position in society (Marshall, 1995). Research suggests that African American parents are the most active in the racial socialization process; they are cognizant that their children must be prepared to deal with racism in society. Marshall (1995) writes, "African American parents are aware that they are

raising children who must be able to deal with the racial oppression, hostility, and overall degradation imposed on their children as a result of the larger prejudicial society (p. 380).

While many parents of African American children are aware that their children will face racism, interestingly many parents are reactive in teaching positive racial socialization. Marshall (1995) who studied the racial socialization frequency practices of African American parents writes:

African American parents appear to be aware of the significance of ethnic socialization, but do not appear to engage in anticipatory socialization: the act of instructing one about how to perform in a situation before one actually has to confront the situation. (p.381)

Interestingly, while parents are the main forms of ethnic-racial socialization for their children, the frequency of occasions in which parents are socializing their children tends to be reactive and inconsistent. This form of reactive socialization can lead to ill-prepared adolescence who are unable to discern the influence of negative stereotypes prevalent in society for African American males.

Racial-Ethnic Identity

To combat the negative portrayals and stereotypes regarding Black males, research has begun to evaluate the impact of racial-ethnic identity (REI) (Neblett et al., 2009). REI is a construct of identity that promotes a racial-ethnic consciousness that creates a sensitized awareness of one's emotional attachment and significance of one's own race and ethnicity, along with a knowledge of social systems that create and perpetuate power differentials between ethnic groups (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). In the simplest of terms, it can be defined as the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs that an individual holds about his or her particular racial or ethnic group (Miller & Macintosh, 1999). REI "entails the intergenerational transmission (from parent or guardian to child) of certain messages and patterns that relate to personal and group identity,

relationships between and within ethnic groups, and the ethnic group's position in society” (Marshall, 1995, p. 383). REI can be utilized as a strategy that will prepare our adolescent African American males for the racism and discrimination that they will likely experience.

African American male adolescents who have been exposed to positive racial socialization tend to demonstrate more positive outcomes (Stevenson, 1997). These children tend to be more physiologically and psychologically whole (Marshall, 1995). Also, there is overwhelming data that supports the increase in academics when African American children display cultural pride, are aware of racism, and see their ethnic group as having a connection to the larger society (Kefele, 2012; Oyserman & Oliver, 2009; Oyserman, 2008; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager; 1995; Noguera, 2003). When we can get African American male adolescents to really believe that they are capable of achieving in school and that their education has merit towards achieving their best possible future self, then they may begin to value and persist through the educative process.

Even though promoting a racial-ethnic identity has been shown to improve academic outcomes, in some instances, having a strong racial-ethnic identity has had adverse effects on academic outcomes. A study by Marshall (1995) had shown that students who reported higher levels of racial ethnic-identity performed significantly lower in reading. This phenomenon, though rare, might be explained by a type of racial socialization that overemphasis a sensitivity to racism and causes the adolescent to distrust the whole system, even the educational process (Marshall, 1995). The literature suggests that a balance in racial socialization will benefit students. Programs should make sure that there is not an overemphasis in both an awareness of racism and potential race barriers without a strong reinforcement of cultural pride and embedded achievement (Neblett, 2009).

Racial-Ethnic Identity as a Construct

While there are many constructs of REI, I chose to use the theoretical framework of Oyserman's tripartite REI model. Her model focuses on REI issues regarding minorities, in particular, African American males, and how REI can improve academic achievement through connectedness, awareness of racism and embedded achievement (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). Each component has a vital role in supporting a racial consciousness that leads to a positive racial-ethnic identity, which has been linked to promoting greater prosocial behaviors and in particular, greater academic outcomes for African American males (Neblett et al., 2009).

Connectedness

The first aspect of the REI model is Connectedness; Connectedness is the extent that someone sees their racial-ethnic group membership as part of who they are. Terms that describe the extent of an individual's connection to their race are either schematic, meaning that they fully connect with and value the embedded beliefs of the racial group, or aschematic, meaning that the individual does not identify with their racial group or the embedded beliefs that go along with being a part of that racial group. Individuals high in Connectedness feel that their race or ethnicity plays a huge role in who they are. These individuals have sentiments like "It means the world to me. I'm glad of my ethnicity. I wouldn't want to be anything else" (Oyserman et al., 2007, p. 103). However, individuals low in Connectedness to their race do not see the racial-ethnic group as part of who they are (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Fuligni, 2007). When asked what it means to be African American or Latinx, aschematic individuals responded, "Like it doesn't matter, I was born in America, so it doesn't really matter to me or doesn't mean anything to me" (Fuligni, 2007, p. 102). With low levels of Connectedness or being aschematic,

an individual may not feel a particular need to act in ways congruent with in-group values or norms.

For example, in the “model minority” stereotype, the academic capability for Asian students as being good at math are reinforced. The more the students have a schema connected to Asian identity, the more likely the students believed that they had the ability and aptitude to be strong in Mathematics (Altschul et al., .2006). Conversely, students who are aschematic in Asian identity may not do as well in math as the schematic group because they do not assent to the stereotype that has become an embedded belief that Asians have the ability and aptitude to be successful in math. As (Altschul et al., 2006) write “To the extent that youth do not see their racial-ethnic group membership as part of who they are, they may not feel a particular need to act in ways congruent with in-group values or norms” (p. 1156).

Embedded Achievement

The second component of the tripartite REI model, embedded achievement focuses on making academic achievement an in-group norm and value. Unlike Asians, African American students are not seen as the model minority when academics are concerned. The embedded stereotype that usually accompanies African American males is that they are and non-academic and lazy. Oyserman (2008) writes:

The racial-ethnic self-schema framework builds on research demonstrating that African American and Hispanic youth are exposed both to negative stereotypes about their in-group’s academic abilities and to the stereotype that school success is part of mainstream [white] norms. (p. 1188)

Oyserman et al. (2007) write:

Research in moderate to low-income middle and high school contexts demonstrate that academic stereotypes about African Americans and Mexican Americans are common. For both groups, these negative academic stereotypes focus on inability laziness and a lack of interest and curiosity. (p. 95)

However, while the stereotypes surrounding African American males purport that they are non-academic, incorporating a racial socialization identity construct that incorporates embedded achievement into REI could reverse the negative psychological impact of such stereotypes. Embedded Achievement “Is a belief that [academic] achievement is a goal that is valued in-group, and therefore provides a specific goal for motivation derived from the desire to enact group identity” (Altschul et al., 2006, p. 98). Embedded Achievement also posits, “That academic achievement is an in-group goal and that members of one's racial-ethnic group have an expectation for group members to succeed makes engaging in school-related behaviors part of being an in-member” (Altschul et al., 2006, p. 97). Embedded Achievement can impact the motivational persistence and academic self-concept of individuals who are highly schematic to race. If students identify with an ethnicity or group which is perceived as successful, professional, smart, intelligent, capable, and successful, students will aim to procure professions that require high levels of educational attainment, along with being motivated to persist through difficult academic challenges.

Ethnic Pride

Nestled in Embedded Achievement is the concept of ethnic pride. Ethnic pride can be defined as feeling proud to be a part of one's ethnic group (Valk & Karu, 2001). People who feel a heightened sense of ethnic pride are often interested in the history of their ethnic group. Individuals who tend to have higher levels of ethnic pride know both the historical and current contributions that their ethnicity has made to society (Valk & Karu, 2001). A higher level of ethnic pride, especially in the domain of connection to the larger society has borne fruit to positive academic outcomes.

Connection to the Larger Society

Having a connection to the larger society has correlated to higher academic outcomes. Individuals in the in-group see those who they identify with as adding positive value in different arenas of society. Connection to the larger society can be defined as positive feelings towards the in-group's contributions towards society at large (Oyserman, 2008). Writing about academics and connection to the larger society, Oyserman and Oliver (2009) write:

In terms of academic outcomes, teens who describe themselves only in terms of in-group memberships (e.g., American Indian, Black, Latino) were less likely to persist in academic tasks than teens who both described themselves in terms of in-group memberships and saw in-group members as integral members of the broader American society, not as separate from broader American society. (p. 130)

When individuals who identify with a certain group see members of their own in-group valuing certain characteristics, then there is a strong likelihood that the other members will emulate and aspire towards those same characteristics that the in-group values. As a result, when African American males understand that their group has contributed greatly to America and is still contributing greatly to its society.

Awareness of Racism

Along with high levels of Connectedness, and Embedded Achievement, the last part of Oyserman's tripartite model makes sure that students have an awareness of racism. Awareness of racism involves wrestling with how other out-group members view the in-group (Altschul et al., 2006). Awareness of racism provides a "Framework for understanding others negative responses, suggesting that others do not see the self as in individual, but rather through a lens of low or negative expectations" (Fuligni, 2007, p. 97). Altschul et al. (2006) correctly deduce the benefits of awareness of racism when they write:

That is, when Racial and identity contains an awareness of racism, adolescents are positive to be less likely to simply incorporate negative feedback as self-relevant and more likely to be able to defend her self-esteem from failure feedback because such feedback reviewed with skepticism depending on the source and nature of the feedback. (p. 98)

If African American male students are aware that there are certain structures and systems in place (whether intentionally or unintentionally) that implicitly degrades their intelligence and misdirects a true representation of their male hood and masculinity, they will be less likely to embrace that identity paradigm. But if they do not know that the media and other elements of society (whether intentionally or unintentionally) degrade their masculinity and academic capability, then they are more likely to believe and embrace that portrayal of manhood.

Possible Selves

When the tripartite model has been successfully incorporated into an individual's REI, I theorize their possibilities of self will rise. Possible selves is a motivational theory that posits an individual will be more likely to persist into becoming or pursuing a future endeavor if they know that there is a possibility that what they are pursuing may become a reality (Cross & Markus, 1994). Possible selves represent the future person or self that the person could become, would like to become, or is scared of becoming. Oyserman et al., (2011) write “Possible selves differ from general expectations or aspirations in that they are vivid images of the self-attaining a future state, rather than simply thoughts, wishes, or desires about the future” (p.494).

Since possible selves are generally a positive image that children have of who they would like to be in the future (Oyserman et al., 2011), we have to do a better job in challenging students to dream, while giving them the tools and strategies to raise the confidence of the child so they can persist towards fulfilling that dream. Oyserman et al. (2011) write:

The more vivid and elaborate the possible selves that can be created in preparation for a performance, the better the performance, because many of the routines required for the performance are already engaged through the processes of anticipation and simulation. (p. 424)

Going along with the analogy of the performance, if we as institutions are going to help African American male students strive toward, and reach the goal of becoming their best possible selves, then we as schooling institutions can provide “rehearsals,” by embedding different interventions that promote and reinforce a masculinity that is intelligent, successful, and academically astute. Having a strong REI may help in combating the negative impact of the stereotypical portrayal of African American masculinity that the mainstream media; If students can acquire a sense of cultural pride, embedded achievement, and an awareness of racism, they may be less likely to believe and embrace the defamatory portrayal of African American male masculinity. Instead, as past studies have found, a positive REI may help African American males both value education more and persist throughout the schooling process.

While mentoring programs aimed at improving the academic achievement of African American male adolescences are becoming increasingly popular, many school-based mentoring interventions do not attempt to motivate its attendees through identity formation practices. Creating a school-based mentoring intervention that aims to increase the racial-ethnic identity of its African American male students through increasing their cultural pride, embedded achievement, and awareness of racism may impact positively impact its students' academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, academic-self concepts, and their possible-future selves.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As stated earlier, African American male academic achievement is among the lowest when compared to other groups ((Noguera, 2003; Harper & Williams, 2014; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; McFarland, Cui, & Stark, 2018). Even when African American males are compared to other ethnic groups within their same socioeconomic status, they still lag behind in grade point averages and standardized test scores (Noguera, 2003, 2012). Racial-ethnic identity has the potential to act as a motivational construct that can impact achievement and other positive school-related outcomes for African American males (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Marshall, 1995; Altschul et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2011). While racial-ethnic identity has shown promise when parents socialize their own children (Neblett et al., 2009; Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002), there is relatively little research chronicling the impact or the experience of how school-based mentoring programs socialize mentees into incorporating a positive racial-ethnic identity. This study attempts to explore the experiences and impact of a school-based mentoring intervention designed to foster positive racial ethnic-identity.

Research Questions

The research questions are as followed:

1. What was the nature of the participants' experience in the mentoring program?
2. What impact did the program have?
 - a. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the racial-ethnic identity of its adolescent Black male participants?
 - b. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the academic achievement of its adolescent Black male participants?
 - c. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster racial-ethnic identity impact the behavioral outcomes of its students?

- d. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster a racial-ethnic identity impact the academic-self-concept of its adolescent Black male participants?
- e. To what extent does a mentoring program designed to foster a racial-ethnic identity impact the possible future self-concept of its adolescent Black male participants?

Methodological Approach

This project was carried out using action research (AR) methodology as outlined by Herr and Anderson (2005). AR is a systematic inquiry that is self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by participants of the inquiry. The goals of this research were the understanding of practice, and a philosophy of practice aimed at improving practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Simply, action research is “learning by doing” (O’Brian, 1998).

AR is designed to make an immediate impact in either solving a problem or coming closer to a solution, while adding knowledge to a specific field. Rooney (2005, p. 1) writes:

Action- research projects demonstrate multiple aims and purposes. Some aim to cultivate “reflective” practitioners who through questioning their current practices, strive to improve them and their understandings of these practices. Others aim for social transformation through their action research efforts. For others, the primary goal is to generate knowledge or theoretical frameworks which other practitioners can draw and adapt to improve practice within their own context.

Herr and Anderson (2014) state that five goals of a successful action-research study are the generation of new knowledge, achievement of action-oriented outcomes, education of researcher and participants, results that are relevant to the local setting, and a sound and appropriate research methodology. As it comes to generating new knowledge, the aim is “To generate knowledge or theoretical frameworks which other practitioners can draw on and adapt to improve practice within their own context” (Rooney, 2005, p.4). In achieving an action-oriented outcome, the researcher must implement a form of self-reflecting problem solving embedded in a

systematic inquiry that causes the researcher to take new actionable steps towards answering the research question after the evidence has been gathered and evaluated (Herr & Anderson, 2014). In educating the researcher and participants, does the researcher find answers to their questions; does the research spur the social change intended (Bailey, 2010)? And finally, in regards to a sound and appropriate methodology, the researcher should be sure that their methodological selections are capturing the characteristics of the phenomena they intend to study.

Most action research comes from a place of struggle within the researcher. My choice in using AR as a research methodology came from trying to improve the academic outcomes of my freshman African American boys during my time as an English teacher at one of the lowest performing high schools in a large urban district. I did not have any idea of how to help them. They were underperforming badly. Thinking of a way to help my students boost their academic achievement led me to AR. Herr and Anderson (2014) captures my sentiment on using AR when they write:

Many action research questions come out of a frustration, a practice puzzle, or a contradiction in a workplace (this is what we say we do, but do we?); often, these are things a practitioner has been giving thought to for some time. The research question most often addresses something the practitioner wants to do better or understand more clearly. (92)

While my first intervention helped boost academic achievement slightly, I needed a more scientific and systematic method to guide my evaluation of data, along with a stronger theoretical framework to guide me; AR was a strong fit to help me capture that duality. AR helps practitioners step back from their daily hustle of just doing, and allows the practitioner time to transition more into the role of researcher. This helps the now research-practitioner implement a more systematic inquiry on a puzzling issue; AR methodology helps the practitioner in

unearthing other dimensions of problems that may have been unrealized or hidden to the practitioner (Herr and Anderson, 2014).

I chose AR as a methodology is because it affords practitioners the ability not only to discover, but correct issues that may cause a misalignment in achieving actionable goals. Because the goal of my next intervention was to improve at creating a more effective mentoring program, AR afforded me the boundaries needed to critique practice, while taking actionable steps to improve my practice.

As a way to improve my practice, one actionable step that I had already implemented after the pilot-mentoring program was to extend the program for more than one marking period. As I previously explained, after the pilot mentoring intervention that lasted one marking period had concluded, the mentees' grades dropped. Since then pilot program, I have scheduled and completed full-year mentoring programs. Because of scheduling issues and IRB concerns, I was only able to start this mentoring program mid-year and therefore had to evaluate the program after 12 sessions (1 marking period). The program did continue until the end of the school year (after the data for the study was collected), but I did not have any other evaluations or assessments of the program aside from the data used for this study.

Research Design

I chose to do a case-study research design that is a part of the qualitative research methodology. Case studies are used by scientist to tests theories, to render descriptions and to develop a theory about topics (Gustafsson, 2017). Case study as a research strategy rose out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena within their contexts (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) writes that "Case study methods allow investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p.3). Creswell writes "The case study method explores a real-

life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (as cited in Gustafsson, 2017, p. 23).

I used a case-study research design because a case study is an appropriate methodology when an in-depth investigation is needed in order to capture aspects of an entire phenomenon within its contextual or natural setting (Tellis, 1999). Because my study’s research questions centered around the *experiences* of African American male adolescents within a mentoring program that attempted to increase the positive racial-ethnic identity of its mentoring group, case study methodology was appropriate because the methodology was advantageous for capturing phenomena (i.e., a mentoring intervention) within its bounded context. While the multiple case study approach intensively examines different units of study searching for comparative or contrasting findings between the units of study, I chose a single-case study to focus on intensively examining one unit (group) in order capture the essence of the experiences within the mentoring intervention.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this study took place within a large urban charter school located in the downtown area section of a large urban area. The school that I named ‘Olive Charter,’ has a student population of approximately 1000 students. Olive charter is a citywide admission school; it is open to anyone who lives within the county where the school is located. While the school is located in an affluent industrial area, over eighty percent of the students come from backgrounds of poverty. Ninety-four percent of Olive’s student population are African American, while three percent is Latino, and another three percent is classified as other.

In the most recent charter school evaluation, Olive charter students' state standardized test scores were slightly behind both similarly grouped charter schools (charter schools with similar demographics of race and socioeconomic status) and public schools in math and English. When disaggregated for gender and race within Olive Charter, Olive Charter's African American males were the lowest performing group.

I was hired at Olive Charter in September of 2016 as an assistant principal. My duties included observing and coaching teachers, meeting with parents, handling student interpersonal conflict and creating a mentoring program. Out of all of my responsibilities, creating and facilitating the mentoring program during my first year gave me a huge "in" with the students. The mentoring program was created to target students who were disciplinary problems or needed more encouragement in taking their work seriously.

During the first year of the mentoring program at Olive Charter, over 15 students participated. I implemented group mentoring sessions, a speaker series, and had one-to-one check-ins. In the group sessions, we spoke about issues regarding masculinity and resiliency. For the speaker series, African American males that have achieved their professional goals came and spoke to the mentees about their own personal experiences that led them to become successful. During the one-to-one check-ins, I would find out if the mentees faced any obstacles that took away from their engagement in school. The second year was more of the same, but saw an increase of students that joined the program. Because so many of the students enjoyed the program, they told their classmates about it. By the end of the first year, students who did not have any issues behaviorally or academically asked to join the program. At the end of that year,

the program was open to any male student who showed interest along with students who were having behavioral issues.

Unlike most schools within the district, Olive Charter has a no failure policy. When a child fails a test, it is the responsibility of the teacher to reteach the content to the student until the student masters the concept. The intervention took place inside of an Olive Charter classroom and in an administrative office space. The group mentoring sessions took place inside of a teacher's classroom, while the one-to-one mentoring took place inside a classroom.

Recruitment Methods

This study recruited its participants from the school's 6th-grade classes. Research posits that 5th through 8th grade or the 10 to 14-year-old range is key in helping African American males procure college aspirations (Camblin, 2003). During these formative years, young adolescent African American males are more impressionable on whether college will be part of their future goals. If they aspire to go to college then they may place a higher priority on the value they put towards their education. Therefore, in order to try and have maximum impact on the mentoring intervention, I chose to begin with the 6th grade.

The following represented the criteria for this study:

1. Identify as an African American male.
2. Must presently be enrolled in 6th grade.

The guidance counselor went into each 6th grade section and read a description of the program. He asked students if they are interested in participating in the mentoring program. He took down the names of the interested students. Due to a lack of space, the maximum number of students I accepted into the mentoring program was 19. The only prerequisite, besides being a

6th grade male, was that the student must identify as African American. Parents were notified about the program via a letter. The letter explained the program's benefits along with explaining the risks of the program. Students had to return signed parental consent and assent forms to be placed in the mentoring program.

Table 1
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE MENTEES

Name (Pseudonym)	GPA Before Intervention	GPA After Intervention	Frequency of visits to the disciplinary office before the Intervention
Zack	3.30	3.38	Medium
Jeremy	3.37	3.37	Medium
Tarique	2.92	3.06	Extremely High
Samuel	3.45	3.58	None
Aaron	3.53	3.78	Medium
Langston	3.41	3.61	Low
Rasheed	3.28	3.25	Low
Lawrence	3.41	3.61	Low
Kurtis	3.5	3.26	Low
Damon	4.0	3.83	None
Eric	4.0	3.83	None
Khalil	3.50	3.48	Medium
Gerry	4.0	4.0	None
Jason	3.41	3.25	Low
Tyon	3.53	3.78	None
Jalil	3.53	3.55	Medium
Nathan	3.48	3.53	High
Kenny	4.0	4.0	None
Rodney	3.25	3.32	Low

Key

Frequency of visits - Teachers can send students to disciplinary office when they disrupt class.

High - 2 or more visits per month.

Medium - less than 2 visits per month.

Low - less than 1 visit per month.

Proposed Intervention Study

The mentoring program had four components: one-to-one check-ins, group mentoring, a speaker series, and social activities.

Component 1.) One-To-One Mentoring Sessions

The one-to-one sessions served as a way to form deep emotional bonds with mentees. Because emotional bonds are less likely to happen during group mentoring sessions, one-to-one session serves as an effective activity to build relational trust (Barber, 2005). There are three practices that are salient within the literature for improving the emotional bond and trust between mentee and mentor in one-to-one mentoring. The practices are of the consistency of times spent with the mentee (Rhodes et al., 2005; Herrera et al., 2000; Barber, 2005), the type of activity the mentor and mentee engage (Pryce & Keller, 2013), and the degree of using a developmental approach (Rhodes et al., 2005, Herrera et al., 2000, Pryce & Keller, 2013).

In regards to the consistency of time spent with the mentee each week, I planned short check-in meetings during which I engaged the mentee in both social and non-social activities; social activities (like talking about basketball or issues not related to school) are more likely to increase the emotional bond, while the non-social activities (such as giving the child a strategy for not getting into trouble in English class) can help the child navigate through school successfully. The type activity or conversation we engaged in depended on the needs of the student at the moment.

Component 2.) Group Sessions

Group mentoring spreads out the limited resources of mentors (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995; Huizing, 2012; Carvin, 2011). One of the most practical reasons to implement a group mentoring

program is because of the scarcity of mentors. In many instances, there are simply not enough mentors to work with the mentees on a one-to-one basis (Huizing, 2012). Hence, group mentoring models have become a more popular venue to spread and encourage a wider body of participants in an informal setting (Carvin, 2011). Group mentoring design allows for mentees to form bonds between each other that can ameliorate the effect of a one-to-one (mentee and mentor) mentoring mismatch. Because group mentoring allows for closeness, cohesion, and mutual support at the group the level (Deutsch, 2017), it is important to have group social activities where bonds of trust can form between mentees. This may motivate mentees to persist and continue in the mentoring intervention even if they do not have a strong and robust connection with the mentor (Herrera et al., 2000). The group sessions focused on African and African American history, the importance of education, and the media's negative portrayals of African American men.

Component 3.) Speaker Series During the Group Sessions

The purpose of the speaker series is for the African American male mentees to see and engage with older professional African American males. This can strengthen the mentees cultural pride, possible future selves, and academic self-concept as they see older career-successful professional African American males (Oyserman, 2008; Oyserman et al., 1995; Steele, 1997; Kafele, 2012; Oyserman & Oliver, 2009; Ordaz-Villegas et al., 2014; Awad, 2007). Before each professional engaged and spoke to the group, they receive guided templates of questions that they are to address during their speaking session. Each question tied into the themes of either academic-self competency, cultural pride, embedded achievement, or awareness of racism. While all of the speakers' experiences were not exactly similar, I do believe that many

of their narratives had similar silent themes that were aligned to the ethos of the mentoring intervention.

Table 2
A DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEAKER SESSIONS

<u>Session Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Connection to Framework</u>
May 1 st	African American males getting fewer chances. The importance of working hard. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Contract Lawyer	Cultural Pride, Connection to the Larger Society.
May 7 th	Education being a pathway to success. The need to commit to hard work. Distancing from friends who do not value education. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Social Worker	Connection to the Larger Society.
May 8 th	Overcoming obstacles and bad decisions. Making a commitment to working hard. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Business Owner/ Home Appraiser	Possible Future-Selves. Academic Self-Efficacy. Awareness of Racism.
May 10 th	Eurocentrism. African American inventors. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Fireman/ Historian	Cultural Pride. Connection to the Larger Society. Awareness of Racism
May 17 th	Civic Engagement. Black boys taking the lead so others can follow. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Director of Black Male Community Engagement	Awareness of Racism.
May 22 nd	Impact of fatherlessness in the African American Community. Personal life narrative surrounding education and career.	Family and Relationship Psychologist	Academic Self-Efficacy. Possible Future-Selves.

Speaking Points

Each speaker was given the following question in advance to answer during their talk with the mentees:

- 1) How does being an African American male factor into your educational journey experience?
- 2) What was a major psychological struggle that could have made you give up on pursuing your education?
- 3) What did you believe about African American male masculinity that was unhealthy to your forward progress in education?
- 4) What made you begin to value your education?
- 5) When did you come into the realization that you were capable of being successful in school?

Component 4.) Social activities

Three times during the intervention, the group was supposed to meet together for social activities, twice after a guest speaker and once during the closing ceremony. During this social activity, the group should have had a pizza party and talk about non-related school issues. The social activities were to happen directly after the guest-speaker sessions.

As I thought about the components of the intervention, I remembered the limitations of the pilot study years ago. This time around, I wanted to make sure that the program lasted longer, exposed the students to more professional African American males and explored racism more at the systemic level.

Data Collection

The data was analyzed by myself (the primary investigator). The quantitative data included the report cards for both achievement and behavior grades, along with the pre and post survey results for the attitudinal measures (REI, academic self-efficacy, possible future-selves). The qualitative data included semi-structured interviews regarding the mentees experience in the program, along with their responses to items on the different surveys. I analyzed the data using a mixed method approach. Both quantitative and qualitative data played a vital role in assessing

Table 3

MAPPING OF THE GROUP SESSIONS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Facilitator</u>	<u>Connection to Framework or High-Quality Mentoring</u>
April 23 rd	Introductory session and program overview. Administration of pretest. Design of aspects of the program that included mentee input. Social activities.	Olufemi Fadeyibi	Developmental Approach. Social Activities.
April 26 th	Inventions of African Americans in the United States.	Olufemi Fadeyibi, Board President	Connection to the Larger Society. Possible Future Selves.
May 12 th and May 14 th	Hip-hop and the media's portrayal of African American males as hypersexual, violent, and criminal. Exploration of stereotype threat and how African American male adolescents may be influenced unknowingly.	Olufemi Fadeyibi	Awareness of Racism. Possible Future Selves.
May 26 th	Exploration of the value of a degree and the likelihood of becoming a professional athlete	Olufemi Fadeyibi, School Counselor	Education as Currency. Stereotype Threat.
May 31 st and June 2 nd	Discussion of two autobiographies by African American males that focused on overcoming-poverty and finishing college.		Possible Future-Selves. Academic self-efficacy. Embedded Achievement

and evaluating the impact (if any) and experiences of the mentees during the intervention. Chen

(as cited in Burke, 2007) defines a mixed method approach as:

A systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study for purposes of obtaining a fuller picture and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Mixed methods can be integrated in such a way that qualitative and quantitative methods retain their original structures and procedures. Alternatively, these two methods can be adapted, altered, or synthesized to fit the research and cost situations of the study. (P. 119)

The quantitative approach was used in determining the impact in assessing whether there are any significant changes in the mentees' attitudes (REI, academic self-efficacy, possible future-selves), GPA's, or behavior during the mentoring intervention. The qualitative approach was used in evaluating the overall experiences of the mentees during the intervention, along with their own a deeper in-depth look towards their own thoughts and feelings related to racial-ethnic identity, academic self-efficacy and possible future-selves.

Pre and Post Quantitative Surveys

Below are the surveys and questionnaires that were used to measure the mentees' racial-ethnic identity, along with their possible selves and academic self-concept questionnaire. The mentees completed the questionnaires before and after the intervention. We did questionnaires collectively in order to make sure everyone understood what was being asked; I expounded on each item before the students elected a response. The scales measured whether the mentees had a change in attitude and thinking after the intervention was completed in regards to the aforementioned concepts.

Survey Instrument 1: Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale

Daphna Oyserman created the Racial-Ethnic Identity (REI) Scale, a Dean's Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern California. Her research focuses on racial, ethnic, and social class gaps in school achievement and health. The scale is broken into three categories that are components of racial-ethnic identity. The scale measures embedded achievement, cultural pride, Connectedness, and an awareness of racism. The literature posits that when these components of positive racial-ethnic identity are present within African American male adolescents, they will be more likely to do well in school because they will take school more seriously. I chose the Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale for this intervention because the

scale measured the racial-ethnic identity of the student. An aim of this study was to try and increase the positive racial-ethnic identity of the students participating in the mentoring intervention. This scale helped in determining if the intervention was successful in increasing its' participant's REI. Both the instructions and the REI questionnaire are below:

People have different opinions about what it means to be African American, I will read some statements to you. *For each one, write how close it is to your opinion using the following scale, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.*

- ETH1) It is important to me to think of myself as an African American.
- ETH2) I feel that I am part of the African American community.
- ETH3) I have a lot of pride in what members of the African American community have done and achieved.
- ETH4) I feel close to others in the African American community.
- ETH5) If I am successful it will help the African American community.
- ETH6) It is important for my family and the African American community that I succeed in school.
- ETH7) Some people will treat me differently because I am African American.
- ETH8) As an African American, the way I look and speak influences what others expect of me.
- ETH9) Things in the African American community are not as good as they could be because of lack of opportunity.
- ETH10) It helps me when others in the African American community are successful.
- ETH11) People might have negative ideas about my abilities because I am an African American.
- ETH12) If I work hard and get good grades, other African Americans will respect me.

Racial-Ethnic Identity

Coding for:

Embedded achievement (items 5, 6, 10, and 12)

Connectedness (items 1-4)

Awareness of racism (items 7, 8, 9, and 11)

Figure 1. RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY SCALE

Survey Instrument 2: Possible Selves Questionnaire

The Possible Selves Questionnaire was created by Daphna Oyserman, a Dean's Professor in the department of psychology at the University of Southern California. Her research also focuses on cultural differences in affect, behavior, and cognition – how people feel, act, and think about themselves and the world around them. The Possible Selves Questionnaire is an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire asks respondents about who they expect to be in one year, along with who do they want to avoid being by next year. Not only does it question the respondent about who they expect (or want) to be in one year, the questionnaire also asks whether strategies, if any, are being implemented towards achieving the one-year expected-self goal or the one-year avoided-self goal. While the Possible Selves Questionnaire responses are originally separated into six categories ranging from academic achievement and personality traits to physical health and material lifestyle, I chose to use only 3 coded categories. The categories that students wrote about are academic achievement, personal characteristics, and interpersonal traits. While the students were filling out the questionnaire, I had examples written on the board of what someone may put for a possible next-year self for the personal characteristic domain. First, the students wrote what they expect of their one year selves in relation to each category (aspirations). Next, they answered (yes or no) whether or not they were currently implementing any active strategy in becoming their expected possible selves, along with writing the actual strategy if they answered yes.

If students have an expected possible one-year self, along with a strategy that they are currently implementing to achieve that goal, then there is more of a plausibility that the student will become that person within the next year. The same is true for the possible selves of who students want to avoid becoming. Oyserman (2004) defines plausibility as “A general assessment

of the usefulness of the achievement related visions and strategies the student describes as a ‘road map to achieving in school’ or plan of action” (p. 8). Conversely, if a student does not have an expected one-year self, who they want to avoid becoming, and are not actively engaging in a strategy that will help manifest the expected one-year self, then there is a higher level of plausibility that the student will not reach that goal.

I chose the Possible Selves Questionnaire open-ended survey instrument for this study because it measured whether students were envisioning their possible selves within the next year, along with measuring whether students were implementing concrete strategies to help them in reaching their next-year self. Because the literature correlates stronger possible selves with higher academic achievement, this scale can assess whether the mentoring intervention helped the mentees increase positive aspirations of their one-year expected self or their one-year avoided self, in addition with aiding the mentees in implementing active strategies towards each end. Below are the instructions for the Possible Selves Questionnaire:

- In the lines below, write what you expect you will be like and what you expect to be doing next year.
- In the space next to each expected goal, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on that goal or doing something about that expectation and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation or goal.
- For each expected goal that you marked YES, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this year to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expected goal, the second space for the second expected goal and so on.

Next year, I expect to be	Am I am doing something to be that way		If yes, What I am doing now to be that way next year
	NO	YES	
(P1) _____			(s1) _____
(P2) _____			(s2) _____
(P3) _____			(s3) _____
(P4) _____			(s4) _____

Figure 2. POSSIBLE-SELVES QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Instrument 3: Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire

Patricia Noonan and Amy Gaumer created the Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire. Both work as associate professors at the University of Kansas in the Center for Research on Learning. Their work focuses on educational initiatives that improve in-school and post-school outcomes for both regular and special education students. I chose the Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire because it measures important components that are relevant within the self-motivation literature. The questionnaire attempts to measure whether students believe in their ability to meet specific goals.

Academic self-efficacy is an extension of the self-efficacy literature, and it attempts to measure the same factors as self-efficacy, but with more of a focus on perceived ability towards academic and school-related achievement. Though the Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire is based in a self-efficacy construct, some of the items on the questionnaire measure academic self-efficacy. For the items that do not measure academic-self efficacy, but only self-efficacy, I

modified the item to relate it to academic-self-efficacy. The writing in red and the words with a strikethrough were part of my modifications. As academic self-efficacy ³increases within a student, there is more of a likelihood that students will believe in their academic ability, along with their ability to grow with practice. A student who has lower levels of academic self-concept, doubt their academic ability and believe their ability to grow is static. The Self- Efficacy Formative Questionnaire informed me on whether the mentoring intervention had an impact on the mentees perceived academic self-efficacy. Both the instructions and the academic-self efficacy questionnaire are below. My modifications are indicated with cross outs and underlines.

Please select the response that best describes you. Be honest, since the information will be used to help you in school and also help you become more prepared for college and careers. There are no right or wrong answers! For each one, write how close it is to your opinion using the following scale, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.

1. I can learn what is being taught in class this year.
2. I can figure out anything in school if I try hard enough.
3. If I practiced every day, I could develop just about any skill that I need to understand difficult material.
4. Once I've decided to accomplish something in school that's important to me, I keep trying to accomplish it, even if it is harder than I thought.
5. I am confident that I will achieve the goals that I set for myself in school.
6. When I'm struggling to accomplish something difficult in school, I focus on my progress instead of feeling ~~discouraged~~ bad.

Figure 3. ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY QUESTIONNAIRE

³ Academic self-concept and academic-self efficacy are at times used interchangeably throughout some of the academic motivation literature (Bong & Clark, 1999). Both concepts involve personal beliefs and draw from the body literature that believe individuals with positive views of themselves strive to succeed and overcome even the greatest obstacles in life.

Pre and Post Qualitative Interviews

I conducted stimulated recall interviews using the responses to the closed-ended Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale, Future Possible Selves Questionnaire and the academic Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire. In addition to the simulated recall interviews, I also used semi-structured interview questions that inquired about the mentees' experience within the program. The primary source of data collection for this research was stimulated-recall interviews using the responses to the closed-ended racial identity scale, possible selves, and academic self-concept along with semi-structured interview questions that focused on the overall experience of the mentees within the program. Stimulated recall interview questions and semi-structured interview questions were used because it allowed for a deeper exploration of the ways in which people express their experiences within the mentoring program, along with keeping the interviews aligned to the mentoring program.

Data Analysis

I ran a quantitative statistical analysis on different measures. It included grade point averages, behavior grades and all the attitudinal measures racial ethnic-identity, academic self-efficacy and possible future-selves. By running a statistical analysis on each variable, I was able to tell whether the mentoring intervention had an impact on increasing or lessening these on different variables. The premise of the study was if REI increases, other school-related and attitudinal variables will be impacted positively. Using quantitative statistical analysis helped me see if the intervention had an impact on the different variables.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, I used interviews that were analyzed by turn or episode (a group of turns on a single topic) using open codes. The purpose of the interviews were

be to gather data on the experiences of the students within the mentoring program. The interviews were based on student responses to the surveys and questionnaires. Surveys and questionnaires were filled out by students both before and after the intervention. The students' explanations to 'why' they changed or shifted in their response to the questionnaires or surveys from pre to post-intervention were of particular interest in my analysis. I wanted to know what it was about the intervention that may have caused a shift in students' responses in the different motivational constructs (REI, possible future-selves, academic self-concept). Exploring and analyzing these experiences enabled me to come into a better understanding of what worked well within the intervention. Data was coded using open coding. After a round of open coding, axial coding was conducted to identify relationships among open codes; I used axial coding to categorize the responses of the students.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To provide a quick summary, my interest in creating a mentoring program was born of my own experience. I wanted to develop a mentoring program at my school site that would help foster a positive racial-ethnic identity for many of my at-risk African American male students. So, I created an in-school mentoring program at my school site. Eighteen 6th graders joined the mentoring program. The mentoring program took place during the third marking period of the school year and occurred during the students' lunch period.

As a reminder, the first component was our one-to-one check-ins. This was where the mentee and I would sit together and talk. During these check-ins, we would talk about their hobbies outside of school, along with how they were doing with their classes, teachers, and peers within the school. In addition to the one-to-one check-ins, the mentoring program had a two-component group session. The first type of group session was facilitated only by me, while the other group session occurred with a guest speaker. During the sessions that I facilitated, we read about and discussed topics surrounding systematic racism, stereotype threat, positive masculinity, African American history, African American cultural pride, and the power of education and resiliency. The second type of group sessions, the speaker series, were facilitated by other African American male professionals. The speakers were given four speaking points that centered around their lived experience as African American males as it related to valuing and education and persisting through school.

All of the quantitative data were procured before and after the intervention. Out of the 19 participants, 15 were present to take both the pre and post assessments. Only when measuring for GPA and behavior, was I able to use the quantitative data of all 19 mentees. The qualitative data

was also procured both before and after the intervention began. In order to make the qualitative load more manageable, I chose to sample only ten mentees (out of the 19) both before and after the intervention ended.

My first research question was to examine the nature of the students' experience while being mindful that the literature and my own experience informed the design. I was aware that I could not presume that the students I was working with, who were of different generations, came from different ethnic backgrounds, would have similar experiences. I wanted to examine the nature of their experience. The data that I drew upon explored the nature of the mentees' experience was from the final check-in interviews from 10 of the mentees. I chose to only interview 10 instead of the entire 19 mentees because it would make the data more manageable. The three exit questions centered around what they did or did not like about the mentoring program, and what could have improved about the mentoring program. To analyze the interviews, I read each participant's interview separately, identifying emerging themes. I then compared the emerging themes to characteristics that the literature on mentoring correlates to high functioning mentoring.

To strengthen the experience of the mentees within the program, I looked to the adolescent mentoring literature. There was consensus in the literature that mentoring programs that incorporated social activities, strengthened the interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees, spent adequate time with mentees, addressed the psychosocial needs of the students and used a developmental approach were likely to be both impacting and enjoyable to the mentee. As a result of the literature, I attempted to format the mentoring intervention to incorporate such characteristics. After analyzing the data from student interviews, my mentoring

intervention seemed to be strong in incorporating social activities and using a developmental approach. However, The mentoring intervention was mediocre in addressing the psychosocial needs of students. It was also weak in strengthening the interpersonal relationships between mentees and mentors, mainly because the intervention failed to promote adequate one-on-one time between the mentee and mentors.

Research Question 1: What was the Nature of the Participants' Experience in the Mentoring Program?

Qualitative

High-quality mentoring research posits that social activities are important in keeping the interest and excitement of a mentoring program. Most social activities involve discussions and often center around fun events or ideas. The most important distinction of a social activity is that it is non-academic; the activity does not correlate in any way to the mastering of an academic competency or concept (Herrera, 2000).

When the mentees were asked about what they liked about the program, seven out of the ten mentees had responded that they liked the speakers, along with the information that the speakers disseminated. A few examples of these students' responses follow:

Jeremy: I liked it. We learned about life, and we learned about where education can take us, about how people, when they were younger, they didn't really have the best life and they didn't really do too good in school, but then they changed and kind of made it.

Kurtis: I like how we got to meet lawyers and people who have famous jobs, and stuff like that. Because I wanted to learn more about lawyers.

Zack: I liked that the mentors that came in and told us about certain things about life and how we should react and what we should do.

The mentees liked the content and information that the speakers disseminated. They seemed motivated and impacted by the speakers. The speaker series was enjoyable to the mentees because it was structured as a social activity.

The speaker series was a social activity (because the activity was non-academic) that allowed the mentees to learn about the speakers' journeys towards success. There weren't tests or assessments that would occur after the speaker series. The speakers told their own personal stories in which students were free to interrupt at any time to ask questions. The students and speakers were able to discuss topics that would probably be out of the scope in most traditional curriculums. Also, students did not have to take notes or work through any problems that involved academic rigor. Finally, during the speaker series, hot food was served while the speaker was presenting. The structure of the speaker series as a social activity gave room and space for the mentees to know the speakers personally, along with receiving the messages that often centered around resiliency and taking education seriously.

While a bedrock characteristic of effective mentoring programs guides mentees by aiding with both the psychosocial and school-related needs (e.g., homework, studying for a test) of the mentee, my mentoring program was lacking in developing that trait amongst a majority of the mentees. During the intervention's one-to-one sessions, the aim was to try and create strong interpersonal relationships and bonds between the mentees and mentor.

When the mentees were asked what they liked about the program, only two out of 10 mentees had responses that centered around the idea of the mentor meeting their psychosocial and school-related needs. Students responded to the one-to-one sessions saying:

Zack: The one-on-ones was cool. They gave a break from class to chill and answer some questions.

Tarique: I like going up there and getting cookies, tell them how my day was and stuff and going up there.

Even in student responses, there was not a strong sense about developing more of an interpersonal relationship between mentee and mentor.

The literature on mentee and mentor relationships is clear that deep relationships between mentee and mentor develop over the duration of meetings and consistency of meetings; the longer the duration and consistency, the better the relationship. In order to create stronger relationships with the mentees that could have possibly led to me addressing more psychosocial needs, I could have had meetings with each of the 18 students once a week for a 12-week intervention. But because of time constraints, I only had meetings for the first three weeks.

My inconsistencies in the one-to-one meetings may have played an adverse role in developing strong interpersonal relationships with the mentees. Because developing strong relationships happens in the frequency and consistency of contact, trust can be established due to positive familiarity. Once trust is established, the mutual emotional bond will occur naturally. Rhodes et al., (2005) writing about characteristics that strengthen the quality of relationships between mentee and mentor state, "Only after a strong emotional connection has been established through consistent meetings, can the two participants proceed to achieving the objectives of the program in which they are involved (p.149)." Not only could have meeting consistently have helped the mentees with their psychosocial needs, but it could have also motivated the mentees to embody more of the spirit and teachings of the mentoring intervention.

I understand that when students feel know and cared for, they are more likely to meet the expectations of that individual. So, while I did not do a good job in within the boundaries of the intervention of creating a space for one-to-one contact, I was still able and intentional to try and

connect with many of the mentees during the school day even if it was outside of the mentoring programs designated components. For instance, I asked the mentees to check up on me in the morning as they arrived to school. Each morning, as some of the mentees would arrive to school, they would walk by the front office (where I station myself in the morning) and come in to say hello, give me a handshake and ask me how my day was going. I would often give a brief response, thank the mentees for checking on me and tell them to have a good day. Some of the same mentees were faithful and checked on me daily. At other times, during my informal classroom visits, I would see the mentees in their classrooms. During these times, I would often give the mentees a nod and sometimes in front of the class ask the teacher how the mentee was doing. The mentees would often nod back and smile. If the teacher had a less than positive comment to say, I would turn the comment around and say something affirming about the mentee. Other times that I would see the mentees were in the hallways whether transitioning to a class, going to the bathroom or running errand. Here, I would greet them, shake their hand and say something affirming. Lastly, if the students were sent to the disciplinary office while I was present in the office, I would read them the riot act about their behavior, but by the end of the conversation say affirming statements to the mentees and try to give them a strategy for improving their behavior. While these impromptu interactions with the mentees were not the same as having regular and consistent one-to-one meetings, they were able to build positive familiarity between the mentees and me.

The more time a mentee and mentor can spend together, the more of a possibility that the two will get to know each other in a more meaningful way. Consistent contact is another feature of higher-quality mentoring relationship; it can be critical to the formation of a lasting and meaningful bond with a mentor (Rhodes et al., 2000). While I was not able to meet the mark

with meetings for the one-to-one interventions, I was able to meet with the mentees as a group at least once a week and sometimes twice a week during the 10-week intervention. While I felt as though I saw the mentees enough during the intervention, they had a different sentiment. When asked “What could have made the program better,” three out of the 10 mentees' responses centered around time spent with the mentor:

Samuel: I wish it was three times a week instead of two times a week or four times.

Jeremy: There was nothing I didn't like about it. The only thing I didn't like was that it wasn't every day because I wish it was every day. That's how cool it was.

The sentiment of the responses shows that the mentees wanted to meet more because it was enjoyable.

While I may not have had enough one-to-one mentoring sessions that would have fostered stronger emotional connections, I did meet with the mentees as a group consistently enough for a few of the mentees to form a social cohesion between one another. The mentees met twice a week, and at times for up to two hours if a guest speaker was present. Group mentoring creates cohesion and bonds among mentees that may not often be present in one-to-one mentoring (Carvin, 2011; Kaye & Jacobson, 1995; Huizing, 2012). Deutsch (2017) writes, “Group contexts may be beneficial in mentoring due to the presence of multiple peers - group mentoring allows for closeness, cohesion, and mutual support at both the dyadic and group levels, providing two pathways for youth outcomes” (p. 294). When questioned about what the students liked about the program two examples include:

Aaron: I got to socialize with my friends and you. I got to learn a lot of new things and learning with my friends and you.

Langston: I liked that it inspired me and the other male students. They're coming together and to work with each other and I think it inspired every male.

Aaron and Langston both enjoyed the fact that they learned and that they were learned alongside their fellow classmates.

One critique the mentees had about the mentoring program that was also consistent with the literature is that effective mentoring programs take developmental approaches.

A developmental approach is a model where the two parties involved in an enterprise come together in order to make joint decisions about the structure of the activities within an enterprise. Herrera et al. (2000) write “The strongest relationships are formed when the mentor takes a "developmental" rather than a "prescriptive" approach, allowing the mentee to take the lead and share in making activity decisions (p. 9).

When the mentees were asked, “What they did not like about the mentoring program?” four out of the ten mentees spoke about not going on field trips. During the group's very first session, I specifically asked the group what to add to the program in order to make the approach more developmental or co-constructed. Either one of the students or myself said taking field trips. After this was said, other mentees added excitedly in the agreement of the idea. However, because of poor planning, I was not able to take the group on a field trip to a university. When the mentees were asked the question of what could have made the mentoring program better, four of the mentees made explicit mentions about not going on field trips:

Aaron: Well we didn't get to go on the college visits. If we could go on trips to learn new things.

Samuel: Maybe if we had more trips and probably if we had the program almost every day.

Langston: Everything was good. We could've gone on one trip probably.

Kurtis: So really nothing, if we count the last time we were here before we went on break, I wanted to go on trips. Well, we may go on trips this year, so, I really think, nothing.

While the students and I co-constructed a component of the mentoring program together, I was not able to implement the idea. The students who actually answered the question of what could have made the mentoring program better with a response other than “nothing,” primarily had responses regarding not going on a field trip.

Research Question 2a: To What Extent Does a Mentoring Program Designed to Foster Racial-Ethnic Identity Impact the Racial-Ethnic Identity of its Adolescent Black Male Participants?

My second research question was to examine the impact of the mentoring program in fostering a racial ethnic-identity among its participants. In the simplest of terms, racial ethnic-identity can be defined as the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs that an individual holds about his or her particular racial or ethnic group. Racial ethnic-identity is composed of three subcomponents. The first component is Connectedness. Connectedness is the extent that someone sees their racial-ethnic group membership as part of who they are. Individuals high in Connectedness feel that their race or ethnicity plays a huge role in who they are. The next component is Embedded Achievement. Embedded Achievement is a belief that academic achievement is a goal that is valued by the ethnicity of the group the child identifies with. The last component is an awareness of racism. Awareness of racism involves wrestling with how other out-group members view the in-group.

Tripartite subsets

Because racial-ethnic identity is composed of three distinct components (Connectedness, Embedded Achievement, and awareness of racism) I choose to separate and categorize the interview responses by the different corresponding subsets within the qualitative analysis. We

also separated the tripartite subsets within the quantitative analysis; the different items in the survey had an answer key that corresponded the different items to the different subsets of racial-ethnic identity.

I wanted to analyze whether the mentoring program impacted their racial-ethnic identity of the Black-male participants. To do this, I used a mixed-method approach. The quantitative data I drew upon was a from a five point Likert scale that captured attitudinal data that ranged between the two possible extremes (strongly agree to strongly disagree) of racial-ethnic identity. The assessment used was the Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale (Oyserman et al., 1995). It was used to capture mentees' attitudes related to their connection or feeling a part of the African American community, their awareness of racism, and their acceptance or belief of academic achievement being a norm for African Americans. The qualitative data that I drew upon were from interviews responses from the Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale. The interviews were conducted both before and after the intervention. To analyze the interviews, I read each participants' interview separately and identified emerging themes as I read.

Quantitative

For the Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale, pre and post-surveys were given to 19 mentees. 15 mentees completed both pre and post-assessments. For each item, students had the option of selecting five responses that matched their feelings to the question. A score of 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The sum of averages of the mentees' racial-ethnic identity before the intervention as a group was a 3.74. After the intervention, the sum of averages for the mentees as a group was a

3.88. The mentees' racial-ethnic identity rose slightly after the mentoring intervention. There was no statistical significance in any of the quantitative analysis.

Ten out of the fifteen (66%) racial-ethnic identity scores rose after the intervention was complete. However, five out of the 15 (33%) had their scores decrease after the mentoring intervention was over. No mentee had a score that stayed the same after the intervention was complete. So, while there was not any statistically significant data, the trend shows that the majority of students are growing in their racial-ethnic identity.

Table 4
RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	T	P
6 th (n = 15)	3.74	3.88	1.30	.21

Data Source: Means and Paired Two Sample t-Tests for Means Result

Connectedness

Connectedness is one of the tripartite components of racial-ethnic identity.

Connectedness is the extent that someone sees their racial-ethnic group membership as part of who they are. Individuals high in connectedness feel that their race or ethnicity plays a huge role in who they are. To the extent that youth see their racial-ethnic group membership as part of who they are (high in connectedness), they may feel a particular need to act in ways congruent with in-group values or norms (Altschul et al., .2006). One goal of the mentoring program was to try and increase the students' level of Connectedness to being African American while trying to counteract the negative narrative of African American males that is often prevalent in the psyches of African American adolescent males. If I could change the perceived narrative to

positive, then I hypothesized that a highly connected student would embrace and try to enact elements of an alternative narrative that shows African American males as successful and integral to society.

Quantitative

For Connectedness, a subset of racial-ethnic identity, we used questions that captured the attitudinal data from a five point Likert scale ranging between the two extremes of students' attitudes related to the mentees Connectedness to the African American community. Fifteen mentees completed both the pre and post assessment. For each item, students had the option of selecting five responses that matched their feelings to the question. A score of 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The sum of averages of the mentees' Connectedness before the intervention for the mentees as a group was a 4.00. After the intervention, the sum of averages for the mentees as a group was a 4.20. The mentees' Connectedness rose slightly after the mentoring intervention. There was no statistical significance in any of the quantitative analysis.

Table 5

CONNECTEDNESS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	T	P
6 th (n = 15)	4.0	4.20	1.01	.33

Data Source: Means and Paired Two Sample t-Test for Means Result

Eight out of the fifteen (53%) Connectedness scores rose after the intervention was complete. However, three out of 15 (20%) of their scores decreased after the mentoring

intervention was over. Four out of 15 (27%) of the mentees' scores stayed the same. While there was not any statistically significant data, the trend shows that the majority of students are growing in connection to the African American community.

Qualitative

The qualitative data that I drew upon were from interviews responses from the Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale's Connectedness items (See Appendix A for the full survey along with codes for Connectedness). The interviews were conducted both before and after the intervention. To analyze the interviews, I read each participants' interview separately and identified emerging themes as I read.

Before the intervention began, the mentees were asked whether they felt close to the African American community. Their responses were mixed. One mentee Aaron felt that he wasn't really close to the African American community because of some of their actions. He states:

Aaron: Because the African, not all the African American community is positive. Because I'm not part of the African American community- like shooting and all this other stuff.

Jeremy, on the other hand, feels very close to the African American community because of their shared heritage. He said:

Jeremy: Most of the people that live around here know me and they like come to see my football games and basketball games" and "because I'm African American, they're African American and we can kind of relate about our history and the African American history.

Another mentee, Kurtis, was in the middle of whether he felt close to the African American community because he did know everyone in his community. He explained:

Kurtis: Because a lot of African Americans that don't know me. And there's a lot of African Americans that I don't know.

Langston also responded that he did not feel close to the African American community. When asked why, he responded:

Langston: I barely know some African Americans in the community.

Out of the four mentees that made explicit mention of whether or not they felt close to the African American community, one response was based off a perceived shared heritage, two mentees responses were based off the number of people they knew within their neighborhood, and one mentees response was based off the actions of other African Americans.

After the mentoring intervention was complete, the post-interview surrounding the mentees' feelings of closeness to the African American community had many similarities to their feeling of closeness before the intervention, aside from one student shifting positions after the intervention was complete. Rasheed felt that he was not close to the African American community because he did not know a lot of people. He said:

Rasheed: Cause I don't know, I don't know the people in a group, I don't know them like that, like how I know my friends around here.

Zack felt that he is not close to the African American community because he does not interact with members of his community. He said:

Zack: Because I go, I barely go outside. I barely go outside anymore.

Only one student in the post-interview explains why he switched from not feeling close to feeling close:

Langston: Before, when they said close, I thought that meant related, but now I know you don't have to be related to an African American male, you can just feel like you're going to their goals.

While many of the mentees in the post interviews seemed to have the same sentiment as other mentees in the pre-interviews, Langston did grasp the message that the program was trying to

promote in the connectedness domain - The feeling of being a part of the African American community's struggles, victories, and goals.

Embedded Achievement

Embedded Achievement is a belief that academic achievement is a goal that is valued by the ethnicity of the group the child identifies with. The stronger the child's belief in Embedded Achievement, the more likely the child will think that achieving is a way of life. And the more likely, the child will conform to that way of believing and being.

Quantitative

For Embedded Achievement, a subset of racial-ethnic identity, we used questions that captured the attitudinal data from a five point scale ranging between the two extremes of students' attitudes related to the mentees' perception of academic achievement being an in-group (African American) norm. 15 mentees completed both the pre and post assessment. For each item, mentees had the option of selecting five responses that matched their feelings to the question. A score of 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The sum of averages of the mentees' embedded achievement before the intervention for the mentees as a group was a 3.68. After the intervention, the sum of averages for the mentees as a group was a 3.82. The mentees' academic achievement rose slightly after the mentoring intervention was complete. There was no statistical significance in any of the quantitative analysis.

Table 6
EMBEDDED ACHIEVEMENT

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	T	P
6 th (n = 15)	3.68	3.82	.70	.50

Data Source: Means and Paired Two Sample t-Test for Means Result

Seven out of the fifteen mentees (47%) embedded achievement scores rose after the intervention was complete. Five out of 15 (33%) of their scores decreased after the mentoring intervention was over. And three out of 15 (20%) of the mentees' scores stayed the same. While there was not any statistically significant data, the trend shows that more mentees than not do believe that the African American community values academic achievement.

Qualitative

Before the intervention, when speaking about whether African Americans value good grades the mentees shared:

Langston: I heard over the news people are getting killed and they don't have good grades. They don't care because their grades.

Zack: Yeah, because I don't think African Americans would care about grades.

Both males, before the intervention, were pretty clear in their sentiments that African American males, in general, did not care about their grades. A child having a negative view on their group's embedded achievement could adversely impact the expectations a child holds for himself.

In addition to the emergence of the theme as to whether or not African Americans value good grades, students gave interesting answers before the intervention began as to whether

African Americans would respect the mentees for getting good grades; the responses were mixed. One mentee, Langston, believed people in the African American community would see him getting good grades as a positive. He said:

Langston: If I work hard and get good grades people [other African Americans] will understand, and they will understand how I have been in life.

Another mentee, Samuel, believed that getting good grades is not something that the African American community necessarily respects:

Samuel: Oh wait, if I work hard and get good grades. I can have good grades and then other people could still walk up to me, bully me, take my money. It wouldn't make them respect me.

Also, another mentee spoke explicitly about the issue of grades and respect in the African American community explained how those in his inner circle might find good grades worthy of respect, but those who do not know him would not care. As he said:

Kurtis: Well if I get good grades and work hard, my friends and family will respect me. But the other African Americans out there may not know me, so they may not respect me.

Before the intervention, the mentees that had made explicit statements about grades and respect in relation to the response of the African American community all had varying degrees of how they believed the African American community viewed the importance of good grades.

After the intervention was complete, it seems that the mentees that responded as a whole became confident in their views that the African American community may not respect them because of their grades:

Lawrence: Just because you had good grades, got degrees and have a good job – people could still disrespect you no matter what.

Aaron: So like, they (African American community) won't look at me as a successful man, they will look at me as just a man who got good grades and then he got, a man who got good grades and listened in school. So they won't always respect me.

Kurtis: Well if I get good grades, it doesn't matter what the African Americans think of me because I know I'm good and successful and I'm getting good grades. Some of them may not even respect that I got good grades.

While three of the mentees expressed doubts about the African American community at large respecting them because of their grades, two mentees spoke about how their immediate African American family would respect them for getting good grades. While Lawrence and Zack do not comment on the general African American community, they do comment on their families reactions and desire for good grades:

Zack: My family is proud of me if I get good grades.

Lawrence: My mom, especially my mom and my grand mom, they all want me to succeed. Ever since I started first grade, they see my grades and stuff. And, ever since then, they just wanted me to stay focused on school.

The mentees may have shifted their thinking more to “The African-American community may not care if I get good grades” as a result of the speaker series and the round table discussions that centered on resiliency. In different instances, both speakers and the stories we read would often provide information about how peers and friends will try to persuade their friends (both intentionally and unintentionally) from studying, paying attention and even coming to school. This may be one of the reasons that a higher percentage of the mentees, more so than before the intervention began, may have vocalized their stance on the African American community. I do believe, however, if the question had been amended to “Would African American professionals respect you if you get good grades?” that more of the mentees would have said yes. Embedded Achievement can be defined as the belief that academic achievement is a goal that is valued by the ethnicity of the group the child identifies with. While students living in backgrounds of poverty are likely to see a gamut of people who look like them and differ on the importance or value of getting good grades, the mentoring program tried to show that among

professional African American males (among this subset of a group), that getting good grades and taking and education seriously is both valued and something that this group would consider a norm.

In addition to the theme of the African American community not respecting students because of their grades, another theme that was salient pre-intervention was the need to inspire younger students to be successful. The majority of responses came from a question asking whether it is important for their family and the African American community that the mentee succeeds in school:

Zack: Yes because if I achieve greatness it will inspire them to achieve greatness as well.

Aaron: Because, as long as I'm successful it will help me in the African American community if I'm very successful I can change the way people think and some of the violence out here. Stuff like that. And I can help the community.

Jeremy: I feel like I can inspire [others], if I do something great in life, I feel like I can inspire other people too.

Langston: When I get successful I can help them. It can help them get through stuff and they probably can agree what I'm talking about.

After the mentoring intervention was complete, fewer mentees made explicit references to inspiring the younger generation. Only one mentee, Langston, spoke about inspiring others:

Langston: Now, I would help the African American community grow stronger, and help others succeed.

Langston also noted the probability that the speakers who were talking about the notions of mentorship, may had been mentored themselves:

Langston: Well, we had a speaker, I think, he was saying, we're strong, and we need to come and motivate each other. So somebody probably motivated him. Motivated an African American male, so others can be part of him.

Kurtis on the other hand had a different sentiment about the ramifications of his success and who it may help or inspire. In responding to a question about whether it's important that the African American community succeed, he said:

Kurtis: Well, it doesn't matter what they do, it's a matter of what I achieve. And my family achieves. Because if they achieve something, it don't mean it's going to help me. If I'm successful it's going to help me and my family.

While the intervention, especially the speaker series, attempted to build on the notion of African Americans helping and inspiring one another to achieve, the activities of the intervention did not make salient the theme of helping your brother or fellow African American. As a result, many of the mentees did not feel a depth to fellow humanity, but more so, may have interpreted success as more of an individual versus a communal endeavor.

Awareness of Racism

Along with Connectedness, and Embedded Achievement, the last part of the REI model makes sure that students have an awareness of racism. Awareness of racism involves wrestling with how other out-group members view the in-group (Altschul et al., 2006); if students can acquire an awareness of racism, they may be less likely to believe and embrace the defamatory portrayal of African American male masculinity that is often portrayed in the media. In order to see if the mentoring intervention had an impact on students' awareness of racism, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Quantitative

For awareness of racism, a subset of racial-ethnic identity, we used questions that captured the attitudinal data from a five point Likert scale ranging between the two extremes of students' attitudes related to the mentee's perception of systemic racism towards African Americans. Fifteen mentees completed both the pre and post assessment. For each item, students

had the option of selecting five responses that matched their feelings to the question. A score of 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The sum of averages of the mentees’ awareness of racism before the intervention for the mentees as a group was a 3.53. After the intervention, the sum of averages for the mentees as a group was a 3.62. The mentees' awareness of racism rose slightly after the mentoring intervention was complete. There was no statistical significance in any of the quantitative analysis.

Table 7

AWARENESS OF RACISM

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	T	P
6 th (n = 15)	3.53	3.62	.57	.58

Data Source: Means and Paired Two Sample t-Tests Means Result

Seven out of the fifteen mentees (46%) awareness of racism scores rose after the intervention was complete. Four out of 15 (27%) had shown a decrease after the mentoring intervention was over. Four out of 15 (27%) of the mentees' scores stayed the same. While there was not any statistically significant data, the trend shows that more mentees are becoming more aware of racism.

Qualitative

Before the intervention began, I interviewed 10 students. During the interviews, I asked students questions related to racism. Many of the mentees were in agreement in their perspectives regarding their beliefs about how outside groups view African Americans. The

mentees responded to a question that asked whether people will treat them differently because they are African American. Their responses:

Aaron: Because racists always think, not always, they always, how should I put this, yeah they always think that their children or that they're better than African Americans. They might have negative ideas about our ability because they're always going to be on top.

Kurtis: Because people think because I'm Black and African American, that I might go to jail and stuff. And skip school. But I might actually go to college and get a good education and get a lot of money.

Zack: White people think just because we're Black, we're not good at anything. So, I like to think of myself as an African American because I can do greatness, and I can achieve what they can achieve, as well.

Unlike the previous three mentees, Samuel believes that he will be treated based on his character rather than on his race:

Samuel: If I'm African American, well, it depends on who you are, inside, and it depends on how you think about the African Americans.

And when I asked Samuel to clarify if people would treat him differently because he was African American, he said absolutely not and that people would treat him according to "his inside" or character. Many of the mentees came into the mentoring intervention with a high awareness that racism exists. The mentees saw racism as a personal, but not as a systemic issue.

After the intervention was completed, the sentiments regarding racism stayed the same.

Aaron's and Tarique responded to whether people would treat them differently because they are African American:

Aaron: They might have negative ideas about my abilities or other African American's abilities because we are Black, and they think we're under them.

Like Aaron, Tarique had the same type of sentiment. When he was asked if people would treat him differently, Tarique responded, "Yes, because I am Black." He then talked about past experiences with experiencing racism from other groups. One time when he was playing

organized football from a majority white team, a player from the other team said derogatory things. He stated:

Tarique: Like one time this White bully was like, 'Oh, I owned you. I owned you back in the day,' and all that.

Unlike the previous two mentees, Samuel still stayed true to the type of sentiments he had prior to the beginning of the mentoring intervention about people not treating him differently despite being African American. He said:

Samuel: Because like I said race doesn't matter. You can be White and you'll have people think negatively about you. It doesn't matter. Race doesn't matter for real.

There did not seem to be any salient changes both before and after the intervention in the mentees' perceptions about the attitudes of outside groups treating the mentees differently because they are African American. Part of the no change in results may be because I was not sure what to promote. I do personally believe people may treat me and look down on me because I am Black, but I also believe that being Black does not mean all people from other groups will dislike me or think condescendingly of me. More than having students believe that everyone in an outside group views them in a certain manner, what was more important for me as the facilitator was that the mentees understand that racism can be systemic within society and not just a personal feeling of bias from someone from an outside group.

Along with the mentees' feelings about racism, another theme that emerged in the interview data both before and after the intervention was a lack of opportunity in African American communities. Before the intervention he said:

Langston: I don't think there are enough opportunities for African-Americans. Some African-Americans, they don't have the same opportunities that other people can have.

However, after the intervention, Langston spoke more about systemic racism affecting a specific people group and gender. He remembers what some of the speakers mentioned:

Langston: Because at first, I already knew that I'm a part of the African American community, and it was important for me to be, but now when we had the speakers, our speakers told us as African American men, we don't have enough opportunities.

Lawrence also noted systemic racism when he spoke about the disproportional number of white politicians to Black politicians. He said,

Lawrence: Because you don't see a lot, there was only one Black president. You don't see a lot of Black senators or Black governors, you don't see a lot of Blacks up there, you see mostly White people and Caucasians.

While Langston and Lawrence, noticed the disparities in opportunities for African American males, Tarique had a short, but concise different viewpoint. When asked if, things in the African American community are not as good as they could be because of lack of opportunity he said:

Tarique: There's plenty [opportunity] around. But people are not taking school and stuff seriously.

All of the responses post-intervention were aligned with the aims of the program. In Langston and Lawrence's responses, we see the mentees are pointing out a system of racism and not just personal racism. In Tarique's response, we see did he did not disband the idea of racism, but instead focused on school and education as a tool to procure opportunities.

The three main components of racial-ethnic identity are Connectedness, Embedded Achievement, and awareness of racism. When African American students believe strongly these aspects of their racial-ethnic identity, research posits that they will be more motivated to value their education and persist in school. While there are other subsets to racial-ethnic identity such as cultural pride and connection to the larger society, these constructs are not as important as the

foundational three and are often embedded within the foundational components of racial-ethnic identity.

Research Question 2b: To what Extent Does a Mentoring Program Designed to Foster Racial-Ethnic Identity Impact the Academic Achievement of its Adolescent Black Male Participants?

My second research question was to examine the academic impact of the mentoring program. The data that I analyzed was the report cards of the 6th grade mentored and non-mentored students during report card period three (RP3) and report card period four (RP4). Report card period three was the marking period before the intervention began, and report card period four was the marking period during the intervention.

Quantitative

In order to determine whether or not the mentoring program had an impact on its adolescent Black male participant's academic achievement, I analyzed the grade point averages of all the 6th-grade boys. This included both the average grade point averages of boys in the mentored and non-mentored group. I compared the mentored groups' (N=19) GPA to the GPA of the non-mentored group (N=17). I compared both groups' average GPA's before the mentoring intervention in report marking period 3, and during the intervention in report card marking period 4.

Although we ran three statistical analyses (a chi-square, an analysis of variance, and an analysis of covariance), we did not find any levels of statistical significance for academics in any of the statistical analyses between the mentoring group and the non-mentored group. We did,

however, notice trends in the academic achievement of the mentored group that were worth mentioning.

Before the mentoring intervention began in RP3, the average GPA of the experimental group (N=19) was 3.52. After the mentoring intervention immediately ended in RP4, the GPA of the experimental group increased to 3.54. The control group's (N=17) GPA during RP3 was 3.55. At the end of the report card period, the control group's GPA decreased to 3.53. ⁴

During RP3, the report card marking period before the intervention, students in the mentoring group scored on average below the non-mentored group. However, during the RP4, the marking period of the intervention, the mentored group had a higher average than those of the non-mentored students. More specifically, RP3, the marking period before the mentoring intervention, the mentoring group scored an average GPA of 3.52. However, during the report card period that the intervention was going forth, RP4, the mentees' grades increased to 3.54, which surpassed their GPA in RP3. Conversely, the non-mentored group's GPA fell between report card periods. During RP3, the non-mentored group had a GPA of 3.55. However, during RP4, the non-mentored group's GPA fell to 3.53.

⁴ At the charter school where the mentoring intervention took place, teachers are directed by a long- standing policy to teach and reteach concepts if a student receives a grade below a B-. So, if a student gets a C+ on a test, teachers are mandated to reteach and retest until the child scores a B- or better. In theory, this should encourage all children to master or at least understand each learning objective. .

Table 8

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	F	P
6 th Grade (n = 15)	3.52	3.54	.72	.40

Data Source: Means and ANOVA Results

Table 9

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT 2

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	F	P
6 th Grade (n = 15)	3.52	3.54	.66	.42

Data Source: Means and ANCOVA Results

Of the nineteen students that participated in the mentoring intervention, from RP3 to RP4, five (26%) of their GPAs dropped during the marking period of the intervention. Four (21%) of their GPAs stayed the same. And 10 (53%) of the mentees' GPAs increased during the marking period of the intervention. Of the 17 students that were not part of the mentoring intervention, from RP3 to RP4, two (12%) of their GPAs stayed the same, nine (53%) of their GPAs dropped, and six (35%) of their GPAs increased.

When I compared the mentored group to the non-mentored group, my results showed the mentored group had 9% more of its students to at least maintain its GPA from RP3 to RP4. From the mentored group, 18% more of its students increased their GPAs than the non-mentored group during RP4. Also, while the mentored children did have students whose grades dropped during

the 4th marking period (26%), the non-mentored group had twice the amount (53%) of students whose grades dropped during the last marking period.

While the different statistical analyses did not yield statistically significant differences, it is noted that the mentored group outperformed the non-mentored group in academic outcomes from RP3 to RP4. This is also worth noting because usually in final marking periods before the summer recess, GPAs traditionally decrease as a whole. Overall, the mentored group of students fared better in every academic outcome than the non-mentored students. A higher percentage of mentored students increased their GPAs between the two marking periods. Over half of the mentored students increased their GPA from RP3 to RP4, while over half of the non-mentored students' GPAs actually decreased during that time frame. The mentored students had less of a percentage of students whose GPAs dropped between the two marking periods. And finally, the mentored children had a higher percentage of students who at least maintained their same GPA from RP3 to RP4.

Research Question 2c: To what Extent Does a Mentoring Program Designed to Foster Racial-Ethnic Identity Impact the Behavioral Outcomes of its Students?

My second research question was to examine the impact of the mentoring program in impacting the behavioral outcomes of the students. Each 6th grade student has eight classes in which they receive a behavior grade. In each class, behavior grades could either be a '1', '2', or '3'. Receiving a 1 is rated as excellent behavior. Receiving a '2' is rated as average behavior and receiving '3' is rated, as needs improvement. There are no non-integer numbers that are allotted for behavioral grades. In order to calculate the behavior average, I added all of the numeric behavior grades together from each class and divided the number by the number classes that

were taken. When dealing with behavior point average, unlike GPA, the lower the behavior point average means that behavior is better or improving.

Although we ran three statistical analyses (a chi-square, an analysis of variance, and an analysis of covariance), we did not find any levels of statistical significance for behavior in any of the statistical analyses between the mentoring group and the non-mentored group. Before the mentoring intervention began in RP3, the behavior point average for the experimental group (N=19) was 1.40. After the mentoring intervention immediately ended in RP4, the behavior point average for the experimental group was a 1.50. The control group's (N=18) behavior point average during RP3 was 1.31. At the end of the RP4, the control group's behaviors grade average was 1.42. Both the non-mentored and mentored groups' BPAs worsened at almost the exact same rate. The literature on school outcomes posits that behavior grades, on average, drop during final marking periods because of reasons sometimes correlated to the impending summer recess.

Research Question 2d: To what Extent Does a Mentoring Program Designed to Foster a Racial-Ethnic Identity Impact the Academic Self-Concept of its Adolescent Black Male Participants?

Again, my second research question was to examine the nature of the students' academic self-efficacy. Academic self-concept is the perception and evaluation that a student has or does not have about his or her academic abilities (Ordaz-Villegas et al., 2014). Students with strong academic self-concept are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, engage in the learning, value school, and persist through challenging coursework (McGrew, 2008).

Quantitative

For the Academic-Self Efficacy Questionnaire we used questions that captured the attitudinal data from a five-point Likert scale ranging between the two extremes of students attitudes related to the mentees perception of their academic ability. Both pre and post-surveys were given. 15 mentees completed both pre and post-assessments. For each item, students had the option of selecting five responses that matched their feelings to the question. A score of 1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neither agree or disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The sum of averages before the intervention for the mentees as a group was a 4.20. After the intervention, the sum of averages for the mentees as a group was a 4.59. Both pre and post-assessment scores showed the mentees were confident in their academic-self efficacy. At the end of the intervention, the mentees' confidence in their academic ability rose to a higher place of confidence. When we conducted a two paired t-test, we found to be statistically significant at the 0.0011 level. The two-sample t-test is one of the most commonly used hypothesis to compare whether the average difference between the two groups is really significant or if it is due, instead, to random chance. The P-value of .0011 indicates that the differences in the pre and post-assessments are likely due to something impacting the difference in scores and not likely to be random chance. Not only was there statistical significance in the two-sample t-test, the effect size, also known as Cohen's D, was .98. 'Effect size' is a way of quantifying the size of the difference between the two groups. It allows evaluators to move beyond the simplistic, 'Does it work or not?' to 'How well does it work in a range of contexts?' (Coe, 2002). When the effect size is over .8, the effect size is deemed as large and therefore a meaningful way to predict the effectiveness of the intervention.

Table 10

ACADEMIC-SELF EFFICACY

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	T	P
6 th Grade (n = 15)	4.20	4.59	1.75	.0011

Data Source: Means and Paired Two Sample t-Tests Means Result

Of the nineteen mentees that participated in the intervention from RP3 to RP4, sixteen of the mentees completed both the pre and post-assessment. One of the mentees' (6%) academic-self competency dropped during the marking period of the intervention. Two (13%) of the mentees' academic-self competency stayed the same. And 14 (81%) of the mentees' academic self-competence increased during the marking period of the intervention.

Qualitative

Before the intervention started, based on the Academic Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire responses, the mentees already had a high estimation of their ability to understand academic material. The mentees believed that if they persisted in attempting, then they would come to an understanding of academic material. Those responses as stated:

Aaron: I can figure out anything in school if I try hard enough because if you put your all into something you really want to know, you will know it.

Rasheed: Because if you keep trying and keep trying, you going to [understand].

Sadiq: If I try hard enough and I put my brain to one thing, I can do it. Samuel.

The mentees were most confident that if they tried, then they would be able to understand any academic material.

Concurrently, while some of the mentees had high estimations of what they could achieve in understanding material if they persisted, other mentees spoke about the frustrations they faced when they do not understand material. Some examples as stated:

Kurtis: If I'm struggling to do something, I get mad because I can't get it. And then I may focus on other things and I may not [try any more].

Rasheed: I might give up. Like, I might. Depending on how hard it is. If I can't keep if I can't get it. Some things I may be able to figure out this year or next year. And some I may not be able to figure out.

Interestingly, before the intervention, some mentees had a high estimation of their ability to understand material if they continued to persist in trying to understand the material, but at the same time, when they did not understand a concept, they readily admitted that they would give up. Even though some of the mentees verbalized the concept of grit and steadfastness in persisting, some of the same mentees (like Rasheed) verbalized that they gave when they did not understand.

After the intervention, the mentees seemed to come to a new understanding that some of the academic material they will encounter may actually be difficult to understand, but if they persisted in trying, then they would be able to understand the difficult material. Jeremy linked struggling to master academic content to his similar struggles of trying to understand his football playbook:

Jeremy: I think about football. And that's why I love math so much. I think about football and how I try hard. And I take it into the classroom too. [If I can do it] in football, I can do it in class. And at school. I think about when I first had to learn the playbook, and it was hard, but then I thought about it and I got through it because I kept working day by day.

In the same way that Jeremy felt about overcoming difficult material by persisting, Langston felt that even when a topic is difficult, he could get it if he stayed with the topic. When asked if he can learn anything if he tries hard enough in school, Langston responded:

Langston: At first, I know I can do anything. Not anything, but I can do something that was hard, but I knew I could keep trying hard to figure it out. But now I strongly agree that if I'm having trouble with something, and I really try hard enough and try to reach that goal I wanted to reach. I can figure it out.

Not only was there a new realization of the difficulty of certain tasks, but a few of the mentees after the intervention also spoke about the how practicing or doing a task repeatedly played a key role in understanding concepts. Some mentees explained:

Samuel: I can figure out stuff if I try hard enough, and if I keep on doing it and go over it again, I will find a way to figure it out.

Aaron: Like I can figure out any problem in sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade. Even if I try hard enough, if I try hard enough, I will learn it easy. If I keep practicing and practicing, it will be easier.... Yeah. Because, if you keep practicing, I could develop any skill that I need to understand.

Lawrence: I know that if I'm working on something, and if I practice every day, I can develop it, but the program taught me that I can really probably try harder than I really wanted to. So, I can develop any skill to understand difficult material.

Before the mentoring intervention began, the mentees had a high estimation of their academic abilities. Their responses highlighted their belief in thinking that they could understand academic material if they tried hard enough. Their responses showed a slight idealism in disregarding the complexity or difficulty of academic tasks. While some mentees did believe that they could understand anything as long as they persisted, other mentees and even some of the same mentees who said they could understand any task if they tried hard spoke about quitting when they did not understand an academic task because of its difficulty; this shows a direct dissonance between thinking and action.

After the mentoring program was completed, the first trend that was noticed in regard to academic-efficacy among a few of the mentees was that they had a new awareness that academic tasks may be difficult. This new awareness of task difficulty was coupled with a higher sense of academic-self efficacy. During the intervention, some of the professional African American males spoke about the rigor of college and the difficulty they had in understanding some of the academic material. They spoke about their need to read and reread material and getting additional help. These discussions during the speaker series may be a reason why the emerging theme of difficult academic tasks appeared during the interviews after the mentoring session was over. Nonetheless, even with the mentees realizing that content may be difficult, their estimation and their confidence also rose after the intervention.

Along with the new revelation that academic tasks may actually be difficult, another emerging theme that a few of the mentees began to speak about was the need for repeated practice in order to understand concepts. During the mentoring intervention, in the group meetings, I reiterated my own need to practice in order to understand concepts. Some of the African American speakers also spoke about the topic of practice and persistence. While no explicit mentions were made about the mentoring intervention in aiding to their thinking about the need to practice, the idea of needing repeated practice in order to master a skill is both realistic and salient in the literature of academic self-efficacy and competency.

Research Question 2e. To what Extent Does a Mentoring Program Designed to Foster a Racial-Ethnic Identity Impact the Possible Future Self-Concept of its Adolescent Black Male Participants?

My second research question was aimed at examining the nature of the students' possible future self-concept while being mindful that the design was informed by the literature and my

own experiences. In order to do this, I used a mixed-method approach. The quantitative data I drew upon was a pre and post-assessment of the Possible Selves Plausibility Scale (Oyserman, 2004). In the Possible Selves Questionnaire open-ended survey instrument, the mentees received individual scores for both their aspirations for their next year possible-self, along with the strategies they are implementing in order to reach their next year possible-self aspirations. The qualitative data that I drew upon were from interviews that explored the nature of the mentees' possible future-selves. The interviews were conducted both before and after the intervention. To analyze the interviews, I read each participants' interview separately and identified emerging themes.

Possible-selves is a motivational theory that posits an individual will be more likely to persist into becoming or pursuing a future endeavor if they know that there is a possibility that what they are pursuing may become a reality (Cross & Markus, 1994). Often, what youth hear and see about the group in which their identity is tied to, generally has a lasting impact on what they believe is possible for their own future-selves. The more they see and hear about their group to which their identity is highly connected to, the more they believe that group's portrayal is an individual self-characteristic of their own selves (Davis, Aronson & Salinas, 2006).

Quantitative Data

The Possible Selves Questionnaire open-ended survey instrument asks respondents about whom they expect to be in one year (*aspirations*) along with whether *strategies*, if any, are being implemented towards achieving the one-year expected-self goal. The respondents were asked only to put responses related to academic achievement, personal characteristics, and interpersonal traits. The questionnaire scores participants on both the number of each aspiration

and the number of each corresponding strategies that a respondent is currently implementing in order to fulfill each aspiration. The respondent is given a point in the aspiration domain for each aspiration they write that is related to academic achievement, personal characteristics, and interpersonal traits. In the same manner, in the strategy domain, the respondent is given a point for each strategy that they are currently implementing that enables them to reach their aspirations.

Fifteen mentees completed both the pre and post assessment. There was a statistically significant result on a repeated-measures ANOVA test. As a group, the mentees' strategies mean score responses rose from .87 to 1.60. While there was not any statistical significance in the mentees' aspirations, there was a positive trend in the mentees' aspirations. As a group, the mentees' aspiration means score responses rose from 2.4 to a 3.0 after the intervention was over.

Table 11

POSSIBLE SELVES STRATEGIES

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	F	P
6 th Grade (n = 15)	.87	1.60	6.669	.022

Data Source: Means and ANOVA Results

Table 12

POSSIBLE SELVES ASPIRIATIONS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	F	P
6 th Grade (n = 15)	.87	1.60	4.350	.056

Data Source: Means and ANOVA Results

In regards to the mentees strategies response scores after the intervention was complete, two out of fifteen of the mentees scores went down (13%), four out of fifteen of the mentees scores stayed the same (26%), and nine out of fifteen of the mentees scores for aspirations rose (60%). More mentees, almost (60%), responded with more strategies to fulfill their aspirations. After the intervention, almost two-thirds of the mentees increased the number of responses of strategies that they were implementing (at that moment) that would help them reach their future goal aspirations. In regards to the mentees aspiration response scores after the intervention was complete, two out of 15 of the mentees aspiration response scores went down (13%), six out of 15 (40%) of the mentees aspirations score stayed the same (40%), and seven out of 15 (47%) of the mentees aspirations response scores rose.

Qualitative

While nineteen mentees were involved in the mentoring intervention, only ten were chosen to participate in the pre and post-intervention interviews, along with an exit interview. Five out of the 10 mentees had interview responses that directly related to their possible future selves.

Kurtis and Zack both changed their future career aspirations because of the information they learned from a lawyer who came to speak with the mentees. When asked if the mentoring program caused him to think about school differently, Kurtis responded:

Kurtis: Well, before, I used to think lawyers didn't get a lot of money. Then when the lawyer came and started talking about how he gets a lot of money, now he actually helps people. I think I want to be a lawyer when I get older.

Zack responded similarly saying:

Zack: I think about, I've been thinking about the law because I was interested in medical, but I'm in law now. I'm interested in law, more than the medical now. Yes, when the lawyer came in because he talked about what he does, helping people. I want to do that too.

Both mentees made explicit mention of the African American male lawyer. The mentees gained new knowledge about the interactions and the profession of law. While the mentees did not make explicit mention about believing they could become lawyers because they saw an older African American male in that position, research on both identity formation and possible future-selves posit that when younger males see older males with whom they identify with attaining something, those same adolescents believe that they will be able to emulate and attain the same as the older males with whom they identify with (Kafele, 2012; Noguera, 2003; Oyserman & Oliver, 2009).

Samuel, spoke excitedly about what he learned from the mentors:

Samuel: All the mentors. What they told us about how much would we get paid? What jobs and what they do at jobs, how they help people. I want the same thing.

In addition to the speaker series influencing the mentees' future aspirations of their possible-self, Lawrence was also impacted by the stories we read and the discussions we had as a group. He said, "I'm getting older, and I need to start maturing." When probed further on why he thinks that, he responded:

Lawrence: That one story about a guy who was and he got shot and then he changed his whole life. If you work hard, you can do anything. You can be anything.

While Samuel and Lawrence did not make explicit mention of the type of career they wanted to pursue, one did make mention of aspirations of a future income category, while the other made an aspiration of the desired future character trait.

Jeremy also responded favorably to the question as to “Whether the program made him think about school or life differently.” His response:

We learned about life, and we learned about where education can take us, about how people, when they was younger, they didn't really have the best life and they didn't really do too good in school, but then they changed and kind of made it and, yeah I started taking school more serious because I used to get in trouble a little bit but I used to think that, I played sports and I'm good at it, so I feel like it made me think I can't just be a clown in school and be good at football because I can't get into those good schools I want to go to if I'm acting up and all that.

Jeremy's comments centered around a possible future self that involves him getting into a good school. He is coming into an understanding that education can be a currency. As a result of what he experienced in the mentoring program, he explicitly states that he has to take school more seriously.

I attempted to change the narrative and counter the stereotype threat that my African American adolescent male students are often exposed to. So often the media shows African American males as undisciplined and unmotivated when it comes to academics, school, and life. And the few overarching professions where African American males are shown in a positive manner are entertainment and sports. By having professional African American males from different career fields come to speak with the mentees about their life journeys and how they valued education, I hypothesized that the mentees would be inspired to believe that they were both able and likely to become professionals as well.

Not only did I want the mentees to see the African American male professionals, but I also wanted the mentees to hear the educational journeys of the African American male speakers. For this reason, I give each speaker five talking points that centered on valuing education and persisting through difficult academic experiences. I wanted the mentees to understand that even when school is difficult, if they continue to persist with the work, they will be able to understand it. I believe this had an impact in helping the mentees believe they were academically able, while at the same time not idealizing that every academic task would be seamless and easy.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

I undertook this project to investigate the impact mentoring that incorporates positive racial-ethnic socialization can have on the academic achievement, academic-self competency, possible future-selves, and classroom behavior of 6th grade African American males in an urban charter school. In this interest, I developed a mentoring program guided by the literature in what works in helping adolescent African American males develop a positive racial-ethnic identity. By doing this, I hypothesized that the higher their ethnic-racial identity of the mentees, the more likely they may value and persist in their education.

The mentoring intervention I developed had numerous features. The program had one-to-one check-ins, group mentoring sessions, along with a speaker-series component. In the one-to-one check-ins, I met with the mentees once a week to for less than five minutes in an informal manner to see how they were doing both academically and socially. For the group mentoring sessions, I facilitated discussions centered around readings that dealt with resiliency, persistence and the benefit of education. Also, there was a speaker-series component where professional African American males came to the mentoring program to speak with the mentees about how valuing an education increased their own (the speakers) life-trajectory. In order to investigate the effectiveness of the program, I looked at both the qualitative and quantitative data of my participants in various categories related to both attitudinal and achievement data. I hypothesized that the mentoring program would positively impact both attitudinal and achievement scores.

As the previous chapter revealed, the mentoring programs outcomes were mixed. They were some very positive trends with statistically significant data. And there were other areas where there were no trends with no statistically significant differences. Within the quantitative data, I found there were positive trends in the mentee's academic achievement after the

intervention. I also found positive statistically significant differences between the pre and post assessment scores in the mentees' positive-future selves and academic self-concepts. For the mentees' classroom behavior, we found neither any significance or positive trends after the intervention was complete. In the qualitative data, we found that the mentees really enjoyed the program but had a problem with the mentor not fulfilling his word when it came to the developmental approach of the program. I also learned from the qualitative data that some mentees took their education more seriously as a result of the program. And finally, the qualitative data helped us explore the mentees thinking about how the speaker series motivated them to shift their career aspirations and embrace new possible-future selves.

The mentoring program was guided by literature. At times, theory and practice merge beautifully and work, and during other times, there is a dissonance between the two that is unexpected. Below is a simple review of what was learned throughout the implementation process of the mentoring program.

Implications for Practice

The Importance of Matching Speakers to the Identity of the Mentees

Possible future-selves is a motivational theory that posits an individual will be more likely to persist into becoming or pursuing a future endeavor if they know that there is a possibility that what they are pursuing may become a reality. There was a statistically significant difference before and after the intervention in the mentees possible-selves. The possible-selves domain measured both the mentees' aspiration and strategies for academic achievement, personal characteristics, and interpersonal traits. In order to boost the likelihood of the mentees increasing their possible future selves' aspirations and strategies, I was intentional with bringing in guest

speakers who were of the same race and ethnicity of the mentees. This may have had a greater effect on the mentees identifying with speakers. The more the mentees identified with the speakers, the more mentees were likely to believe the narratives and world views of the adult males. Also, I made sure to have the speakers direct their presentations and active lectures around the speaking points that centered around the speaker's narrative regarding valuing and persisting in education.

Any mentoring intervention for at-risk adolescent African American males that want to increase a students' possible-selves should include speakers that the children can identify with both racially and ethnically, along with having those speakers share parts of their life narratives that center around valuing education. Because the mentees identified with the speaker, there was a higher probability buy-in from the mentees would occur, leading them to believe that they could "be" or follow the same career path as the speakers.

The Benefits of Structured Remarks and Speaking Points

Academic self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own academic abilities. The mentees' pre and post academic self-competency scores were statistically significant; the mentees as a group, scored higher on the academic-self competency scale after the intervention was complete. A component of positive African American male racial ethnic-identity is Embedded Achievement. Embedded Achievement is a belief that achievement (valuing education or persisting through education) is an-ingroup norm for successful professional African American males. I believed that the mentees changed their notion of what they considered as "smart." At first, the mentees shifted from thinking smart was solely about ability, but they reconceptualized 'smart' as persisting in school even when assignments were getting difficult. The speaking points

that I emailed and texted to the guest speakers before they presented to the mentees were tailored to evoke memories in the speakers' narratives that related to resiliency and persistence in school. Therefore, when formulating a session that has guest speakers, the facilitating mentor should create speaking points that all guest-speakers will have access to before the session. These speaking points should center around themes that the facilitating mentor is trying to make salient among the mentees. When the mentees hear how successful professional African American males share some of the same characteristics, they will believe more that valuing an education is part of the embedded achievement of professional successful African American males.

On-Site Academic Tutoring Could Bolster Achievement Outcomes

While the mentees' academic achievement (GPAs) trended positively after the mentoring intervention, students still made numerous mentions about their classwork, sometimes being difficult. In order to alleviate the difficulties that students may have faced in completing their work, a tutoring component that was part of the mentoring intervention may have been helpful. In the pre-assessment interviews regarding academic self-efficacy, some mentees said that when their teacher helps them individually that they are better able to⁵ understand the classwork. Because a student's academic achievement is dependent on whether or not they understand a concept, and not if they are willing to persist, it may be beneficial to add a tutoring component when designing a mentoring program that attempts to increase the academic achievement for at-risk African American adolescent males.

The Need to Partner with Parents to Regulate Mentee Behaviors

⁵ Because the mentoring program did not focus on instructional pedagogy, there was not a need to add any of that interview data into the document.

Only one mentee mentioned explicitly that he realized that he had to improve his behavior after the intervention was over. There was no difference in the non-mentored and the mentored groups' behavior after the intervention. Actually, both groups' behavior worsened by the end of the intervention. There was no contact with myself or teachers regarding the mentees' behavior. Often times, a child's behavior only changes when parents are contacted by school staff. A mentoring program that incorporates weekly or bi-weekly phone calls or a weekly report regarding a mentees' behavior may be a way to improve the behavioral outcomes of mentored students.

The Need to Incorporate Others to Carry the Load

Thirty percent of the interviewed mentees explicitly mentioned that a component of the mentoring program that could have been improved was the number of weekly meetings that occurred. Many mentees felt that the program did not have enough meetings. The mentoring intervention lasted 10 weeks and met twice a week, with one guest speaker (speaker-series) appearing every other week. While I wish we could have scheduled more times for the intervention to occur, preparing for the group sessions which I facilitated were often time and thought consuming. However, I noticed that having a speaker (who was given talking points which centered around specific themes) was relatively less time consuming but highly effective in garnering student interest on topics that were aligned to the purpose of the program. Once a speaker was contacted and given the pre-written talking points, there was very little energy, on my part, invested in creating activities. The students both enjoyed and embraced the messages of the speaker series. If a facilitator or lead mentor would like to schedule more meetings (to appease students' desires for more meetings) and do less work, I would suggest having guest

speakers come in more than originally planned. Having more speakers will lessen the burden from the facilitating mentor to continually plan each session's activity.

The Importance of Having Numerous Pathways to Connect with Mentees

One-to-one check-ins can be an access point in creating deeper emotional bonds between mentees and mentor, along with creating a space where the mentor can give mentees individualized advice on how to navigate through school and social issues. These one-to-one check-ins take uninterrupted time, and can be time consuming if your group has a high number of mentees. Unfortunately, I was not able to meet with the mentees during their scheduled times because my job as a school-leader was so unstructured that when I was to meet with the mentees, there were often things of “higher importance” that would need my attention unexpectedly. As a result, my one-to-one check-ins with the mentees were rescheduled and often never happened. In planning to meet with students one-to-one, the facilitating mentor has to take into account the unannounced and random day-to-day distractions that can thwart the planning of meeting one-to-one with students. If the facilitating mentor has a very demanding role within the school site, the mentor should look at other ways to check-in with the students. One solution may be a quick text message with a set of students throughout the school day or scheduling group sessions that have a one-to-one check-in component within each group session. The one-to-one check-in within a group session may be a promising alternative to avoid interruptions because school staff is less likely to interrupt a principal or a school leader when they know the principal or school leader is meeting with a group of students vs. when they see or know a school leader is meeting with just one student.

The Importance of Leader Follow Through

Forty percent of the mentees that were interviewed spoke about how not going on the college trip was an aspect of the mentoring program that they did not like. During the first session of the program, the mentees and I decided we would be making a college visit to a local university sometime before the mentoring intervention was complete. As the program facilitator, I had great intentions of taking students on the trip. But as the program hit full throttle, I was too overwhelmed handling the daily operations of the program and the demands of a principal to do the back and forth when scheduling a trip, such as creating and collecting permission slips, figuring out transportation and lunch, procuring chaperones, creating an itinerary and so forth. While the mentees and I had successfully co-developed and implemented other components of the mentoring program like deciding on a group name (Young Scholars), what days of the week to have the program, the type of food to be ordered for the mentees and guest speaker other components like the college trip were not implemented. In order for facilitating mentors not to make this same mistake, plans for any trips that may need extensive or detailed planning should be hashed out immediately after the decision is made by the mentor and mentees to include a new complex component (like a college visit) to the mentoring program.

Future Sustainability of Program

My hope in enacting my study was to see how I could make my mentoring program more effective. I wanted to systematically review what worked well and what needed improvement. After finishing the study and gaining more insight, I realize that others could replicate the program outside of myself. While this study could help give a general overview into components that make for an effective school-based mentoring program aimed at increasing the

racial ethnic-identity of its African American male participants, there were some complexities and challenges that may need to be adjusted by others who may want to implement the program.

A great challenge for me as the facilitator was my other role as principal. Granted that it was great spending time with the mentees and engaging them in serious discourse and activities regarding race, identity and masculinity, it was also very time consuming and exacting. There were often times that my professional responsibility as a building leader constantly superseded my ability to implement all the components of the mentoring program with fidelity. Hence, the one-to-one component of the mentoring program could not be executed because my presence was continually needed in other parts of the school building. Whoever will carry the mantle of facilitating the mentoring program must allocate a significant amount of school time if they are to implement the program with fidelity. Lastly, I taught about whether my status as principal had any impact on the student's buy in and perception of the program - it is hard to discern. Even though I am an African American male principal, there was no explicit mention in any of the interviews about my position. Somehow, I believe that the mentees would have paid particular attention to any African American male that they perceived cared for them.

Implications for Research

Examining the Impact of Career Series on Distal Possible Future Selves

Possible future-selves is a motivational theory that posits an individual will be more likely to persist into becoming or pursuing a future endeavor if they know that there is a possibility that what they are pursuing may become a reality. For this reason, I wanted my students to be exposed to working professional African American males. Many of the mentees live in poverty-stricken socially isolated neighborhoods. As a result, many of the older African American males that they are exposed to are often incarcerated, unemployed or selling drugs,

and in better scenarios, are at low wage paying jobs (excluding their exposure to African American males as professional athletes or entertainers). So, I invited professional African American males to speak with the students a little about their careers, but more so, how valuing an education played a part in their life trajectory. After the intervention was finished, I interviewed mentees on how the intervention impacted the way they see life. Three out of the 10 mentees explicitly mentioned changing their future-career aspirations to becoming a lawyer because one of the speakers (An African American male lawyer) gave an in-depth insight as to the role and work of a lawyer. While the scale for possible future selves used in the dissertation measured more proximal aspirations and strategies, future research could measure the impact, if any, a speaker series with African American male professionals with a strong focus on career paths impact the distal possible selves of at-risk adolescent African American males in choosing and persisting towards career paths. I would hypothesize that if their distal possible selves could be impacted in regard to career and knowing what it entails educationally, then the youth may be more motivated to take education seriously as it pertains to that career.

Examining the Duration of Effective Programs

An often overlooked, but integral part in creating programs for students are finding out the ideal durations for programs. Duration can mean from how long an actual session should last for (minutes or hours) or the actual calendar length (October through December) along with the number of frequencies throughout a week or month. We often think that the more exposure the better. But there were times during the speaker series that I saw the mentees very fidgety and squirmy. Although many mentees said that they wanted to meet more than two times per week, I wondered whether they were able to internalize the different messages that they were hearing biweekly. While, I believe that interventions that help combat negative and dominant influences

should be year-round or the duration of the school year, future research can look into the ideal session length for adolescents as well as the frequency of said meetings.

Examining the Effectiveness of Different Components

The mentoring intervention was made up of 4 different components. Each component was selected because it aligned with what the literature regarded as high-quality mentoring along with the racial socialization process for racial-ethnic identity. While I did not implement all the components with fidelity due to different constraints, it would be interesting to see which of the components add the most to school related outcomes. While it was possible that each component added positively to the overall outcomes for GPA, academic-self efficacy and possible future selves, it would thoroughly help practitioners in determining what components of mentoring programs designed to foster racial ethnic-identity are more important in achieving desired outcomes. Future research could pave the way in helping practitioners understand what components of mentoring programs aimed at increasing students' REI are most effective.

Closing

I wanted to create an intervention that would help African American adolescent males tap into their racial and ethnic identity. After years of teaching in urban schools and along with my own personal experience in graduate school, I understood firsthand that the way one sees their own individual abilities is paramount in determining ones motivation to persist in certain endeavors. In both my experience and according to the literature, the more one believes they are capable, the more they will be motivated to persist and complete tasks. I created the mentoring intervention with the hopes and dreams that my mentees would view being African American males as a strongpoint in relation to educational attainment. While I was happy with many of the outcomes over the short duration of a 10-week span, I realize there were many things I could

have done better. This study was simply one man's attempt to empower a traditionally marginalized group to enter the educational attainment margin. My hope is that none of the mentees will fall by the wayside, but instead through valuing an education, attain, procure and lay hold of what an education can add to a life.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SPEAKING POINTS FOR SPEAKERS

Each speaker will answer the following questions during their presentation:

- How does being an African American male factor into your educational journey experience?
- What was a major psychological struggle that could have made you give up on pursuing your education?
- What did you believe about African American male masculinity that was unhealthy to your forward progress in education?
- What made you begin to value your education?
- When did you come into the realization that you were capable of being successful in school?

APPENDIX B
RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY SCALE

People have different opinions about what it means to be African American, I will read some statements to you. *For each one, write how close it is to your opinion using the following scale, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.*

- ETH1) It is important to me to think of myself as an African American.
- ETH2) I feel that I am part of the African American community.
- ETH3) I have a lot of pride in what members of the African American community have done and achieved.
- ETH4) I feel close to others in the African American community.
- ETH5) If I am successful it will help the African American community.
- ETH6) It is important for my family and the African American community that I succeed in school.
- ETH7) Some people will treat me differently because I am African American.
- ETH8) As an African American, the way I look and speak influences what others expect of me.
- ETH9) Things in the African American community are not as good as they could be because of lack of opportunity.
- ETH10) It helps me when others in the African American community are successful.
- ETH11) People might have negative ideas about my abilities because I am an African American.
- ETH12) If I work hard and get good grades, other African Americans will respect me.

Racial-Ethnic Identity

Coding for:

Embedded achievement (items 5, 6, 10, and 12)

Connectedness (items 1-4)

Awareness of racism (items 7, 8, 9, and 11)

APPENDIX C

POSSIBLE-SELVES QUESTIONNAIRE

- In the lines below, write what you expect you will be like and what you expect to be doing next year.
- In the space next to each expected goal, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on that goal or doing something about that expectation and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation or goal.
- For each expected goal that you marked YES, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this year to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expected goal, the second space for the second expected goal and so on.

Next year, I expect to be	Am I am doing something to be that way		If yes, What I am doing now to be that way next year
	NO	YES	
(P1) _____			(s1) _____
(P2) _____			(s2) _____
(P3) _____			(s3) _____
(P4) _____			(s4) _____

APPENDIX D

THE SELF-EFFICACY FORMATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please select the response that best describes you. Be honest, since the information will be used to help you in school and also help you become more prepared for college and careers. There are no right or wrong answers! For each one, write how close it is to your opinion using the following scale, where 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.

Belief in ~~Personal~~ Academic Ability

1. I can learn what is being taught in class this year.
2. I can figure out anything in school if I try hard enough.
3. If I practiced every day, I could develop just about any skill that I need to understand difficult material.
4. Once I've decided to accomplish something in school that's important to me, I keep trying to accomplish it, even if it is harder than I thought.
5. I am confident that I will achieve the goals that I set for myself in school.
6. When I'm struggling to accomplish something difficult in school, I focus on my progress instead of feeling ~~discouraged~~ bad.