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EXAMINING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE MENTORS RELATIONSHIPS

WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN BOYS: BENEFITS, BARRIERS,

RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION.

An Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

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Dr. Kathleen Scholl, Chair

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Dr. Wilfred Johnson, Co-Chair

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July, 2020

ABSTRACT

Currently there is a shortage of African American male mentors available to build meaningful relationships with young African American boys and young men. Approximately 200,000 youth mentors are working in community agencies in any given year, yet only 6% of these mentors are African American men. Research supports that youth can benefit from a homogeneous mentoring relationship. Very limited research has been conducted that explores the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of African American male mentors from an African American perspective. Therefore, this research gathers information and explores the benefits and barriers of African American adult males who mentor young African American males. Furthermore, the researcher will identify strategies for the recruitment and retaining of African American male mentors. If we can gather solid information through this research, we can use this material to help organize and create programs and initiatives to recruit and retain African American men for successful mentoring purposes. The method of data collection for this study will be a qualitative Phenomenological research method. In this phenomenological study, the data will be gathered through in-depth personal interviews conducted with adult African American male mentors. Once the data collection and analysis are complete, important themes will be identified to assist in reversing the limited number of African American male mentors that exist.

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Quenton Angelo Richardson

University of Northern Iowa

July, 2020

DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to my grandmother Laura Jackson and my beautiful children. My grandmother not only raised me, but also taught me how to be a man. She also taught me that if I work hard and believe in myself that I can do whatever I wanted in life. Without the love and information that Laura Jackson provided me I could have never completed this long journey and finished this life changing project. Thank you, Grandmother Laura, I love you so much.

This paper is also dedicated to my children who have also assisted me in becoming not only a caring father, but also a humble and loving man. Everything I do is for them. The day my oldest son was born my entire life changed because I realized that I had somebody else to look after other than myself. Now I have three daughters and two sons, and my entire life is dedicated to being able to support and take care of them for the rest of their lives. Therefore, this paper not only belongs to me, but also to them as well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> Building a life of significance, and creating a legacy of real value, means being willing to get your hands dirty. It means being willing to step out in your life and onto the platforms of influence you've been given and touch the lives of people in need. Whether it's in your business, your school, your community, or your family, if you want to make a difference in the lives of the people you lead, you must be willing to walk alongside them, to lift and encourage them, to share moments of understanding with them, and to spend time with them, not just shout down at them from on high. Mentors build mentors. Leaders build leaders. When you look at it closely, it's really one and the same thing.
> –Tony Dungy (as cited in Dungy & Whitaker, 2010, p. 13).

I believe strongly in this powerful quote from Tony Dungy. Because of the great love I have for my community and the people within it, I feel it is necessary for elder members of all communities to guide youth positively. Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) reported that, out of 24 million reported at-risk youth, nine million have never been mentored. Unfortunately, this is an enormous problem within African American communities and neighborhoods nationwide. As a youth on the west side of Chicago, there weren't many positive African American male role models or mentors to tell us right from wrong and guide us on a correct path. Many Black communities expressed that youth looked up to thugs and drug dealers because these were glorified and respected in the neighborhood; others were broke and barely surviving. This respect for thugs and drug dealers was because young men wanted to purchase new clothes, shoes, and cars help their mother and family pay bills. Research indicates that this is one reason why African American youth gravitate to illegal activities and why so many communities suffer.

Due to a lack of visible, positive, male role models, African American boys and young men may follow the footsteps of adult African American males that really don't know any better or have hope for the future. This is a recipe for disaster that shows through research and statistics on the success of African American male youth. Historically, minority groups have graduated at lower rates than Caucasian youth. In 2016, the high school dropout rate for black youth reached a historic low of 6%, while rates among Hispanic youth also reached (again a historic low) of 9% (Child Trends, 2018). However, these estimates do not include incarcerated individuals—a population that has grown significantly over the years, particularly among young black and Hispanic males. For 2013-2014, the national Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for Caucasian students was 87% compared to 76% for Hispanic students and 73% for African American students (National Center for Education Statistics [NECH], 2018). While these statistics are better than ever, African American students still have the lowest graduation rates nationwide. Compared to white and Hispanic students, African American students also have a higher prevalence of being involved in violence in and out of school, having sex before the age of 13, and not maintaining a proper diet (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018).

It is also estimated that while black youth make up only 16% of the general youth population, they account for 30% of juvenile court referrals, 38% of juvenile placements, and 58% of youth in adult prisons. Research from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD; 2007) shows that Black youth are detained at higher rates than white and Latinos, and young Latinos are detained at higher rates than whites. The

Sentencing Project, which calculates state rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity, found that young Black males are incarcerated six times more often than whites, while Latinos are incarcerated twice more often than whites (Mauer & King, 2007). While these are alarming statistics, it mandatory for there to be effective mentoring youth in general and there is a strong need for mentoring programs tailored to meet the needs of young minority males.

Past research related to the need for more mentoring for African American youth includes a lack of information related to African American male mentor in general. There is also limited research supporting the benefits of a young black man to be mentored by adult black men (Albright, Hurd, & Hussain, 2017; Jarjoura, 2013; Ogbu, 1990a). I can attest to the wide range of benefits available through racial matching, having once been an at-risk, African American youth mentee who later became an adult mentor. Because I have been a mentee and a mentor, I understand the dynamics, benefits, and restraints of mentorship from both perspectives. By analyzing the relationships that I have been involved with both as a mentor and as a mentee, I understand how having a positive, African American male mentor as an African American youth is extremely beneficial for both parties. The only issue is that there is a shortage of positive, male African American mentors to work with young men in our communities. There is a national crisis for young African American men seeking mentors because of challenges involving recruiting and retaining adult African American mentors (Miller, 2007). Garringer, McQuillin, and McDaniel (2017) reports that, out of 193,823 mentors involved with 2,722 agencies and programs, only 15% of those mentors are African American. Because these statistics

include male and female mentors, the percentage of African American male mentors is lower than the 15% reported. What can we do to increase the number of African American adult males to mentor young African American men and help prevent these young men from failing?

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

One existing gap in mentoring frameworks is details surrounding a same-sex, same-race, mentoring relationships between African American male mentors and mentees. Few studies have documented and produced evidence of the effectiveness of African American racial matching related to mentoring relationships. While some programs take a race-blind approach, many act on the implicit—and sometimes explicit—assumption that European American mentors (typical mentors in a cross-race match) can neither appreciate the experiences of minority youth nor fully assist them in their goals (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993). As a result, organizations nationwide have long waiting lists of pre-teen and teenage African American males seeking mentors (Miller, 2007).

Only 41% of African American males graduate from high school and, for every three African American men in college, four are incarcerated (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2006). Also, young black men have a one-in-three chance of going to prison in their lifetime compared to a one-in-seventeen chance for their Caucasian male counterparts. Homicides among African American males ages 15 to 19 years represent one leading cause of death among this population. Add the increasing number of teen

births (68.8%) in the African American community, African American children are increasingly growing up in single-parent households (56%) and being raised by their grandparents (CDC, 2007). With these types of issues, it is imperative to examine African American youth mentoring in order to gather information regarding the relationships and matches needed for growth.

There is a great need for more African American male mentors to build relationships with young African American male mentees. Research findings on the benefits of same-race versus cross-race mentor matches are relatively mixed (Sanchez, Colon-Torres, Feuer, Roundfield, & Berardi, 2014). Many researchers feel that, culturally, someone from another race cannot fully connect with an African American youth due to their different background and upbringing. Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, and Maxine Lee (2002) argued, "Proponents of racial matching mentoring base their belief, in part, on the assumption that an adult of a different racial and ethnic background cannot teach a youth how to cope in society if he or she cannot understand what it feels like to be a minority in America" (p. 2115). Because minority youth internalize the racial and ethnic attitudes of larger society, they are thought to be more vulnerable to low self-esteem and have restricted views of the possibilities of their life (Ogbu, 1990b). Therefore, a mentor with a similar racial and ethnic background who can understand their social and psychological conflicts within America may be better equipped to offer real-life solutions based on experience. While any caring adult can offer developmental guidance, a healthy relationship between a mature African American male mentor and an

young African American male mentee may benefit both individuals during a mentoring relationship.

A prototypical mentor is a White, middle-class adult and the prototypical protégé is an economically disadvantaged youth of color (Freedman, 1993; Liang & West, 2007). Few studies investigated the role of class, race, ethnicity, or gender differences in youth mentoring. Further, the limited research conducted focused simply on whether or not matching based on these demographic characteristics may lead to better youth outcomes (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sanchez, 2006; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Gaddis, 2012; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Kanchewa, Rhodes, Schwartz, & Olsho, 2014; Rhodes, Reddy, et al., 2002). Therefore, there is a need to explore the mentor relationship between African American male mentors and mentees. If we can identify some benefits or barriers that mentors may experience during mentoring, this information will add to the body of mentoring literature and help recruit and retain adult African American male mentors.

Mentoring literature lacks valuable information about adult make African American mentors in general and the affects these mentors have on young African American men. The literature also lacks information about the benefits and barriers African American male mentors face when working and building relationships with African American male youth. This research was designed to gather information and explore the benefits and barriers that adult male African American mentors face when mentoring young African American men. Further, this research attempted to identify

suggestions for recruiting and retaining male African American mentors from their perspective. Solid information gathered on the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of African American male mentors can help organize and create programs and initiatives to recruit and retain African American men for mentoring purposes.

<div align="center">Theoretical Models</div>

Similarity Attraction Theory

Past research has suggested that similarity in race and gender are important considerations in pairings (Burke, 1984; Thomas, 1990). Therefore, the degree of similarity between the mentor and the protégé, either actual or perceived, could affect the quality of the mentoring relationship (Turban & Jones, 1988). The theory that explains this phenomenon is called the similarity-attraction paradigm model. The paradigm proposes that individuals are attracted to those like themselves (Byrne, 1971). Even though most research conducted on similarity-attraction theory focuses on similarity in attitudes and personality, the theory also proposes that, given the option to choose a own mentor, youth most likely select mentors of the same race, ethnicity, or culture. The similarity-attraction paradigm also proposes that some mentors or mentees feel less invested in others who appear different based on race/ethnicity. From this perspective, relationships between mentors and mentees of similar racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds—who likely have more in common—could be expected to be more successful than those involving mentors and mentees of different backgrounds (Sanchez et al., 2014). Therefore, an analysis of the similarity-attraction paradigm model in relation

to this study may help explain positive findings related to homogeneous mentoring among African American male mentors and mentees.

<u>Social Exchange Theory</u>

Social exchange theory (SET) posits that when individuals enter relationships or groups, they focus on the investment cost of their participation in relationship to the returns they receive (Monge & Contractor, 2003). SET also suggests that individuals enter relationships in which they believe the rewards will be greater than the cost (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This theory contends that a basic motivation for interacting is to seek rewards and avoid of punishments (Emerson, 1976; Bandura, 1986). As such, social exchange argues that attitudes and behaviors are determined by the rewards of interaction minus the penalty/cost of that interaction (Griffith, Harvey, & Lusch, 2006). According to SET, individuals make two calculations: (a) the comparison level, which is a straightforward assessment of the costs of effort and resources expended against the benefits received and (b) the comparison level of alternatives, which is a more complex assessment of the cost–benefit ratios of maintaining particular relationships compared to the cost–benefit ratios of available alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). These calculations help an individual determine whether or not to move forward with a relationship.

Mentoring is an intervention aimed to create or facilitate a supportive relationship with a significant other and is largely based on social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Social exchange theory views the reciprocal relationship between mentors and

mentees as a basis for the exchange of things; for example, support, knowledge, advice, etc. (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Through a social exchange theoretical construct, mentors and mentees must discover mutual benefit and satisfaction for the relationship to continue. While benefits to mentees are articulated and well-documented, rarely are they explicated for mentors. Essentially, mentors must also experience some benefit from the mentoring process for the relationship to endure and ultimately be successful (Reddick, Heilig, Marks, & Crosby, 2012). The value (whether reward or benefit) that a mentor may receive from the relationship could increase self-esteem, provide a sense of accomplishment, or open networks. From a mentee's perspective, the benefits could be academic or education, change attitudes and motivation, provide social skills and interpersonal relationships, and increase psychological or emotional status.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of ten African American male adult mentors who mentored in an African American male youth, same-race, same-sex, group mentoring program for two years or longer. Several goals were accomplished by analyzing the perspectives and experiences of the mentors of this program. First, this study identified ways the mentoring program benefitted the mentors. Second, this study identified barriers mentors experienced in the mentoring program. Finally, this study offers suggestions for recruiting retaining African American male mentors from their perspective. The findings

revealed information that can be applied to future African American mentoring programs and research.

<u>Brief Description of Mentoring Program</u>

The mentoring program that served as the basis for this study is the Kool Kids Society (KKS). KKS was a mentoring program located in Waterloo, Iowa from 2012 to 2016. KKS was a mentoring program dedicated to the excellence and positivity of minority males in the Cedar Valley area. The overall goal of the KKS was to plant seeds within its member to help them flourish as successful students and as healthy, respectful, hard-working citizens in their community and society. To successfully fulfill the goals of the KKS, responsible African American male mentors worked closely with African American male youth in areas such as self, family, community, and future aspirations.

KKS was founded by Quenton Richardson, Theron Montgomery, and ten other original members. Shortly after starting the program, KKS added three participants, bringing the mentee count to 13 youth. Within two months of starting the program, KKS had a wait list of 25 to 30 more youth who signed up or showed interest in joining. Unfortunately, KKS did not have sufficient funding to serve and mentor more than the 13-15 youth. KKS worked with approximately 30 youth in total before the program ended.

KKS had eight mentors. All mentors were African American males between the ages of 28 to 40, from different places and walks of life. All mentors were educated, qualified, and had encountered hardships and experiences the youth mentees may have

also experienced. Therefore, the mentors could teach mentees unique and useful information as educators and through first-hand experience because the mentors had walked in the mentees' shoes.

<div align="center">Significance of Study</div>

There are several benefits to better understanding the mentor/mentee relationship between younger and an older African American man. First, there is little research on adult African American men mentoring African American youth, which is very important to the mentoring field. There is also a great need to create effective mentor relationships within urban communities, where there are large concentrations of minority youth considered to be at risk of failing due to various societal factors. Some of these societal factors include the fact that African American males lead in categories like incarceration, homicide, school dropout, fatherless homes, drug addiction, sexually transmitted disease, high unemployment, and poverty (Hardiman, 2013). Simultaneously, minority youth are exposed to examples of dysfunctional behavior, are deprived of opportunities to acquire and maintain coping skills necessary for life-long competence, and are bereft of the materials and social support available to youth in more privileged families and situations (Blechman, 1992). Therefore, adding additional information to the body of literature could assist in making the mentoring process more accessible, successful, and positive for African American mentors and mentees.

First, mentoring African American youth from a societal perspective saves communities valuable time and resources that are being expended towards human

services, juvenile crime prevention, and rehabilitation efforts. Estimated costs of

mentoring programs range from $1,007 to $2,313 per year per mentor (depending upon

the nature of the program), with a national average of $1,695 (Garringer et al., 2017).

These costs are much lower than intensive remedial programming and more

comprehensive service programs. Further, the annual per youth cost for mentoring is

considerably lower than incarcerating one juvenile per year. In a survey of state

expenditures on confinement in 46 states, the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) found that the

average cost of the most expensive confinement option for a young person was $407.58

per day, $36,682 for three months, $73,364 for six months, and $148,767 per year. The

numbers show that it is much cheaper to mentor youth and keep them on a positive path

than leave them to the streets and failure.

Second, it can be very helpful to explore the different aspects of same-sex, same-

race mentor matching within the African American mentoring field, as there is a lack of

information pertaining to these areas within mentoring literature. It is also important to

understand how gender, race, class, and ethnicity might influence a mentoring

relationship, since ineffective mentoring can significantly impact to match matching by

gender, making it difficult to differentiate if research findings were the result of a mentor

or mentee's gender some combination of the two (Liang, Bogat, & Duffy, 2014). Existing

research on same-sex mentoring in the field has mixed reviews, with some research

indicating positive outcomes and others producing insignificant data on the topic. For

example, research on natural mentors found that adolescent males with male role models

engaged in less problematic behavior and had better academic outcomes than those

without male role models (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003). However, a lack of comparative data on outcomes for males with and without female role models limits interpreting this finding.

Research findings on the relative benefits of same-race versus cross-race matches are mixed (Sanchez et al., 2014). Qualitative investigations have indicated that shared racial/ethnic backgrounds within a mentoring relationship may positively affect African American youth. For example, Garraway and Pistrang (2010) found that young African American men believed that sharing their mentor's racial background allowed for greater mutual identification over shared experiences and interests. Mentees also felt more confident receiving advice from a mentor who shared similar personal experiences, opposed to advice from mentors who did not. On the flip side, many who defend cross-race matches believe that effective relationships can develop despite racial, ethnic, and class differences (Furano et al., 1993). While homogeneous matching might expedite the development of trust, it does not guarantee a successful mentoring match (Henkin & Rogers, 1992). Therefore, many programs recommend that mentors be recruited because of personal skills, experience, common interests to youth, their capacity to provide sensitive support, and their openness to the nuances of cultural differences (Ascher, 1988; Flaxman, 1992). These are qualities to look for in a mentor; therefore, it is strongly recommended that mentoring programs implement training that assists mentors to understand and relate to diverse mentees.

Third, there needs to be a focus on the African American male mentor and the benefits and barriers he encounters while mentoring African American male youth. Some benefits of mentoring youth (in general, not specifically for African American male mentors) are increased self-esteem, well-being, fulfillment, and accomplishment (Stand Together, 2017). Some of the barriers for African American male mentors noted in the literature are money, time constraints, previous challenges with law enforcement, inadequate training, and an inability to find mentoring programs in the local community (Miller, 2008). This study also gathered information from mentors related recruiting and retaining African American male mentors. Despite major outreach efforts, recruiting enough volunteers to meet the demand for mentoring youth remains a significant problem (Raposa, Dietz, & Rhodes, 2017). A recent national survey identified recruiting mentors as the top challenge facing programs (Garringer et al., 2017). Mentor retention is a significant challenge in trying to form solid mentoring relationships with youth nationwide. These are problems for mentoring overall and also specifically for African American mentors who seek to mentor African American youth.

While there is limited research on the barriers that African American male mentors face, there is no research to date on the benefits African American male mentors receive when mentoring African American male youth. Further, there is a lack of information within mentoring literature on recruiting and retaining African American male mentors to work with African American youth. Considering the shortage of African American male mentors, it is very important to identify the benefits and barriers of this particular mentoring relationship to increase the number of African American males

willing to mentor young African American men. In addition, this study may develop best practices on how to better recruit and retain male African American mentors.

Research Questions

This study followed qualitative a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology draws on the experiences of a group of people who are expected to share similar experiences during the research process. This study examined the benefits, barriers, and best practices of recruiting and retaining male African American mentors. The study addressed the following questions:

RQ1. What are the benefits of African American adult males mentoring African American male youth mentees?

RQ2. What barriers do African American male mentors face when seeking to mentor African American male youth mentees?

RQ3. What are best practices when recruiting and retaining African American male mentors who are mentoring young African American male mentees?

Definitions

The following definitions introduce key terms discussed throughout this study. Further elaboration is provided throughout the dissertation manuscript.

Mentoring. In this study, mentoring is a "relationship between an order, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé in which the adult provides ongoing

guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé" (Rhodes, 2002, p. 3).

Mentor. In this study, a mentor is an individual who is (ordinarily) several years older and has more experience and seniority in the world into which a young mentee is entering. This person acts as teacher, sponsor, counselor, developer of skills and intellect, host, guide, and exemplar and supports a young mentee realizing his dream (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978).

Mentee. This term refers to the youth being mentored by a mentor.

Informal/Natural Mentoring. Defined as an informal relationship with an adult, other than a caregiver or paid professional, in which a youth is provided an additional source of support beyond the family (Gilligan, 1999).

Formal Mentoring: Formal mentoring is that cultivated through structured programs sponsored by youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, schools, or after-school programs (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018).

Group Mentoring. Group mentoring refers to either "natural" or programmatic mentoring contexts in which one or more mentors work with at least two youth (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2014).

One on One Mentoring. Defined as one adult mentoring one young person. The one-to-one contact of this type of mentoring can be achieved through an individual-to-

individual approach or through a team approach (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention [CSAP], 2000).

Same-Race Mentor Matching. Matching a mentor and mentee of the same race or ethnicity.

Same-Sex Mentor Matching. Matching a mentor and mentee of the same gender or sex.

Cross-Race Mentor Matching. Matching a mentor and mentee of a different race or ethnicity.

Cross-Sex Mentor Matching. Matching a mentor and mentee of a different gender or sex.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is qualitative research method that draws on the experiences of a group of people who are expected to have shared a similar experience. Phenomenology works to reveal meanings associated with a common experience by eliciting personal points of view (Creswell, 2003).

Homogenous: Describes a group or thing that has members or parts that are all the same.

African American. One of the largest of the many ethnic groups in the United States. African Americans are mainly of African ancestry, but many have non-African ancestors as well. African Americans are largely the descendants of slaves—people

brought from their African homelands and forced to work in the New World. Their rights were severely limited, and they were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States. Nevertheless, African Americans have made basic and lasting contributions to American history and culture (Lynch, 2020).

Similarity-Attraction paradigm model. Implies that mentors and mentees of similar racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds—who likely have more in common— experience more successful relationships than those of different backgrounds (Sanchez & Colon, 2005).

At-risk youth. At-risk youth are those who come from families that provide the least support, neighborhoods that offer the fewest positive outlets or role models, and some of the poorest-performing schools (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring is known to foster individual growth and development among youths and adults. Most research on mentoring focuses on three focal points: youth mentoring, student-faculty mentoring, and mentoring within the workplace. This study focused on youth mentoring. Mentoring is an age-old topic gaining relevance being understood psychological research (Allen & Eby, 2007). The term *mentor* has been around much longer than the actual practice of mentoring. Homer introduced the word "mentor" in the Greek literary classic, *The Odyssey*. In *The Odyssey*, Mentor was a friend of the main character, Odysseus, who looked after his only son, Telemachus. Odysseus left Mentor in charge of his home and son while he embarked on a ten- year journey. During this time, Mentor helped Telemachus transition from boy to young man. The popularity of this character and book helped establish the word "mentor" to become used worldwide to describe this very important area of research and study.

The origin of today's structured mentor programs is credited to charity groups formed during the Progressive era in the United States, in the early 1900s. Charity groups sought adult volunteers to guide vulnerable youth who were, at the time, at risk because they were poor or had become involved with the juvenile court system (Beiswinger, 1985). According to Fernandes-Alcantara (2018), "These early organizations provided practical assistance to youth, including help with finding employment, and creating recreational outlets" (p. 2). From the early 1900s until today, youth mentoring continues

to be a positive way to provide youth with relationships that help build solid social connections and essential societal skills.

During the early days of mentoring, a few influential organizations jump-started the movement. Founded in 1910, Big Brothers—now known as Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)—is one of the first and most well-known mentoring programs in the United States (Baker & Maguire, 2005). Currently, BBBS is the oldest mentoring organization in operation, with 350 agencies across the country serving nearly 630,000 children, volunteers, and families (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 2013). Various other programs, such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks helped found youth mentorship in America (Baker & Maguire, 2005).

In the late 1980s, with help from foundations and corporations (including Fannie Mae, Commonwealth Fund, United Way of America, Chrysler, Proctor and Gamble, and the National Urban League), the contemporary youth mentoring movement began in the US (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018). At the time, the federal government also began supporting structured mentoring initiatives: "At that time, mentoring was becoming increasingly recognized by the government as a promising strategy to enrich the lives of youth, address the isolation of youth from adult contact, and provide one-to-one support for the most vulnerable youth" (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018, p. 4). Having the government and larger corporations board made it easier for mentoring to be established throughout the United States.

More recently, mentoring is a common practice that occurs in every state and major city in the US. Youth mentoring has become a cornerstone strategy that is meaningfully embedded in youth development programs and in education, public health, workforce development, juvenile justice, child welfare, and many other systems and institutions (Garringer et al., 2017). Garringer et al. (2017) led the largest data collection in almost 20 years to examine youth mentoring services across America. The study collected data from 1,271 mentoring agencies and 1,451 mentoring programs that served 413,237 youth, supported by 193,823 mentors and 10,804 staff. Numbers like these show that the field of youth mentoring is one of the biggest things since sliced bread.

<u>Defining Mentoring</u>

One issues within mentoring literature is that there are numerous definitions to describe mentoring. Jacobi (1991) identified 15 different definitions of mentoring in educational, psychological, and management literature. Even within a given discipline, researchers lack consensus a definition of mentoring (Jacobi, 1991; Peper, 1994). Regardless, the literature still identifies several attributes of mentoring that provide a common framework to understand the phenomenon (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010).

First, mentoring reflects a unique relationship between individuals (Austin, 2002; Garvey & Alred, 2003; Jacobi, 1991). Second, mentoring is a learning partnership (Garvey & Alred, 2003; Jacobi, 1991; Peper, 1994; Roberts, 2000). Third, mentoring is a process defined by the types of support provided by a mentor to a protégé (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985). Fourth, a mentoring relationship is reciprocal, yet asymmetrical. While a

mentor may benefit from the relationship, the primary goal is protégé growth and development (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Fifth, mentoring relationships are dynamic; the relationship changes over time (Garvey & Alred, 2003; Kram, 1985; Roberts, 2000) and the impact of mentoring increases with the passage of time (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Kram, 1985). For this study, youth mentoring was defined as follows:

> a supportive relationship between a youth or young adult and someone senior in age and experience, who offers support, guidance, and concrete assistance as the younger partner goes through a difficult period, enters a new era of experience, takes on an important task, or corrects an earlier problem. In general, during mentoring, mentees identify with, or form a strong interpersonal attachment to their mentors; as a result, they become able to do for themselves what their mentors have done for them. (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988, p. 13).

Types of Mentoring

Formal Mentoring

Finkelstein and Poteet (2010) stated:

> a formal mentoring program occurs when an organization officially supports and sanctions mentoring relationships. In these programs, organizations play a role in facilitating mentoring relationships by providing some level of structure,

guidelines, policies, and assistance for starting, maintaining, and ending

mentor/protégé relationships. (p. 354)

Formal mentoring programs in the US began in the late nineteenth century and were

designed to counter risks individuals faced in their daily lives (Freedman, 2008). Formal

youth mentoring involves volunteers or part-time paid adults who are paired with a

younger individual with the goal of building a meaningful and supportive relationship.

These structured or formal mentoring programs aim to empower youths involved,

promote their personal development, and compensate for a lack of positive role models

(DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes, 1994, 2002). As of 2014, approximately 4.5

million youth were in structured mentoring relationships (Bruce & Bridgeland., 2014).

The CSAP (2000) report stated that formal mentoring typically:

- Takes place for a minimum of 6 months,

- Involves frequent and regular contact between mentor and mentee,

- Is assisted by an organized service or organization,

- Focuses on providing life-guidance and support,

- Includes support and/or supervision for the mentee and the mentees family,

- Involves screening and training as well as ongoing support and/or supervision of
  the mentor. (p. 5).

This study discusses two popular categories of formal mentoring programs: one-

to-one mentoring and group mentoring. Both are widely used formats that formal youth

mentoring programs use today. Findings from the Garringer et al. (2017) national study

indicated that out of 1,271 mentoring agencies and 1,451 distinct mentoring programs surveyed, 56% reported using a one-to-one model, 19% reported using a group model, and 15% reported using a one-to-one and group models combined within a program format.

One-to-one mentoring involves one adult (mentor) mentoring one young person (mentee). The one-to-one contact of this type of mentoring can be achieved through an individual-to-individual approach or through a team approach (CSAP, 2000). According to Mentor and the Corporation for National and Community Service (2005), approximately 3 million adult volunteers are involved in formal, one-to-one mentoring relationships with young people—an increase of 19% since 2002. While one-to-one mentoring is typically community-based, it can also be site-based. Community-based programs are more likely to include social and recreational activities, while site-based programs are more likely to target specific academic, life-skills, or career related activities (Sipe & Roder, 1999).

Group mentoring refers to either natural or programmatic mentoring contexts in which one or more mentors work with at least two youth (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2014). The number of youths within a group could vary from two to as many as 32, and groups may include a single mentor or two or more mentors working in a team (Herrera, Vang, & Gale, 2002). The mentoring field knows very little about comparing group mentoring to one-to-one mentoring, and there is little understanding group mentoring effectiveness (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor,

2006). What is known is that culturally designed group mentoring could offer the additional benefit of enhancing cultural identity (Washington, Johnson, Jones, & Langs, 2007). Therefore, group mentoring could be an effective strategy for African American youth. Group mentoring may also be a cost-effective alternative to traditional, one-to-one mentoring programs (Herrera et al., 2002). Herrera et al. (2002) acknowledged that the benefits of group mentoring generally occurs in familiar environments, with familiar people and can engage youth who have difficulty developing one-to-one relationships. Key outcomes discovered in Herrera et al.'s study included improvements in social skills and relationships with teachers, parents, and friends.

Formal mentoring programs are matching match more mentors with youth groups. It is estimated that at least 20% of formal youth mentoring occurs within group settings (Kuperminc, 2016). Through mentoring groups, youth may experience a sense of belonging, receive support from peers, help others by giving and receiving, learn that they are not the only ones with problems, and understand how to function in the interpersonal world (Struchen & Porta, 1997). During the group mentoring, the mentee gains experience and insight through communicating and working with the mentor, but mentors also gain experience by dealing with other mentees in a group.

Informal/Natural Mentoring

An informal/natural mentoring relationship describes a close, informal relationship with an adult (other than a caregiver or paid professional) in which the youth is provided an additional source of support beyond the family (Gilligan, 1999). Informal

mentoring is essentially when a sustained relationship develops naturally between an adult and a young person (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). In an American study with 3187 participants, nearly 73% of respondents (18-26 years of age) reported having a natural mentor. The most common mentors in DuBois and Silverthorn's (2005) study were described as family members (40%) and as teachers and guidance counselors (26%), with a mean relationship span of 9.1 years. Further:

> Informal mentoring is a natural component of relationships that occurs throughout society, in the workplace, as well as in social, professional, and family activities. Informal mentoring occurs in a relationship between two people where one gains insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship, and support from the other. Either person may initiate the mentoring relationship, the mentor to help the other, the mentee to gain wisdom from a trusted person. (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, p. 35)

Informal mentoring requires fewer resources and is far more accessible to a broader range of youth than formal youth mentoring: An estimated 75% of youth have natural mentors while roughly 5% have formal mentors (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009; Raposa et al., 2017). In informal mentoring relationships, mentees commonly communicate that mentors provided them with developmental skills rather than academic support. These natural mentors give advice and encouragement to help mentees make sound decisions, stay on a correct path, and stay motivated (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Informal mentoring involves no minimum time requirement, may or may not involve frequent or regular contact, and may or may not include assistance by an organized

service or organization. Informal/natural mentoring also involves providing guidance and support to a mentee only as a bi-product or secondary focus of the relationship; may or may not involve support or supervision for the mentee and their family; and exist in the form of youth programs, athletics, youth groups, religious instruction, and school volunteer programs (CSAP, 2000).

<div align="center">The Mentoring Relationship</div>

The mentoring relationship must include the following characteristics: First, the mentor must be someone with greater experience or wisdom than the mentee. Second, the mentor must offer guidance or instruction intended to facilitate the growth and development of the mentee. Third, there must be an emotional bond between the mentor and the mentee, a hallmark of which is a sense of trust (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Some positive characteristics of mentors that appear to facilitate close mentoring relationships include prior experience in helping roles or occupations, an ability to appreciate salient socioeconomic and cultural influences, and a sense of efficacy for mentoring youth (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2018). At its most basic, the necessary conditions for an effective mentoring relationship are that the two people feel connected, there is mutual trust, and a sense that one is understood, liked, and respected (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006).

Relationship Styles

Morrow and Styles (1995) identified two distinct relationships styles to explain the types of mentoring relationships. These styles are referred to as developmental and prescriptive relationships. *Developmental relationships* focus more on the mentee's needs

and are more flexible and supportive towards the interests of the mentee. Developmental relationships involve the youth mentee in decision making and place a high priority on making the mentoring experience more fun (Morrow & Styles, 1995). Using this approach, mentors can clearly identify the needs and interests of the youth and use this information to build a personal connection. Mentors that use developmental styles provide consistent reassurance and kindness, respond to requests for without judging, offer problem-solving suggestions, and avoid criticizing and lecturing their mentee (Allen & Eby, 2010). As the relationship starts to prosper, the youth feels more comfortable disclosing their issues and receiving advice and guidance from their mentor.

Prescriptive mentoring relationships draw more attention to re-shaping the youth by achieving certain goals set by the mentor. The issue with prescriptive mentoring is that the mentor attempts to address the mentee's problems and difficulties too soon, before establishing a real relationship. From this perspective, mentors tend to set the goals, determine the pace, select the activities, and establish the ground rules of the relationship with little regard to the youth's opinion (Allen & Eby, 2010). Because of these tactics, mentors and mentees find these types of relationships less satisfying and beneficial (Morrow & Styles, 1995). This does not mean that effective mentoring relationships only involve adult friends offering youth unconditional support. In fact, the most beneficial relationships are those in which mentors offer moderate levels of support, structure, and activities (Rhodes, 2007).

Successful Mentoring Relationships

Research identified many characteristics of successful mentoring relationships. Rawlings, Mcbride, Desai, Withers, and Sundgren (2009) report lists five successful, core elements of mentoring relationships as

- A sense of mutual trust;

- Friendship (although the relationship is more than this);

- Clear expectations;

- Duration and frequency (regular face-to-face meetings over a longer period); and

- Multi-level activities (mentoring, skill groups, and volunteering)

The key to creating effective mentoring relationships lies in developing trust between two strangers (Sipe, 1996). Without trust, it is virtually impossible for a mentor to build a lasting relationship with a mentee. Mentors who follow a gradual path to building trust with youth find that the types of support they can offer—and that will be accepted—broaden considerably once trust is established (Sipe, 2002). Mentors who focus first on building trust and becoming friends with a mentee tend to be more successful than those who are overly goal-oriented and immediately try to change or reform their mentee (Sipe, 2002).

From a youth's perspective, seeing the mentor/mentee relationship as a friendship is fundamental to the success of the relationship. While starting a friendship with a youth may sound simple, it is often not as easy as it seems. Many factors can interfere in the process, such as age difference, backgrounds, or even culture. During the initial moments

of a mentoring relationship, even the most advanced mentor may have difficulties sparking a meaningful friendship. It takes time for youth to feel comfortable talking to a mentor, and even longer before they feel comfortable enough to share or confide in that mentor. Learning to trust is a gradual process—especially for youths who were likely already let down by adults in their lives. Mentees cannot be expected to trust a mentor simply program staff have matched them together (Garringer & Jucovy, 2007). Developing a friendship requires skill and time, but upon reaching this level, the relationship becomes beneficial for mentors and mentees.

Setting clear expectations refers to setting boundaries and goals for mentors, formalizing roles, and explaining procedures and requirements (Yelderman, 2017). The expectations must involve everyone, including the agency or program, the mentor, the mentee, and the mentee's primary caregiver. Because mentoring relationships vary with the type of program, it is essential that mentors and mentees clearly understand the program's expectations. For mentors, it is important to have a realistic expectation of the benefits and challenges associated with mentoring. It is also important that the needs of the youth in the program match the services provided by that program. Eliminating mismatches between mentor and mentee expectations helps reduce the chance for the mentoring relationship to end prematurely and ensures it is a positive experience for both (Youth.gov, 2019). Promoting the success of a young person requires, in many cases, that mentors build rapport with the mentee and also with primary caregivers to help understand the family's circumstances, belief systems, and expectations for the child.

Indeed, a successful mentor match often depends on cooperation between mentors and family members (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006).

Another key characteristic of successful mentor/mentee relationships is duration. One study found the greatest positive outcomes when relationships lasted 12 months or longer and that positive outcomes decreased for relationships lasting 6 to 12 months and 3 to 6 months. Notably, youth in relationships that lasted less than three months regressed in some areas (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). The youth in this study would have been better off not having a mentor than having one not fully committed to the process. Subsequent research suggested that fewer than six months of mentoring may damage youth, but that meeting mentee expectations for the duration of the relationship was the most important criteria to preventing harmful effects (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006).

Frequency or consistent contact is another component of higher quality mentor/mentee relationships (DuBois & Neville, 1997). Reliability is essential when it comes to trust. For many youths who experienced significant disruptions in important relationships (such as foster youth or youth whose fathers do not maintain regular contact), reliability is critical to forming lasting and meaningful bonds with a mentor. Furthermore, it is generally thought that regularly spending time together creates opportunities for mentors to become more directly involved in mentees' lives and for positive changes to occur—whether through emotional and instrumental support or by facilitating attachment-related processes, such as helping youth more effectively cope with stress and promoting positive changes in working models of relationships (Parra,

DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002). For example, DuBois and Neville

(1997) found that monthly contact (on average) predicted greater perceived benefits for

youth. This was reported by mentors within a BBBS program and at a university-based,

service-learning course. Also, young people whose mentors contacted them frequently

had significantly better outcomes than with comparison groups on a range of indicators,

including: higher grades, college attendance, greater confidence about school work, fewer

school absences, and less initiation of drug use (Jekielek et al., 2002).

Multi-level activities refer to experiences and activities that mentor and mentee

participate in together while engaging in the mentoring process. Multi-level, community-

based experiences and activities include skill groups, volunteering, and mentoring. With

this concept, mentees are exposed to more than typical mentoring processes. The study

by Keating, Tomishima, Foster, and Alessandri (2002) of six months of intensive

mentoring (three hours weekly), which involved group activities and monthly life skill

groups, showed improvements in mentee self-concept and behavior. Another similar

multi-level mentoring program that included the same components showed increased

protective factors for at-risk youth within the program (Moody, Childs, & Sepples, 2003).

In the study, participants perceived higher levels of self-esteem, body image, mentor

support, positive peer bonding, social skills attainment, school attachment, and attitudes

against drug use. Also, the areas of positive group bonding and increased social skills

showed good results, with increases of 119.5% and 82%, respectively. While further

study is for a clearer picture of effective types of interventions and in what combinations,

preliminary findings suggest that a multi-level approach to mentoring may be effective, particularly to meet the complex needs of youth (Rawlings et al., 2009).

<div align="center">Challenges of Mentoring</div>

When it comes to youth mentoring literature, there is minimal research on why such relationships end prematurely and are unsuccessful. The early phases of relationship formation and development received the bulk of attention through empirical and practice literature on youth mentoring (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Recruiting and selecting prospective mentors, matching mentors and youth on the basis of shared interests, providing pre-match training and ongoing support once the relationships beings, are all critical components of an effective program and are associated with the benefits of mentoring for youth participants (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). Less attention was given to situations that cause a relationship to end and what can be done to prevent it. By shedding more light on this topic, mentors and organizations can use this information to shape their methods and procedures to help reduce early relationship terminations. Spencer's (2007) qualitative interview study of early ending matches identified a six key themes of mentoring relationship failures:

- Mentor or protégé abandonment;
- Perceived lack of protégé motivation;
- Unfulfilled expectations;

- Deficiencies in mentor relational skills, including the ability to bridge cultural divides;

- Family interference; and

- Inadequate agency support (p. 339).

Mentor or protégé abandonment is when either the mentor or mentee removes themselves from the relationship. Both mentees and mentors who experienced abandonment expressed feelings of disappointment and reduced enthusiasm for the program (Spencer, 2007). Both mentors and mentees are capable of walking away from a mentoring relationship; in some instances, adolescents have terminated relationships in response to what they perceive as unsupportive, disappointing, or overly demanding mentors (Morrow & Styles, 1995).

Perceived lack of protégé motivation is simply when mentors feel that a mentee is not interested in building a relationship with them. Spencer (2007) stated that this sometimes occurs because mentees had gone along at their parent's request rather than their own interest. Young people need to want the relationship and the relationship must be mutual for it to be effective.

Unfulfilled expectations demonstrate a need for mentors to handle rejection from mentees (Rawlings et al., 2009). Spencer (2007) found that mentors were typically overwhelmed by the needs of youth and the difficult situations they and their families faced. Also, mentors felt disappointed if a mentee did not appear to need them or they felt they were not making a difference. Due to mentor behavior patterns, termination

frequently occurred because mentees felt they could not connect with their mentor or did not share similar interests.

Another key factor in the termination of mentoring relationships is a mentor's lack of relational skills (Spencer, 2007). This includes being unable to relate to the mentee on their level or engage in activities that were fun and interesting. In Spencer's study, mentees in reported that some mentors expected them to relate and behave like adults, while others were disappointed if a mentee did not show overt appreciation. Also, relational problems occurred if a mentor could not bridge cultural differences. Ultimately, these mentors were unprepared to work with a mentee due to a lack of important skills, including friendliness, understanding developmental stages, resilience, and cultural competency (Rawlings et al., 2009). This is one reason training is so important in the mentoring process.

Family interference is another factor that can contribute to mentors or mentees ending a relationship prematurely. Some mentors noted that they felt the family played a part in the disconnection, either through not returning calls or passing on messages from the mentor to the mentee (Spencer, 2007). If parents or guardians are not attentive and do not support the mentor in creating a solid relationship with their child, this give the match a higher risk of failure from the start.

Inadequate agency support involves either too much or too little support given to the mentor, particularly when an agency extends mediocre support to a mentor dealing with a mentee with behavioral problems or involves itself in indirect communication

within the agency. These issues can cause mentors to cut ties with the organization because the mentor is not comfortable with their procedures or methods. This factor highlights the need for clearer roles for the mentor and the agency, along with structured support, supervision, and reporting systems (Rawlings et al., 2009).

Research suggests that when relationships end prematurely, they tend to have little positive effect and may result in negative consequences for the youth, including decreased self-worth and perceptions of scholastic competence (Britner & Kraimer-Rickaby, 2005; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011; Karcher, 2005). These abrupt endings may impact youth differently, depending on prior experiences and the vulnerabilities they bring into the mentoring relationship. Many youths in mentoring programs experience significant loss and disruptions of relationships with important adults due to parental separation, incarceration, or transfer into foster care (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013). Therefore, mentors must be mindful how they approach the ending a relationship. Research on interpersonal relationships indicated that adults tend to use more direct strategies for ending relationships. This occurs when adults perceive themselves to be at personal fault for the relationship's end, when the cause is external rather than because of a difficulty within the relationship, or when an overlap in social networks causes the adult to likely encounter the person (Banks, Altendorf, Greene, & Cody, 1987; Baxter, 1982; Sprecher, Zimmerman, & Abrahams, 2010). When adults use more direct approaches to relationship dissolution, research has found that youths react less negatively and experience lower levels of personal distress (Collins & Gillath, 2012).

Garringer et al. (2017) conducted a national survey that covered approximately 2,700 agencies and programs working with over 500,000 mentors and youth. This was the largest data collection effort in over twenty years and was designed to better understand the structure, services, and challenges of mentoring programs. Two key findings of this research relate to early match termination and agency challenges. Garringer et al. (2017) stated that when programs were asked to report the top three reasons why matches tend to end prematurely, the programs revealed that those reasons were, in order were: changes in mentor and mentee life circumstances, common friction points in mentoring relationships, and unrealistic or unfulfilled expectations by mentors and lack of support or interference from the youth's family. Listed in order, challenges were mentor recruitment, fundraising/grant writing, parent/family engagement, and program sustainability/growth (Garringer et al., 2017). After observing challenges from a more recent mentoring study, these issues are still present and need to be analyzed and addressed in order to offer beneficial mentoring practices.

Darling (1986) asserted that four types of mentors elicited negative effects in mentoring relationships. The first type is those who avoid their mentee that they are supposed to be mentoring. The second type are mentors who constantly disappoint mentees by making promises they cannot keep. The third is a more dangerous extension of the first type, in which individuals actively refuse to meet with mentees and stall their development. Lastly, being overly critical and excessively challenging is another type of mentoring with negative consequences. These following types of unexperienced mentors contribute to the main reasons for mentor/mentee relationship turmoil and failure, which

are: lack of commitment, inadequate support, and personal conflict (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Ultimately, mentor agencies and dedicated mentors need to examine the failures and challenges of the mentoring process and its relationships to ensure themselves and mentees get the most out of the experience and not waste time and resources during the process.

<center>Benefits of Mentoring</center>

Benefits of the Mentor

The focus of most studies related to the outcomes and benefits of mentoring primarily identify the implications such relationships hold for the person being mentored (Weiler et al., 2013). There is a lack of empirical research within mentoring literature that documents the benefits mentors accrue from engaging in mentoring relationships. Given the benefits that youth experience, it is surprising that more research has not addressed the benefits that adult mentors receive by serving in this pivotal role. In mentoring literature, there are three areas that research focuses on: academic, organizational, and youth mentoring. Throughout the research, these three areas overlap at times and relate to each other. Because of this, there is a gap in research related to the benefits of youth mentoring for mentors. This study considers information from the field of organizational mentoring field (rather than youth mentoring) to identify possible benefits that mentors receive. These pathways are basic and all-encompassing to a degree that is safely generalizable to other mentoring fields, such as youth mentoring.

A study by Murphy (1996) identified four benefit pathways of mentoring for mentors. The benefits described by these four pathways have been noted by other mentoring research (Barnett, 1984; Grima, Paille, Mejia, & Prud'homme, 2014). The first pathway resolves around the idea that mentoring allows individuals the comfort and satisfaction of continuing a people-helping lifestyle (Murphy, 1996; Barnett, 1984). Second, mentoring positively impacts the mentor's self-image (Grima et al., 2014; Murphy, 1996). Third, mentoring contributes to mentor success by facilitating learning tasks and creating network connections (Grima et al., 2014; Murphy, 1996). The last pathway merges the first three; Murphy (1996) concluded that the pathway consists of the personal benefits to mentors, including added influence, practicing, validating wisdom, gratifying a professional family/organization, and exercising spiritual values.

The Blue Heart Foundation is a mentoring program that focuses on underserved young men ages 13 to 19 in the greater San Diego County. Mentees receive mentoring, personal and professional development workshops, college campus tours, and structured activities supervised by qualified mentors. The Blue Heart Foundation (2019) identified several benefits that mentors experienced from mentoring youth within their organization. These benefits are detailed in the next sections.

Understanding Children. The first benefit is understanding children. The Blue Heart Foundation stated that one large benefit reported was that mentoring helped mentors gain a deeper understanding of children in general. In turn, they enhanced relationships with other children in their lives because of time spent with mentees.

Personal Fulfillment. The second benefit is personal fulfillment. As an adult, it can be tough to find activities in that provide a sense of accomplishment and personal fulfillment. Mentoring allows adults to give of themselves in a manner that is both selfless and fulfilling. Mentors can also benefit from watching a mentee's life improve as an outcome of their help, friendship, and guidance.

Improved Self-Esteem. The third benefit is improved self-esteem. Many feel that youth are the only ones who experience an improved self-esteem due to a mentoring relationship, but this is not true. Mentors who worked with this program reported greater self-esteem and saw their skills and accomplishments in a new light.

New Relationships. The fourth benefit are new relationships. This refers to individuals who mentor and may meet and form relationships during mentoring. Mentors often connect with one another during training and while participating in the program. These relationships help mentors form connections that are beneficial inside and outside the mentoring process.

Improved Interpersonal Skills. The fifth benefit is improved interpersonal skills, which are acquired when mentors learn to communicate with kids who are reluctant to trust them. Mentors also learn to respect kids' boundaries, build trust, and form lasting relationships. These skills carry over into their personal lives and can help strengthen relationships with their families, friends, and colleagues.

Perspective. The last benefit is perspective. The Blue Heart Foundation stated that a change most reported by their mentors is a new perspective on life. This perspective is a

new understanding and viewpoint about the difficulties disadvantaged young boys face, and how those issues follow them into adulthood. This perspective also gives mentors new appreciation for the advantages (or even the disadvantages) they have faced in their own life and sparks a desire to bring about societal changes that truly help the young men they mentor (Blue Heart Foundation, 2019).

It is reported that a supportive, healthy relationship formed between a mentor and a mentee provides a host of benefits for mentors, including: increased self-esteem; a sense of accomplishment; new networks of volunteers; insight into childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood; and increased patience and improved supervisory skills (Youth.gov, 2000). After reviewing available information about the benefits mentor's experience, the outcomes of mentoring are beneficial and similar to being a mentee. With these types of benefits, it is important to continue exploring benefits to mentors and share this information in the hopes of recruiting more qualified mentors.

Benefits of the Mentee

Research on youth mentoring demonstrates that mentoring relationships likely promote positive outcomes for youth and avoid harm when they are close, consistent, and enduring (Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010). Some areas for improvement with youth are academics and education, attitudes and motivation, social skills and interpersonal relationships, and psychological and emotional status. Youth who participate in mentoring programs typically exhibit less frequent use of illegal drugs and alcohol, less

frequent school truancy, improved grades, more self-confidence, fewer unplanned pregnancies, and improved relationships with adults and peers (Ryan & Olasov, 2000).

In a longitudinal study of a representative sample of young adults, DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found that youths who reported having had a mentoring relationship during their adolescence exhibited significantly better outcomes within the domains of education and work (high-school completion, college attendance, and employment), mental health (self-esteem, life satisfaction), problem behaviors (gang membership, fighting, and risk taking), and health (exercise, birth control use). Further, a meta-analysis of 55 mentoring program evaluations found benefits for participation in the areas of emotional/psychological well-being, involvement in problem or high-risk behavior, and academic outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002).

This study examined three categories of youth benefits that re-appeared within the youth mentoring literature. These categories are academic, social functioning, and behavioral regulation. While there is a range of benefits youth experience from mentoring, most benefits can be grouped within these particular areas.

Academic. Most mentors and the programs they work within promote academic achievement from youths being mentored. Improvements in grades, attitudes towards school, school behavior, absenteeism, and preparation for college are common themes that many educational mentoring programs focus on. Many of these programs and mentors had great success providing youth with improved educational outcomes. Jekielek et al. (2002) conducted a Childs Trend research brief that reviewed studies of ten youth

mentoring programs nation-wide and local. The evaluations compare youth randomly assigned to a mentoring program against a group of similar youth not assigned to a program.

Jekielek et al. (2002) found that youth participating in mentoring relationships experienced positive academic returns in the areas of better attendance, increased attendance in higher education, and better attitudes towards school in general. Youth participating in mentoring programs had fewer unexcused absences in school than similar youth who did not participate. For instance, youths in the BBBS program skipped half as many days of school as did those not in a program. Also, youths participating in the Across Ages program showed a gain of more than a week of attended classes compared to youths not in a program. Similar results were gathered across all three studies regarding attendance (Jekielek et al., 2002).

The youth examined in this study who were involved with mentoring also had a better chance of attending college. In their evaluation of Career Beginnings, an academically oriented mentoring program, Jekielek et al. (2002) found that participants were more likely to attend college than non-participant youths. The results were modest but still higher than the youth who had no mentor in their life. Of the youth enrolled in Career Beginnings, 53% enrolled in college their first year after high school graduation, compared to 49% of the control group.

These youth also demonstrated better attitudes towards school, in terms of the mentee/student's perception of school. For example, a negative attitude toward school

was when a student did not attend school or was frequently tardy because the they

perceived that teachers held little real knowledge. This type of negative attitude could

prevent a student from attending at all. Evaluations of the Across Ages program showed

that mentored youth had better attitudes toward school than non-mentored youth. In

addition, teachers viewed youth mentored in the BELONG program as placing a higher

value on school than non-mentored youth (Jekielek et al., 2002).

Social Functioning. Skills improvements in youth is an important benefit that can

result from mentoring. Research suggests that a principle benefit of group mentoring is

improvements in mentee social skills (Van Patten & Burke, 1997). Today, individuals

need solid social skills to live a productive life and successfully navigate everyday

interactions. Social skills are also related to school performance (Wentzel, 1991) and are

critical in determining whether people get and keep a job (Holzer, 1996). When

mentoring helps youth develop social skills, this benefit potentially shapes the mentee's

entire future.

Social functioning also relates to interpersonal relationships youth will encounter

and form as they get older. If a young person has good social skills, it is easier to form

beneficial, interpersonal relationships with others as they grow older. Mentoring can

enhance interpersonal relationships with parents, siblings, and peers (Rhodes, 2005). For

example, mentors may help mentees through interpersonal problems that have at school,

home, or work. By doing so, mentees experience a trusting, close relationship with a

mentor may lead to positive expectations about interpersonal relationships with others

(Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000) which, in turn, promotes many positive

relationships.

Dappen and Isernhagen (2006) reported that youth who participate in mentoring

programs showed improved relationships with peers, adults, and parents specifically.

They also stated that the youth had increased self-confidence and self-awareness and

found it easier to express themselves. Also, a study that evaluated the impact of

mentoring programs on youth social relationships found that participants felt they trusted

their parents more and communicated better with them. Participants also felt they had

better emotional support from friends than youth not involved in a mentoring program

(Jekielek et al., 2002).

Behavioral Regulation. Mentoring is often discussed as a way to increase

desirable behavior—including academic and job performance—and decrease undesirable

behavior—including dropping out of school and substance use (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, &

Dubois, 2008). Mentors are expected to build a close, meaningful relationship with a

mentee and influence him or her to make the right decisions in order to become

productive young adults within society. The hope is that mentoring will deter negative

outcomes such as drug use, teen pregnancy, college drop-out, and academic failure while

simultaneously encouraging alternative, positive behaviors (Eby et al., 2008). Several

studies found feedback that supports the notion that mentoring promotes positive

behaviors.

Dappen and Isernhagen (2006) found that youth who participated in mentoring programs experienced reduced alcohol and drug use, likelihood of becoming a teen parent, and incidence of violence towards others. Of the four programs that evaluated behaviors related to delinquency, all showed reduced negative behaviors. Mentored youth in the BELONG program committed fewer misdemeanors and felonies after program participation (offenses were reduced from 4% to 1%). In the Buddy System program, mentees with prior offenses were less likely to commit another offense due to program assignment (38% compared to 64% of the non-mentored group). Also, youth mentored by BBBS were almost one-third less likely to assault someone than youth not in the program. Results from Across Ages also indicated that youth participating in mentoring were less likely to engage in "problem behavior" (Jekielek et al., 2002, p. 4).

<div align="center">Cross-Race/Same-Race Mentoring</div>

Mentoring programs, researchers, and consumers have had questions about racially matching mentoring pairs, since the majority of formal, volunteer mentors are white (77%) compared to individuals referred into mentoring programs, who are often youth of color (Raposa et al., 2017; Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002; Valentino & Wheeler, 2013). Some believe that African American youth gain greater benefits from mentoring if paired with an African American Mentor. The issue with this is that there are fewer African American mentors to work with the many youth waiting on a match. Therefore, it become necessary for these youth to utilize available mentors, who are typically Caucasian, so that the opportunity to be mentored does not expire. The

unanswered question is: Are African American youth fully benefiting from cross-race mentoring relationships?

Research findings on the relative benefits of same-race versus cross-race matches are mixed (Sanchez et al., 2014). For example, one study revealed that youth in same-race matches reported receiving more instrumental support compared to those in cross-race matches (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). However, matching by race was not associated with youth-reported levels of emotional support or satisfaction with mentors. Instead, this study suggested that mentees in cross-race matches might be just as satisfied as those in same-race matches if the mentees perceive themselves as being similar to their mentors in other ways. Moreover, in a study of 476 African American, Latino, American Indian, and Asian-American youth, Rhodes, Bogat, et al. (2002) compared same-race and cross-race matches (where all cross-race mentors were white Americans). The findings suggested matches based on shared interests, geographic proximity, and youth and parental preferences for same-race pairs, no differences were found for the same-race and cross-race groups in meeting frequency or relationship duration.

Advocates of cross-race matching feel that the qualities and actions of a mentor matter more than the mentor's race. While homogeneous matching might expedite developing trust, it does not guarantee a successful mentoring match (Henkin & Rogers, 1992). Because cross-race matches are considered the "norm," they are reflected in study samples in which much of the positive effects of mentoring are found (Sanchez et al., 2014). Morrow and Styles (1995) found that effective relationships were just as likely to

form in cross-race pairs than in same-race pairs. While challenges occurred due to cultural differences, the challenges were generally resolved through adequate support and understanding. This finding is similar to Herrera, Sipe, and McClanahan (2000), who found that cross-race matches were as close and supportive as same-race matches and that other factors (such as type of activities, shared interests, and mentor training) were more predictive of relationship quality.

Some researchers see social distance and socioeconomic status as more of a concern than issues of race or ethnicity (Flaxman et al., 1988). Social distance becomes a problem when it "causes the mentor to misunderstand the young person's problems, needs, and thoughts" (Flaxman, 1991, p. 17). One of the ways this is less likely to occur is through training. The main issue most proponents of cross-racial youth mentorship programs agree on is that "white mentors need some type of training to sensitize them to the possible impact of their whiteness" (Hengeveld, 2015, p. 26). Cross-race matches may appear viable, but mentoring programs should consider mentor or mentee interests, the cultural sensitivity of the mentor, and the mentee's level of cultural identity and degree of mistrust of cross-race relationships (Sanchez & Colon, 2005). Without training in specific areas, well-intentioned mentors may make critical errors that can negatively impact the relationship (Rhodes, Bogat, et al., 2002).

Research on same-race mentor relationships is minimal, partially because programs often have a lower proportion of racial minority mentors compared to racial minority mentees (Sanchez & Colon, 2005). Arguments for same-race matching are

deeply embedded in the historical experience of minority groups in the United States, cultural legacies, and values regarding self-protection (Leigh, 1989). In part, proponents of racial matching base their belief on the assumption that an adult of a different racial or ethnic background cannot teach a youth how to cope in society if the mentor cannot understand what it feels like to be a minority in America (Rhodes, Bogat, et al., 2002). While this makes sense, this is untrue in certain situations, where different factors can change the relationship. These factors include the actual mentor or mentee, the program involved in the equation, or training that was provided.

Proponents of same-race matches contend that mentors with similar backgrounds are better matched to minority youth in a number of ways, particularly in better understanding the social and psychological conflicts of minority youth (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1991). Further, the mentor naturally shares deeper levels of trust and cooperation, thus becoming more effective in helping the youth achieve their goals (Liang & Grossman, 2007; Sanchez & Colon, 2005). Youth tend to select role models and mentors of the same racial or ethnic background, suggesting that a natural preference should be respected to a certain extent in formal programs (Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002). This may be because perceived similarities are associated with mentee satisfaction and a mentor's fondness with the youth (Ensher & Murphy, 1997).

Same-race matches definitely matter too many minority youth because of initial attraction and relationship expectations. For youth, an adult with a shared identity is easier to relate to and offers shared life experiences that prove beneficial to the mentee's

future decisions. A mentor who is more relatable may also develop a trusting relationship based on shared experience, demonstrate ways to cope with discrimination, and expand notions of future selves (Albright et al., 2017). For example, Garraway and Pistrang (2010) found that the young black males in their study felt that sharing their mentor's racial background allowed for mutual identification over shared experiences and interests. Garraway and Pistrang also recorded that the youth felt more confident in advice given from mentors who shared similar personal experiences as opposed to advice from others. These shared life experiences also led mentors to report feeling more empathy toward their mentee, which fostered greater trust in mentors.

Other studies recorded the importance of possessing racially/ethnically matched role models among youth who belonged to historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups, as these role models provided youth with models of who they could become (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Zirkel, 2002). Findings indicated that youth of color were aware that Caucasians are successful, but the youth had not been exposed to as many successful people who looked like them. Thus, youth of color—especially those who are economically disadvantaged—may be more motivated by mentors who look like them, as these mentors demonstrate that success is possible despite oppression, disadvantage, and unequal opportunities (Albright et al., 2017). With positive information related to both cross-race and same-race mentoring, there needs to be more research that digs dig deeper into the topic. Expanding on this research provides more understanding of what makes mentoring relationships work and the benefits for mentors and mentees.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Despite concerted outreach efforts over the past decade, recruiting enough volunteers to meet the demand for mentoring remains a significant problem (Raposa et al., 2017). A recent national survey identified mentor recruitment as the top challenge facing programs (Garringer et al., 2017). Throughout mentoring programs nationwide, youth needing mentors nearly always outnumbers the adults available to step up and donate their time. One way mentor agencies and programs can work on this issue is by learning more about recruiting mentors and implementing this knowledge into program structures.

One effective strategy for recruiting and selecting mentors is word of mouth, as many programs use existing mentors to recruit friends, family, coworkers, and acquaintances. Because of personal contact with someone already a mentor, potential volunteers usually already understanding the required commitment and persistence to be a successful mentor (Sipe, 2002). In a survey of over 700 formal programs, 71% cited word of mouth as a common recruitment strategy (Sipe & Roder, 1999). Programs must implement various recruitment strategies to attract qualified mentors. Community-based mentoring programs often recruit from community organizations, which are clearinghouses for volunteers. Media announcements, fliers, and organizations often serve as outreach to recruit. Business involvement is also commonly used, with

recruitment achieved through company-wide campaigns tied to corporate objectives to increase employee morale, civic duty, and community leadership (CSAP, 2000).

It is important that mentoring programs realistically describe the requirements, rewards, and challenges of mentoring during recruitment (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015). These programs must be clear about the needs of the target population while clarifying the skills, backgrounds, and qualities required of a potential mentor. Being upfront about the benefits and the difficulties and challenges of mentoring is a simple strategy to ensure that mentors carefully weigh the pros and cons when signing up (Rhodes, 2002). Recruitment messages that are inaccurate, misleading, or missing key information can result in short-term recruitment success, but long-term volunteer failure (Garringer et al., 2015).

The content placed in recruitment materials that programs deliver to the public is very valuable in determining whether or not an individual decides to volunteer. Recruitment materials must be designed to attract and engage target audiences whose skills and motivation best matches the goals and structure of the mentoring program. Research on volunteer recruitment suggests that, in addition to being clear and realistic, the tone of recruitment materials is important to attract dedicated, reliable mentors (Garringer et al., 2015). The tone and content must address the barriers, misconceptions, and benefits of mentoring. The most common barriers to volunteering reported are lack of time, lack of interest, and health problems (Sundeen, Raskoff, & Garcia, 2007). Further, mentoring programs must create materials that demonstrate alternatives and solutions to

these barriers. For example, advertisements for e-mentoring (a form of mentoring over the internet) may attract prospective mentors with time restraints. The issue is that the proper recruitment materials, with the right information, must reach the correct individual; this is always challenging within the mentoring field.

There are many misconceptions and concerns of mentoring prevent people from participating. For instance, misconceptions about the cost of mentoring, previous challenges with the law, and lack of trust for mainstream programs stop an individual from volunteering. Concerns to be addressed include safety concerns or concerns about being properly trained and receiving ongoing support from a mentoring agency. Advertising mentoring benefits in recruitment materials is also very important, as people gravitate to activities that offer positive outcomes. Recruitment efforts might also be more successful if mentors learn how mentoring and volunteering benefits them in the short-term (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000) and the longer-term (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015; Larose, Tarabulsy, & Cyrenne, 2005; Wyman et al., 2010). Two established benefits of volunteering are enhanced psychological and behavioral well-being (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2006). There are also benefits specifically associated with being a mentor, including having enjoyable interactions with mentees, feeling satisfied and fulfilled as a mentor, and receiving professional development opportunities through mentor training and helping a younger individual (Garringer et al., 2015). With the proper recruitment campaign, benefits like these attract many eligible mentors.

<u>Retention</u>

Once the recruitment process is over and a mentor is selected, the next challenge is retaining that mentor. Mentor retention is a major challenge for agencies, including those funded through federal programs (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). The success of a mentoring program depends on recruiting legitimate volunteers and using strategies to assist and retain those volunteers in long-term relationships with a mentee. Not only is a high volunteer turnover rate damaging to an organization, but it is also negative for the youth in the equation. For example, Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that premature termination of youth mentoring relationships prevents psychosocial and academic gains, but also results in negative effects for youth, such as deterioration of self-worth and perceived scholastic competence. Practices that foster mentor satisfaction and support effective mentoring relationships, as well as those that provide support, feedback, and recognition, may help retain existing mentors (Stukas & Tanti, 2005).

Orientation and training, as well as support and supervision are two strategies to help retain mentors (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). While most mentoring programs recruit, screen, and match mentors to mentees, most do not provide in-depth training in preparation for the actual relationship they enter. Looking back at the Sipe and Roder (1999) study, 95% of the 722 mentoring programs reviewed offered limited orientation, with less than half of mentors completing two or more hours of training and 22% receiving no training. This does not make sense, considering that research suggests that providing orientations and ongoing training to mentors promotes strong mentoring

relationships, mentor satisfaction, and sustained matches (DuBois et al., 2002; Herrera et al., 2000). Therefore, more programs should attempt to offer more in-depth orientation and training opportunities to increase the odds of retaining mentors.

After the orientation and training process is over, the level of support from a program typically declines. Support and supervision during the mentoring process is essential because mentors should not be expected to navigate the experience alone. Instead, ongoing supervision and training may provide mentors with the understanding and skills necessary to develop effective mentoring relationships, receive feedback about performance (e.g., any benefits to the mentee), and be recognized for their efforts—all of which enhances mentor satisfaction and retention (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). During the support and supervision phase of mentoring relationships, organizations can promote mentor satisfaction and retention by ensuring that mentors are meeting their goals for activities they are involved in (Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000). Regular, ongoing supervision provides programs with opportunities to assess mentor goals and motives, to remind mentors of the benefits they receive, to monitor changing motives, and to adjust task affordances as necessary (Stukas & Tanti, 2005).

Organized support groups also help retain mentors because they are important to sustaining mentors by reinforcing their role and creating a social network of shared mentoring expectations (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). In addition, support groups make it possible for mentors to become motivated as volunteers and gain understanding, enhancement, and social goals (Clary et al., 1998). Overall, meeting with groups of

individuals that have similar interests and activities gives mentors an opportunity to share and absorb useful information and to also bounce ideas or suggestions related to mentoring relationships. This could make the mentoring process easier for the mentor which, in turn, could result in increased satisfaction and retention.

Theoretical Approach

Similarity-Attraction Theory

The similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971) suggested that the more similar an individual perceives another person, the more that person is liked. Byrne (1971) developed the similarity/attraction paradigm by reviewing literature related to similarity and dissimilarity. While Byrne's original study was based on similarity in attitudes, over the years, more recent research extended these findings to include other attributes. Aside from attitudes, similarities in demographic characteristics, personality, and values also influences attraction (Riordan, 2000). Research has supported that similarities in socioeconomic background, competence, leisure activities, academic interests, and achievements also create attraction (Baskett, 1973; Byrne, 1971; Byrne, Clore & Worchel, 1966; Fehr, 2001; Werner & Parmelee, 1979). A meta-analysis of more than 300 similarity studies observed that similarity produces a positive, moderately sized effect on attraction (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008). Overall, this theory confirms that being similar to another individual increases the odds that the person will be accepted and liked.

Research on the similarity-attraction paradigm also shows that similarity between individuals may lead to frequent communication, high social integration, and a desire to maintain the affiliation with the other individual (Lincoln & Miller, 1979). Similarity-attraction suggests that individuals are attracted to those who share similar values and perspectives, and that this shared similarity enables better communication and interpersonal functioning (Byrne, 1997). Therefore, similarity increases the possibility that a person receives validation for their own viewpoints, generating positive attitudes and behaviors towards the person like them (Kram, 1985). Similarity-attraction theory also predicts that perceived similarity generates comfort and attraction, and when applied to new relationships, predicts a positive, linear relation between similarity and attraction that typically results in both individuals liking each other (Byrne, 1971; Morry, 2005).

Similarity-attraction theory can specifically be applied to the early stages of mentoring relationships, because it suggests that mentors and mentees will be attracted to people they perceive to be similar to themselves (Byrne, 1971). Researchers has suggested that similarity in race and gender are important considerations in the pairing process (Burke, 1984; Thomas, 1990). Sanchez and Colon (2005) stated that mentors and mentees of similar racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds (who likely have more in common) experience more successful relationships than those of different backgrounds. The theory also suggested that, given an opportunity to choose their mentors, youth more often selected mentors of the same race, ethnicity, or culture (Sanchez et al., 2014). In interviews with adult mentors, Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs (1997) found that when mentors were asked what attracted them to mentees, one factor reported was that mentees

reminded mentors of themselves and that they had much in common. Thus, there is support that similarity related to racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds plays a part in mentor-mentee selection.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) posits that when individuals enter relationships or groups, they focus on the investment cost of their participation in relation to returns received (Monge & Contractor, 2003). SET also suggests that individuals enter relationships in which they believe the rewards will be greater than the cost (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This theory contends that a basic motivation for interaction is to seek the rewards and to avoid punishments (Bandura, 1986; Emerson, 1976). As such, SET argues that attitudes and behaviors are determined by the rewards of interaction minus the penalty/cost of that interaction (Griffith et al., 2006). According to SET, individuals make two calculations: (a) the comparison level, which is a straightforward assessment of the cost of effort and resources expended against benefits received and (b) the comparison level of alternatives, which is a more complex assessment of the cost–benefit ratios of maintaining particular relationships compared to available alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). These calculations help individuals determine if they want to move forward with a relationship.

Mentoring is an intervention aimed at creating or facilitating a supportive relationship with a significant other. Mentoring is also largely based on social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which views the reciprocal relationship between

mentors and mentees as a basis for the exchange of things, such as support, knowledge, and advice (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Mentoring can be understood through a social exchange theoretical construct in that mentors and mentees must discover mutual benefits and satisfaction for the relationship to continue. The benefits to mentees are well-documented and articulated, but the benefits to mentors are rarely explicated. Essentially, mentors must also experience some benefit from mentoring process for the relationship to become enduring and, ultimately, successful (Reddick et al., 2012). The value, reward, or benefit a mentor receives could be increased self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, or additional networks of people. From a mentee's perspective, the benefits could be related to academics and education, attitudes and motivation, social skills and interpersonal relationships, and increased psychological and emotional status.

<div align="center">The Male African American Mentor and Mentee</div>

Male African American Mentor

The Garringer et al., (2017) study that examined youth mentoring services across America found that out of 193,723 mentors listed in the survey, 15.04% were African-American, Further, 60% of African American mentors reported as female, 38% reported as male, and 2% reported as transgendered. This means that male mentors were underrepresented in agencies and programs in the United States to meet the national crisis for African-American male youth seeking adult male African-American mentors. This crisis is due to challenges involved with recruiting and retaining such mentors (Miller, 2008). While representation for African American volunteerism is low overall, Black

volunteers are still more engaged in mentoring than other groups, averaging 4.5 hours per week (Grimes, 2014). In short, once an adult male African-American mentor becomes involved, they fully dedicate their time and energy to mentoring.

African American male mentors prefer natural or informal settings and other areas where they feel comfortable. This is why some mentors do not fully accept mentoring in a formal program or participating in training opportunities. Specifically, mentors of color serve more often as natural mentors in schools, workplaces, and churches than in formal settings (Sanchez & Colon, 2005). Of the types of formal mentoring programs, school-based (as compared to community-based settings) are more successful in recruiting ethnic minority mentors (Herrera et al., 2000). When designing and implementing recruitment campaigns for African American males, agencies and programs must consider the above to increase and retain these types of mentors.

Many barriers and misconceptions impact recruiting and retaining male African American mentors, including: time restraints related job and family, previous challenges with the law, lack of trust for programs funded by the government, and lack of monetary support to be a mentor. Unfortunately, these barriers and misconceptions prevent individuals from becoming mentors; as a result, less men mentor in our communities. This means the United States needs more mentoring programs to ensure that accurate information is available for potential mentors (Miller, 2008).

Male African American Mentee

Garringer et al. (2017) study that examined youth mentoring services across America identified that out of 413,237 mentees on the survey, 33.31% were African-American. While Black youth constitute approximately 14% of the child population in the US, they still represented one-third of mentees involved in this nationwide survey. These numbers show that male African American mentees are over-represented within mentoring agencies and programs across the nation. Further, there are many more male African American mentees unaccounted for in this survey with no ties to formal programs. In short, many more African-American youths are in need of mentors or are currently in a natural/informal relationships.

Young Black men in America face many challenges, many of which stem from the failures of institutions that shape their development and prospects for healthy futures. In school, for example, Black male students face over-referral for disciplinary action and special education (Rowley et al., 2014). Similarly, within the criminal justice system, African American children are 18 times more likely than Caucasian children to be sentenced as adults (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2007). Statistically, young Black men face disproportionately high rates of suspension, expulsion, and dropping out; are more likely to go to prison than to go to college; and to father children they will not live with or parent (Jarjoura, 2013). According to Hardiman (2013), African American males lead in categories such as incarceration, homicide, school dropout, fatherless homes, drug addiction, sexually transmitted disease, high unemployment, and poverty. With issues

like these, it is essential that young Black men obtain assistance to deal with the trials and tribulations they will encounter while growing into adulthood. Mentorship is a legitimate strategy that can help guide these youth in the right direction.

Research shows that young Black men can significantly benefit from being mentored by adult African American male mentors. Young Black men need males of the same ethnicity, who have common spiritual and cultural experiences, and with whom they can identify to help guide them in a society predominately governed by white males (Miller, 2008). According to similarity attraction theory (Byrne, 1971), relationships between mentors and mentees of similar racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds (who will likely have much in common) can be more successful than relationships between mentors and mentee of different backgrounds (Sanchez et al., 2014). Regardless of whether the mentor of a young Black man is Caucasian or African American, mentees will benefit in a range of areas, including academics, social-emotional well-being, mental health, and the prevention of risky behaviors (Sanchez, 2016). Therefore, as long as there are trained, competent, adult mentors available for these youth, it is necessary that we move forward with the mentoring process.

Evidence shows that different methods and content is more effective when mentoring African American boys than with youth from other cultures. Most successful programs geared towards mentoring African American boys are structured differently than typical mentoring programs that work with kids of all races. According to Jarjoura (2013), there are three primary differences. First, the mentoring model is not usually one-

on-one. Also, there is a more deliberate focus on pointing the youth toward a more

positive future rather than being a "buddy." Finally, more attention is paid on preparing

mentors to be more culturally competent. The structure and training provided to mentors

is geared toward educational success, career development, civic engagement, and

building character and leadership for the youth served. These programs also focus on

ethnic identity, cultural values, and gender roles (Jarjoura, 2013). Modifying the structure

and the content of the program, mentors can focus the specific needs of mentees improve

as a team.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of six African American adult male mentors in a same-race, same-sex, group mentoring program doe young African American men for two years or longer. More specifically, this study will attempt to identify the ways the mentoring program was beneficial to the mentors. Second, this study will also attempt to identify barriers the mentors experienced while mentoring in the program. Finally, this study will record suggestions for recruiting and retaining male African American mentors from their perspective. By identifying this information and adding it to the body of research, mentoring programs and agencies can further understand male African American mentors in general. Further, programs can use this information to improve recruiting and retaining these mentors.

Phenomenological Methodology

Creswell (2013) noted that a qualitative investigation is an inquiry of understanding, grounded in a distinct methodological approach that explores a social phenomenon. In this study, qualitative research will help the researcher construct a multifaceted and holistic picture, evaluate words, report detailed participant perspectives, and conduct the study in natural context (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people

bring to them" (p. 3). Qualitative research includes recognizing that participant views are important, that the researcher must ask open-ended must in the participant's natural setting, and that research can advocate to change individual lives for the better. Researchers can use qualitative methods such as phenomenology when variables are unknown and the researcher must explore participant perceptions to best answer the research problem (Creswell, 2008).

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that draws on the experiences of a group of people who are expected to share similar experiences. Phenomenology reveals meanings of a common experience by eliciting personal points of view (Creswell, 2003). Phenomenological approaches are based on personal knowledge and subjectivity which emphasizes the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. This approach helps researchers understand subjective experiences to gain insight into human motivations and actions while cutting through assumptions and conventional wisdom (Lester, 1999). Moustakas (1994) stated that the purpose of a phenomenological qualitative approach is to determine what an experience means for those in a study: "From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, or in other words the essences or structures of the experience" (p. 13).

As a methodology, phenomenology tasks the researcher to select participants, collect data from those participants, analyze the data, and then report the findings. Findings are the collected descriptions and explanations from an individual related to their lived experiences and how they interpret those experiences. While human

experiences can be investigated through observation, shared interaction, and literature and art, in phenomenological research, human experiences are typically investigated by speaking directly with people in conversational, in-depth interviews (Bliss, 2016). Phenomenological interview questions allow researchers to elicit descriptions of participants' lived experiences while maintaining enough flexibility for participants to tell their full stories. After interviews are completed, Creswell (1998) stated that data analysis proceeds through a method of reduction, analyzing specific statements and themes, and searching for all possible meanings. During this process, the researcher must set aside pre-judgments, which is known as bracketing his or her experiences. This procedure is also known as Epoche, and refers to setting aside personal experiences, biases, prejudgments, and preconceived ideas that. This results in the researcher having a new perspective on the participants and/or the topic under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers should engage Epoche while analyzing their study because it allows them to be free of bias while describing reality objectively (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

To effectively perform a phenomenological study and analysis, the researcher must fully understand the order and details of this intricate process. Creswell (1998) described the general structure of phenomenological study as follows:

1. Introduction: problem and questions

2. Research procedures: phenomenological and philosophical assumptions, data collection, analysis, outcomes

3. Significant statements

4. Meanings of statements

5. Themes of meanings

6. Exhaustive descriptions of phenomenon

As it relates to the phenomenological inquiry and analysis for this research project, Creswell (1998) proposed the following process to successfully complete a study:

1. The researcher must understand the philosophical perspectives behind the approach, especially the concept of studying how people experience a phenomenon.

2. The investigator writes research questions that explore the meaning of that experience for individuals and asks the individuals to describe their everyday lived experience.

3. The investigator collects data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Typically, this information is collected through long interviews.

4. For the phenomenological data analysis, protocols are divided into statements or horizonalization, units are transformed into clusters of meaning, then tie the transformation together to make a general description of the experience, including textural description, what is experienced and structural description, and how it is experienced.

5. The phenomenological report ends with the reader understanding the invariant structure of the experience.

Interpretative Phenomenology

For this particular study, the researcher will use interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA) to gather information about the experiences of male African American mentors. An interpretative approach is distinctive from other phenomenological approaches because it allows the researcher to concentrate on the phenomenon being reviewed through discovering and then interpreting the meanings embedded in participant narratives (Maggs-Rapport 2000). The main objective of IPA is to understand the participant's life world and "describe what it is like" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, p. 104). An IPA study typically involves a highly intensive and detailed analysis of accounts provided by a small number of participants. These word-for-word accounts are generally captured through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, or diaries, the analysis then looks for patterns of meaning, which are then reported thematically (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

IPA also involves a two-stage interpretation process in which the researcher interprets the participant's sense-making activity. This is described as a "double hermeneutic" by Smith (2004), referring to a two-fold sense-making process. The analytical process in IPA is often described as a double hermeneutic or process of dual interpretation because, first, participants make meaning of their world and, second, the researcher decodes that meaning to make sense of the participant's meaning making (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Smith and Osborn (2007) referred to these types of interpretation as empathic and critical and suggested that they work together through

sustained inquiry for a balanced perspective that is appropriate to the phenomenon and participates of the study.

There are several reasons IPA will be used in this study on male African American mentors. First, it is important to be able to fully understand the shared (or common) experiences of individuals related to this study. Since the researcher has been a male African-American mentor for more than ten years, this will make it easier to understand the common experiences of another male African-American mentors. Second, interpretative phenomenology is interested in what and how participants experience phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). By personally understanding these shared experiences, the researcher will be able to develop a deeper understanding of male African American mentors and their relationships with African American boys and young men. Third, interpretative phenomenology is an interpretative process (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). The experiences of these mentors will help them form their realities. In forming the essence of their realities in participant interviews, the researcher will then be able to analyze their words to interpret their perspectives. Last, IPA is suitable for this study because it welcomes self-reflection. Since the researcher's own background as a male African American mentor is his reality, this will help in interpreting the experiences this study will capture. In addition, self-reflection will allow the researcher to bracket biases and put personal thoughts and perceptions aside to understand the lived experiences of study participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Kool Kids Society

Kool Kids Society was a mentoring program located in Waterloo, Iowa from 2012 to 2016. This program focused on working with African American boys and teens between 12 and 17 years old. All mentors in the Kool Kids Society were adult African American males between the ages of 28 to 40. While the Kool Kids Society operated, over 30 young men were mentored by eight mentors in an extensive mentoring program. The program had two meetings per week with the youth, as well as weekend activities that were planned weekly in group and individual settings. There were also yearly group trips to Chicago, New York, and Kansas City with the purpose of creating bonds and strengthening relationships between mentors and mentees. The program also implemented an employment component that assisted youth in starting their own carwash and lawn care service during the summer. Mentors and mentees worked closely to start and run both businesses for four summers.

The purpose of the Kool Kids Society was to encourage African American men in the community to step up and mentor young men who had no fatherly figure in their life in order to help them grow and become productive citizens. Mentors in the Kool Kids Society also worked closely with Waterloo Community Schools to support behavioral and academic success. All parents of mentored youth signed consent forms that allowed mentors access to their child's academic records and communication with their teachers. The specific goals of the Kool Kids Society were to assist young men to do well in school, stay out of trouble in and out of school, and learn to respect themselves and their

community. These goals were important because African American teens across the nation suffer academically and criminally. To successfully fulfill these goals, responsible male African American mentors worked closely with male African American youth in areas such as self, family, community, and future aspirations. Overall, this African American mentoring program took pride in connecting young men with responsible adult males invested in teaching youth to succeed and move through society.

Participant Selection

For the current study, the researcher recruited six African American males to participate. All participants are adult African American male mentors who have mentored male African American youth within a formal mentoring program for two years or more. The size of the participant group for this study is consistent with other phenomenological studies involving youth participants (Smith et al., 2009). All six participants are African American men who have full-time careers and volunteered their time to mentor young African American boys in their community. All six mentors volunteered at least six hours each week and participated in one-on-one and group mentoring activities. Participant ages ranged from 28 to 40 at the time of data collection.

The researcher followed Laverty's (2003) recommendations in selecting participants for this research on the lived experiences of male African American mentors. These recommendations are that participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied, are willing to talk about their experiences, and that the group be diverse enough that participants are likely provide unique stories about the experiences (Laverty, 2003).

To satisfy this, the researcher used purposeful sampling to recruit study participants. Purposeful sampling widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases to effectively use limited resources (Patton, 2002). This further involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of participant availability and willingness to participate, as well as an ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. The African American mentors who will participate in this study have knowledge and experience on the topic of mentoring and are effective communicators willing to explore this important phenomenon.

Each participant was contacted through email or telephone to consent to participating in this phenomenological study. The researcher notified participants that interviews would be digitally recorded in order to be analyzed and transcribed. Once interviews are completed, the digital files will be returned to participants for transcription consent. Also, each participant will read and sign a human participant informed consent form that explains the study's details. After signing informed consent, interviews will be scheduled and completed within a month.

Data Collection

This phenomenological study will gather data through personal interviews conducted with six adult male African American mentors. These mentors have

volunteered for two years or more with the Kool Kids Society mentoring program, which connected male African American mentors with African American boys in Waterloo, Iowa. In an interpretive phenomenological approach, the most common method for data collection is through semi-structured interview questions (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, the researcher created open-ended research questions which will explore the phenomena of African American mentors and their perceptions. Semi-structured interviews will be guided by major research questions that balance focus and flexibility in order to get as close as possible to what [participants] think about the topic, without being led to much by the [researchers] questions (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Moustakas (1994) stated that "Phenomenological interviews are informal, interactive processes that engage open-ended questions and comments" (p. 114). All qualitative research relies on rich, thick, detailed, and full data, but also on the quality of the data (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Keeping all this in mind, the researcher designed semi-structured interview questions that couldn't be answered with a simple yes or no. Instead, the interview questions will give participants opportunities to reflect, describe, and explain their experiences in detail. Furthermore, the questions were designed to allow participants to narrate their specific stories and how they viewed the mentoring field from their perspective. Essentially, nothing participants will share is to be considered right or wrong; all the collected data will be used to understand the topic. Since participants are experts of their own experiences, phenomenological interviews will follow the participants' descriptions and stories rather than the interviewer's thinking (Cope, 2005).

Each mentor in this study will participate in a 60 to 120-minute interview led by the principal researcher. All interviews will be conducted at the former Kool Kids Society headquarters—the same location where the mentors regularly met and worked with youth. This is a good place to have the interviews because it was a private place where the mentors could speak freely and privately, without influence or interruption. Also, this location will help participants remember information related to that activities and meetings they were involved with in the same location.

Several prompts will guide the phenomenological interview procedure. The prompts that will be used for this study were as follows:

1. Please tell me your name, age, and give me a brief description about yourself? [prompt] What do you do for a living? Do you have children? Are you single or married? Are you a high school/college graduate?

2. Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it? Ask about family, community, and school.

3. What is your definition of a mentor?

4. Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African American adult male?

5. Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

6. Was mentoring for the Kool Kids your first time being a mentor?

7. Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

8. What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids Society mentoring program?

9. Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

10. Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

11. What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

12. Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?

13. Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool Kids mentoring programs for two years?

14. What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?

15. Please take this moment to reflect for a minute or so and give me any final thoughts about your experiences and role that you played in being a part of an

African American male mentoring program (Kool Kids) that was created to help

mold and assist the endangered young black men of our community that we once

were.

Audio from the interviews will be digitally recorded and stored on a device during

data collection and analysis. The researcher will transcribe all participant interviews.

When transcripts are done, the researcher will listen to each interview a second and third

time to ensure accuracy during analysis. This will allow the researcher to connect with

the dialogue and ensure that any important points and themes were captured. Once the

transcripts are analyzed, they will be transferred from Microsoft Word to document files

on the ATLAS.ti (Version 5.2) qualitative data analysis software for additional analysis.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

In qualitative research, data analysis is based on configuring the collected data

into understandable information (Emmel, 2013). In this study, the main objective of data

analysis is to identify important themes and transfer that information into a report that can

be easily interpreted by others interested in the findings. Managing the collected data is

the primary starting point of qualitative research, leading to presenting the meaning of

participant experiences as in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007). In this study,

data management will consist of the researcher organizing the collected materials in

separate files. Each participant will have a separate file that will include their consent and

all interview information.

After data collection, the next step will be to transcribe the information. The researcher will transcribe audio recordings after each interview. After transcription, the researcher will perform what is known as a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Member checking will be used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the data (Harper & Cole, 2012). In member-checking for this study, each participant will be sent a copy of their interview transcript and encouraged to offer feedback and verify that their interview was transcribed accurately. Once transcripts are approved, the next step will be to start data analysis.

The data analysis process used for this research will be IPA. In this study, the researcher will successfully implement IPA in five steps: The first step is to read and re-read the interview text and to make notes that reflected the researcher's initial thoughts and observations. The second step is for the researcher to identify and label emergent themes that characterized each section of the text. After, the themes are clustered together and labeled to capture the essence of the study. Next, the researcher will create a summary table of the structured themes for each participant. Last, the themes will be integrated into an inclusive list of master themes that reflected the experiences of the participants as a whole (Willig, 2001). Then, the most important themes will be added to the findings to explain and describe the participants' lived experiences. Finally, the researcher will follow-up with a second member check to double-check interview transcriptions and the themes derived from the data analysis.

Identifying and categorizing themes for this study will be important in capturing the lived experiences of the participants. Initially, the researcher will gather clusters of meanings from significant statements made by participants (Creswell, 2013) and then utilize this information to develop study themes (Moustakas, 1994). Silverman (2010) stated that coding and segmenting provides clarity for the collected data. Considering that this study should produce a tremendous amount of data, which is necessary to break the information down to report the findings.

This study will use three main steps to code the data and identify common themes. These steps are initial coding, focused coding, and thematic coding. Initial coding occurs when a researcher first analyzes the available materials and carefully and reads the information multiple times to become very familiar with the data. By immersing themselves in the data, a researcher can discern general patterns within interviews (Creswell, 2013). These patterns will allow the researcher to find common themes and topics from the dialogue. Focused coding will be the second step in the data analysis. In this step, the researcher will identify relevant themes from each interview and observe which themes surfaced across all interviews. Themes and categories will be generated using the ATLAS.ti (Version 5.2) qualitative data analysis software. The researcher then will analyze the categories and themes until they can be dissected to create subcategories (Creswell, 2013). The last step, thematic coding will not be performed until the researcher identifies categories and themes. During thematic coding, the researcher will work to understand how the themes were interconnected (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) stated that thematic coding allows a researcher to move from multiple themes to a

more manageable number. Using thematic coding in this study will help the researcher narrow down valuable information to communicate relevant findings effectively.

<center>Role of Researcher</center>

The researcher of this study is a male African American Doctoral student at the University of Northern Iowa who chose to research the phenomena of African American male mentors. Before pursuing a EdD, the researcher obtained a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Master's degree in Organizational Communication at the University of Northern Iowa. The researcher came to this project as a social sciences' graduate student, but also as a business owner, father of five, son, mentor, mentee, and former African-American youth who grew up in the streets.

The researcher's interest in performing a study related to African American mentoring stemmed from experiences he encountered during childhood. Growing up in Chicago, Illinois and Waterloo, Iowa exposed him to much more than action figures and basketballs, including drugs, alcohol, gangs, sex, and the streets. If it wasn't for a group of special African American men who chose to guide and mentor the researcher, he would likely be dead or in prison. Because of mentoring, the researcher chose to dedicate his time to this research and his life to learning how to recruit and retain more African American men to work with young men in our communities.

As an African American resident of the United States, the researcher feels that he understands the bigger picture to what is going on in African American communities nationwide. The bottom-line is that Black young men are getting killed and going to jail

regularly and they need to be saved. One way to save these young men is to have a legitimate man in their life who can teach them how to be man. Because many African American children are raised in one-parent homes without a father, there is room for a much-needed father figure in these kids' lives. Fortunately, formal and informal mentoring can fill that void—if a youth is lucky enough to build a mentoring relationship with the right mentor. The researcher considers himself to be that mentor because he loves young men in his community and has stepped up to be an active volunteer and mentor in his immediate area.

To understand a phenomenon, a phenomenological researcher will make every effort to suspend or set aside presuppositions, biases, and other knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from personal and scholarly sources. This bracketing (or phenomenological reduction) involves rigorous self-reflection (Hein & Austin, 2001). For this study, it is important that the researcher use bracketing, as he is already familiar with the phenomena of African American mentoring. This will not be easy but is necessary in order to understand a new point of view and avoid prejudgment. By implementing bracketing, the researcher will learn new information about the topic.

<u>Ethical Procedures</u>

The researcher requested approval for this study from the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board (IRB). A request for approval was submitted after the researcher gained permission from the graduate committee to move forward. Once all materials were reviewed, the IRB granted the researcher approval for the study (UNI

IRB# 11-0086). The researcher will closely follow University of Northern Iowa IRB regulations throughout this study. The researcher constructed an informed consent document that requested consent from participant mentors and provided a general idea of the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). Once potential mentors were identified, they were required to sign the consent form to move forward with the interview.

To ensure that participants are treated with fairness and dignity (Hatch, 2002), the researcher will adhere to ethical and legal principles found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010), including the following: "to ensure the accuracy of scientific knowledge, to protect the rights and welfare of research participants, and to protect intellectual property rights" (p. 11). Prior to participating in the study, participants will be informed about research procedures and confidentiality of data and received informed consent forms (Creswell, 2013). This will give participants all the information they will need to decide whether they participate in the study.

Information obtained during this study that will identify its participants will be kept confidential. The summarized findings will include no identifying information if published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference. Recordings and transcripts from this study will be reviewed by the researcher's committee. Direct quotations will not include identifying information and may be published, while actual data may be used in future research. Risks to participation in this study are minimal. Minimal risk will be related to inconvenience or time from the participant's daily schedule. No direct benefits to participants will be expected, but this research will

generate important information about African American mentoring. The mentors will also be informed that their participation is completely voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the study whenever they want, without retribution.

      The research participants will be ensured confidentiality and anonymity by securing the informed consent documents, interview tapes, and transcripts. All physical data will be kept under lock and key in a fireproof safe that can only be accessed by the researcher. All documents related to the study, which will be on the researcher's computer, are also password-protected. The only person with the password is the principal researcher. Once the study is completed physical data will be destroyed one year later. The researcher will save data electronically for future expansion on the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived

experiences and perspectives of six male African American adult mentors in a same-race,

same-sex, group mentoring program for young African American men for two years or

longer. More specifically, the findings focused on the benefits and barriers the

participants experienced as well as suggestions they provided about recruiting and

retaining male African American mentors. Due to a medical condition experienced by

one participant, the researcher was unable to complete the sixth and final interview. As

such, this chapter focuses on findings from five participants.

The researcher also attempted using the ATLAS.ti (Version 5.2) qualitative data

analysis software to further analyze participant interviews, but instead decided it would

be more beneficial to manually analyze the data for information and themes. This chapter

provides a brief description of each participant mentor and provides all relevant

information to answer the research questions. The findings also discuss other information

related to African American men, boys, and the mentoring dynamics created within these

mentoring relationships. After summarizing each interview analysis, emerging themes

that became known during analysis are presented. All participant information was

obtained directly from the interviews.

<u>The Mentor's Life</u>

Before we analyze the data provided by the participants, I think that it's important that the reader understands more about the mentors involved. By being able to glimpse into the lives of the mentors and their lived experience, we can gain a better understanding and perspective of the perpetual problems that plague the Black males of our country. We will never be able to fully address the issues and come up with viable solutions until we acknowledge and understand the systematic problems that these black youth face daily. It is also important to recognize that while the focus is on mentoring, some of the alarming statistics that have been recorded about African American male's tie directly to the mentors that were involved in this study. These include statistics related to incarceration, homicide, single parent homes, and education.

After conducting and analyzing the interviews, it was evident that all five participants were African American men born and raised in low income environments. Each participant was over the age of 30 and had children and families to look after. Out of the five subjects, three obtained college degrees, while the other two mentors were high school graduates. At the time of the study, all five participants were employed and are still currently employed. All participants discussed that they experienced some highs and lows growing up as an African American boy, but the help of mentors provided them ways to navigate their childhood somewhat easier. While all participants learned important information and tools from their mentors, some still experienced hard times and repercussions due to not listening to the guidance provided by their mentors.

Regardless of what has transpired during these men's lives, they acknowledged they still carry something of value with them that they obtained from an important mentor. When asked about same-race versus cross-race mentoring, all participants accepted and respected the concept of cross-race mentoring, but also identified differences and benefits of same-race mentoring as it relates to African American boys.

Some of the issues plaguing African American male youth are incarceration, homicide, single parent homes, and education. After examining the interview transcripts and reading about the mentors themselves, I noticed several interesting patterns. Related to incarceration, three of the five mentors had been to jail as young adults. Two of the five were incarcerated for 10 years or more in detention centers and prison. All five participants were exposed to homicide from a young age due to the communities that they were born and raised in. Also, all five mentors were raised in single-parent homes with no significant presence of their biological father. Last, from an educational perspective, two of the five mentors were high school dropouts and had issues with suspension and expulsion during the time that they attended school. However, they both eventually obtained their GED's and went on to become college graduates. What is so interesting about these facts is that the same issues that the mentors went through 20 to 25 years ago are the same issues that current youth are still experiencing. After processing this information, it became clear African American males and their very existence are being threaten by a vicious cycle that needs to be fixed in order to strengthen their future generations.

The following section of this chapter will highlight several key points touched upon by the participants related to the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of African American male mentors. To examine more information used to formulate the emerging themes gathered in this study review the full interview transcripts in the appendix section at the end of this chapter. Please keep in mind that the following quotes are taken from very extensive interviews. I have chosen to present the direct quotes of each participant organized by the overarching themes without additional commentary because I want to ensure that the voices of each participant are firmly at the forefront.

<div align="center">Benefits</div>

The participants spoke about the benefits that they received while mentoring youth within the mentoring program. All five mentors provided in-depth information related to the benefits that experienced from their personal perspective. The interview question that guided the participants responses is as follows: *What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?*

Participant One Responses

> Just being a part of that, being a part of something where a kid is at this point where he's ready to give up. To fight through something for a cause that's what you gain from that. You gain that this kid is pushing himself to be a better person than he was yesterday.

Always understand that whatever somebody's giving you, they're getting something in return. And that's one thing that I hate about life. I want to gain that experience of knowing that this person can be a better them.

If you are truly helping somebody what is there to gain? Maybe I'm gaining a friend that I know for the next 20 years, but I'm not looking for a monetary gain, or some instant gratification because if I was doing that, then I wouldn't be doing mentoring, I wouldn't be trying to help. I would be going and doing something that makes money.

It feels good from a give-back standpoint, but you always feel like you could do more and that's the tough part of mentoring somebody that's considered to have some of the same obstacles as yourself. It always leaves you wanting to do more.

Honestly, it is very rewarding and liberating. It was very rewarding to see that even though I made a lot of mistakes in my life, I was in a position to help someone steer away from making those same mistakes.

<u>Participant Two Responses</u>

Internal feelings of knowing that I'm making a positive difference in somebody else's life. The gains would be the fact that somebody saw something in me to even allow me to be part of such a positive program knowing this is going to have an impact on our future generation.

I really don't know the technical term to that, but it can almost bring a man to tears when you see the success of somebody you've spent intricate time with trying to help.

So, the feeling can be described as an emotional explosion of success. I help this individual get to this point. When you see a young man struggling to do something or anyone struggling to do something and you can help them not struggle and achieve their goal. The internal rewards is just gratification, and the fact that I made a difference in somebody else's life.

Participant Three Responses

I learned a lot from the Kids just relating to them and getting to know them. That was a benefit.

The benefit for me personally was it wasn't even about the money it wasn't about finance and it was just about our goal that we set as an organization and we reached it. I think that was a benefit, the ultimate benefit.

It was refreshing and I think it's our calling. Once we get a certain age, we have to mentor and give back knowledge, but it feels good.

Participant Four Responses

You just learn something new every day about yourself and the level of patience or tolerance that you may think you have and how to go further.

So the benefit to me is that you're dealing with walking, living examples of resilience and strength because these kids are dealing with so much stuff. So much more stuff than even my generation or the one before had to deal with because of social media and other outlets. They just introduced a whole other dynamic of problems that we didn't have to deal with because of technology and the information that reaches you and gets in front of you so quickly.

So, the biggest thing for me is just being reminded of how to stay resilient and stay in the fight, and not give up, that's the greatest benefit that I receive from working with these young people.

It feels amazing! It's an amazing feeling to know that you're having such a positive influence over another human being's life and erasing some of that negative stigma or stereotype that's been pounded into them through all their experiences up to that point.

Participant Five Responses

The benefits was that it taught me a lot about myself and I got to experience some things with them that I didn't even get to experience as a kid myself. So while we were teaching them and mentoring them they taught us some lessons as well.

Being able to take trips and have individual time with the kids. This was an awesome thing. It was definitely beneficial to be a part of that process man. It

helped me to be a better person, it helped me to have patience, and to be able to deal with younger kids.

It is gratifying especially if you can see the seeds that you've planted into these kids actually growing.

So when you see the substance that they've taken in and you see the goodness come out of what you helped put into that kid. You can't help but to be excited and be happy about it because you know that's all you can hope for, that whatever you're trying to pour into someone is not falling on deaf ears or falling on a stony heart and that they didn't want to receive it. You don't have a choice but to be happy about it.

<u>Emerging Themes/Benefits</u>

After analyzing the benefits of African American male mentoring, two primary themes emerged from the data: (a) shared learning and (b) intrinsic rewards. The first theme "shared learning," was evident in how the mentors learned something directly from their mentees. Each participant shared that one primary benefit of mentoring African American boys was gaining or learning something from the youth by being involved in the mentoring program. The mentors said they learned patience, tolerance, resilience, and strength. One mentor spoke about how he learned more about himself and to deal directly with children in general. He specifically said, "While we were teaching them and mentoring them they taught us lessons as well." From reading the interview

transcripts it is apparent that the mentoring process can be a two-way street because, if the relationship is genuine, mentees and mentors learn valuable information and lessons.

The second theme was "intrinsic rewards." Each participant described how good it felt to give back to their community and mentor African American boys. The following are direct quotations from each participant, in order by participant:

- "It feels good from a give-back standpoint."

- "It is very rewarding and liberating."

- "It was refreshing, it feels good."

- "It feels amazing."

- "It is gratifying, you can't help but to be excited and happy."

These quotes reflected the lived experience of African American male mentors mentoring African American boys. There were occasions during the interviews that participants became emotional simply remembering the times they spent with their mentees. This supports the idea of building an authentic connection while mentoring. There are benefits that mentor gain and experience psychologically.

<u>Barriers</u>

The participants spoke about the barriers that they encountered while mentoring youth within the mentoring program. All five mentors provided in-depth information related to the barriers that they experienced while mentoring African American boys in

their community. The interview question that guided the participants responses is as follows: *What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?*

Participant One Responses

Resources are very minimal.

The system itself is a barrier.

Now it goes back to jobs and everything else, because some of these guys can't be mentors because they can't get a job that pays decent wages, so that's what I mean when we always talk about what a problem is. The problem can keep getting kicked back and back to a bigger problem because there are other problems.

His community, his education, his knowledge retained. A lot of those things are barriers and some of them are self-inflicted. Self-inflicted is when you take that as the answer of that I'm not going to be nobody, I'm not going to do nothing. And you accept that. That's self-inflicted to me.

To mentor in a small community like this, now there's a difference from mentoring in Chicago where you could be a whole different person on the other side of town, and then you come over on the west side of Chicago, and mentor kids and everybody think you are a saint. When you're in a community like this where everybody knows everybody, and when you're mentoring somebody. Other people have to believe in you, because if they don't believe in you as the mentor,

then they're not supporting that kids be a part of your program. So, extremely hard when you're an African American male.

It can be changed by more people being who they say they are, when they say they are. You know, just being real people, accountable people, where there's no question about what type of person you are mentoring my kid.

Participant Two Responses

I would say the barriers and roadblocks would involve support.

It's not a lot of unity between the mentor and the parent, and them staying in close proximity to work together, to cultivate whatever it is that you want that child to obtain.

Financial support is another barrier. If it was more financial gain to mentoring, I think more people would be willing to participate. Again, you'll have the negative and minuses to that, but more people would be app to get involved more seriously and in-depth.

Participant Three Responses

The only barrier I can think of is participation. Getting the parents on the same page because we're talking about their kids, so the kids are only going to come if their parents get them involved, or they give them the information or permission to do so.

So, if it's a more collective or more joint effort with the parents I think it would be easier all around, but that doesn't mean I'm going to give up or going to stop. It just means that I understand the problem.

Involve the parents with the process and walk them through it with the kids. It doesn't necessarily have to be a two-on-one type of situation, but just walking through it. Let them know why we're doing what we're doing as a man because they don't look through life through the same lenses, they don't see it how we see it. So, if we communicate with them, I think it would help more.

Participant Four Responses

One of the biggest issues I'd say right now is within the school district providing programs with access to their resources to help their students. So, for example, if you create a program, let's just say basketball and you want to provide all these youth the opportunity to just participate in a sport outside of school. To occupy some of their time, some of that free time, after school that a lot of them are not spending wisely. You would think that the school districts would hand you the keys and give you all access to the gyms or the media center or whatever you need, but it doesn't work that way.

The parents themselves can be a huge barrier because of trust issues. Every other program is coming along, promising to do all these things and provide all these opportunities, and when they get the check or get the money for the fees it doesn't always pan out.

On one hand, like I said, there's a lot of mistrust. You got these parents who are

used to only dealing with or having dealt with African American men that have

been deceptive, abusive and unreliable. These men left them and their children

alone because they were incarcerated or just ran off. So, you have to fight through

those stereotypes and negativity to prove that.

Participant Five Responses

I say sometimes dealing with parents. Sometimes you get a barrier with the

parents wanting to be involved when they weren't involved to a certain magnitude

before we got there, but now that you get there and you start mentoring all of a

sudden this father or this mother or somebody pops up that wants to have major

input as to what you're doing with the kids. And they weren't really expressing

that before the mentorship started.

Emerging Themes/Barriers

Three themes emerged pertaining to barriers faced by African American men

while mentoring African American boys: (a) material resources, (b) parental

involvement, and (c) mentee mental and emotional stages. The first theme "material

resources" refers to financial support and to physical resources such as locations,

equipment, and activities for mentees to utilize. One participant who worked for a local

school district and ran a mentoring program spoke directly about the "red tape" involved

in using local facilities and equipment to mentor youth. Money was an issue that emerged

in most of the participant interviews, specifically if money was used to fund a program or compensate mentors, participants identified this as a barrier.

The second theme was "parental involvement." During the interviews, participants spoke about issues with mothers or parents. Keep in mind that in many African American mentoring relationships, mentors must communicate with mothers or extended family members only because this is the way that a lot of African American families are structured. Participants identified this as a barrier that can impede successful mentoring. First, in certain cases, the participant mentors felt a lack of support or participation from parents during the mentoring relationship. Second, participants spoke about difficulties with building relationships with the parents in order to strengthen their relationship with the youth. The last struggle with parental involvement dealt with parents or guardians having difficulty trusting mentors. It is not uncommon for African American parents to have trouble trusting people with their child due to the environment and situations they have experienced. Regardless of the specific issue or problem, the participants identified parental involvement as a possible barrier in certain situations.

The third and final theme was "mentee mental and emotional stages." In the interviews, participants described how being an African American boy is different and can be difficult. Because of issues some youth face daily, mentors must approach and mentor the kids differently. Participants spoke about how such mentees have layers that must be penetrated while also dealing with the mistrust and anger they consumed. One mentor discussed how many African American boys are lost and do not know their

purpose or who they truly are. Another mentor described getting past the walls some boys have built up before even starting a successful mentoring relationship. Because these are issues mentors must face, these were also barriers to overcome.

Recruitment

The participants spoke about recruitment tactics and ideas that they would use to recruit African American mentors like themselves. All five mentors provided in-depth information related to the recruitment of adult African American men to mentor youth in their community. The interview question that guided the participants responses is as follows*: Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [Prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?*

Participant One Responses

I would start out with a male wellness plan, bringing in guys to help each other finagle life struggles. So financially and all of these things would be what this wellness group of men could do for each other and then take that and trickle it down. Because like I said, if you keep on going at it from a broken angle of people just coming together because they got good hearts, but life isn't right, that's a tough way to think that you're going to be successful.

Participant Two Responses

I would definitely say it would have to be a diverse group of individuals, meaning from all different types of backgrounds, all different types of social networks. Let me say this. It would be diverse because I would want somebody who was in the medical field, law enforcement, manufacturing, sanitation etc. I would want people to have different types of jobs that way these young men could see that you can do whatever they want and be successful outside of selling drugs or becoming a professional athlete.

> I would have to trust them. I would definitely do a callout to any individuals that I knew in these different avenues in life. It would have to be somebody that I felt like I trusted because if I'm starting this and I'm saying this is the program that I'm taking off the ground, I can't have any wishy-washy individuals that I really don't trust and understand what they're bringing to the table when I bring them in. So, I would definitely have to screen them. There would have to be a screening process.

Participant Three Responses

> First, I would filter through my peers. I would just filter through my friends and my family, and then I would go further into coaches and people that already volunteer because they're already doing it, they already have a passion for it. And that's how I built my committee in my circle, is that I would share my vision and people would buy into it. But that's how I would recruit. I would just go around in my circle and recruit and ask people if they want to get involved to get them in.

Participant Four Responses

I would probably begin with social media and just kind of put out there that I'm looking for African American males to mentor African American boys. I'd give a little brief description of the purpose and meaning behind it, and then I would probably create a flyer of some sort and take it to the local churches and probably start there with the social media and the local churches and then maybe hit the parks, on a warm nice day where you could find a basketball game going on any court and just kind of recruit word of mouth and talk to some people.

Participant Five Responses

I wouldn't so much look at their status based on education with them, having a college degree or anything of that matter. I look at life situations and life lessons and what people have been through and what they learn from what they've been through. Also, the life that they live and if they're credible people, and some light to shed on a situation. They have to be knowledgeable when it comes to kids, and when it comes to expressing their life lessons and teaching young people about what to do and what not to do and being transparent. These mentors can be recruited through work, church, personal friendships, through word of mouth and social media.

Emerging Themes/Recruitment

Analyzing the responses to the interview question related to recruiting African American male mentors, two themes emerged: (a) word of mouth and (b) social media campaigns. The first theme, "word of mouth," refers to recruiting through people that a mentor already has a relationship with. Participants listed these individuals as peers, friends, family, colleagues, coaches, or church members. All participants interviewed felt that recruiting African American male mentors should start with their inner circle and work outward.

The second theme was "social media campaigns." This stood out in the data because of the importance of social media in the world today. Not only is social media important to people, but it reaches large groups of individuals without strenuous footwork. Therefore, I understand why some mentors suggested using social media platforms to reach people who may be interested in mentoring African American boys in their community.

<div align="center">Retention</div>

The participants spoke about the retention of adult African American male mentors. All five mentors provided in-depth information related to retention tactics that they feel would help organizations and programs increase retention of Black men. The interview question that guided the participants responses is as follows: *What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?*

Participant One Responses

I would start that wellness group for men because that's the only way to help, because guess what, your life might be peaches and cream when you start up with the program and you are mentoring. But six months from now something drastically bad could happen in your life. God forbid, it does, but when the tables turn for you are you still going to be the strong mentor that you were six months ago?

Participant Two Responses

Organizations have to be diligent, stay involved, and stay active.

If I can make that a career, and it was financial benefits to being a mentor and I didn't have to be a mentor and go to another job. That would definitely be a way to keep me around.

Participant Three Responses

The easiest way is to give them an income. It's not about the money, but at the same time, if we want people to volunteer their time that's going to make it a little easier.

Another thing is people like to be involved in the planning and that's very key. Like if you have events that's planned and you got a strong committee a lot of people will be more energized and motivated to help you finish something rather

than putting somebody in a position to run it totally for you. So instead they're just a piece of the puzzle.

Participant Four Responses

I think we have to raise the minimum wage and we have to find a way for hard middle class working families to make more money so that they can have more free time available to put back into the community and work with these kids. If they're struggling to make ends meet the chances that they're going to have free time available to go give back is going to be very unlikely. Or we need to create resources that can compensate them for the time that they do spend and put in, so monetary issues are basically what it breaks down to.

Participant Five Responses

To keep an African American man, as an active mentor, just basically keep him engaged, and keep him in the loop.

Just try to come up with different ideas to keep it fresh. If I ran the program and facilitated the program, I would definitely be open to other suggestions and other ways to mentor, like I said, to keep it fresh and to keep it fun.

So, that's basically what I would do and try to keep it fresh by always being open to suggestions into different avenues and different ways to mentor. Also, by letting the mentors make their own blueprint as to what they want to do with the children and being open to a not so structured type of situation.

Emerging Themes/Retention

Participants provided two main recommendations for retaining African American male mentors and one interesting suggestion emerged related to the mentor: (a) compensation, (b) mentor involvement, and (c) the creation of an African American mentor wellness group. The first theme was "compensation" or financial benefits. Most participants discussed some type of compensation for time spent with mentees. While the participants clearly did not mentor for money, they identified that it would have been easier to not be forced to choose between mentoring and working in order to survive financially. Essentially, participants identified that if they had to work to pay bills, they were forced to spend time working instead of mentoring community youth. Other participants identified working long hours and being unable to mentor. Therefore, if more money was available for African American mentors, there might be more individuals willing to step up and mentor youth for longer periods.

The second theme for retention is "mentor involvement" within organizations and programs. Some participants suggested that involving mentors in planning would help retain them for the long haul. One participant stated that mentoring programs and organizations should be open to suggestions while working with African American youth. This was especially because many organizations continue to search for reliable programming ideas that help steer African American boys in the right directions. This would make the mentoring process easier for mentors and help them feel valuable, because their input is considered and implemented.

An interesting suggestion one participant mentor raised was about starting a wellness group for African American mentors. This wellness group would help mentors stay focused and provide other mentors to confide in while facing daily life struggles. In short, this would be mentoring for mentors. The group would meet monthly, share issues and information, and implement planning to help the mentors stay on top of their game. This would be encouraging for mentors but would also help retain them to continue working with youth. This recommendation could help retain male mentors of all races.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

After transcribing, reading, and analyzing the interviews multiple times, there were several themes that emerged from the data. Some of these themes specifically relate to the research topic of the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of male African American mentors, while others are related to the overall topic of African American mentoring dynamics.

After reading and analyzing the five interviews multiple times, several themes emerged on the topics of the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of male African American mentors. The benefits the mentors experienced were "shared learning" with mentees and "intrinsic rewards." The themes that surfaced about barriers mentors experience are "material resources," "parental involvement," and "mentee mental and emotional stages." For suggestions related to recruitment, the themes that appeared were to recruit via "word of mouth" and "social media campaigns." Last, suggestions related to retaining male African American mentors were the themes "compensation" and "mentor

involvement" in planning for mentors and a suggestion to create an African American

mentor wellness group. This final suggestion is examined in chapter five along with other

relevant themes that were not directly related to the research questions but were relevant

to the topic of African American male mentorship.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived

experiences and perspectives of six adult male African American mentors in a same-race,

same-sex, group mentoring program for young African American men for two years or

longer. The findings focused on the benefits and barriers the participants experienced and

on suggestions they formulated regarding recruiting and retaining male African American

mentors. Due to one participant experiencing a medical condition, the sixth interview was

omitted from data collection. The remaining five male African American mentors

engaged in one-on-one interviews related to their experiences with the Kool Kids Society

mentoring program.

The Kool Kids mentoring program operated for four years, from 2012 to 2016.

The program worked with African American boys and teens between the ages of 12 and

17. All mentors in the program were adult African-American males between the ages of

28 and 40. The purpose of the Kool Kids Society was for African American men in the

community to step up and mentor young men who had no fatherly figure in order to help

them grow and become productive citizens. The specific goals of the Kool Kids Society

were to assist young men with doing well in school, staying out of trouble in and out of

school, and to teach them to respect themselves and their community.

In this phenomenological study, data was gathered through personal interviews with five adult male African American mentors. Each mentor participated in a 60- to 120-minute interview to describe their experiences and share opinions about mentoring African American boys. The researcher used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions to give participants an opportunity to reflect, describe, and explain their experiences in detail. Furthermore, questions allowed participants to tell their specific story and their views on mentoring from the perspective of an African American male.

The main objective of data analysis was to identify important themes and transfer into a report that can be easily interpreted by others interested in the findings. To accomplish this, the researcher first planned to use IPA and follow-up with themes and categories generated through the ATLAS.ti (Version 5.2) qualitative data analysis software. Unfortunately, the ATLAS.ti software did not provide the necessary information; therefore, the researcher moved using only IPA.

In this study, IPA consisted of five steps to properly analyze the data. The first required step was to read and re-read the interview text and then make notes that reflected the researcher's initial thoughts and observations. The second step was to identify and label emergent themes that characterize each section of the text. After this, themes were clustered together and labeled to capture the essence of the study. Next, the researcher produced a table summarizing the structured themes of each participant. Last, the themes were integrated into an inclusive list of master themes that reflected participant experiences as a whole (Willig, 2001). After the list of master themes was created, the

most important themes were added to the findings to describe and explain the participants' lived experiences.

This study sought to answer three research questions, and the data allowed the researcher to accomplish this task. The research questions that guided this phenomenological study were:

RQ1. What are the benefits of African American adult males mentoring African American male youth mentees?

RQ2. What barriers do African American mentors face when seeking to mentor African American male youth mentees?

RQ3. What are best practices when recruiting and retaining African American males to mentor male African American youth mentees?

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

Several themes emerged on the topics of the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of male African American mentors. The two themes that emerged from the topic of benefits were "shared learning" with mentees and "intrinsic rewards." Three themes surfaced on the topic of barriers the mentors experienced, including "material resources," "parental involvement," and the "mentee mental and emotional stages." For suggestions related to recruitment two themes appeared: "word of mouth" and "social media campaigns." Last, two themes and one interesting idea emerged on the topic of suggestions related to retaining male African American mentors. These were

"compensation" for mentors and "mentor involvement" in the planning process. The interesting idea suggested was a men's wellness/support group.

Table 1:

Summary of Findings

Themes	Findings
Benefits of Mentoring	Shared learning; Intrinsic rewards
Barriers to Mentoring	Material resources; Parental involvement
	Mentee mental and emotional stages
Recruitment of African American male mentors	Word of mouth; Social media campaigns
Retention of African American male mentors	Compensation; Mentor involvement; Mentor wellness/support group

What are the benefits of African American adult males mentoring young male African American mentees? Participants listed shared learning and intrinsic rewards as being the benefits that an African American man experiences while mentoring an African American boy. Which suggests that when developing a new African American male mentoring group, one should consider the importance of these factors, shared learning and intrinsic rewards.

There is a lack of empirical research within mentoring literature documenting the benefits that African American mentors accrue from engaging in mentoring relationships. Therefore, the researcher could not find relevant information to match the findings of this

study. These findings need to be explored and expanded upon using an accessible body of literature.

What barriers do African American mentors face when seeking to mentor young male African American mentees? Participants identified material resources, parental involvement, and mentee mental and emotional stages as barriers that African American mentors faced when mentoring African American boys.

All three themes have been discussed in mentoring literature. Struchen and Porta (1997) identified additional barriers to the success of mentoring programs that target African American youth, including lack of knowledge of other funding sources, competition among programs that could collaborate, institutional racism and discrimination, isolation and the neighborhood, and lack of parental involvement. In Herrera et al. 's (2013) study, mentors working with youth in a high-risk environment noted difficulties connecting with and receiving support from youths' families. Older adults mentoring high-risk youth identified mentee's difficult life circumstances, fear of neighborhoods, and balancing the mentors' relationships with youth and their families as salient stressors (Rogers & Taylor, 1997). This research would highly recommend creating a successful African American mentoring program that these barriers are reviewed before recruiting African American male for a mentoring program.

What are best practices when recruiting and retaining male African Americans mentoring young male African American mentees? Participants recognized word of mouth and social media campaigns as best practices for recruiting male African

American mentors and compensation and mentor involvement as best practices for retaining these mentors.

Grimes (2014) stated that word of mouth and the internet are outreach channels that work well in recruiting African American men. Also, Garringer (2004) discussed word of mouth and a strong online presence as ways to recruit men to mentor. One theme that emerged from the findings related to retention was compensation for mentors. Some participants suggested that compensation or money would make it easier for African American men to mentor due to financial and time constraints. Miller (2007) mentioned that, given the challenges mentoring programs have with recruiting and retaining men of color, compensating mentors must be viewed as a realistic option.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

Because American society expects youth to be ready for schools and programs, mentoring programs and mentors must also be ready to effectively engage Black boys and young men, embracing the call to guide them through the early stages of their lives. Mentoring programs that ignore this reality and do not fully consider the needs of Black men and boys in their outreach, recruitment, matching, and retention efforts may cause more harm than good for Black boys (Grimes, 2014). These are the recommendations gathered from the study related to the benefits, barriers, recruitment, and retention of male African American mentors. These recommendations may help create solid programming for African American boys and their communities.

These recommendations include advertising the benefits of mentors in recruitment materials in order to attract more mentors. Implementing requirements related to parental involvement as a part of the mentoring program. Using social media platforms in order to recruit and educate the public about the mentoring program and their activities. Last, advocating politically on a state and federal level to raise more money for mentoring initiatives and mentor involvement.

Table 2

Summary of African American Male Mentoring Recommendations

Themes	Recommendations
Mentor Benefits	Advertise the benefits of mentors in recruitment materials
Barriers to Mentoring	Requirements for parental involvement within programs
Recruitment	Start using social media platforms to recruit
Retention	Advocate politically on a state and federal level to receive more money for mentoring initiatives
	Mentor involvement
	African American mentor wellness/support groups

<u>Benefits</u>

When it comes to creating benefits for male African American mentors, my recommendation is that programs publicize the benefits more in recruitment materials. Not only do many African American men have no idea about how to become a mentor,

they also are not aware of the benefits related to mentoring. If more recruitment materials focused on the positive benefits gained from mentoring youth, more men would consider becoming involved. Most people mentor to give back to the youth in their community, but it also wouldn't hurt to share more openly what mentors gain from being in a relationship through the stories of current and former mentors. From this study, it would be very beneficial for those who want to start an African American male mentoring program to consider the content and the delivery of their media publications.

Barriers

Related to the barrier's African American mentors face, my recommendation is tied to parental involvement. The research shows that parental and family involvement or support were concerns for African American mentors and programs. Mentoring programs should implement specific requirements for children to participate in mentoring. For instance, there needs to be programming that includes a set number of meetings between a mentor and parents for them to collaborate and set an effective, tailored mentoring plan for the particular youth. These meetings should also be consistent over the course of the mentorship so that the parents remain involved and active in the process and support program, the mentor, and the child.

Recruitment

Being that social media is in society, I recommend that certain programs, recruiters, and mentors recruit more through social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and SnapChat are excellent platforms that a mentor or mentoring

program can use to search for mentors and educate the public about their program. One

great feature of Facebook and Instagram is the ability to filter the people you wish to

communicate with. Considering that today's world is engrossed in social media it is only

fitting that mentor programs and recruiters capitalize on this and reach out to people

worldwide that they wouldn't normally have access too.

Retention

Based on the research in this study, I have several recommendations about

retaining African American males to continue mentoring. First, I think that programs and

interested people should advocate on state and federal levels to receive more support for

mentoring initiatives. Money received can be used to compensate mentors who need it for

their time and effort, while increasing the pool of available African American mentors.

Mentoring programs and interested people should join the current trend of advocating for

a cause to receive state and federal funds to support their efforts. Why not campaign to

support mentoring programs within the African American community? This money could

reduce expenses encountered when helping African American youth, like incarceration

and mental illness. It would be smart to invest in their success earlier in life than to spend

money on them later after they have failed.

My next recommendation is related to mentor involvement. When it comes to

African American mentoring and programming, there is room for improvement and

understanding. Because of this, mentoring organizations should design questionnaires

and surveys specifically for African American mentors to receive valuable information

while a mentor is actively involved. Organizations should also interview eligible

participants for their opinions and resolutions about these children. Information compiled

in this study is not readily available, but this type of data should be collected for there to

be legitimate programming that can affect these youth. One way for this to occur is to

understand African American youth from an African American perspective. Further, this

can only occur by talking with people from the community to receive valuable

information. This would work best by doing so while an organization is working directly

with a mentor.

I also suggest starting an African American mentor wellness group. Mentor

support groups have been implemented before. Garringer (2004) spoke of how an all-

male support group may help retain active mentors and help them feel welcomed and

connected to the organization. From an African American perspective, such a wellness

group could do even more for mentors. To help mentors deal with the issues they face (be

it family, financial, or personal), such a group could serve as "mentoring for the

mentors." Such groups would allow mentors to put their circumstances on the table

without judgment, as other mentors can relate. This adds another benefit to mentoring

and can help retain these mentors for long haul.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

Future research that should be conducted in this field is linked to the benefits of

mentoring for male African Americans, parental involvement of African American

mentees, and exploring African American wellness groups. My recommendations for

future research more specifically is to identify the benefits of African American male

mentors, discover the reasons that parents don't participate and what can be done to

increase support of programs, and explore the dynamics and benefits of an African

American wellness/support group.

Table 3

Recommendations for Future Research

Topic	Future Research
African American male mentor benefits	Identify benefits of African American male mentors
Parental Involvement	Identify the reasons that these parents don't participate and what can be done to increase support.
African American wellness/support groups	Explore the dynamic and benefits of an African American wellness/support group

Benefits to African American Mentors

The focus of most studies related to the outcomes and benefits of mentoring is

primarily related to the implications that mentoring relationships hold for mentees

(Weiler et al., 2013). There is a lack of empirical research within mentoring literature that

documents the benefits mentors accrue from engaging in mentoring relationships.

Therefore, it is very important to focus on the benefits for male African American

mentors and all mentors in general. However, research focused on the benefits for male

African American is vital, as there is a lack of African American men participating in

mentoring efforts in their communities. If we can identify and publicize the positive

benefits mentors receive, this will likely motivate more men to step up and help break the

cycle for all groups, however especially for African American mentors.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a major issue when it comes to African American

mentorship. All participants in this study discussed that some parents needed to

contribute more to the relationship the mentor tried to build with their child. Numerous

articles also indicate a lack of parental support when it comes to mentoring African

American, low income, and high-risk youth (Herrera et al., 2013; Rogers & Taylor, 1997;

Struchen & Porta, 1997; Townsel, 1997). As such, more research is needed to identify

why parents do not participate and what can be done to increase their support. Mentors

and mentoring organizations can then use this information to strengthen programming

and foster better relationships with mentees and parents.

African American Wellness Groups

One participant in this study discussed having a support group for male African

American mentors. There is some literature in the field that discusses mentor support

groups, but not from an African American perspective. Further research on this topic

would address recruitment and retention issues African American men face with

mentoring. For starters, research should investigate the general dynamics of such a

support group for African American men. Such research should also study the benefits

that African American men gain from a wellness or support group. Further, such research

could discuss if wellness groups improve retention among these mentors. By learning more about mentor wellness and support groups and their effectiveness, programs and organizations may use this method to support this limited group of men.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the dynamics of African American men mentoring African American boys. Specifically, this study sought to understand the benefits and barriers that participants experienced and to offer the suggestions they formulated about recruiting and retaining male African American mentors. The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological approach to answer the research questions by conducting one-on-one interviews with five African American mentors of African American boys. After analyzing the data and findings, this study established legitimate answers to the research questions. Shared learning and intrinsic rewards were identified as benefits that mentors experienced. Material resources, parental involvement, and the mentee mental and emotional stages were described as barriers that African American men experienced while mentoring. Word-of-mouth and social media campaigns were suggested as best practices to recruit African American mentors and compensation and mentor involvement were listed as best practices to retain male African American mentors. I hope when one is deciding whether to mentor or not, that they remember a quote by Mindy Hale, "To make a difference in someone's life you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect. You just have to care."

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

<u>Participant One</u>

The first participant in this study was a married, 37-year-old African American man originally from Chicago, Illinois. He moved to Waterloo, Iowa to attend the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). He graduated high school and college and attained a business degree from UNI. Participant One cooked at his own restaurant and also catered food. He has two daughters who are 12 and nine and one son who is three years old. Mentoring for the Kool Kids Society was not the first time this participant has mentored.

<u>Participant One Responses</u>

Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [Prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it?

> When you grow up in an all African American neighborhood, gangs control the streets and when the gangs control the streets, you got to choose which side because nobody believes in being neutral, so it's almost like you're forced and now you're telling that same person to go out and be productive in society. It's kind of, like, two different worlds, but you're asking that kid to balance that.
>
> I was talented athletically. So, growing up African American I feel like I had a great road. When I hear some of the stories that were far less fortunate than mine.

There was a lot of positivity around me, the structure of my family was positive in itself that on one city block in Chicago, I had a great grandmother, a grandmother, my mom, and a couple uncles and aunts. You know, it almost made it where you didn't do much because eyes were on you no matter where you were. It takes a village to raise the child. The difference was my family was that village!

What is your definition of a mentor?

A mentor is one that can unbiasedly help an individual with no pre-conceived notions.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African American adult male?

I think that an African American boy needs to be mentored by an adult male who has the knowledge to help that kid achieve greater and I don't think that race is the answer.

Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [Prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

I've had many, but one of the strongest would probably be from a religious standpoint, would be my pastor. I learned patience, I learned how to be resilient, and I learned that in life there's going to be spills, clean it up and then talk about it. And that's just in life period.

Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

It feels good from a give-back standpoint, but you always feel like you could do more and that's the tough part of mentoring somebody that's considered to have some of the same obstacles as yourself. It always leaves you wanting to do more.

What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

Just being a part of that, being a part of something where a kid is at this point where he's ready to give up. To fight through something for a cause that's what you gain from that. You gain that this kid is pushing himself to be a better person than he was yesterday.

Always understand that whatever somebody's giving you, they're getting something in return. And that's one thing that I hate about life. I want to gain that experience of knowing that this person can be a better them.

If you are truly helping somebody what is there to gain? Maybe I'm gaining a friend that I know for the next 20 years, but I'm not looking for a monetary gain, or some instant gratification because if I was doing that, then I wouldn't be doing mentoring, I wouldn't be trying to help. I would be going and doing something that makes money.

Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [Prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

> So, a time for me is watching these kids rotate out at the register as they sold candy in the candy shop and want to take on that responsibility. That's the time for me.

> Juwon was one kid where drying off cars was one thing that was his thing at the carwash, to make the car look clean and nice on the way out. Just different things that different kids over the time, over the summers of dealing with them, it's a lot of moments that I can look back and say, man that was a great moment, because you saw kids outside of their element.

Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

> Extremely, and I say that because to mentor in a small community like this, now there's a difference from mentoring in Chicago where you could be a whole different person on the other side of town, and then you come over on the west side of Chicago, and mentor kids and everybody think you are a saint. When you're in a community like this where everybody knows everybody, and when you're mentoring somebody. Other people have to believe in you, because if they

don't believe in you as the mentor, then they're not supporting that kids be a part of your program. So, extremely hard when you're an African American male.

It can be changed by more people being who they say they are, when they say they are. You know, just being real people, accountable people, where there's no question about what type of person you are mentoring my kid.

What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

Resources are very minimal.

The system itself is a barrier.

Now it goes back to jobs and everything else, because some of these guys can't be mentors because they can't get a job that pays decent wages, so that's what I mean when we always talk about what a problem is. The problem can keep getting kicked back and back to a bigger problem because there are other problems.

His community, his education, his knowledge retained. A lot of those things are barriers and some of them are self-inflicted. Self-inflicted is when you take that as the answer of that I'm not going to be nobody, I'm not going to do nothing. And you accept that. That's self-inflicted to me.

Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [Prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?

Mainly because of the guy on the other side of the recording. But just a good nature of friendship that we've had over the years and knowing that I have no problem helping when it comes to anything of goodness for that matter. So yeah, it was no problem at all.

I would start out with a male wellness plan, bringing in guys to help each other finagle life struggles. So financially and all of these things would be what this wellness group of men could do for each other and then take that and trickle it down. Because like I said, if you keep on going at it from a broken angle of people just coming together because they got good hearts, but life isn't right, that's a tough way to think that you're going to be successful.

Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool Kids mentoring program for two years or better?

Because my thing is, whether you helped every kid that was in Kool Kids or not, the fact that you gave it your all to help the few that wanted it. And I'm not saying that every kid didn't learn something from Kool Kids, but what I am saying is in a community like this, when everybody's talking and everybody knows everybody and you continue to get these kids to show up. First to show up all of the time and then to participate fully. That's something you get behind.

What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?

I would start that wellness group for men because that's the only way to help, because guess what, your life might be peaches and cream when you start up with the program and you are mentoring. But six months from now something drastically bad could happen in your life. God forbid, it does, but when the tables turn for you are you still going to be the strong mentor that you were six months ago?

Final thoughts?

I'll keep this simple. I believe that you put together a group of responsible, strong, and well put together, African American men on your team as mentors in this program. And if it was a ride at a carnival, I would have been mad to have missed it and I would ride it again. And you picked a perfect name when you decided to call this group of boys the Kool Kids.

<u>Participant Two</u>

Participant Two was a 46-year-old African American male originally from Chicago, Illinois who was working as a quality inspector at a manufacturing plant at the time of the interview. He was divorced with five children and seven grandchildren. His children were 26, 25, 20, 19, and 13. He graduated high school and college and served as a full-time minister at his church. Working with the Kool Kids Society was his first time as a mentor. Participant Two also had his share of hardship, as he spent ten years in prison before being released and changing his path. When asked to describe himself, he stated, "I'm just an African American man that's trying to make a difference in life after

taking advantage of a lot of situations that I was in and not really understanding what it is to be a man. I've grown into a man now, starting with my relationship with God."

Participant Two Responses

Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [Prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it?

>You are either going to gang bang (participate in gang activity), sell drugs, or hustle because those were just the jobs of that society, those were the things as a young man, you looked to and you glamorized because those are individuals that we thought at that time were successful. They had the cars, they had the flash, they had the money, and it just seemed like they did whatever they wanted. Not knowing anything else obviously it would be easy to follow their path. Or become a statistic.

>At that time not realizing and being educated, No, because I didn't know anything outside of my immediate environment, but as I became a man, and moved on in life and experienced other things that life had to offer, absolutely it was difficult growing up.

>Unity and comradeship made growing up positive.

I would say one of the greatest things I was able to participate in was the Upward

Bound program because as I stated growing up in the environment that I was in,

there was really not a lot of diverse things to do, so to speak.

What is your definition of a mentor?

A mentor is someone that is willing to give their time to teach the things that

they've experienced in life to somebody else to help them not make negative

mistakes and to give them an outlet when it seems like they're not getting that at

home with their parents, their guardian, or whatever. The mentor is another

avenue to help guide you in the right direction or redirect something that was

negative.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African

American adult male?

It's 100% necessary. And the reason I say that is because this African American

boy can relate to this guy. This guy looks like me, this guy may have come from a

similar background that I have.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by Caucasian male?

I think it's a good thing, I think it's admirable, but I also believe they have to have

some experience with African American culture. You can't mentor them and

relate to them if you have none of their experiences or you can't say I know what

you're talking about.

Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [Prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

I have a lot of uncles and yes, they mentored me, but it wasn't for the right things, they were mentoring me and exposing me to the life that they were living because they never got outside of their environment, they never got out of the society that they were in. So, by choice, that's all that they really knew. So that's all that they had to pass on to me.

The things that I learned from them. Well, I learned how to sell drugs, I learned how to cook up drugs. I learned the difference between the products that were being sold. What good product look like, what bad product looked like, how to become your own businessman. Now, it was illegal activity, but there was a way of making money, that's what they knew, and that's what they taught me. They taught me how to survive, they taught me how to hold a gun, how to shoot a gun, what not to do when shooting the gun and what to do if somebody beat you with the ups or pulls a gun on you first.

Being introduced to Upward Bound. I love that program so much because it showed me a world that I didn't even know existed at that time in high school, which was just the mere fact that you can go to college. I never even thought about it. Most of the people in my neighborhood, once you graduated out of high school, you are a man and you started doing men things. Whether it was selling

drugs, getting a job or whatever. Your manhood basically started once you graduated high school. A lot of people wasn't pushing the college thing because it was non-existent in that environment.

Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

Honestly, it is very rewarding and liberating. It was very rewarding to see that even though I made a lot of mistakes in my life, I was in a position to help someone steer away from making those same mistakes.

What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

Internal feelings of knowing that I'm making a positive difference in somebody else's life. The gains would be the fact that somebody saw something in me to even allow me to be part of such a positive program knowing this is going to have an impact on our future generation.

I really don't know the technical term to that, but it can almost bring a man to tears when you see the success of somebody you've spent intricate time with trying to help.

So, the feeling can be described as an emotional explosion of success. I help this individual get to this point. When you see a young man struggling to do something or anyone struggling to do something and you can help them not

struggle and achieve their goal. The internal rewards is just gratification, and the fact that I made a difference in somebody else's life.

Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

I'm going to say outside of the community services like going to cut the laws, and snow removal and all those different things, and the car washes. I'm going to say to answer that question. I saw a couple of young men that were part of the Kool Kids Society at a movie theater. From what I saw the individuals that they were with had a negative vibe and was being loud and I remember saying to the two young men that they might want to get away from these other young men before something negative happens. Now that I think back this was very gratifying, and rewarding because they didn't just take off and run from the group, but I can see as I was leaving they were gravitating towards going in the opposite direction of the other boys. And they respected me enough at that point in time to say, "Yeah, you're right," and do the right thing.

Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

I will say no and yes. No, because once you decide that's what you're going to do, then you're available and you know that you're going to go into some situations

where you're not going to be 100 percent welcome with open arms. Yes, because a lot of our young men right now are so angry and so lost in who they are, that they have walls set up and in order to mentor them and to break through, you got to be patient enough to break down the layers and those walls.

What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

I would say the barriers and roadblocks would involve support.

It's not a lot of unity between the mentor and the parent, and them staying in close proximity to work together, to cultivate whatever it is that you want that child to obtain.

Financial support is another barrier. If it was more financial gain to mentoring, I think more people would be willing to participate. Again, you'll have the negative and minuses to that, but more people would be app to get involved more seriously and in-depth.

Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [Prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?

This mentoring program was actually created by a very close friend of mine and having a 20-year friendship when he brought that off of the ground, he knew a lot of my life experiences and the changes that I made in my life. So, he asks would I

be available to help when he picked this up off the ground and used some of the things that I've experienced and where I am now in life to help some other young man not fall victim to the same pray. So that's how I initially got involved in it.

I would definitely say it would have to be a diverse group of individuals, meaning from all different types of backgrounds, all different types of social networks. Let me say this. It would be diverse because I would want somebody who was in the medical field, law enforcement, manufacturing, sanitation etc. I would want people to have different types of jobs that way these young men could see that you can do whatever they want and be successful outside of selling drugs or becoming a professional athlete.

I would have to trust them. I would definitely do a callout to any individuals that I knew in these different avenues in life. It would have to be somebody that I felt like I trusted because if I'm starting this and I'm saying this is the program that I'm taking off the ground, I can't have any wishy-washy individuals that I really don't trust and understand what they're bringing to the table when I bring them in. So, I would definitely have to screen them. There would have to be a screening process.

Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool Kids mentoring program for two years or better?

Because it really wasn't like work. I'm going to be honest with you, it really wasn't like work, and I feel like out of all the wrong I've done in society, that's the

least I can do to give back. I've been off parole for a long time, and all my fines are paid off, but this is a way that I can contribute to my society deeper than just the steps that I'm taking. I can help somebody else take the right steps. So, for me, it's really a no-brainer, and it has internal rewards. God has blessed me this far in my life to be a blessing to somebody else.

What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?

Organizations have to be diligent, stay involved, and stay active.

If I can make that a career, and it was financial benefits to being a mentor and I didn't have to be a mentor and go to another job. That would definitely be a way to keep me around.

Final thoughts?

I'm looking to see what great things come further down the line, and I truly believe that at some point in life, it will get national recognition because its core is in the right place. Its foundation is in the right place, and it's not something to be left just for waterloo, Iowa. I think it's something that can have benefits throughout the world.

<div align="center">Participant Three</div>

Participant Three was a 38-year-old African American male from Nashville, Tennessee who worked as a travel agent and also ran a second branch of the Kool Kids

Society at the time of the interview. Participant Three was a high school graduate who attended college but did not complete his degree requirements. He was also a football, basketball, and baseball coach who works with kids between 7 and 17 years old. He was single with one son and one daughter who are three and 12 years old, respectively. This was his first time mentoring youth within a formal mentoring program.

Participant Three Responses

Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [Prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it?

> I grew up in a single parent home, my brother was 12 years older than me, and my sister was eight years older than me. My brother unfortunately passed away when I was ten. Let me add that I never saw my dad so there were no males in the household except for my brother who died when I was ten and my sister was hearing impaired so she was handicap. So, I kind of took care of a lot of stuff and I became the man of the house early.

> It was hard as a kid. You don't see that it's hard, but as an adult looking back seeing my mom struggle and work two jobs to raise three kids in a low-income environment. Yes, it was very hard.

> Positivity came with taking trips, being in sports, and being involved in team things.

What is your definition of a mentor?

A mentor is somebody who actually will pour something into you whether it's time, whether its knowledge, whether it's just experiences or just somebody positive to mold yourself after. They are also positive, consistent, dependable and men first.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African American adult male?

I think it's very key. The reason why I say it's very key is because it's hard to even listen to somebody who hasn't walked in your shoes, and it's very key to have some kind of link with a kid so that you can keep their interests or keep their attention, or keep them even wanting to listen to you. So I think as African American men, it's very important for us to mentor our young youth because we know from first-hand experience what the world has to offer them, because we either made those decisions that took us down that road or we actually had to counter those decisions and situations because it came within our path.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by Caucasian male?

I don't think it should be depended on. And let me explain, I think that white males should play a role in black males' life, but not necessarily as a mentor or father figure. I just feel like teachers, coaches, don't matter what race you are, I feel like they are mentors in their own right, too.

I'm not saying zero tolerance to white mentors because they exist and they are out here. They are coaches, they are principals, they are role models in their positions. But mentors like somebody that you send your kid with on a consistent basis, if it's a choice I think he would learn more from a black male, because of the life experiences.

Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [Prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

I was a part of this group called the Godfather's program. What these guys did is about six guys that were a part of the church that were deacons and reverends worked with kids in the neighborhood and every Tuesday they would bring us in the church feed us and do homework with us, tell us that they care about us and that they love us. Three, four times a year they would plan a trip. They did stuff like historical trips, they took black kids from Nashville on what they called the freedom ride, and we took the freedom ride down through Georgia and back through Alabama.

I learned respect, people skills, looking people in the face, shaking their hands. Walking with your chest out and posture. Those guys put respect for a woman in me, respecting my mom being the man of the house, taking care of home first type of stuff.

Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

It was refreshing and I think it's our calling. Once we get a certain age, we have to mentor and give back knowledge, but it feels good.

What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

I learned a lot from the Kids just relating to them and getting to know them. That was a benefit.

The benefit for me personally was it wasn't even about the money it wasn't about finance and it was just about our goal that we set as an organization and we reached it. I think that was a benefit, the ultimate benefit.

Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [Prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

I think that the block party was when it all clicked in. When we did the block party, after the New York trip. I think that the response from the neighborhood really solidified what we were doing in the community. We had a plan, we going to do the block party, we going to do the car show, and we going to have vendors. Everything happened like it was supposed to, and it was a community effort that made it happen.

Ultimately, the New York trip was the climax. I really can't compare the New York trip. But we still can't forget the opening up of the car wash and the candy store. Taking those trips to Chicago with those kids showing them how to invest in themselves. It was just so many elements. I really can't choose one moment because they were all great moments.

Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

Yes and no. I say yes, it's hard because our society has molded the Black male or molded actually the Black female to be independent. So, in my realm when I mentor Black males and I suggest things to single Black parents, they like to question it, you got to prove yourself a lot. And that's even in our own community, and that's because it's so much distrust, not necessarily in the household but just in general. I say no because it's little Black kids everywhere. It's organizations to be a part of and to be involved to mentor if you really want to do it. It's ways to start your own organization, if you want to do it. If you really want to do it, you can do it.

So, if it's a more collective or more joint effort with the parents I think it would be easier all around, but that doesn't mean I'm going to give up or going to stop. It just means that I understand the problem.

Involve the parents with the process and walk them through it with the kids. It doesn't necessarily have to be a two-on-one type of situation, but just walking through it. Let them know why we're doing what we're doing as a man because they don't look through life through the same lenses, they don't see it how we see it. So, if we communicate with them, I think it would help more.

What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

The only barrier I can think of is participation. Getting the parents on the same page because we're talking about their kids, so the kids are only going to come if their parents get them involved, or they give them the information or permission to do so.

Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [Prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?

I was asked by a close friend during his doctorate campaign.

I agreed because it seemed like an awesome opportunity. It was the right timing in my life, and it just felt good. Like I said, I made it through life, being around positive mentors and being in the community that I was in and in Waterloo it was needed, it was a lot of stuff going on in the streets with the young kids. It was like an obligation and I felt like I was obligated to do it for you and the kids.

First, I would filter through my peers. I would just filter through my friends and my family, and then I would go further into coaches and people that already volunteer because they're already doing it, they already have a passion for it. And that's how I built my committee in my circle, is that I would share my vision and people would buy into it. But that's how I would recruit. I would just go around in my circle and recruit and ask people if they want to get involved to get them in.

Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool kids mentoring program for two years or better?

Because I feel like it's my calling as a Black male to give back to my community.

I feel like it's my calling, I feel like I'm supposed to do it. There isn't anybody telling me to do it, it's just natural, it's like it's just a part of me.

What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?

The easiest way is to give them an income. It's not about the money, but at the same time, if we want people to volunteer their time that's going to make it a little easier.

Another thing is people like to be involved in the planning and that's very key. Like if you have events that's planned and you got a strong committee a lot of people will be more energized and motivated to help you finish something rather

than putting somebody in a position to run it totally for you. So instead they're just a piece of the puzzle.

Final thoughts?

I loved the experience so much that I wanted to continue it in my city. So, the saga continues man, it's not going to stop. Hopefully our kids will pick it up and continue the legacy. It's a great program and I'm glad I was a part of it.

<div align="center">Participant Four</div>

Participant Four was a 44-year-old African American male originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota who worked as a risk coordinator at a local elementary school at the time of the interview. He obtained a GED and then eventually moved on to obtain a bachelor's degree at UNI in Youth, Leisure, and Human Services. Participant Four was also married for 16 years and had four sons and one daughter, ages 26, 21, 14, 12, and 8, respectively. This mentor also experienced hardship when younger and was incarcerated for 15 years from age 11 to 28. When asked to describe himself, Participant Four stated, "I'm an advocate for change, the biggest thing that I do is focus my life around service primarily to the youth of my community."

Participant Four Responses

Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [Prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it?

Most of the males in my neighborhood including my family, including my father, were not around. So, it was a lot of younger males in the community, and most of them were selling drugs and were participating in gang activity. So, for the low-income families in my neighborhood, working 12- to 16-hour factory jobs, barely making enough money to get the bills paid. Watching these younger African American males on the street hustling, selling drugs, wearing all the fancy jewelry, wearing new tennis shoes, and driving nice cars. This was a huge attraction.

In total I would say probably four years from 11 to 17, maybe five in total, in and out of the juvenile justice system. And then when I was 17, almost 18, I was convicted of armed robbery and third-degree burglary and I was waived to adult court and sentenced to 25 years, of which I served ten years in the adult prison system. So, all together I have been locked up for 15 years of my life.

The most positive experiences where family because my mom was huge on family.

Participating in youth sports, boxing, football and basketball. Some of the coaches had lasting impressions on me and those experiences were fun playing with teams and competing.

What is your definition of a mentor?

An individual that provides love, support, counseling, guidance to someone younger than them with regards to areas about life and choices and supports someone younger than them. Also, someone that supports that person, attends some of their functions and guides them and gives them advice based on their experiences.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African American adult male?

I think it's important and necessary. Gender and ethnicity are critically important in my opinion because there's something about taking instruction and receiving love and from someone that looks like you. I think there's just a vibe and a connection that can't be reached or matched in any way when it's coming from a person that walks, talks and breathes in a manner that makes you feel like you come from the same thing, like your cut from the same cloth.

So, if an African American male child is looking at an African American male adult. Your mind naturally is going to make you feel like this person has already walked in the same path that you're currently in. So, the things that they have to share and say are going to carry a little more credibility than coming from someone who clearly hasn't walked that path. So, I think it's just a power and a connection that is unmatched and it's a beautiful thing to be able to see an image of yourself in a place of success and strength that you can look up to. It will motivate and fuel you to want to move in that same direction.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by Caucasian male?

I feel like any human being no matter the gender or ethnicity if their intentions are pure and they are passionate about wanting to help someone, they can help someone and it can be positive. However, I think that there are certain experiences and certain things that someone coming from a different ethnic background just will not understand and not be able to help develop that African American boy in certain critical areas.

It can also in some instances potentially have a negative effect, because when you're trying to give someone advice or guidance about an area or a topic that you're not quite familiar with or don't have the experience in. You could be giving some advice or giving some direction that could be interpreted wrong and that could have a negative effect.

Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [Prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

I had a couple of mentors growing up, one of the biggest ones was probably my uncle. He was a mentor to us and he didn't have all the answers, or all the experiences and his life was squeaky clean. But he definitely had a love for us and wanted to see us be successful, and that was a rare thing to witness or experience in a black male growing up in my neighborhood and community.

My uncle's biggest thing I got from him is just to never quit. Whether it's on the football field and your body is hurting and you're all down, whatever the situation you just can never quit. You just fight and keep fighting, and eventually something is going to break through and go your way.

There were some individuals that although they were affiliated and heavily involved in the gangs they were also positive influences. Even though some of their methods might not have been approved according to the law or whatever, their intentions were pure and they wanted to see you win and they wanted to try to teach you how to survive and how to be successful.

And then from the OGs or gang members in the community it was just basically survival skills. To be aware is to be alive and you got to always know your surroundings and know who you're dealing with and don't ever put anything past anyone because anybody can pull it and stab you in the back or play you at any given moment. So, you got to proceed with caution and be very careful about who you offer your trust, love, and loyalty too.

Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

It feels amazing! It's an amazing feeling to know that you're having such a positive influence over another human being's life and erasing some of that negative stigma or stereotype that's been pounded into them through all their experiences up to that point.

What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

You just learn something new every day about yourself and the level of patience or tolerance that you may think you have and how to go further.

So the benefit to me is that you're dealing with walking, living examples of resilience and strength because these kids are dealing with so much stuff. So much more stuff than even my generation or the one before had to deal with because of social media and other outlets. They just introduced a whole other dynamic of problems that we didn't have to deal with because of technology and the information that reaches you and gets in front of you so quickly.

So, the biggest thing for me is just being reminded of how to stay resilient and stay in the fight, and not give up, that's the greatest benefit that I receive from working with these young people.

Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [Prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

I think one of the biggest experiences was the trip to New York. First of all, the thought of taking that many young people to New York just didn't even seem realistic to me. Because I always thought in my mind of New York City being a bigger, faster city, potentially too dangerous, and it just didn't seem possible. And

so, to be able to experience that trip with those young people was pretty life changing and I think the biggest thing that shocked me was how we were received by the different communities when we got there. When people knew what we were there for, to give these young men this experience and show them some different things about culture and life. They rolled the red carpet rolled out for us.

Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

That's a tough question because it kind of cuts both ways. On one hand, like I said, there's a lot of mistrust. You got these parents who are used to only dealing with or having dealt with African American men that have been deceptive, abusive and unreliable. These men left them and their children alone because they were incarcerated or just ran off. So, you have to fight through those stereotypes and negativity to prove that.

No, for lack of better words. Some parents are thirsty for someone to come and spend some time with their child and help and be a resource.

What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

One of the biggest issues I'd say right now is within the school district providing programs with access to their resources to help their students. So, for example, if

you create a program, let's just say basketball and you want to provide all these

youth the opportunity to just participate in a sport outside of school. To occupy

some of their time, some of that free time, after school that a lot of them are not

spending wisely. You would think that the school districts would hand you the

keys and give you all access to the gyms or the media center or whatever you

need, but it doesn't work that way.

The parents themselves can be a huge barrier because of trust issues. Every other

program is coming along, promising to do all these things and provide all these

opportunities, and when they get the check or get the money for the fees it doesn't

always pan out.

Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [Prompt] Why did you

agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to

mentor African American boys?

Well, if I remember a good friend of mine was trying to do some research for

something that he was studying, and he wanted to get some youth in the

community together and find some males that looked like them to help mentor

them. And just in conversation was talking about the idea and asked if I would be

interested and I said yes.

Well, he expressed to me something that I had already felt that obviously there

was a need, because much like the way I grew up, a lot of the young boys in our

community didn't have males in their lives, whether dead or incarcerated. It was a

lot of single mothers and unfortunately, it still is. And so, the number one reason was because there was a need and he was passionate about wanting to create this platform to get the research for whatever study that he was doing. So, just being passionate about the community and wanting to make a difference, it was just a no-brainer, to want to help and participate in something that could impact these youth in such a positive way.

I would probably begin with social media and just kind of put out there that I'm looking for African American males to mentor African American boys. I'd give a little brief description of the purpose and meaning behind it, and then I would probably create a flyer of some sort and take it to the local churches and probably start there with the social media and the local churches and then maybe hit the parks, on a warm nice day where you could find a basketball game going on any court and just kind of recruit word of mouth and talk to some people.

Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool Kids mentoring program for two years or better?

First of all, I made a connection with the young people. So, once you make that connection and you have that relationship, it's not easy to just walk away from. So, I wanted to continue to watch these young people make positive moves and grow, and I wanted a front-row seat so I kind of got hooked once I got in and I had the experience. It was just a beautiful thing and I didn't want to let it go.

What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active mentor in his own community?

I think we have to raise the minimum wage and we have to find a way for hard middle class working families to make more money so that they can have more free time available to put back into the community and work with these kids. If they're struggling to make ends meet the chances that they're going to have free time available to go give back is going to be very unlikely. Or we need to create resources that can compensate them for the time that they do spend and put in, so monetary issues are basically what it breaks down to.

Final thoughts?

Well, I think that growing up the way I did, I just am very blessed and thankful for the opportunity to give so many young people, what was missing from my life. So, to be able to at least be a drop in the bucket or a step toward that love and support from an African American male, like a father that I didn't receive, to have that opportunity to do that. It's just a blessing and I'm very happy and grateful and appreciative that I had that opportunity. And then finally, I would encourage people, regardless of what your time looks like or your financial situation to get out and get involved in their community with the youth because they need it.

<u>Participant Five</u>

Participant Five was a 45-year-old African American male from Minneapolis, Minnesota who, at the time of the interview, had worked as an assembler at a John Deere plant for 15 years. He was a high school graduate with no college experience or education. Participant Five was also a family man of three—two sons and one daughter. His daughter is 21 and his two sons are 26 and 28 years of age. This was his first time as a formal mentor, but he continued mentoring after the Kool Kids Society with another organization.

Participant Five Responses

Describe what it was like growing up as an African American male? [Prompt] Was it difficult? If so, what was difficult about it? Was it positive? If so, what was positive about it?

Well, I began growing up as an African American male in the Twin Cities, it was pretty diverse because it was a melting pot. It was a lot of different nationalities that lived in my community. We had a lot of people from Asia, we had Native Americans, we had Africans, and it was pretty diverse. My schools that I went to had a lot of diversity in them as well.

Well, living in the inner city, I grew up in an apartment complex. It wasn't really a housing project because it was really just one big building. It was an 80-unit building, but it was predominantly women, single women raising kids on government assistance. They had to do what they had to do to make a way for themselves and their children, so there were a lot of things taking place. We had a

lot of them that tried to make an honest living, but then you have some of them that had to go outside of what society was saying is acceptable to do some things that weren't so acceptable to make a way for themselves and their children. Some of them sold drugs, some of them sold themselves, some of them shop-lifted or boosted clothing or whatever they had to do to make a means. So basically, I witnessed all of this growing up.

What is your definition of a mentor?

A mentor to me is someone who has a vested interest in a person and their outcomes in life, whether it be for a moment or a lifetime. If you have a vested interest in someone and their well-being in a situation or over a lifetime period, you're a mentor to that person. If they have respect for you as an elder, or as a person, that they can get a learned lesson from then it's a mentorship. A mentorship can last 30 minutes, or it can last 30 years, but it's just all about the compassion that you have for that person that you're trying to help out and trying to reach out too. If it's genuine then it's a mentorship to me. Just having a vested interest in someone and hoping that they can reach the best heights of their ability in their lifetime and hopefully you can give them something that can help them get there.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by an African American adult male?

I feel like it's very important to have an African American male teach an African American boy about what it is to be an African American boy and man.

You need to have a male figure in that young man's life. There's a lot of situations where it's just not possible because the dad left or situations like that. I just think it's important whether it is an uncle or brother or a family friend, or somebody at church. There needs to be that African-American male, it needs to be that influence in a young man's life so he can have something to reflect upon to know how to pattern himself after, because if you don't get it from a positive influence in the community, that's a black influence. He's going to get it from a black influence, but it might not be the right one.

Share your opinion about an African American boy being mentored by Caucasian male?

I feel like that could be a good thing, but I wouldn't want it to be the sole mentorship, I would want that young man to have exposure to his own as well. For a Caucasian male, to be willing to spend that time and put his resources into a young black male, that's an awesome thing. I think it's good, but at the same token, I really feel like that black male needs to have the other influence because his reality is just this. You're a black male regardless of who you associate yourself with or learn from at the end of the day, you're still a young black male.

Did you have a mentor/mentors while growing up? [Prompt] If no, why not? If yes, tell me about your mentor? What are some of the things that you did with your mentor? Did you learn anything from your mentor?

My mom worked hard as well to make sure I got whatever she could afford, so she was really my biggest mentor. She was a young mom, my mom had my sister at 13, and had me at 18, so even though she was young and there were some times when it felt like a brother-sister relationship, we still knew where to draw the line between mom and friend. We knew that she was our authority figure and we knew to look up to her as such and not disrespect her in any type of manner. But either way it goes she definitely was one of my biggest mentors.

I wouldn't really say mentors, but it was just elders that I looked up to, and those are really guys that I just saw around the neighborhood. I didn't know how they were doing what they were doing to make a living, but I knew that they were making a living and it looked like they were doing well. So I looked up to those guys, they had the cars, they had the Jordan's, they had the jewelry, they had everything that I wish I did have and some of the stuff that I did end having come from some of those guys looking out for me just as a youngster to keep me out of the streets.

Basically through school, they had a black history class, where I met Dr. Ray Dial and he shed some light on some things as far as my history of my ancestry that open my eyes and open my heart to know some things about myself that I didn't know.

I basically just learned to treat people like you want to be treated. I don't have anything to hide so, I try to be honest with people at all times and treat people like

I want to be treated. I want to be respected so I give people respect and that's what I've been taught from my mom and from my mentors.

I learned that I came from a heritage of people that were great, that were kings and queens, and that I had that in me and I had the traits of a king. Because of this I conducted myself as such and as a leader, and in that I didn't have to follow anybody in order to get notoriety. I could just be who I was from birth and get what I needed to get just from being myself.

Describe what it felt like to mentor a young African American man from your community?

It is gratifying especially if you can see the seeds that you've planted into these kids actually growing.

So when you see the substance that they've taken in and you see the goodness come out of what you helped put into that kid. You can't help but to be excited and be happy about it because you know that's all you can hope for, that whatever you're trying to pour into someone is not falling on deaf ears or falling on a stony heart and that they didn't want to receive it. You don't have a choice but to be happy about it.

What benefits did you experience or gain from mentoring the young men of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

The benefits was that it taught me a lot about myself and I got to experience some things with them that I didn't even get to experience as a kid myself. So while we were teaching them and mentoring them they taught us some lessons as well.

Being able to take trips and have individual time with the kids. This was an awesome thing. It was definitely beneficial to be a part of that process man. It helped me to be a better person, it helped me to have patience, and to be able to deal with younger kids.

Describe a time during one of the Kool Kids mentoring activities that you felt like you gained something from the program personally? [Prompt] Where were you at? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

Well, for me, there were a few moments. Definitely when we had the award ceremonies and everything like that, it just showed a great deal of Comradery, when all the boys showed up with the Kool Kids jackets on and we had our sweaters on as mentors with big Kool Kids logos on there and everybody was together. We were a brotherhood and that was definitely a moment when I realized that it was definitely worth every time, every minute that I got to spend with these kids, it was definitely worth it.

Going back to when we went to New York, it was a moment after 911 when the Towers went down and they were rebuilding. Even thinking about it, I get choked up because I know the magnitude of what happened that day and for us to get to take them down to Ground Zero was like one of the realist moments in my life.

We were actually walking on a sidewalk, where people jump from a building to escape their death, they were jumping to their death to escape their death. For us to be on that very ground where such a tragic thing happened and to let the boys witness that, and to get to feel that in that moment with the boys that was something that I will never forget as long as I live. That was one of the heaviest moments that I ever experienced in my life, and I was able to share it with the Kool Kids.

Is it hard or difficult for an African American man like yourself to mentor African American youth in our community? If the answer is yes, why? What can be done to change this for you personally? If no, what makes mentoring work for you?

I say no, I don't think it's hard at all. Each child is different. There's a lot of layers when it comes to kids and you got to get past a lot of the layers to get to their heart and get them to open up and to receive you and know that your intentions are genuine. So, once you get to that point, I think it's pretty fluid after that. I think everything just flows after you get to a point with a kid or anyone in that regard. Once they trust you, then it's not hard to build a friendship and a comradery with a kid.

What are some barriers or issues that you personally experienced while mentoring the youth of the Kool Kids mentoring program?

I say sometimes dealing with parents. Sometimes you get a barrier with the parents wanting to be involved when they weren't involved to a certain magnitude

before we got there, but now that you get there and you start mentoring all of a sudden this father or this mother or somebody pops up that wants to have major input as to what you're doing with the kids. And they weren't really expressing that before the mentorship started.

Describe how you were recruited for this mentoring program? [prompt] Why did you agree to mentor these youth? How would you have recruited African American men to mentor African American boys?

I met a gentleman who ended up being a good friend of mine and we developed a great friendship throughout our life. Later on, after we became grown men, he started going to school and pursuing his education and he came up with the idea that he wanted to give back and he wanted to bring some young men on board and do some positive things. And he felt like I was the type of person that he would want to have as a part of that. So, he asked me if I would be willing to be a participant and help them out with a group of young men, and I was like let's go for it. I want to be a part of it. It sounds positive. And if it means helping and being a Shining light to some of these kids in the community, then I'm all for it, sign me up.

Because there were some guys that took time out for me, it might not have been the most structured setting that the mentorship took place, but there was some gentlemen that took time out for me when I was that age, so I felt like that's the

least I could do is give my time and assistance to young men that were in a

vulnerable state where they could have went one direction or the other.

I wouldn't so much look at their status based on education with them, having a

college degree or anything of that matter. I look at life situations and life lessons

and what people have been through and what they learn from what they've been

through. Also, the life that they live and if they're credible people, and some light

to shed on a situation. They have to be knowledgeable when it comes to kids, and

when it comes to expressing their life lessons and teaching young people about

what to do and what not to do and being transparent. These mentors can be

recruited through work, church, personal friendships, through word of mouth and

social media.

Why did you continue to mentor for the Kool Kids mentoring program for two years or

better?

Because I saw the results of it, and I knew that it was working. I knew that it was

something positive and the influence that we were having was solid, not only on

the kids in the program, but also on the kids that were on the outside looking in.

What do you feel can be done to retain or keep an African American man as an active

mentor in his own community?

To keep an African American man, as an active mentor, just basically keep him

engaged, and keep him in the loop.

Just try to come up with different ideas to keep it fresh. If I ran the program and facilitated the program. I would definitely be open to other suggestions and other ways to mentor, like I said, to keep it fresh and to keep it fun.

So, that's basically what I would do and try to keep it fresh by always being open to suggestions into different avenues and different ways to mentor. Also, by letting the mentors make their own blueprint as to what they want to do with the children and being open to a not so structured type of situation.

Final thoughts?

If there's anybody out there that wants to get involved in a situation like this and you are kind of hesitant about doing it, I would say put the hesitation on the back burner and just go for it. This is something that is a chapter of my life that I was happy that I took part in, and it's something that was definitely at a time in my life that it was needed because I needed to take those time out and pause for the cause. So, it helped me out tremendously and I feel like the Kool Kids program was greatly needed then and is also needed now.