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A Case Study on the Experiences of Black Men Participating in an African-American
Male Initiative at a Post-Secondary Institution

by

Michael A. Gibson, Jr.

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

A Case Study on the Experiences of Black Men Participating in an African-American
Male Initiative at a Post-Secondary Institution

by

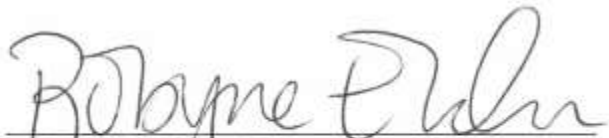
Michael A. Gibson, Jr.

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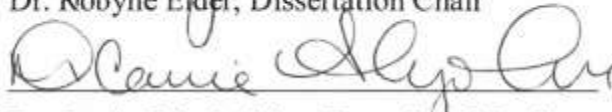
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Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education


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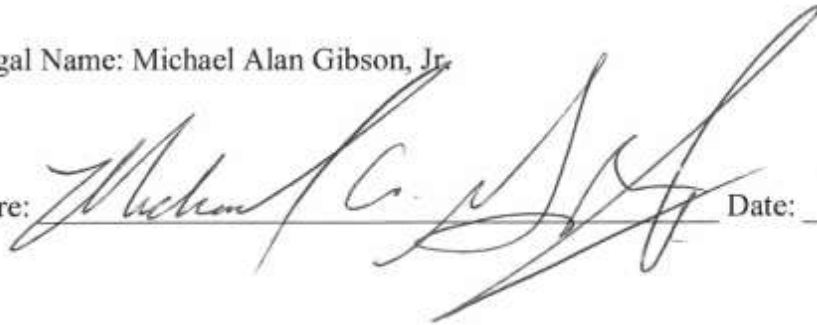
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Michael Alan Gibson, Jr.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael A. Gibson, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Date:

9/28/18

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Abstract

In the United States, African-American men are dominant in the entertainment industry mainly in sports and music. However, their success in entertainment does not translate to education. Many Black men grow up not having a positive experience in education, thus they do not see its value. However, many see the value in striving after a false sense of masculinity comprised of sex, drugs, money, and crime. This research was conducted to see how effective Black male mentorship through an African-American Male Initiative could be for Black males in a post-secondary institution in providing the positive experience in education that they need. To conduct the study, a questionnaire was provided to the African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) members and an interview was conducted with non-AAMI members and the AAMI Coordinator. The research yielded results showing how the AAMI members' college experience was enhanced by being a part of the program. Due to the program, the AAMI members valued education, wanted to pursue a graduate degree, pursued a professional career, and became a leader for young Black males. Based on the results and previous research, one recommendation the researcher provided was that the AAMI program and programs like AAMI promote more Black men working in education as teachers, counselors, principals, or school district administrators. Another recommendation was to promote HBCUs to participants because research showed that Black males have not only support, but a positive Black male role model. A contributor to the success and motivation of Black males at HBCUs was Black male leadership. According to Gasman (2013), 70% of HBCU presidents were Black males (p. 14). It was important for more post-secondary

institutions to incorporate mentorship programs like the AAMI because it engaged Black males and brought them into leadership roles.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Throughout history, Black males have been faced with challenges that bar their ability to succeed in education. Wilson (2009) stated Black males suffered disproportionately from what he termed as the “new urban poverty” (p. 56). Due to the poverty-stricken environment that Black males were cultivated in, they lacked essential resources required for them to thrive (p. 56). Wilson (2009) also stated that the blue-collar jobs that were supposed to be available for undereducated Black males had, by and large, vanished due to outsourcing or enhanced technology and reorganization of the global economic order. These males were also faced with the challenge of lacking necessary skills for the skilled labor force. “What is disturbingly absent from the political economy analysis of schooling is the racialized ideological constructions which foster negative beliefs about Blacks in general, and Black males in particular” (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012, p. 90). Negative perceptions of Black males made it challenging for positive Black men striving to flourish. Ferguson (2001) stated:

According to the statistics, the worse-behaved children in the school are Black and male, and when they take tests, they score way below their grade level. They eat candy, refuse to work, fight, gamble, chase, hit, instigate, cut class, cut school. . . . They are defiant, disruptive, disrespectful, and profane. These Black males fondle girls, draw obscene pictures, make lewd comments, intimidate others, and call teacher names. They are banished from the classroom to the hall, to the discipline office, to the suspension room, to the streets so that others can learn. (p. 46)

Due to the behaviors some Black males displayed in schools, Black males were looked at in a negative way, although the possibilities of the reason why these actions took place sometimes were not taken into consideration. The U.S. Department of Justice (2009) reports showed that Black men were incarcerated at 6.6 times more than White men (Howard et al., 2012, p. 88). This even translated to the trouble that younger Black males got into while in grade school. Education had been a challenging experience for Black males and discipline had been the biggest struggle. Dauntingly, the study showed that Black males were more likely to be suspended or expelled from schools than any other group (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Skiba and Peterson's (2000) study of a major Midwestern school district revealed that African American students represented 66.1% of all office referrals, 68.5% of out-of-school suspensions, and 80.9% of expulsions, despite constituting only 52% of the district population (as cited by Monroe, 2006, p. 102). Later, as recorded in 2014, Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students. On average, 5% of White students were suspended, compared to 16% of Black students. Black boys and girls had higher suspension rates than any of their peers. Twenty percent of Black boys and more than 12% of Black girls received an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014, p. 3). According to Monroe (2006), there was an overrepresentation of Black students in disciplinary sanctions that proposed the ideology that the biggest concern was Black boys. This ideology was the forefront of the Black male identity in education that impacted educators and Black male students. "A small yet compelling body of literature further reveals that teachers are most likely to discipline Black boys even when students of other races participate in identical behaviors" (Monroe, 2006, p.

103). Howard, Flenbaugh, and Terry (2012) depicted the severity of the perpetual academic and social challenges that African-American males faced in education.

African-American males currently make up approximately 8.1% of the nation's student population, yet they make up a disproportionate number of students receiving special education and remedial services. African-American males comprise approximately 26% of students, nationwide, identified as "educable mentally-retarded," 34% of students diagnosed with serious emotional disorders, and 33% of students identified as "trainable mentally-retarded," or developmentally-delayed. (Howard et al., 2012, p. 87)

This trend continued; Black boys were more likely than any other group to be placed in special education classes, with 80% of all special education students being Black or Hispanic males. Black boys accounted for 20% of United States students labeled as mentally retarded, even though they represented just 9% of the population (Lynch, 2018).

African American males' advancement was minimal compared to other demographic groups. The challenges they encountered illustrated why their dropout rate was the highest among other groups. During the 2005-2006 academic year, 47% of African-American males did not receive diplomas with their classmates after four years of high school (Samuels, 2008). Also according to Samuels (2008), dropout rates for Black males were as high as 60% in some of America's major urban cities; in states such as Illinois, New York, and Wisconsin, there was a graduation gap of at least 50% between Black males and their White male counterparts (p. 9). However, in 2016 all minority groups saw a rise in on-time graduation rates; but gaps still persisted. According

to Balingit (2017), only 76% of Black students and 79% of Hispanic students graduated on time, compared to 88% of White students and 91% of Asian/Pacific Islander students (p.1).

“Although students of color and low-income students are graduating at higher rates, we must be mindful that there are still significant gaps for historically underserved students which translate into lost potential for our communities and our country,” said John B. King Jr., who served as education secretary from 2016 to 2017 (as cited in Balingit, 2017, p. 201). “The urgent work to close these graduation rate gaps must be a national priority” (Balingit, 201).

Interestingly, these factors go hand in hand which create the struggle that Black males faced. For this reason, “enrollment and completion rates among Black males in higher education are dismal compared to other groups, most notably their female counterparts” (Harper, 2006, p. 14).

One of the challenging external factors for Black males was growing up in a high poverty environment. For this reason, many Black males were faced with attending schools that were underfunded. “Black males, like many other individuals reared in economically depressed areas, face major life challenges from the outset” (Howard, 2013, p. 54). Low funded schools were at a disadvantage compared to schools that are wealthy because they were unable to provide the same resources and quality of education. Their facilities were not as updated with issues that need to be fixed. To add, these low funded schools had sub-par staff with no experience or certification. Kozol (1991) called these savage inequalities, in other words, a large disparity in resources.

East St. Louis Senior High School's biology lab has no laboratory tables or usable dissecting kits (Kozol, 1991, p. 28). Meanwhile, children in neighboring suburban schools enjoy features like a 27-acre campus (p. 65), an athletic program featuring golf, fencing, ice hockey, and lacrosse (p. 157), and a computer hookup to Dow Jones to study stock transactions. (Kozol, 1991, p. 158)

Often these schools were forced to focus on student behavior problems more so than performance. According to Amato (2015), many teachers in urban schools worked with students who were at-risk and usually had very few resources to accommodate them. A classroom of 35-plus students without books was hardly a learning environment, especially when compared to suburban and private schools, where the average class size was 20 students and resources were plentiful (Amato, 2015, p. 1). It was a challenge to focus on the two because these students were faced with harsh realities outside of school (Darling-Hammond, 2001). These harsh realities made it hard for most students to focus, for the simple reason that these realities caused them to have a survival mindset. Many of these students did not know when and where they would be able to eat dinner. Some did not know if they would have a home to sleep that night or if they would suffer abuse. To add, some Black males are faced with focusing on school while at the same time focusing on surviving rough home conditions.

Another challenging external factor was caused by the poor social imagery that society placed on Black men. Howard et al. (2012), who described the evolution of Black male characterizations over the several centuries previous to this writing. Early 17th and 18th century images typically cast Black men as physically strong, mentally inept, hyper-sexed brutes who were well suited for slavery, and deemed to be subhuman. Over time,

the image became more entrenched of Black men being lazy, docile, and inhumane savages. Society also witnessed the depiction of Black males as the Sambo or minstrel character, who only sought to entertain their superiors. Many of the twentieth century depictions painted Black males as pimps, thugs, hustlers, and law-breaking slicksters who were not to be trusted, were not worthy of equal treatment, and needed to be marginalized because they were a “menace to society,” prone to violence, and constantly involved in gangs and drugs (Howard et al., 2012, p. 89).

The great deal of stress that young men had to endure could cause them to lose motivation or fuel it, helping them persist through the pain. One contributing factor to poor academic performance of Black males in education that young Black men had to endure was stress. According to Johnson (2014), “Approximately 70% of Black Fourth-Grade boys read below grade level and at the bottom or near the bottom of all academic achievement categories” (p. 2). Likewise, “Black males are grossly overrepresented among school suspensions, dropouts, and special education tracks and nearly 40% of Black males will be jobless, unemployed, or incarcerated by 2020” (Johnson, 2014, p. 2). These alarming statistics developed the pathway to the damaging perceptions of Black male students. The 30% that did not fall into this statistic were faced with nearly insurmountable challenges in the educational system. Unfortunately, these challenges impacted their future in society.

An internal factor that was a challenge was the cultural ideology of “acting White” in the Black community (Palmer & Maramba, 2011, p. 435). There was a false belief that focusing on education and being studious was in resistance to the culture, meaning Black males were not considered ‘cool.’ Facing these ideologies was

challenging because of the peer and cultural pressure involved. Fordham, Signithia, and Ogbu (1986), who initially introduced this theory, explained that Blacks formed an oppositional culture stemming from the oppression, enslavement, and discrimination they experienced in America (as cited in Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). “Not only does this oppositional culture act as a bulwark between Blacks and White America, it also provokes Blacks to persuade their same-race peers to devalue academic success because of its association with ‘acting White’” (Palmer & Maramba, 2011, p. 435). According to Lundy (2003), Blacks who subscribe to the mindset of ‘acting White’ viewed academically inclined Blacks as abandoning their Black cultural identity and rejecting their own cultural norms (as cited in Palmer et al., 2009). Undergoing this pressure was challenging in the aspect that Black males had to fight through the negative stereotypes from academia and within their own culture, which affected the way society viewed them. At a young age, Black males were faced with the pressures that caused an impact on them emotionally and mentally. Hearing and facing these negative stereotypes affected how they viewed themselves.

Weinrath, Donatelli, and Murchison’s (2016) research showed that one resolution to these challenges was mentorship. Mentorship is the process by which an experienced person volunteered to develop a relationship with a younger person for the purposes of assisting in his or her personal development. The mentor could work as a role model, as a teacher of social skills and values, and as a counselor (Weinrath, Donatelli, & Murchison, 2016, p. 295). Being a mentor was rewarding for both the mentor and the mentee. Although this could be hard work, it could cause a positive influence on the lives of young people.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this project was to show the possible impact of mentorship of Black males through the African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) program at a post-secondary institution. At this phase in life, Black males were participating in other activities instead of focusing on college. The activities they participated in were sometimes illegal and diminished the image of the Black male, solidifying the negative connotation placed on them (Fox & Swatt, 2008, p. 3). With this being the case, this project aimed to show the experiences of Black Males who were supported, encouraged, and enriched through mentorship programs such as the AAMI. It also compared the experiences of Black males that attended a post-secondary institution that did not participate in the AAMI program to perceive what other types of campus programs in which they are involved. This study explored the comparisons of the AAMI and other programs on campus, showing how Black males were affected by the mentorship and developmental training that they undergo. The research also included a survey to gain insight on what the participants in the program thought about their experience in the program. Lastly, the researcher followed up by conducting interviews of participants of the AAMI and four Black male students on campus at a post-secondary institution who did not participate in the AAMI. Focusing on the two separate groups provided a comparison to show if the AAMI's mentorship differentiated itself from other organizations and if it provided varying results. The study also consisted of surveys for AAMI members, non-AAMI members, and the Coordinator of the AAMI program.

The researcher's goal was to analyze whether the results translated to positive or negative influence on Black males; and alternatively, to interpret whether the Black Male

Initiative had any effect at all. Through the research, showing how helping Black males to understand the importance of college aimed to show whether this would help more Black males to have a better college experience and become more academically successful. The study was located in St. Louis and aimed to show if supporting Black males in St. Louis by having a willingness to understand their challenges, could possibly cause a major improvement of our society. Black males were contributors of crime in society. An example of this is the crime statistics in a midwest city from Burns (2011):

A midwest city is 44 percent [W]hite and 49 percent [B]lack, but statistics shows a racial imbalance in crime. Based on the city's official crime data for 2012 — the most recent year which data are available — 97.6 percent of those arrested for murder were [B]lack and 2.4 percent were [W]hite. More than 82 percent of those arrested for serious crimes like murder, aggravated assault and larceny were [B]lack, while just 17.5 percent arrested were [W]hite. Black males in the midwest city were responsible for the vast majority (63.5 percent) of crimes committed. Other groups contribute significantly less to the serious crimes in the midwest city. White males made up 17 percent of arrests, [B]lack females were 14 percent of arrests and [W]hite females only 5.3 percent of arrests. (Burns, 2011, p. 1)

The highest crime rates in the Midwest city came from the poorest parts of the city. There were many contributing factors such as Black males, poverty, and crime. The Black male experience was poor due to lack of positive male figures in their lives and lack of college degrees, which made them ineligible to earn a majority of the decent paying jobs. Due to the lack of mentorship, Black males were leaders in committing violent crimes and their

incarceration rates were high (Noguera, 2003, p. 1). “In the labor market, they are the least likely to be hired and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed” (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, p. 1). Black males were the only group in the United States that had a declining life expectancy (Spivak, Prothrow-Stith, & Hausman, 1988). “However, the death rate for black men between the ages of 20 and 49 dropped by half between 1990 and 2010. These positive developments are encased in graver news: Black Americans still live shorter lives, on average, and they die at higher rates than whites from infant mortality, heart disease, and homicide” (Thompson, 2016, p. 1).

Based on Richardson’s (2012) research, the researcher believed that mentorship was imperative to providing a supportive college experience to the Black male student. Mentorship would not only provide a positive experience, but it would translate to academic success. With the success of Black male college students, this would produce more encouraging role models for other Black male college students of the future. Having mentors in the lives of Black males helped the young men overcome challenges (Richardson, 2012, p. 1).

Rationale

Gasman’s (2013) study showed how Black males were impacted by the active promotion of Black Male success. The researchers developed an on-campus program to see how Black males would perform with a team effort of support. Interviews were also conducted to get more insight into the effectiveness of the program. Through their research, they found the Black males who were in the program had a much better college experience. Participants commented on the linkage of helpful and encouraging faculty to academic success. Faculty supported these students by displaying concern, not only for

their academic successes, but also for their personal welfare. Faculty members displayed empathy for their students and tried to help students maximize their potential (Gasman and Palmer, 2008, p. 58)

This study aimed to show the effectiveness of mentorship in the lives of Black male college students through on campus programs, such as the African American Male Initiative. One of the major challenges in education was how to effectively improve the academic performance and interest of Black males in education. For example, Tatum (2006) highlighted self-concept and identify as two major internalized factors that influenced the academic success for Black students. “Findings posit that Black male students sometimes respond by disassociating themselves from school and acting-out in negative ways as coping mechanisms — for a lack of self-concept and identify” (Tatum, 2006, p. 1). This research aimed to show how Black male mentors, through the African American Male Initiative (AAMI), supported Black males, made an impact on the college experience of Black males and their view on education, and compared to other on-campus organizations in terms of their mentorship.

Watkins, Green, Goodson, Guidry, and Stanley (2007) showed how the challenges that Black males faced caused stress. Stress among these Black males who were pursuing a degree in college showed how they were impacted psychologically. These stressors could cause depression, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem. Racism was another factor that contributed to the stress that Black college men went through. “In Watkins et al.’s study, the focus group participants also spent a substantial amount of time discussing a topic that was not discussed at the HBCU: racism” (as cited in Watkins, Green, Goodson, Guidry, & Stanley, 2007, p. 110). Battling something that feels

unwinnable causes frustration. “Not only did the men recognize racism as a major stressor at the predominately [W]white institution, but they also discussed their internal struggle with not acting ‘too White’ or ‘too Black,’ an issue that, unlike their peers at HBCUs, they admittedly face every day” (Watkins et al., 2007, p. 111).

This research intended to show the Black male college experience and how they were possibly affected by mentorship, specifically the AAMI program. The AAMI was an example of a positive reinforcement method used to promote, uplift, and encourage the Black male in college. It was geared to helping them face challenges and value education. This research aimed to show the type of impact made by implementing AAMI programs on a college campus and compared it to other programs at a post-secondary institution.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. How can programs such as the African-American Male Initiative produce more Black males that value education?

Research Question 2: How can being in an African-American Male Initiative help Black males to be leaders and positive role models for younger Black Males?

Research Question 3: How are African-American males supported in an African-American Male Initiative compared to other campus organizations?

Research Question 4: How does the African-American Male Initiative help Black males overcome challenges?

Limitations

Due to the AAMI program being a small organization, there were very few participants to choose from for the purposes of this study. Since the conception of the

program in 2012, modifications were made that created slightly different experiences. During the piloted program at the study college, the director had a surplus of funding, which enabled the ability to provide participants a much richer experience. Members of the AAMI program were able to go on college visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, conferences, panels, and brought renowned African-American dignitaries to campus. Students who started later in the program did not get the opportunity to experience as much as those who were involved when the program piloted. However, each survey and interview was completed to the fullest capacity possible, giving each participant's account of the program and their views on the effectiveness of the program. Not only was grade level a factor in experience, but transfer students caused limitations, due to the fact that they were new to the program, not necessarily a first-year student in college. These transfer students had limited insight, as well as first-year students in the program.

Definition of Terms

African-American Male Initiative. AAMI was created as a response to the needs of African-American male students on a midwest, post-secondary campus. The program began offering services to students in 2012 and was funded by a generous grant for Predominantly Black Initiatives awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

The goals of the program were to:

- Increase the persistence rate of African-American male students at St. Louis Community College;
- Increase the academic achievement levels of African-American male students at St. Louis Community College;

- Enhance the in-depth understanding and focus among faculty members and staff regarding the array of challenges faced by African-American males as they enter college. (St. Louis Community College, 2018, p. 1)

Discrimination:

The practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people. There are many forms of discrimination.

Traditional approaches to the study of prejudice and discrimination within social psychology and sociology have viewed sexism and racism largely within the same broad conceptual framework and essentially as different manifestations of the same underlying phenomenon. In contrast, we will argue that while these two forms of discrimination are clearly related, they are also qualitatively and dynamically distinct. (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000, p. 2)

Discrimination has been a part of American History since the beginning. One of the major cases involving discrimination in education was *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling which took place in 1954.

Approximately 50 years ago, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was viewed by many as a turning point in American history that crystallized a national consensus for change in public schools. In this case, the Supreme Court unanimously held that the de jure segregation of public schools on the basis of race violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. (Russo, Harris, & Sandidge, 1994, p. 1)

Equality: “As a descriptive concept, equality is, by definition, an adjectival relation between entities that are identical in some specific respect. No two entities can be

identical in all respects, for then they would not be two entities but the same entity”

(Capaldi, 2002, p. 1). Capaldi (2002) continued, “Equality is also a normative concept.

As a normative concept, equality is the notion that there is some special respect in which all human beings are in fact equal (descriptive) but that this factual equality requires that we treat them in a special way” (p. 1).

HBCU: This acronym stands for Historically Black College and University.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are the only institutions in the United States created for the express purpose of educating Black citizens. These institutions were established during the decades after the Civil war until 1964. Many were started by the federal government’s Freedmen’s Bureau with assistance from Whites — primarily abolitionist missionaries and Northern philanthropists, who either wanted to Christianize Blacks or train them for their industrial enterprises. African Americans, through the African Methodist Episcopal Church, also established HBCUs (Gasman, 2013, p. 5). In addition, Historically Black Colleges and Universities provided opportunities for African-American students to be mentored and developed by African-American faculty. At an HBCU, the students experienced a nurturing environment that allowed the students to learn effectively and how to overcome the challenges of being a minority.

However, until the mid-1960s, HBCUs were, with very few exceptions, the only higher education option for most African Americans. With the push for the integration of historically White institutions during the Civil Rights Movement, enrollment dropped at HBCUs, and their role of educating the near entirety of the Black middle class shifted. (Gasman, 2013, p. 5)

Predominantly-White Institutions.

A PWI refers to predominantly white institutions; basically, any institution of higher learning that wasn't labeled an HBCU prior to 1964. These institutions usually have student bodies made up mostly of whites, with sprinkles of different races such as African American, Hispanic, Asian, and so on. (Nicole, 2015, p. 1)

These institutions had a small percent of minority students. Predominantly White institutions were founded, based on westernized White American culture. These institutions lacked a wealth of strong mentorship and guidance for Black students, especially Black males.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to focus on the experiences of Black males in an African American Male Initiative at a post-secondary institution. Conducting a study on their experiences showed the effects of mentorship on Black males in a college setting. Having this qualitative data could add to the existing body of research on how Black males valued education by having adequate support or mentorship, like other groups. The researcher also believed the aspects of effective mentorship were imperative to the success of Black males in education. It was the essential factor that drove their motivation for achievement and grit to defy odds. These topics are addressed in Chapter Two within a review of the then-current literature.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter Two synthesizes relevant literature that discussed the importance of mentorship, experienced Black males serving as mentors, the challenges Black males faced, Black manhood, and the Black male college experience. It is important for the reader to empathize with what it was like to be an American Black male pursuing a college degree. Chapter Two also shows how much of an impact African-Male Initiative programs made in the lives of Black males that attended a post-secondary institution. “The literature review provides a framework for establishing the research on Black male mentorship in an African-American Male Initiative at a Post-Secondary Institution” (Creswell, 2009, p. 57). The chapter highlights the effectiveness of mentorship, which provides insight on whether mentorship was the appropriate method for helping African-American males in a post-secondary institution to achieve on a high level and have a positive experience in the process.

Challenges of Black Male College Students

Black men in college faced complex issues that were hard to relate to and understand by those who were not Black men. They often entered college with a negative stereotype attached to them that they must fight through. This put them at an automatic disadvantage making their college experience challenging. It was already difficult being a minority in college, but being a Black male made the experience even more challenging. According to Sullivan (2009), “All kinds of discrimination are wrong and can be harmful to those involved. In schools, discrimination can make it difficult for students to learn because they don’t feel safe or accepted” (p. 1). Having these unresolved issues did not

create a healthy campus climate. For this reason, division was present and this caused hate to arise on campus. Discrimination was a leading issue in education and had been for decades. “Critics argue that ethnic minority and low-income students are unfairly and disproportionately placed in lower ability groups, in special education, and are held back a grade and that these placements seriously reduce their opportunities for learning” (Farkas, 2003, p. 1126). These placements not only caused a disadvantage, but also could cause bias and unfair stereotypes, which affected minority students’ educational experience from their White counterparts. Also, Garibaldi (1992) stated the topic of Black male issues was the “most actively discussed, and vigorously debated issues since the late 1980s has been the declining social, economic, and educational status of young African American males in our society” (p. 1). He also added

Many of these negative indicators along with their last-place ranking on many measures of educational performance and attainment have become so commonplace that it has caused many to view the majority of these young men's futures as hopeless and impossible to salvage. (Garibaldi, 1992, p. 1)

The disadvantages then-currently seen in education date back to landmark Supreme Court cases. A classic example of this is the “Little Rock Nine,” in which the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* led to the integration the schools (Branton, 1983, p. 261). In the fall of 1957, nine brave African-American students enrolled in Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas attempted to attend their first day of school after being discouraged from attending (Branton, 1983, p. 261). On that day, they were turned away, but one of the nine did not go to school with the group because she did not receive the message about meeting up, due to her not having a phone. This particular student had a

horrific experience that day as she was on her way to her new school. Branton (1983) stated that the mob crowded around her with taunting remarks and she proceeded in the direction of a drug store to escape, but an employee saw her and locked the door (p. 262). Branton's (1983) study shows the hardship that African-Americans faced in an attempt to receive equal opportunity in education. These traumatic events were so traumatic in that they still affected African-Americans at the time of this writing (Branton, 1983, p. 262). Although these events took place and issues still arose at the time of this writing, it was unacceptable for African-Americans to suffer from a poor educational experience due to discrimination. Situations of discrimination that occurred on college campuses were common, but it was the job of the institution to handle these situations. The main purpose was to provide an equal opportunity of learning for all students. An example of this is the series of incidents that took place on Mizzou's campus in efforts to fight discrimination.

[The] Mizzou student group Concerned Student 1950, named after the year the first [B]lack student was admitted to the university, stopped a homecoming parade on Oct. 10, 2015 to voice their concerns of racism on campus. Cell phone footage from the parade showed the car carrying Mizzou president Tim Wolfe bumping into the protestors as they chanted. (Langen, 2015, p. 2).

The African-American students from Mizzou passionately protested for their equal rights. The President's unwillingness to address their concerns is one example of the disadvantage African-Americans faced in education. His actions showed the unfair treatment of African-American students. For this reason, one Black male Mizzou graduate student by the name of Jonathan Butler, went on a hunger strike calling for the University of Missouri system's board to address the demands of the African-American

students (Langen, 2015, p. 2). Langen (2015) also added that a large group of football players (Black males), decided to join Butler in his efforts by deciding not to play another game until demands were addressed, with the understanding that the protest would cost the university substantial money. Langen (2015) concluded, stating that the President of the University of Missouri system stepped down after the football team's protest.

Furthermore, the protest at the University of Missouri brought about change; however, "confronting discrimination can be challenging and intimidating, but it is critical to safeguarding students' rights to learn" (Sullivan, 2009, p. 2). In education, Black men are a highly underrepresented group, for example "only 2% of teachers in the United States are Black males" (Hanford, 2017, p. 1). Black male students did not have many people who could stand up for them, so their voice was not heard. With a low representation in education, there were very few role models that could help Black men to excel. According to Lynn (2006)

Black men responded in various ways to the burden of being both Black and male in a profession that is dominated by White women. He also added that they operated on a continuum between resistance and accommodation to White patriarchal norms and practices as a way to survive. (p. 2500)

The lack of Black male teachers available in schools to mentor young Black men contributed to low academic performance level, due to the lack of relationship building and empathy. Hopkins (1997) found that in K-12 institutions, Black male student populations experienced political, cultural, and economic inequalities almost daily. According to Fashola (2005), there was one out of three Black children raised in a poor household (p. 55). "Here the evidence is clear that the risks faced by children, particularly

African American males, in terms of health, welfare, and education are substantially greater” (Fashola, 2005, p. 55).

In school, Black males are more likely to be labeled with behavior problems and as less intelligent even while they are still very young (Hilliard, 1991). Black males are also more likely to be punished with severity, even for minor offenses, for violating school rules (Sandler, Wilcox, & Everson, 1985, p. 16) and often without regard for their welfare. They are more likely to be excluded from rigorous classes and prevented from accessing educational opportunities that might otherwise support and encourage them (Oakes, 1985, p. 53). Consistently, schools that serve Black males fail to nurture, support, or protect them. (Noguera, 2003, p. 436)

“The outcomes of the disparities continue to result in significant numbers of these students failing, stopping out, dropping out, or generally losing interest in scholastic endeavors” (Bonner & Bailey, 2006, p. 25). Another factor that played a role in the challenging college experience for Black males was peer pressure. Ogbu (1988) argued that community-based “folk theories” suggested that because of the history of discrimination against Black people, even those who worked hard would never reap rewards equivalent to Whites, which could contribute to self-defeating behaviors (p. 23). It was a part of African-American culture for Black males to view education as a less promising route to success than sports or music (Hoberman, 1997, pp. 48-49). Lastly, “Some researchers have found that for some African American students, doing well in school is perceived as a sign that one has ‘sold out’ or opted to ‘act White’ for the sake of individual gain” (Fordham, 1996, p. 12). Black males had to face the pressures of

manhood as well. “With traditional masculinity, men are taught to not express themselves emotionally to not appear weak or feminine” (Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque, 2014 p. 387). Black males did not want to look vulnerable in any way. Having a tough persona was the male factor that validated the manhood for Black men. It was important for them to show their capabilities and strengths. Strength showed that they could take up for themselves and their families (Mincey et al., 2014, p. 388). “Research has identified higher levels of substance abuse, riskier sexual behavior, stress, and anger among men who embody traditional concepts of masculinity” (Mincey, et al., 2014, p. 387). Black males often times struggled with their identities and mental health as a result of this struggle. In addition, Black men who exemplify traditional concepts of masculinity may also be at a higher risk for mental health issues, such as low self-esteem and depression (Hammond, 2012). Ornelas et al.’s (2009) photo voice study reported that one force affecting the health of Black men was the role and responsibility of being a Black man. In the study, the researchers used photos and had the African-American men that participated in the study speak on the personal significance of the photos. After conducting the study, Ornelas et al. (2009) found:

- 1) African American men do not prioritize their own health because of the expectation that they are strong and healthy.
- 2) Even among African American men who do give priority to their own health, the multiple demands placed on them make it difficult to find time to eat healthfully, exercise, and get regular health care.
- 3) An important aspect of being an African American man is to take responsibility for their own lives, their family, and the conditions in their community. (p. 558)

Orneleas et al.'s (2009) research showed norms and expectations of manhood influenced the attitudes and behavior of African-American men and that seeking to take care of their health was a sign of weakness. One of the subjects in the research stated,

We're men, that's all. We're tough. So, the little aches and pains that we feel, we sleep on them and we wake up in the morning and we go on. Inside, our internal health is not important as long as outside we're physically able to still move. . . . We don't have time to stop for other things, interruptions like going to the doctor. (Orneleas, 2009. p. 1)

Another researcher, Hammond (2012), reported that men (18-29), who had more exposure to everyday racism and a higher masculine role norms score related to emotional restraint, were more likely to report having depressive symptoms. This finding confirmed work by Mahalik, Lagan, and Morrison (2006) who found that lower self-esteem and more psychological distress in Black men aged 18 to 25 were positively related to conforming to masculine norms. Mahalik et al. (2006) alluded to the fact that Black men were slanted with a bona fide 'tough guy' persona. If there were any signs of weakness shown, it could be detrimental, assassinating their character and reputation. In those types of situations, these young men felt isolated from everyone else in the world. This is why they tended to shield their emotions by participating in edgy activities to create a mirage that they were emotionally untouchable (Mahalik, Lagan, & Morrison, 2006, p. 191).

When looking at Black males in college, research has found that stress in college-aged men can be affected by the campus environment. Research on stress and Black males in college reported that Black men who attended

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) had more familial and personal stress such as balancing their personal life with their college life whereas Black males at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) had more school stress such as racism and stereotypes. (Watkins et al., 2007, p. 1)

When Black men strive to succeed in ways that contradict their stereotype, they have to fight hard for equality and face insurmountable challenges. Research by Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011) said that the higher the education for a Black male, the higher the level of stress, which could cause them to be affected by negative health outcomes. Either way, Black men must face adversity if they pursue an education or if they have to fight to survive in the streets. Facing racism was a daunting challenge within itself (Wade & Rochlen, 2013, p. 1). When someone had to go through oppression and traumatic challenges it affected him or her mentally, especially when he or she saw people around them not having to face the same challenges. Franklin (1999) described how African American men's repeated encounters with prejudice and racism created an "invisibility syndrome," defined as "an inner struggle with the feeling that one's talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or even recognized because of prejudice and racism" (p. 761).

Furthermore, Black males that defied the odds did so by finding ways to cope with the injustice. "To deal with these stressors, Black men may choose to use one of many coping techniques common to Blacks such as social support, denial, and religious participation" (Mincey et al., 2014, p. 316). Research on undergraduate Black students at a HBCU identified that avoidance coping protected them from suicide, because they

believed that being introverted was a safe haven (Wang, Nyutu, & Tran, 2012). Similar research on coping and depression reported that Black college students reported higher use of active and passive religious coping styles. Another similar study also reported that Blacks using coping not related to religious beliefs had fewer depressive symptoms (Kohn-Wood, Hammond, Haynes, Ferguson, & Jackson, 2012). To survive, Black men found other ways to deal with their challenges, such as an athletic team, fraternity, hip hop, or just having a group of friends that had similar interests (Harper, 2007, p. 104). Developing relationships with the opposite sex could help African-American men get the nurturing and support that they needed. Another way that Black males coped was by joining a local church and being active. Churches were unique because they provided a diverse form of support (Orneleas et al., 2009, p. 559). Being a member of a church served a type of family support system; they also received mentorship, spiritual guidance, and relationship building. In churches, they could get the mentoring that they needed from an older Black male that they would not get if they did not have their father actively present in their life (Orneleas et al., 2009, p. 560).

Poor Black Male Leadership

For years, Black male teachers were hard to find and if found, hard to retain. Harper (2009) stated that the typical Black boy in a K-12 educational setting was taught almost exclusively by White women who combined an insufficient anticipation for his academic achievement with high expectations for disruptive behavior, intellectual stupidity, and a dispassion for learning that would ultimately culminate with high school dropout (pp. 697-698). Dissecting Harper's (2006, 2007, 2009, 2012) research, which

analyzed the lack of Black male leadership in the U.S. educational system, it was illustrated how critical it was for more Black males to become educators and role models.

Further, it was evident that Black males had many great challenges, internally and externally that obstructed their academic success. For this reason, helping Black males was an extremely difficult task, especially for those who could not completely identify with being a Black male. Kafele (2012) said, “Of all the challenges we face in education today, I can think of none greater than the challenge of motivating, educating, and empowering black male learners” (p. 67). For this to be possible there must be role models in their lives that could push them to their goals and help them to see their potential. Although this was a challenge, it was rewardingly necessary to push educational excellence in Black males. Kafele (2012) stated, “To excel in school, black male students need role models and dreams” (p. 1). With Black, male leadership being scarce, the challenge to push younger Black males to succeed is greater. According to Samuels (2008), the U.S. high school graduation rate for Black males was just 47%, compared with 57% for Latino males and 75% for White males (as cited in Kafele, 2012, p. 1). Kafele (2012) continued in stating, “Alarming as this figure is, the situation becomes even more shocking in large urban school districts, such as New York City, Detroit, and Miami, where the graduation rate for black males ranges from 20 to 30 percent” (p. 1). With Black, male leadership scarce, the challenge to push younger Black males to succeed was greater. The Schott Foundation for Public Education released its biennial report about Black males in United States public schools, estimating that 59% of Black males graduated from high school on time in the 2012-2013 school year, compared to 65% of Latino males and 80% of White males (as cited in Brown, 2015, p.1).

Damaging as this was, data showed that Black males were the bottom performers; however, this did not answer why it appeared that they did not value education. The data also did not show the barrier between educators and pushing their Black male students to success, making it a challenge to identify root cause. Kafele (2012) indicated, “A staggering number of elementary school teachers say they have run out of ideas on how to keep their black male students focused and inspired” (p. 68). He continued in saying, many teachers broke down in tears during this conversation expressing that they desperately wanted to help their Black male students succeed; but, they felt overwhelmed by the challenge. The teachers making these comments validated the need for Black men to lead other educators in this initiative. These remarks indicated a need for team effort in accomplishing this goal. Negative labels and views contributed to the level of difficulty on educators to cause improvement. It hampered the ability to easily gain resources and garner support from the appropriate constituents.

Another point to add is how the external factors impacted Black males justifying the need for leadership. According to the Samuels (2008), approximately 50% of Black children in the United States lived in households without a father figure present. . According to the U.S. Fatherless Statistics (2016), approximately 57.6% of Black children in the United States lived in households without a father figure present. Alarming data such as this showed the lack of male leadership in the home, which showed there was not a father present for many Black males to look up to on an everyday basis. This depressing amount of Black males growing up without fathers in the United States showed a reason for little guidance and direction. Along with making their own mistakes in life, they saw their brothers, fathers, and peers incarcerated, or worse (Hunter

et al., 2006). Experiences like this shows how the psyche of the Black male is impacted. It shapes their ideological identity of manhood and how they view themselves. Harper (2009) added, “The Black male has been told that he is unlikely to accomplish much in life; that he is no good, just like the rest of them; and that being successful in school is an anomaly for people like him” (p. 698).

Father figures heavily influenced the Black male view of manhood. It determined the way they identified themselves and set their standard beliefhood on what a man really was. Unfortunately, due to poor positive leadership in Black communities “there is much warranted concern about joblessness, the lure of the underground economy, and youth-based definitions of masculinity that emphasize high-risk masculine behaviors” (Hunter et al., 2006, p. 430). A subject in Hunter et al.’s (2006) study validated this in his statement.

These days and times, especially, the era we’re living in, it’s a lot dealing with being a man, like all types of things coming towards you: police, selling drugs, sex, and diseases; it’s all types of things that you’ve got to go through as far as being a man, growing up. (p. 430)

The temptations Black males overwhelming faced made it reasonable for younger Black males to fall into the pit of developing a false sense of manhood. According to Hunter et al, (2006), Harper (2009) elaborated by stating,

the majority of Black family households are single parent there is also public angst about how growing up without fathers is implicated in the troubles of Black male youth, including school dropout, violence, crime, incarceration, early paternity, and problematic masculine identities. (p. 428)

Outside groups speculated the mindset of young Black males. Hunter et al.'s (2006) study showed the pattern identifying the psychological reasoning behind the young Black males' adoration of 'negative' influential Black leaders, due to the inexperience of Black male childhood. These outside groups were alienated from the feeling and interpretations of being a fatherless Black male, or how their perceptions shaped their gender ideologies as they were coming of age. Beginning in the late 20th century, "in memoir and other autobiographical media, including rap, that African American male youth and men have reflexively interrogated the loss of their fathers and of relationships unfulfilled" (Hunter et al., 2006, p. 428). Hip-hop had the essentials of a commemorative diary that gave the ability to articulate over rhythmic tunes. There were many accounts of emotionally expressive records where fatherlessness in the Black community was expressed by Black males through poetic hip-hop art form. Shakur (1995), in his classic ode to his mother, "Dear Mama," remembered having "no love for [my] father 'cause the coward wasn't there. He passed away and I didn't cry, 'cause my anger wouldn't let me feel for a stranger" (para. 5). Kanye West, another famous artist, also created an ode to his mother, titled "Hey Mama" (as cited in West & Leace, 2005). In this emotional song, West dug deep from within to show his mother how he felt about how she raised him as a single parent. He also showed his anger towards a male figure in his life, not clearly stated if it was his father or a man his mother dated. In his song, he sang,

And you never put no man over me, And I love you for that mommy can't you see?
Seven years old, caught you with tears in your eyes, Cuz a ni** cheatin,
telling you lies, then I started to cry as we knelt on the kitchen floor/ I said

mommy I'mma love you until you don't hurt no more. (West & Leace, 2005, para. 3)

These artists narrated their feelings about growing up fatherless. Both of them equally expressed negative emotions and anger towards their fathers. Exploring their choice of expression gives insight into the psychological framework of fatherless Black males. "In this art form, these young men positioned them ideologically, created cautionary tales, and constructed the type of man they wanted to become" (Hunter et al., 2006, p. 438).

Due to so many African-American boys growing up without fathers, they did not have a positive male role model at home. Without that guidance, these young men easily fell into the pit of committing crimes.

Black Men, Crime, and Racism

At the time of this writing, crime had been plaguing the Black community in the United States for years; particularly-violent crimes associated with Black American men, causing the negative perception. "From 2002 to 2007, the number of homicides involving black male juveniles as victims rose by 31% and as perpetrators by 43%" (Osho, 2013, p. 279). With Black males consistently leading the way in violent crime, it was difficult to change the negative perception. For this reason, it was more challenging for Blacks males that attempted to choose a positive route, because of the stereotype that had been created. For this reason, Black males were heavily scrutinized, due to the negativity that surrounded them. "In terms of gun killings involving this same population subgroup, the increases were even more pronounced: 54% for young black male victims and 47% for young black male perpetrators" (Osho, 2013, p. 279). Analyzing this

research showed how deadly these violent crimes were and how it was causing the Black community to be in a state of danger.

One of the issues with violence from Black males was the Black males that were victims.

Results from the most recent National Victimization Survey, conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, reveal that Blacks living in urban areas and Blacks ages 16–19 years are at greatest risk for victimization from violent crimes such as aggravated assault, sexual assault or rape, and robbery. (Reed et al., 2013, p. 97)

To add, racism towards Black men had an effect on their progress in life. In striving for gaining success, the institutionalized racism was an enormous hurdle that Black men from all social classes had to find some way of jumping over. According to Badger, Miller, Pearce, and Quealy's (2018) study,

Black boys raised in America, even in the wealthiest families and living in some of the most well-to-do neighborhoods, still earn less in adulthood than white boys with similar backgrounds, according to a sweeping new study that traced the lives of millions of children. (p. 1)

Furthermore, Reed et al. (2013) provided evidence for the elusive issue in society called racism or discrimination, which was often a challenge to prove. "Even when children grow up next to each other with parents who earn similar incomes, black boys fare worse than white boys in 99 percent of America" (Badger, Miller, Pearce, & Quealy, 2018, p. 1). In evaluating the disparity, some researchers based their findings on racial gaps on test scores; however, others suggested that test scores did not accurately measure the abilities of Black children (Badger et al., 2018, p. 1). Individualized or household issues did not

explain the disparities either, but researchers suggested that the problems lie outside the home. Problems were said to be in “surrounding neighborhoods, in the economy and in a society that views black boys differently from white boys, and even from black girls” (Badger et al., 2018, p. 1). Also, the negative stereotypes put on Black men contributed to creating the barrier blocking them from gaining success equally. “It’s not just being black but being male that has been hyper-stereotyped in this negative way, in which we’ve made black men scary, intimidating, with a propensity toward violence,” said Hurd, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia (as cited in Badger et al., 2018, p. 1).

HBCUs

HBSUs influenced change with regard to success of young Black males.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are the only institutions in the United States that were created for the express purpose of educating Black citizens. These institutions were established during the decades after the Civil war until 1964. (Gasman, 2013, p. 1)

They played a significant role in helping Black men to graduate college and become successful. HBCU campuses were comprised of African-American faculty and staff, making learning more comfortable for African-American students.

A study Gurin and Epps conducted with over 5,000 Black students across 10 HBCUs revealed that compared to Black women, Black men were more likely to have considerably higher educational and career goals, were more likely to express an interest in enrolling in graduate and professional school, and were more attracted to prestigious careers in fields, such as engineering, business, and the sciences. (as cited in Palmer, Wood, & Arryo, 2015, p. 7)

The study showed that Black men who attended HBCUs were more ambitious and confident in reaching their goals. In this environment, Black men tended to perform on a higher level when at a HBCU. According to Palmer, Wood, and Arryo (2015), Black men at HBCUs were more socially integrated, earned better grades, and perceived their colleges to be more supportive of their academic success (p. 7). Furthermore, “Many HBCUs have garnered a reputation for admitting students who would not otherwise qualify for more selective institutions and graduating them with critical skills to access some of the nation’s best graduate programs” (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010, p. 1). Indeed, evidence showed that HBCUs created a warm, nurturing, family-like environment, which helped to facilitate Black students’ self-efficacy, racial pride, psychological wellness, academic development, and persistence (Reeder & Schmitt, 2013, p. 1). “Although underfunded compared to their predominantly White counterparts, HBCUs are frequently praised for disproportionately producing minority graduates with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as well as producing many of the nation’s Black judges, lawyers, and doctors” (Shorette & Palmer, 2015, p.1). According to McClure (2006), racial masculine identity was constructed by a need for peer relationship and support. Jackson (1997) contended that only European-American models of masculinity were widely accepted as lived and understood and equated as a universally accepted facet of American culture. Black men historically felt the necessity to function with a double consciousness or a negotiated cultural identity that constantly was in flux from one cultural identity position to another. Having the sense of belonging was a contributor to Black males desiring a culturally supportive environment, such as an HBCU.

Another reason Black males who attend HBCUs tended to perform well was because they were in an environment where they saw they were cared about as Black men. According to Palmer and Shorette's (2015) study, participants agreed that being at an HBCU let them know there were people out there who cared about them as Black men and who were genuinely invested in their success. One of the participants in Palmer and Shorette's (2015) study discussed the importance of having positive Black role models and peers to identify with in this educational domain, which was in the engineering field. "The HBCUs represented in this study were not only developing confidence in these men that allowed them to complete their tasks at a higher level, but they were producing higher aspirations within the participants as well" (Palmer & Shorette, 2015, p. 24). Another participant in Palmer and Shorette's (2015) study stated that the HBCU he attended intentionally encouraged those aspirations by designing their programs with graduate school in mind and reinforcing the idea that graduate school was the natural next step for students. A contributor to the success and motivation of these Black males at HBCUs was the Black male leadership. According to Gasman (2013), 70% of HBCU presidents were Black males (p. 14). At HBCUs faculty supported students by displaying concern, not only for their academic success, but also for their welfare. Faculty also displayed empathy with their students and tried to help students maximize their potential. A strong body of literature characterized Black students' interaction with faculty at HBCUs as positive. The faculty, according to Palmer and Young (2010), took an interest in Black students and engaged them in extra curricular activities while helping them develop their confidence in achieving their goals. In Palmer and Young's (2010) research, studies of Black students at HBCUs showed that these students experienced

greater personal interaction with their professors than Historically White Institutions (HWIs). The student participants in Palmer and Young's (2010) research discussed the impact faculty had on their academic success and how the faculty were available and wanted to establish a rapport with them.

This seemed to be pivotal in promoting student success. By showing empathy, one of the participants, by the name of Robert stated how his professor showed that she identified with his experiences. This enabled the professor to cultivate a trusting and a supportive bond with Robert, which transcended the formal role of a professor merely engaging in teaching and research. Robert's professor demonstrated that she cared about not only Robert's academic success, but also his psychosocial growth and development. Furthermore, Robert understood that he had someone on campus to turn to for guidance and nurturing. (Palmer & Young, 2010, p. 474)

Furthermore, Black males that attended an HBCU were more prepared to face a society of racism when they graduated. According to Palmer and Young (2010), for the participants in their study, perspectives on race and inequality became more apparent after graduation from the HBCU and pursuing graduate studies at a PWI. Palmer and Young (2010) also mentioned that, through their reflections, the participants revealed the ways in which their experiences with and lessons about racism at their HBCUs prepared them to deal with discriminatory systems later in life. In fact, according to (McMickens, 2011) research showed that HBCUs were uniquely equipped to help students understand the effects of race and inequality in the United States, due to their history of inequitable treatment within the U.S. higher education system. Although HBCUs took on the

responsibility of educating their students on racism, the burden should not solely fall on them to educate college students about race and inequality in this country.

Campus Organizations

Besides attending HBCUs, Black men joining campus organizations, such as the AAMI and fraternities, enabled them to achieve. The commonality of ethnicity and culture provided a sense of support and a bond. Harper (2007) stated in his study that a significant amount of African-American students that attended a PWI perceived their instructors as racist and were disappointed with how they were treated in class (p. 99). Harper's (2007) study also included problems expressed by African-American students:

- (a) Negative comments and stereotypes from professors and their non-African American peers about the African American community;
- (b) being forced to validate their intellectual competence to White peers and faculty in the classroom;
- and (c) less-than-appropriate stereotypes about their personal appearance. Without exception, all of the participants felt they had to prove their academic worth more often than did their White peers in the classroom. (p. 97)

However, fraternities and sororities could help combat these problems; Historically Black fraternities and sororities served the function of promoting connectedness and linking Black students with the university, the larger Black community, and the surrounding campus community (McClure, 2006). There was a great deal of positivity that came out of Black males being a part of an on-campus organization with people that could identify with them. Findings from Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) purported that a major reason Black students became involved in student organizations was because they provided them a venue to promote cultural activism on behalf of disenfranchised members, in order to

enhance the academic and social campus environment. These campus organizations helped Black men to develop and to become leaders. Being a part of an organization gave Black men the ability to show their assurance. Having that confidence, their identity solidified and they tended to express their ethnicity and racial identities.

Higher education provides Black college students the opportunity to experiment with their African ethnicity (i.e., course in Black studies or involvement in a Black student organization such as a BGLO). A result of involvement in these organizations enables students to have a feeling of group empowerment and an exploration into their racial identity both collectively and individually. (Brown, 2014, p. 57)

Groups, such as these, were led by an older Black male or female that was a positive role model. “Research has shown early exposure to leadership experiences in BGLOs provide Black students with a solid foundation to succeed socially, academically, and professionally” (Brown, 2014, p. 57). Specifically, leadership development during the student’s collegiate life was found to be the best method to enhance students’ leadership and communication skills (Harper, Byars, & Jelke, 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) asserted that participation in activities, such as student government, being elected to serve in the position of an officer in a sorority or fraternity, or being employed as a residence hall advisor contributed positively to students’ leadership development during their collegiate experience. These experiences were the reasons why Black men should be a part of an on-campus group. Being involved in a campus organization was beneficial because of the healthy social connection. The qualities of these organizations were what Black men needed to become successful.

On the other hand, if there was no support for Black students facing adversity at a PWI, it could cause negative experiences on campus. “There is sufficient evidence to validate the premise that some minority students experience difficulty at White institutions because of deficient academic preparation and personal problems related to identity issues” (Homes, Ebbers, Robinson & Mugenda, 2000, p. 44). This was something common in the transition of Blacks from high school to college. The author in the research showed that being Black at a predominantly White university was very challenging. These students were in a place where they were out of their comfort zone (Harper, 2007, p. 97). The environment was filled with many people who did not understand them, nor seem to care. While dealing with these challenges, Black students often became neglected and did not receive the same support as White students (Harper, 2007, p. 98). This affected Black male college students, because they had the least representation in faculty roles in education. This was an environment that was not only new territory, but an environment where they were unable to be themselves like they could in their own environment (Harper, 2007, p. 99). Psychologically, it put a strain on students, but challenged them emotionally and intellectually. Being at a PWI forced a Black student to undergo added stress. Outside of the systematic oppression that Black males must deal with on campus:

Echoing the findings of earlier Black researchers (Woodson, 2000), Critical White Studies scholars who focus on higher education contend that one of the distinguishing characteristics associated with PWIs has been the presence and practice of White supremacy and racism on campuses (Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2004). They contend that White supremacy is reflected in the curriculum,

traditions, customs and everyday practices of PWIs (Bourke, 2010). Considering that the original mission of many of these institutions was to nurture and develop the White students they enrolled (Wilder, 2014), one legacy of this history of White-focused educational practice is that the needs of Black students are often ignored, dismissed or minimized. Often, the ubiquitous practices of White supremacy and White racial superiority in these “colorblind” higher educational spaces are not acknowledged, which negatively affects the experiences of Black (and other minoritized) students (as cited in Beasley, Chapman-Hilliard, & McClain, 2016, p. 11).

Higher education scholars reported that academic and social engagement were variables that distinguished academically successful Black collegians from their less successful counterparts (Laird et al., 2007). Offering courses, such as African American/Black studies, and courses of this nature encouraged student engagement. Specifically, the Africana/Black Studies curriculum and the environment created in these classrooms was cited as importantly contributing to the academic engagement and social adjustment of Black students at PWIs, often by creating an environment of possibility and empowerment (Carter, 2007). Due to the increased student and academic engagement triggered by African American studies courses, there was a positive impact of Black student achievement in terms of grade point average. Adams (2005) conducted a study that examined the influence of Black Studies enrollment on Black collegians’ academic and social experiences at a southern PWI and found that students endorsed increased academic achievement and greater interest in school after having been enrolled in Black Studies courses. Another study compared Black Studies majors and minors to

counterparts who had not taken Black Studies courses and found that students who had taken multiple courses in ABS reported greater academic persistence and demonstrated higher graduation rates (Adams, 2009). These courses impacted students, because the experience brought social engagement, helping Black students to adjust to being in college, and created a positive college experience. Black Studies courses were identified as safe, intellectual spaces for Black students to learn and engage by expressing themselves without the pressure of racial prejudice (Adams, 2005).

For Black males, being involved on campus at an HBCU provided a sense of belonging. These students explained that student involvement fostered a sense of commitment to the campus and facilitated their time-management skills. Additionally, participants indicated how student involvement helped them become familiar with campus resources. Student involvement on college campuses, by participating in different activities, aided students' abilities to become academically and socially integrated into the culture of the university, which then in turn developed a bond between the university and the student. In Palmer and Young's (2010) research, James, a participant, noted the relationship between student involvement and developing a commitment to the university; Lawrence saw student involvement as fostering relationships with campus constituents. Being involved on campus provided students with access to build a network and to have more resources. It also provided a sense of diversity, because students interacted with people from different backgrounds that had different points of views.

A participant in Palmer and Young's (2010) research stated, "Mostly women are involved not men . . . I definitely need to get Black male involvement in school activities, not even just like SGA [student government association] but like get involved with your

major” (p. 472). Another participant stated that Black men were not engaged on campus, because the university did not understand the interest of Black men. Campus activities were a great way for Black males to receive the support that they needed on a college campus, in that, they could gain positive relationships and mentorship.

Mentorship

Mentorship is important to the development of youth. A mentor was someone who acted as a role model in a younger person’s life and was willing to give them guidance and advice to encourage the younger person to be successful. These relationships were enriching, because the younger person benefitted from the mentor’s life experiences, thus making the development process easier and faster. According to Weinrath et al. (2016), “the term mentor has traditionally been used to describe a process by which an older person volunteers to engage in a relationship with a younger person that serves to assist in his or her personal development” (p. 295). The mentor worked with the younger person in teaching him/her life skills, social skills, and values. Without mentorship, there was little guidance for youth to receive in the next generation.

According to Rhodes and Dubois (2008), “One of the earlier organized forms of mentorship started with the reform-oriented initiatives in the juvenile court system more than a century ago” (p. 254). Programs like this led to the development of programs, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America to focus on mentor relationships of youth from at-risk areas as a preventative method. The basis of these programs were to reach at-risk youth who did not come from a proper home family foundation, which made effective mentorship challenging to obtain. Rhodes and Dubois (2008) identified that “an estimated three million youth are in formal one-to-one mentoring relationships in the

United States, and funding and growth imperatives continue to fuel program expansion” (p. 254).

Mentorship programs, or one-on-one type of mentoring, became a popular method in reaching youth. “Federal funding for mentoring programs has increased substantially as well, with annual congressional appropriations of \$100 million since 2004” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008, p. 254). Although, programs developed for mentoring youth were established, the best mentoring came from the youth’s parents and family members. They could spend quality time, effort, and resources providing a more intimate relationship. This was very important, because parents and other close family members were key influencers in the life of a young person; meaning, they could make a positive impact or negative impact, depending on their morals. Mentorship produced positive results when the mentor was involved in the mentee’s life over a significant period. The essential characteristic of a good mentor was supportive, especially toward teens and young adults. Making these young people feel significant gave them a boost in confidence. It produced drive that willed them to succeed and impacted their decision-making, which made them better as a person, thus enabling them to live their lives to the fullest potential. In Rhodes and Dubois’ (2008) study, the researchers identified how DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found that those who reported having a mentoring relationship during adolescence exhibited significantly better outcomes within the domains of education and work (high-school completion, college attendance, employment), mental health (self-esteem, life satisfaction), problem behavior (gang membership, fighting, risk taking), and health (exercise, birth control use). In a successful mentorship, over a period of time the mentee developed a special bond with the mentor. Hence, having special bonds, such as these,

tended to contribute to positive outcomes, because the mentee wanted to make their mentor proud. Rhodes and Dubois (2008) cited that close and enduring ties appeared to be fostered when mentors adopted a flexible, youth-centered style in which the young person's interests and preferences were emphasized, rather than when they focused predominantly on their own agendas or expectations for the relationship. In order to adequately grab the interest of a young person, there had to be a concentrated interest in understanding their interests. Moreover, understanding this enabled the mentor to effectively reach the youth where they were.

Although mentorship could be positive, there could be negative effects that could develop. If the mentor was not a good influence, this could lead the mentee to make bad decisions, because they were being led in the wrong direction. "Nevertheless, when all relationships are combined, as in most of the analyses described above, notably more positive outcomes for some youth may be masked by neutral and even negative outcomes for youth involved in less effective mentoring relationship" (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008, p. 255). This was not originally how mentorship was designed, nor was this the purpose of mentorship. A mentorship relationship could be naturally formed. Youth would automatically develop a relationship with someone older, like a teacher, coach, and even a family member. Therefore, it was important to understand how important it was for adults to set good examples. Poor guidance and support could result in poor representation of mentorship. This could damage a young person tremendously.

Another downside to mentorship was when the mentor was not invested in the relationship with the mentee. Eby, Butts, Durley, and Ragins (2010) reported, "The most common bad experiences reported by protégés is mentor-protégé mismatches (e.g.,

differences in values, personalities, work styles)” (p. 82). If the two did not see eye-to-eye, or if there was a personality mismatch, then this could be a problem. Pursuing a relationship with this type of chemistry would be an automatic failure if the mentor did not adjust his or her methods. When being a mentor, it was imperative to be willing to be flexible. Doing this showed the mentee that the mentor cared and genuinely was invested in seeing the mentee succeed. However, neglect could also occur if the mentor was perceived as not interested in helping the protégé develop (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2008).

Furthermore, studies suggested that young Black men were in dire need of positive mentorship. Howard (2013) stated that data from U.S. Department of Commerce (2007) revealed the manner in which Black males had chronically high unemployment, were over incarcerated, had disparate health conditions, and ultimately lower life expectations than any of the largest racial/ethnic and gender groups in the United States (p. 54). Viewing data such as this shows the complexity of the life of a Black male in America. It also shows the potential for more research to be done in this area. These challenges were prevalent for quite some time with little change. Furthermore, Howard (2013) referenced that Black males were frequently labeled as problems, prone to violence, invoking fear in many, deemed as undesirable in certain circles, and the view of Black males were diverse and extreme on many levels in society. A culture that pushed this propaganda affected the psyche of Black males. On the other hand, the very thing that Black males were criticized for, was the very thing that was glorified by society through media. Howard (2008) elaborated, Black males were

loathed in various environments, applauded in others, perhaps no other group of people are emulated yet despised simultaneously to the extent that Black men are today. However, the paradoxical perception of Black males within the larger society remains puzzling. There are ongoing elements of mainstream and popular culture that have been developed, sustained, and made into multi-billion dollar industries based on the talents, creative genius, intellect, and identities of Black males. Thus, in many ways, this love-hate affair represents the illogicality of how many Black males are viewed within mainstream society. (p. 55)

Ladson-Billings (1995) discussed “the love-hate relationship with Black males” (p. 8). She asserted, we see African American males as “problems” that our society must find ways to eradicate (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 8). We regularly determine them to be the root cause of most problems in school and society. We seem to hate their dress, their language and their effect. We hate that they challenge authority and command so much social power. While the society apparently loves them in narrow niches and specific slots — music, basketball, football, track — we seem less comfortable with them in places like the national Honor Society, the debate team, or the computer club. (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 9)

Howard (2008) and Landson-Billingsly (1995) demonstrated the ways that African-American men were categorized in society. Both authors showed how African-American men in their research were limited in society, and this showed a need for mentorship.

Mentorship initiation and intentions were other aspects of mentoring that should be explored. “Among the many barriers to diversified mentoring, obstacles related to

mentorship initiation are especially important, as every mentoring relationship evolves through the phases of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition” (Hu, Thomas & Lance, 2008, p. 728). Mentorship initiation was one of the important phases in mentorship, because it created the foundation for the later phases, because the initial interaction determined if there was a connection between the two, which would dictate duration, quality, and benefits of the mentorship (Hu et al., 2008, p. 728). Thus, exploring the factors of mentorship initiation could identify what caused initiation to be successful or a failure. According to Hu, Thomas, and Lance (2008) the degree to which one person in an informal mentorship relationship perceived the other member as being proactive may affect the development of the informal mentorship. Perception of proactivity determined if the mentorship was real or not. Also Hu et al. (2008) suggested, “both professional abilities and personality characteristics associated with proactivity in interpersonal interactions are the most influential factors in selection decisions and the amount of mentoring that protégés receive” (p. 728). Therefore, proactivity was a big factor in initiating mentorship. Another factor in mentorship initiation was individual characteristic. Interestingly, in the initiation process, individual characteristic was a big identifier of intent for mentorship. Hu et al. (2008) stated, “The similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) suggests that demographic similarity in race, sex, or age generates a positive impression and a mutual attraction, which leads to positive interactions” (p. 729). On the other hand, cultural difference could develop negative impressions and discomfort, which made it challenging for cross-racial mentorship. Due to discomfort, most desired to be in same-race mentor relationships (Turban, Dougherty,

& Lee, 2002). Stereotypes contributed to the difficulty of cross-race mentorship. Hu et al. (2008) discovered,

Social stereotypes categorize individuals into in-groups and out-groups so that individuals can develop perceptions of out-group members and respond to out-group members according to these stereotypes (Tajfel & Forgas, 2000).

Stereotypes can distort the perceptions that people have regarding the competence or the performance of stigmatized social groups' members (Ilgen & Youtz, 1986).

For example, in-group members may perceive highly proactive individuals as ambitious, whereas out-group members may perceive them as hostile. When other social groups negatively interpret the proactivity of the potential mentors or protégés, the chances for a self-initiated mentoring relationship consisting of cross-race, rather than same-race, mentoring dyads lessen. (as cited in Hu et al., 2008, p. 731)

Although cross-racial mentorship was seen by some as uncomfortable and non-compatible, this type of diversity could bring about successful mentorship. Hu et al., (2008) stated that potential mentors from other social groups may have more power or resources and potential protégés from other social groups to have higher potential or abilities geared toward success" (p. 732). Not every mentor was a perfect match for a mentee; however, mentorship was important for Black males and their mentors that were perfect matches for mentees.

According to Sanchez, Hurd, Neblitt, and Vaclavek (2017), Black boys were targeted for mentoring intervention programs that suited their needs, due to the fact that their needs were unique (p. 1). Black boys' transition into adulthood was one of

uncertainty, especially for those that came from a poverty stricken background, while having to navigate cultural norms in school that were different from their neighborhood and home (Sanchez, Hurd, Neblitt, & Vaclavek, 2017). Also, Black males had to develop and adapt to multiple cultural contexts in their daily life, which was challenging, especially transitioning from a child to an adult. Therefore, intervention should attend to Black males' strengths as a method to build their confidence and gain trust (Sanchez et al., 2017). According to Spencer and Tinsley (2008), identity development was key to adaptive coping; thus, developing a healthy identity as a Black male youth in a society that often problematized Black boys and men was a challenging and critical task that mentors could support. Moreover, mentorship intervention was developed to properly address the unique risk factors placed on Black boys.

Mentorship was an important part of development from an adolescent to an adult. All youth needed mentors and Black boys were in dire need of mentors that could help lead and guide them, due to the challenges they faced from the failures of key institutions (Rowley et al., 2014). Sanchez et al. (2008) cited research stating that Black children were 18 times more likely than White children to be sentenced as adults (p. 3). Also, Black boys, in particular, were dominated by a problem or deficit perspective of the narrative, which was "that Black boys are in peril, that mere survival should be their goal, and that their very futures are uncertain" (Rowley et al., 2014, p. 303).

Summary

Understanding the challenges that Black males faced helps when attempting to develop a resolution. Although there were so many researchers that had studies identifying the problems with Black males, there were many resources that addressed

these problems. At the time of this writing, in the 21st century, there were different programs on college campuses that could help provide Black men with a good educational experience. Joining on-campus groups and mentorship programs provided a support system that was needed to help Black males become successful. Not only did these programs and groups provide support, but also provided positive relationships and a sense of belonging.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the effectiveness of mentorship of African-American young men who attended a post-secondary institution and participated in the AAMI during the fall 2017 semester. At this phase in life, Black males were participating in other activities instead of focusing on college. The activities they participated in were sometimes illegal and diminished the image of the Black male, solidifying the negative connotation placed on them (Fox & Swatt, 2008, p. 3). With this being the case, this project showed the experiences of Black males who were supported, encouraged, and enriched through mentorship programs, such as the AAMI. It also compared the experiences of Black males who attended a post-secondary institution who did not participate in the AAMI program to explore involvement in other types of campus programs. This study explored the comparisons and differences of the students in the AAMI program, students who did not participate in a campus organization, and other programs on campus. The research included a questionnaire to gain insight on what the participants in the program thought about their experiences in AAMI, while attending a post-secondary institution. In addition, the researcher followed up with conducting interviews with the Coordinator of the AAMI and four Black male students on campus who did not participate in the AAMI. Focusing on the two separate groups provided a comparison to show if the AAMI differentiated itself in regards to effectiveness of mentorship from other organizations and to examine the provided results.

The research aimed to show how helping Black males to understand the importance of college through a mentorship program would help them to have a better

post-secondary experience and become more positive role models. If society was educated on how to support Black males and having a willingness to understand their challenges, society could improve.

The highest crime rates come from the poorest parts of the city. There were many contributing factors as to why this was the case. Black male experience was poor due to lack of positive male figures in their lives and lack of college degree, which made them ineligible to earn a majority of the decent paying jobs (Noguera, 2003 p. 434). Also, Black males faced the unfortunate reality of being the only group in the United States experiencing a decline in life expectancy (Noguera, 2003, p. 432). However, having mentors in the lives of Black males helped them to overcome challenges (Richardson, 2012, p. 1). Due to the lack of mentors, Black males had been leaders in committing violent crimes and their incarceration rates were at the top of the charts (Noguera, 2003, p. 1). “In the labor market, they are the least likely to be hired and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed” (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, p. 1). Based on Richardson’s (2012) research, the researcher believed that mentorship was imperative to providing a positive college experience for the Black male student. By creating a supportive environment for Black male college students, this would produce more positive role models for younger Black male college students in the future.

AAMI Structure

The AAMI was a mentoring program that was overseen by an AAMI Coordinator who was also the head mentor. To ensure that the program was effective for members, the AAMI Coordinator headed the meeting sessions, recruited volunteers within the college to be mentors, recruited new members, registered the organization for

conferences, and planned trips for the organization. Black male faculty and staff from within the college were volunteer mentors. More experienced students served as a support and a type of mentor to new students.

Questionnaire

Once the researcher received the appropriate approval from Lindenwood University's Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A), as well as the Urban Community Colleges' Human Research department and the Coordinator of the AAMI, surveys went out to 24 participants in the AAMI at an urban community college. This questionnaire consisted of questions that could illustrate the experiences of these Black males who participated in this program, showing the effects of mentorship. The survey was developed by the researcher and approved by both institutions' research departments. An informed consent form was completed prior to participation of the study. The researcher expected to have 19 to 24 participants in this study as a feasible sample size to illustrate the effectiveness of mentorship of Black Males. The researcher began conducting the study once the consent forms were returned. Participants of the study were selected based on their membership in the African-American Initiative program, which resulted in 19 subjects that participated in the study. Surveys for the study were sent to the Coordinator of the African American Initiative program via email, then emailed to the members. Each member then emailed their completed survey back to the AAMI Coordinator. The Coordinator then emailed the completed surveys to the researcher. Once the questionnaires were received, the researcher completed a qualitative analysis, evaluating and coding all the data from the participants of the study.

Interviews

The researcher included interviews in the data collection as well. Interviews provided a more in-depth analysis of the participants' beliefs and perceptions on their experiences. They provided detailed responses to questions for the researcher to understand their narrative. Participants that were interviewed were four Black males who did not participate in the AAMI, but were students at the post-secondary institution. The Coordinator of the AAMI program was also interviewed. Interview questions (Appendix B) were different for each type of participant to provide a breadth of information from different angles, to make findings as thorough as possible and allow for triangulation of data results. One set of interview questions were for the students who were not in the AAMI, and the other set of interview questions (Appendix C) were for the AAMI Coordinator. The purpose of interviewing the Coordinator was to gain his insight on the program. Having the Coordinator's analysis could show if mentorship through a program, such as this, was effective. It could also determine if programs like this could be a possible solution and a way to improve the overall college experience for Black males attending a post-secondary institution. Interviewing non-participants provided a comparison of AAMI members to non-AAMI members, which enabled the researcher to establish a framework. Non-AAMI members provided insight on how their post-secondary experience was, without having a mentor who was not an AAMI affiliate to help guide them in their college careers. These participants gave their narratives on their experiences, discussing their challenges and successes. Participants for the interviews were recruited, based on their relationship with members of AAMI. These participants were also Black males, as well; however, not members of AAMI.

Methodology

Once all questionnaires were submitted to the AAMI Coordinator, the researcher requested the data; and after data was sent to the researcher, it was evaluated for anonymity and coded so the researcher could analyze all data. The Coordinator did not exclude any data; moreover, the student names were not included to protect their identity. Next, interviews were hand written and recorded with the Coordinator of AAMI and non-members of AAMI.

After interviews and surveys were complete, the results from both were coded to analyze the findings. The researcher consulted with the Coordinator of the AAMI about the findings to ensure that the data were as accurate as possible. The researcher then coded the data to accurately display results.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. How can programs such as the African-American Male Initiative produce more Black males that value education?

Research Question 2: How can being in an African-American Male Initiative help Black males to be leaders and positive role models for younger Black Males?

Research Question 3: How are African-American males supported in an African-American Male Initiative compared to other campus organizations?

Research Question 4: How does the African-American Male Initiative help Black males overcome challenges?

Limitations

Having one program held at two campuses made it a challenge to connect with members of the program. These campuses were in two separate parts of the metropolitan

area, one in the city limits and the other in the county suburbs. Taking into consideration commuting between the two, contributed to the reasoning behind the decision to aim for 19 to 24 participants in the study. While having a greater number of participants was ideal, the situation of splitting between two campuses created a limit. In addition, the two campuses caused an effect on the results, because the members in the study had different mentors. Although the program is one, the experiences of the participants were different, due the difference in mentors, participants, and campuses.

In addition to having more than one location, the AAMI program was a new program that was in its infancy stage. There were a limited number of campuses in the region that then-currently had an African-American Initiative program or similar. For that reason, this limitation caused a challenge for comparing programs such as this, which caused the researcher to focus on comparing this program to other programs that did not specialize in mentoring of African-American male college students.

Furthermore, the responses to the survey questions and interviews may have been impacted due to a limited amount of data. The collected data that produced the results were defined more clearly in the results section of the dissertation. Participants being in different grade levels posed another challenge, because some students just started the program while some just graduated from the program. Due to these differences, some surveys reflected very little experience, while others reflected sufficient experience in the program.

Finally, the AAMI program made slight changes from when it began in 2012. During the piloted program at the study college, the Coordinator had a surplus of funding, which enabled the ability to provide a much richer experience. Members of the program

were able to go on college visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, conferences, panels, and bring renowned African-American dignitaries to campus. Students who started later in the program did not get the opportunity to experience as much as those who were involved when the program piloted. However, each survey and interview was completed to the fullest capacity possible, giving each participant's account of the program and his views on the effectiveness of its operation. Not only was grade level a factor in experience, but transfer students caused limitations, due to the fact that they were new to the program and not necessarily a first-year student in college. These transfer students had limited insight as well, similar to first-year students in the program.

The Research Site and Participants

The researcher interviewed the Coordinator of the AAMI, students in the program and not in the program, and conducted a questionnaire for members of AAMI. The program at the study college was located in the Midwest. This program was a state government funded program at an accredited college by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association Colleges and MODESE. Students who were members of this program were enrolled in the college with various majors, as well as the students who were not participants in AAMI. In order to be deemed eligible for the program, the student had to be an African-American male student who was then-currently attending classes on either of the two campuses or the Education Center. They must be then-currently enrolled in at least six credit hours in the fall and spring semesters or three credit hours in the summer semester, and they must have earned less than 25 credit hours of college coursework. Students who were not in the AAMI program were eligible for

participation based on being enrolled in at least six credit hours and involved in a different on-campus group. The researcher reached out to the Coordinator of the AAMI and proposed the research idea and purpose. The Coordinator accepted the proposal upon IRB approval. Once the researcher gained approval from the research college, the researcher had a meeting with the AAMI Coordinator to present the research study in depth. At this meeting, the researcher gave the Coordinator Consent forms for willing participants to fill out and sign.

Students were able to complete questionnaire on any computer, at home, or on campus. Once students completed the questionnaire, results were submitted to the researcher to analyze data. Coding the data gave the researcher insight on how the AAMI program influenced its participants through mentorship.

Summary

AAMI was piloted at a post-secondary institution in the fall of 2012. The researcher used this piloted program to investigate the effectiveness of mentorship of African-American males, feedback from participants through questionnaires and interviews, and feedback from the Coordinator of AAMI to investigate if there is any benefit for Black males participating in such a program. A case study using qualitative data was used to gain feedback. This type of method allowed the pilot to gain insight on the experiences of Black males participating in this type of program. Chapter Four explains the results obtained from this qualitative case study.

Chapter Four: Results

The intent of this project was to show the possible influence of mentorship of Black males through the African American Male Initiative program. The study also compared the experiences of Black males who attended a post-secondary institution that did not participate in a African-American Male Initiative program, to explore the possible influence of other types of campus programs. Therefore, this study explored program comparisons, showing possible influence on Black males. The research also included a survey to gain participants' insights on the program and their experiences in the AAMI. Lastly, the researcher followed up with conducting interviews with the AAMI Coordinator and four Black male students on campus at a post-secondary institution who did not participate in the AAMI, but who did participate in other programs on campus. Focusing on the two separate groups provided a comparison to show whether the AAMI differentiated itself from other organizations and whether it provided different results.

Overview

Once all questionnaires were received, all information that could identify participants was scrubbed so the researcher could analyze the data while protecting participants' privacy. The researcher also conducted interviews asking the non-members and the AAMI Coordinator a series of questions geared towards the researcher's research questions. The researcher recorded the interviews and collected data from the interviews by taking notes on feedback, based on interview questions.

Results and Analysis of Qualitative Data

The results of this study were derived by the qualitative data collected on the experiences of the Black males. The study's qualitative data investigated the perspectives

of Black males that participated in an African-American Male Initiative, Black males that were not in the AAMI, and the Black male leader who was the Coordinator of AAMI on education, on campus experiences, societal challenges, and organizational mentorship. Data for this research were collected, analyzed, and coded. All the participants were divided into three different categories, which were participants in the AAMI program, non-AAMI members, and Coordinator to provide data from multiple different angles. The participants' perspectives were analyzed using questionnaires and interviews. All participants completed questionnaires and five participants were interviewed during the fall 2017 semester. Questionnaires and interviews were geared to gauge the study participants' perspectives on being a Black male at a post-secondary institution. It also showed the Black males' perspectives on those who participated in a mentorship program, such as AAMI, and the impact of its mentorship, along with the perspective of the mentor himself. All the questions were specific to the participant's background and perspective. Students who did not participate in AAMI had a questionnaire directed towards their experiences on campus. Questions asked about their challenges they faced as Black men, what on campus programs they were involved in, and their relationships with administration and faculty. After gathering all data, the researcher organized the questionnaire and interviews, then coded the responses according to evolving conceptual categories.

Results of Questionnaire - Students in AAMI Program

Participants that completed the questionnaire (Appendix A) joined the program while enrolled in the post-secondary institution with the goal in mind to graduate, then transferred to a four-year university or a four-year HBCU.

Table 1

Questionnaire-Students in Program

Survey Question	Answer Choice #1	Answer Choice #2	Answer Choice #3	Answer Choice #4
Desire for higher education?	Yes-21.4%	No-78.5%		
Sufficient Support?	Yes-50%	No-50%		
Impacted by AAMI?	Yes-100%	No-0%		
Skills gained after being in AAMI?	Yes-100%	No-0%		
Relationship with faculty and admin	Yes-14.2%	No-85.7%		
Feels challenges are greater than other groups?	Yes-85.7%	No-14.2%		
Other campus involvement?	Yes-92.8%	No- 7.1%		
Decided major?	Yes-42%	No-57.1%		
Educational goals?	Associates-21.4%	BA-57.1%	MA-7.1%	Undecided-14.2%
Career goals?	Yes-64.2%	No-0%	Undecided-35.7%	
Faced Discrimination on campus?	Yes-57.1%	No-21.4%	other-21.4%	
AAMI helped with training on discrimination?	Yes-92.8%	No-0%	Other-7.1%	
AAMI educational influence?	Yes-92.8% %	No-0%	Other-7.1%	
Perspective on Black male leadership.	It's Important-92.8%	It's not important-0%	Other-7/1%	
Ideal program for Black males compared to others?	excellent-57.1%	Needs Improvement-7.1%	No-0%	Other-35.7%

While enrolled, these Black males sought a program such as this for mentorship, as guidance throughout their duration in the institution to maximize their experiences as much as possible. There were 14 participants who completed the questionnaire. The comprehensive anecdotal evidence was provided by these Black males that participated in the AAMI. Information from the *Questionnaire - Students in Program* is summarized in Table 1.

The majority of African-American Male Institute member participants expressed that prior to becoming a member in the program they had no interest in pursuing a post-secondary degree. Based off the data from the study, 78.5% of the members did not desire to attain a college degree and 21.4% did desire to do so. Therefore, many members did not want to attend college prior to enrolling in the Urban Community College and becoming a member of AAMI. A few participants reflected on the external factors, which caused them to decide to go to college after not having a desire to do so. The participants indicated that they had outside influence, mainly from their situation or seeing someone else succeed who had their education. After enrollment, 92.8% of the participants expressed that AAMI had been an influence for them in their education. As of the time of this writing, a little over half of the members decided to pursue a bachelor's degree, while 7.1% decided to pursue a master's degree. The interest in pursuing a higher degree showed the impact of the influence that AAMI has on its members. The majority of the participants showing no interest in education, to more than half of the participants desiring to obtain a higher degree, could be a reflection of the AAMI program. Prior to becoming a member of AAMI, only 21.4% of the members had a desire to pursue a post-secondary degree. After becoming a member of AAMI 57.1% of the students had decided

to transfer to a four-year university to pursue a Bachelors and 7.1% decided to pursue a Masters. Although some members had not declared a major, some did. Some decided to major in journalism, engineering, computer science, communications, and business.

Each participant strongly expressed that the AAMI program impacted him in a positive way. There was not a participant that expressed a view that was contrary to the other members. Participant A stated, 'I want to become an engineer which means I need at least a bachelor's degree. I would like to work for Boeing or for a company in Silicon Valley.' Participant B stated,

I want to get my Associates then go to a four-year college and create my own blog. I want to do something where I am happy and can be an example to other people. I have learned etiquette, time management and a few other things that we go over during our real talk sessions.

The program provided a place of support and encouragement with the understanding of the inequality in support for Black males on campus. Half the participants stated that they did not feel that they were supported on campus by faculty and administration outside of the AAMI program. Members that participated in this study varied from first semester students to students in their last semester. When asked about their relationships with faculty, only 14.2% stated that they did have a relationship with faculty. To add, 57.1% stated that they faced discrimination on campus, while 21.4% did not, and 21.4% did not choose to select either. Considering this, a majority of the participants said that AAMI helped them to face discrimination through the training that they provided. Participant A stated, 'They informed us about racism in the country and how to overcome and maneuver.' Members spoke of the training on discrimination to be coherent with the

challenges they faced on campus. Eighty-five percent of the participants expressed that they believed their challenges were greater than other groups on campus. With these challenges, the AAMI program helped its members to overcome challenges they had to face as being Black males in society.

Responses that the participants gave in the questionnaire eluded to mental and behavioral preparation. One participant stated, 'They help me keep my mind right.' Another participant stated, 'They help me prepare for what I have to face in the future.' One particular participant decided to go further in depth by stating, 'They show you that you're not alone and that if you fight through the challenges you will be able to help those that are coming up behind you so that they don't have to go through the same thing.' The most frequent response to AAMI help preparing its members in dealing with challenges was being able to deal with different people and facing racism/discrimination the best possible way. Discrimination and racism were challenges that were consistent amongst AAMI members and were expressed as the areas that they needed the most help in. Other ways that AAMI was an influence on Black males in the program was in skills that they learned. Every member in the program stated that they all in gained skills that they did not have before, because of the mentorship in the program. These young Black men learned the importance of having an equitable skill set to compete with other groups in the job market. Some of the skills that these young men mentioned they gained were communication skills, networking, conflict resolution, study skills, interviewing techniques, time management, and proper etiquette. As stated earlier, AAMI influence even translated into impacting the participants' career goals and perspective on leadership. More than half the members, roughly 65%, had already decided what career

path that they wanted to take. Most members decided on an entrepreneurship career path. Development of career goals and planning for a successful career were a part of the strategic plan implemented by AAMI to provide motivational support for its members.

One of the recurring themes from the questionnaire was challenges. Participants expressed how they dealt with challenges they had on campus as a Black male, if they had any. Discrimination was a prominent challenge that the participants faced. One student responded to the questionnaire stating, 'I had an instructor who would never speak to me in class regardless of the situation, but would choose to speak with everyone else. She looks uncomfortable around me.' Another student stated, 'I have before and there was nothing I could do about it so, I just try to avoid getting into any situation that involves the police.'

Results of Personal Interviews

The researcher administered interviews with five participants: four that were not participants of the African-American Initiative program and one that was the Coordinator of the AAMI. Interviews for the study took place within the time allotted to conduct the study on the AAMI program. Interviews took place in person, via phone, and via email. While analyzing the interview responses, there were five major themes that appeared in the results for the personal interviews. Results for the non-participants of AAMI and for the AAMI Coordinator were transcribed separately.

Results of Interview for Non-Participants of AAMI

The interviews for *Non-Participants of AAMI* were randomly selected, but met the participant requirement for the study, Black male participants were between the ages of 18 and 35. These students attended the same post-secondary institution where AAMI was

held. This was done to present a comparison between AAMI participants and non-participants to see the impact of AAMI. Interviews took place in person, via phone, and via email. Responses to interview questions in their entirety are available in Appendix B with full transcriptions. Although interviewees were not participants in AAMI, they were familiar with the program, but just decided not to participate. After the four interviews were conducted, the researcher analyzed the qualitative data and the results provided four themes: (1) Value of Education, (2) Support, (3) Challenges, and (4) Experience. The issues that created the themes were situational based and focused on preparation and persistence.

Value of Education

Most of the interview responses were similar, as it related to their views on education. One of the participants said that he believed that education was the key to success. Others said that they decided to pursue a post-secondary degree, due to outside influence, whether it was because they wanted to get a better job, their parents told them to go, or they were influenced by friends. One subject stated in the interview:

Honestly, I didn't choose to pursue education after high school. During the '08 STLCC registration, couple of former friends of mine signed me up to attend. I've grown since then, have noticed I have a passion for learning. Therefore, I continue attending due to the fact of my general interest of learning.

Although there was an outside influence to push these research participants towards post-secondary education, they each declared a major. Each member decided what career to pursue and what educational goals they wanted to achieve. However, members in AAMI expressed that they did not have interest in receiving a post-graduate degree before

joining AAMI. The AAMI participants alluded to the fact that AAMI was an influence on their education. On the other hand, two of the interviewees stated that the campus program that they were in influenced their educational goals and perspectives. All four interviewees stated that campuses everywhere needed programs, such as AAMI. One of the interviewees stated, 'I do think that colleges need programs that can help people whom have been marginalized.' It is important to note that this interviewee was not part of AAMI. It was unknown as to why he elected not to be a part of the program, but decided to join another program. Another response from a subject of the research stated,

Albeit I am not in the stated program — I do believe with great enthusiasm, that this program is very well needed in post-secondary institutions. I feel that we all need someone that is able to provide us with guidance on our academic journey.

This interviewee was another participant that elected to be in a different on-campus program. The research participant was a part of four on-campus organizations, the Student Government, African Pride Club, Campus Improvement Committee, and TRIO SSS, which were demanding. He stated that his value for education came from his friends, which led him to join various organizations on campus. Interview participants expressed how being involved on their campus helped change their perspectives on education.

Support

In the conducted interviews, participants expressed their perspectives on how well they were supported on campus, or if they were supported on campus. Three of the interviewees expressed that they had good relationships with the faculty and administration on campus. One of the interviewees stated, 'I don't have a relationship

with administration and my contact with faculty is minimal.’ The other two interviewees just stated their relationships with faculty and administration was ‘good.’ No further explanation was given to supplement why they had good relationships with administration and faculty, neither did they state how much contact or access they had to both. Another interviewee stated, ‘My relationship with administration and faculty is progressive. I speak with majority of the admin and faculty on a daily basis. I have a really good rapport with the admin and faculty.’ This interviewee showed his effort in developing a good rapport with the faculty and administration on his campus. He expressed how having the relationships with the key people to helping him in his education was important to him.

Challenges

Discussing the many challenges that the interviewees faced was the most passionate part of the interviews. The participants expressed their hatred of the systematic oppression and inequalities that they faced. This area of the interview provided insight into the psychology of young Black males pursuing their degrees at a post-secondary institution to better their lives. One student stated that his challenge was, ‘Being a Black man in a White man’s world.’ The interviewee expressed his anger towards the system and the challenges he faced. He went further to say that racism was the biggest problem and it was what affected his college experience and in his life in general. Another student stated, ‘I think people may look at me like I am not going to graduate.’ Another student stated, ‘If any, the challenges I believe I face as a black male at this college are budget cuts. That inevitably hinders programs that benefits my college experience and myself.’

Budget cuts for programs was another area one of the interviewees felt was a challenge for Black males seeking their post-secondary degree, like himself. The interviewee emphasized that this was an area in which Black males were marginalized. Budget cuts were an important part of funding programs that were beneficial to the enrichment of Black males on campus. The interviewee expressed how important these programs were and the significance of having the funding to keep these programs available. Programs, such as AAMI provided a better support because they understood the needs of Black males and knowing how to meet them. One interviewee stated,

Albeit I am not in the stated program — I do believe with great enthusiasm, that this program is very well needed in post-secondary institutions. I feel that we all need someone that is able to provide us with guidance on our academic journey.

A statement from the interviewee showed how other Black males that were not a part of AAMI viewed the program and the expressed need for it. The interviewees showed strong feelings toward the challenges that they faced on campus and in society, unlike the members in AAMI who participated in the questionnaire. The same student added, ‘The challenges I face in society are knowing that I am not completely safe while I commute from destination to destination. Whether it be because of the threat of strangers or the threat of the police.’ Receiving a statement, such as this added to the discontentment of the Black males that participated in the study that were not members of AAMI. This study group showed the difference in how Black males were supported when it came to their challenges with societal issues. It also showed how it affected their college experiences as a Black male to a certain degree. Along with these statements, another student made statements that eluded to the concern for safety.

AAMI members stated that they received training and support when it came to facing discriminatory issues. Another Black male student who participated in the interviews stated, 'A lot of assumptions because of my race,' and 'I try to keep to myself so I'm not looked at as a statistic.' From these statements, the interviewee expressed what he felt about being a Black male on campus. He also stated that he did not undergo training under the guidance of the mentors of the AAMI. He also stated that he did not join AAMI due to his involvement in other activities.

Experience

Half of the interviewees that did not participate in the AAMI participated in other multiple programs on campus. One of the students stated that he was involved in the African Pride Club, along with the Student Government Association. Similar to the first interview participant, the next participant of the study stated that he was also in the Student Government Association on campus. He also was a member of Trio SSS and the Campus Improvement Committee. When interviewing one of the participants about his experience and campus involvement, he stated that he elected not to be involved on campus. When asked why, he stated, 'I don't really have time.' The other participant that elected to be uninvolved on campus never gave a reason why he made that decision, outside of just not wanting to.

A point illustrated in this data, was that the students that were busy, whether it was being involved on campus or having outside responsibilities, had a better college experience than the students who had no campus involvement. Although faced with the same societal challenges, the students who were involved more showed their dislike towards their circumstances, but still showed a sense of optimism and mental strength.

One participant stated, 'I have before and there was nothing I could do about it so, I just try to avoid getting into any situation that involves the police.' Interview participants that were involved in campus organizations showed that they perceived to have an overall good rating on campus experience. One participant stated, 'If any challenges I face as a Black male at this college is budget cuts. That inevitably hinders programs that benefit my college experience and myself. My experience as a Black male here at STLCC has been amazing to say the least.'

Furthermore, while analyzing and transcribing the interviews, the researcher noticed that none of the four interviewees mentioned that their programs helped and trained them on how to handle discrimination. Neither did the subjects add that the programs that they were involved in contributed to providing them with the needed support and resources. Interestingly, each interview participant expressed their knowledge of the AAMI program and that it was needed on campuses throughout the nation.

Results of Interview for AAMI Coordinator

The Coordinator worked as a professor at the same post-secondary institution where AAMI was held. This was done to illustrate the perspective of the AAMI Coordinator to see the effectiveness of AAMI from his vantage point. The interview took place in person between the researcher and the AAMI Coordinator. Responses to interview questions in their entirety are available in Appendix C, with full transcriptions. After the interview was conducted, the researcher analyzed the qualitative data and the results provided five themes (1) Value of Education, (2) Support, (3) Challenges, (4) Impact of AAMI, and (5) Experience. These were the most significant areas that were

brought up in interview responses that were conducted. Some of the themes had overlapping responses. The Coordinator's background was different from the students that participated in the study. He graduated from a prestigious college preparatory school and came from an affluent environment; however, he stated he always wanted to work with students that looked like him. The issues that created the themes were situational based and focused on preparation and persistence.

Value of Education

The Coordinator of AAMI expressed how much he valued education. It was very important to him and something that he took pride in. He had been an avid learner and proponent of education for quite some time. The coordinator stated that he went to a private prestigious high school in the area of the research site. He stated, 'I was born and raised [here] and attended a private school. When I am not working . . . I enjoy reading and playing golf.'

His strong background in education validated its importance. These qualities instilled in him, along with his experience, could be seen as driving factors behind him motivating his participants in AAMI to value education. In the interview, the Coordinator included that he received his BA in History and MA in American and European studies, and was finishing up his Ed.D. Furthermore, he mentioned that his career goals were to continue as a faculty member in higher education and move up to a Dean or Vice President. The Coordinator stated,

For college, I attended [a university] where my Bachelor's degree was in History while my Master's degree from there was in American and European studies. I will be finishing up my dissertation this fall. . . . I have plans on continuing

working in higher education as either a Faculty member or eventually a Dean of Students or Vice President.

Also, the AAMI Coordinator clearly expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for education by discussing how he would have three degrees, persisting to obtain an Ed.D, by the end of 2017. He expressed how he used his educational background and passion to work with students that looked like him. Not only did he value education, he wanted the members in the AAMI program to understand the importance of education, so they could persist and graduate. He later stated,

I have always wanted to work with students that looked like me because I understand the importance of representation. When the opportunity arose to work with such a great program I knew that this would be a great opportunity. I do believe that a program like this will continue to assist in graduation rates of Black men because there is a system set in place to make sure that they will be successful if they work within the confines of the program.

During the interview the AAMI Coordinator expressed his confidence that the members in his program had developed a better understanding of the importance of education. Through the years of the program, the Coordinator implemented his philosophy on education to his members in the program. He discussed how Black males that persisted through his program understood the benefits of education for them and the negatives within education. A holistic approach was utilized to give the AAMI members realistic insight. The Coordinator added,

I do believe that the members of the program have been influenced mentally understanding the benefits of education as well as the negatives too. A degree

does not guarantee a job so we prepare them in every aspect once they are involved with the program.

Evidence of the members showing a growing value for education was how well they performed academically. In the interview, the AAMI Coordinator discussed how students who persisted in the program saw improvement academically, due to the system that was in place to push them to succeed.

Support

Support from the campus community was an area that the AAMI Coordinator said the program was in need of. He clarified it was not that there was a lack of support from within the program, but a lack of support from the outside. In the interview, he expressed the need for support from faculty and administration. He believed that having this support would make the program more successful.

The AAMI Coordinator explained how support from faculty and administration was very important to contributing to the motivating of the members psyche. He eluded to the fact that his members needed to see that the rest of the faculty and administration cared about them and wanted them to succeed. This was one of the largest factors in sustainability of programs such as this, along with funding.

Impact of AAMI Mentorship. As recorded in the results for the questionnaire for members of AAMI, each participant in the study stated that the program's mentorship made a positive impact. In the interview with the AAMI Coordinator, he mentioned that he understood what it took to keep the members engaged in the program. He understood how important engagement was, along with meeting their needs to help each of them to have a successfully fulfilling college experience. The AAMI Coordinator stated, 'We

have always wanted to meet the students where they are and make sure that the programming that was provided meets their needs and not just the needs of the department of education.’

Furthermore, the previous response showed that the AAMI Coordinator understood that the members in AAMI had needs to be met outside of just their academics. Meeting these needs were supplemental in helping the members academically. In the interview he described his focus for the program was to ensure that the tools provided to the members of AAMI helped them in their growth and development. He believed that these things were vital to enriching their college experiences and getting the most out of it. The AAMI Coordinator later stated, ‘For some of the members who truly work with the program, one can see a huge impact on their college experiences because they are given the tools to grow and develop within the collegiate system.’

He also added that AAMI’s retention rates, along with the academic improvement and success, were indicators of measurement of the program’s successful impact on its members. The Coordinator included that the Black male students that were members of his program transfer to a four-year university and graduated.

Challenges

Although the AAMI program had its share of success, the AAMI Coordinator shared that there were challenges that the program faced. These challenges were critical and could be an exceptional help if they were overcome. One challenge they faced was lack of support from administration and faculty. The Coordinator alluded to the fact that the members wanted to feel that they were cared about outside of the program, because

then-presently, they did not feel this way. The interview showed that with the small leadership team, AAMI was effective, but with more support the program could be even more effective on a greater scale. The Coordinator did not delve in to the specifics as to why the program lacked outside support on campus from faculty and administration.

Another challenge that the AAMI Coordinator mentioned was funding. The Coordinator expressed how he enjoyed taking the members on trips out of town to give them more exposure. However, with limited funding, he was only able to take them on so many trips. This was an ongoing challenge that he had to face leading this program. Even though this was a challenge, it did not stop the Coordinator from working with what he had. In the interview, he mentioned that he took the members on various trips to colleges, events, and to the African-American museum. He also brought in various speakers and panels. These different activities were emphasized as beneficial in providing the members with great experiences, information, and engagement.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. How can programs such as the African-American Male Initiative produce more Black males that value education?

According to the Coordinator of AAMI, programs such as this could ‘influence Black males mentally understanding the benefits of education, as well as the negatives too. A degree does not guarantee a job so we prepare them in every aspect once they are involved in the program.; He also stated, ‘AAMI assists in graduation rates of Black men, because there is a system in place to make sure that they will be successful if they work within the confines of the program.’” Every participant of the study that answered the questions on valuing education agreed that AAMI could produce Black males that value

education. Members also stated that AAMI helped them in deciding what they wanted to study in college. One participant stated, ‘My major is Engineering, and the African-American Initiative has helped me by introducing me to people at Missouri S&T’” Another participant stated that his major was computer science and, ‘Yes, they have provided tutoring services, productive learning environment resources to do homework (computers, printers, etc).’

The next participant stated,

My major is economics and yes, they have helped me find scholarships that I need to help pay for some of my supplies. They have also supported me towards my goals and with just being able to have conversations and answer questions that I might have about the events that have taken place in the past few years.

One participant stated, ‘AAMI has helped me with my GPA.’

In helping Black males understand the value of education, AAMI emphasized the importance of education in pursuing a career. Multiple participants stated that they wanted to be entrepreneurs. One participant stated, ‘I would like to own my own business and AAMI is helping me with the business plan.’ Another participant added,

I want to get an internship at an economic consulting firm and work there for 5-6 years to learn the ins and outs of the industry; after that I want to open up my own consulting firm. And yes they have with showing me the expectations and the culture of the professional world.

AAMI showed students that education leads to achieving a successful career. The last participant said, ‘To work in the cyber-security field, informed me about different programs for computer-science, help look for different universities specifically for my

major, etc.’ Lastly, referring back to Table 1, 92.8% of the participants stated that AAMI influenced them to value education. There were only 14.2% that were undecided as it related to their educational goals.

Research Question 2: How can being in an African-American Male Initiative help Black males to be leaders and positive role models for younger Black Males?

AAMI helped its members to understand what leadership was and inspired them to be leaders themselves. Participants in the study expressed the need for more Black male leadership in their communities. One participant stated, ‘We need more leaders that are Black men, who are serious about helping others.’ Another student said, ‘‘I think there should be way more leaders that look like me.’ Participants spoke on how they knew what true leadership was since being in AAMI. One of the participants said, ‘When you’re a leader, you have to lead by example and be responsible for your actions.’ The next participant stated, ‘Leadership isn’t for everyone,’ while another participant stated, ‘A leader helps those around him so that everyone can help fight through the challenges that you are going to face with fighting oppression and supporting Blacks all across America.’ After understanding what leadership means, some participants expressed how they wanted to become leaders in the future. One participant stated, ‘I can see myself being a leader one day.’ The AAMI Coordinator also discussed his desire to be a role model for Black males in college. During the interview, the AAMI Coordinator stated, ‘I have always wanted to work with students that looked like me because I understand the importance of representation. When the opportunity arose to work with such a program I knew that this would be a great opportunity.’ Due to the leadership displayed in the

AAMI program, 92.8% of the members stated that they found Black male leadership important now.

Research Question 3: How are African-American males supported in an African-American Male Initiative compared to other campus organizations?

According to participants in the study, they felt that AAMI was their support system on campus. When asked if the participants had support on campus, one participant stated, 'Yes, but only with the AAMI staff. They are the only ones that value us.' Another participant stated that he only received support from AAMI, while another participant stated, 'Not really, this institution is only here to take the students money and nothing else in my opinion.'

While conducting the study, participants expressed that AAMI also supported them by impacting their life, not just their education. According to the participants, AAMI gave them structure and made them feel comfortable and feel that AAMI mentors cared about them. One participant said, 'They helped me shape my vision, meaning they worked to give me the confidence I need to grow. Another participant stated, 'It prepares me for my classes, as well as provide books, school supplies, and resources to do my homework. They also help me with personal issues that I'm dealing with outside of school.' One student stated, 'It helped me connect with other Black males that were focus on completing school and also had mentors that could help guide through the issue we come in contact with every day.'

Another way that participants of the study stated that they were supported was through training that helped them develop the necessary skills for them to be successful in college and in the future when they start their careers. One participant stated that he

learned the importance of education and what it really means to have it. How networking with other black males to build a solid team foundation that I can use throughout the rest of my life and how to support other black males in our community.’ Another participant added, ‘I have learned etiquette, time management and a few other things that we go over during or real talk sessions,’ while a different participant added he learned ‘how to interview, dress for interview, network, deal with police, and talk to my professor.’

AAMI participants included that they learned interpersonal skills, as well. Some of these skills that the participants stated they learned were how not to be judgmental, how to treat others, how to change their negative attitudes, how to have respect for others who are like them, how to work with others, and how to become open minded. Mentors in AAMI also focused on exposing its members to different experiences and people outside of the institution by taking them on field trips. AAMI participated in different events, such as conferences and symposiums. They also traveled to different cities to visit different educational sites, such as the first African American museum that is located in Washington DC. Every activity done in the program was geared toward supporting Black males to improve their overall academic experiences and motivate them to persist in society. Unlike the AAMI members, non-AAMI members did not show a sense of mental strength and maturity relative to how to handle these situations. One reason was the AAMI members went through mentorship that helped them with conflict resolution and how to carry themselves. They also did not mention how the other programs or relationships with faculty and administration showed support to their needs. One non-AAMI student stated, ‘The challenges I face in society are knowing that I am not completely safe while I commute from destination to destination. Whether it be because

of the threat of strangers or the threat of the police.’ Interestingly, two non-AAMI member participants of the study stated that they had good relationships with faculty and administration, unlike the AAMI members. When asked about their relationship with faculty and administration, they mentioned how they made efforts to develop the relationships, but never mentioned how the other party made equal effort. They never mentioned how services were readily available to them and how the relationships benefited the students like the mentorship through the African American Male Initiative. Also, these participants did not include if the faculty and administration helped them develop necessary skills to be successful when working with people of different backgrounds and professional conduct.

Another way that the Black males in AAMI were supported was through counseling from mentors. The mentors had challenges as well, being a young Black male in America; therefore, they identified with their struggles and desired to show emotional support. Through their mentorship, they developed personal relationships with the members acting as a ‘big brother.’ This was an important aspect of AAMI because it was what connected the members to the mentors. According to Table 1, 92.8% of the AAMI participants stated that AAMI training on discrimination helped them.

Research Question 4: How does the African-American Male Initiative help Black males overcome challenges?

According to the AAMI members that participated in the study, the program mentors prepared their members for the future and what they may face being Black men in their careers. AAMI provided mental preparation for young Black men. When asked if AAMI equipped members for discriminatory challenges, one participant stated, ‘Yes,

because they show you that you're not alone and that if you fight through the challenges you will be able to help those that are coming up behind you so that they don't have to go through the same thing.' The mentors had strong conversations with the members challenging their perceptions and beliefs. Another participant said, 'Yeah, by informing me about racism in this country and how to overcome and maneuver.' AAMI members added that through the program they met different people that had their best interest. Support was one area that multiple AAMI members agreed upon, as it related to helping them handle discrimination. When asked do they feel that they had the support needed, one AAMI participant stated, 'Only within AAMI.' Another student stated, 'Yes, but only with the AAMI staff. They are the only ones who value us.' However, non-AAMI participants had a different perspective. One non-AAMI participant stated, 'I think people look at me like I'm not going to graduate.' Another non-AAMI participant stated that he felt that he was a 'Black man in a White man's world.'

Summary

The research that was conducted in this study was qualitative in nature to conclude the impact of mentorship of Black males in an African American Male Initiative program. There were four main areas that were looked at to help in determining the impact of the program's mentorship of Black males. The areas investigated were:

Research Question 1: How can programs such as the African-American Male Initiative produce more Black males that value education?

Research Question 2: How can being in an African-American Male Initiative help Black males to be leaders and positive role models for younger Black Males?

Research Question 3: How are African-American males supported in an African-American Male Initiative compared to other campus organizations?

Research Question 4: How does the African-American Male Initiative help Black males overcome challenges?

To investigate these four areas, the researcher used a questionnaire and interviews as data gathering measurement tools. The researcher used three different groups of Black males to provide three different perspectives to investigate the effectiveness of the program. After gathering and analyzing the information from the study, the results showed areas of strengths and other areas that needed improvement for the program.

The study showed the perspectives of the members of AAMI on how the mentorship impacted them. Each member shared how the program had been a great help to them and how it shaped their views on education and its importance. They mentioned that the program's mentorship had been a contributing factor in motivating its members to persist and graduate college. It also pushed them to develop their career goals and work towards them. Another important aspect that the response data showed was the development of the member's maturity within the program. Members of AAMI showed an uncanny ability to display relentless mental strength when facing challenging situations of discrimination. They showed how they were aware of the challenges that they, as Black men, faced and very well educated in maneuvering through the systematic oppression. AAMI members stated that this was done by being educated in other areas outside of just academia and being taught needed skills for them to be successful. Some of the members stated how they were taught how to dress and carry themselves professionally. Others mentioned that the members in the program were taught other

skills, such as networking, conflict resolution, and effective communication. Overall the members believed that the mentorship they received through the AAMI program was very beneficial and instrumental to broadening their horizons and shaping their perspectives on education, challenges, and life in a positive way. The qualitative data from the interviews and questionnaire showed that the AAMI members went from not wanting to pursue a post-secondary degree to wanting to graduate and become leaders in their communities. Some of the members expressed that they desire to become entrepreneurs once they graduate. They also mentioned that the AAMI program was also assisting them in their business startup.

Based off the responses from the qualitative data, one of the key elements that had been effective in the mentoring of Black males who participated in AAMI was support. The members mostly credited the on-campus support that they got from the AAMI program instead of faculty and administration. This showed how important support and feeling that someone cared about them mattered to the members. Receiving support helped the members gain the confidence and mindset that they needed to help them academically and desire to achieve more. Although this was a key element that was the driving force of the success of the program, this was one area that was still in need of improvement. The AAMI Coordinator expressed that if there was more support from faculty and administration, the program could be more effective to more Black males. Interestingly, lack of support on campus was one of the main things that discouraged Black males in the study. They felt that the African American Initiative Program was the only group that cared about them on campus and that the educational system was designed to be against them. One student stated, ‘This place is only here to take students

money and nothing else in my opinion.’ Another member stated, ‘I mean this place is not built to help, only focus on their needs.’ These participants made it clear how important support towards Black males in post-secondary institutions was to them.

The researcher also included interviews in the qualitative study to gain comparative insight from other Black males on campus who were not a part of AAMI. These research participants already seemed to value education and motivational support from home. Each of them already knew what they wanted to major in and what career path they wanted to pursue. They all knew what was required for them to reach their goals through education.

One student stated,

Honestly, I didn’t choose to pursue education after high school. During the ’08 STLCC registration, couple of former friends of mine signed me up to attend. I’ve grown since then, have noticed I have a passion for learning. Therefore, I continue attending due to the fact of my general interest of learning.

Lastly, the Coordinator of the African American Male Initiative program participated in the study by being a subject in an interview. This was done to get his insight as an experienced educator and the founder of the program. From the start of the program the Coordinator had seen a drastic improvement from the Black male students who participated and stuck to the program.

He mentioned how students improved academically, based off the support and influence from the mentorship of the African American Male Initiative program. The Coordinator saw how the students developed a sense of pride in their education and desired to become successful, based off their sessions that met their needs outside of

meeting academia requirements set by the department of education. The Coordinator eluded to meeting the students where they were as a big part of his success influencing the Black males in the program. From there he said he was able to meet their needs in other aspects; because, as a Black male himself he understood the challenges that they had to face and knew what it took for them to become successful.

The challenges he faced in his efforts to help Black males on campus was the lack of support that he received from administration and faculty. This made it more of a challenge to effectively mentor the Black males in his program. He mentioned that this contributed to the negative perception that the Black males came to his program with. The Coordinator stated,

More faculty and administrative involvement is necessary to see that programs like these succeed. My leadership team could only do so much, but the help of others works to increase the enrollment as well as mindset that those in the program were not the only ones who want the students be successful.

Another challenge was that the African American Male Initiative Coordinator faced was a limited budget. He maximized the budget trying to utilize the funds the best way possible to benefit the members in his program. Funding came from the state government and not the college. He believed that if the college helped, he felt the program would be even more effective. The enrollment of Black males would increase and the overall experience for Black males that attended that particular college would be more successful, because their mindset would be much better. They would feel and see the support rather than feeling like the educational system was created for them to fail.

In conclusion, conducting the study on AAMI was enlightening relative to the effects of mentorship of Black males at a post-secondary institution. AAMI members provided substantial data showing how being in the program impacted their experience as Black males pursuing their degrees. Members expressed how much they learned being in the program and how much they liked receiving the support from mentors of AAMI. They also expressed there was not another on-campus organization like AAMI and that they showed their members more attention. One member stated, 'I can only speak to AAMI and I think they are just more trustworthy.' Another member added, 'It is more personable than other organizations and the men involved truly care.' According to AAMI members, this organization was more beneficial to Black men than the other organizations. Members stated that the mentors engaged them and had real talk sessions that helped them to focus on their personal development and interpersonal skills. After being in the program, all members stated that they valued education more now as opposed to their perceptions of education before they joined AAMI. When asked about their value of education, one member that participated in the study stated, 'Yes I do. There are many black males at my school now that value education but they just need that helping hand that this program brought to our school.' Now all of the members had educational goals that they wanted to achieve. Half of the members decided to go to a four-year university to earn their Bachelor's degree. Also, members decided on career goals as well. In the study, members stated how AAMI helped them with their career path and provided them more insight. AAMI members stated that mentors of the program assisted with mock interviews, teaching them how to dress for interviews, introducing them to people outside of SLCC, and developing business plans. One of the members

stated, 'I would like to have my own business and AAMI is helping with the business plan.' In considering the analysis of the results of Chapter Four, Chapter Five discusses recommendations for the AAMI program.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Reflection, and Recommendations

Overview

To effectively evaluate the African American Male Initiative program and the effectiveness of its mentorship, the researcher investigated the program through the use of a questionnaire and interviews. While conducting the study and gathering the data the researcher gained an understanding of the perspectives of the African American Male Initiative members, the Coordinator of the program, and Black males who were students on campus, but did not participate in the program. Black males who participated in the AAMI program expressed how the mentorship helped them. They stated how it helped them to value their education, carry themselves in a professional manner, and gain other appropriate skills to support them to become successful. The Coordinator expressed how he understood the challenges that the Black males in his program faced, because he was a Black male himself. For that reason, he made sure the program was developed to meet the students where they were, and then provided the proper support. He emphasized the importance of this and how support was the most essential aspect of mentorship. Participants of the study that were not members of the AAMI expressed how they already valued education and had some type of support outside of the college. However, they still had struggles in learning how to maneuver in society and displayed their strong feelings about the racism and discrimination they faced. Members from the AAMI program expressed that, since they had been in the program, they developed a desire to graduate and become leaders in their communities. The program's emphasis on leadership showed to be significant, because most of the participants decided that they would like to be entrepreneurs. Members of the program mentioned how AAMI

developed plans to help them to get their businesses started by connecting them to the right people.

Discussion

Research Question 1: How can programs such as the African-American Male Initiative produce more Black males that value education?

Programs like the African American Male Initiative can produce more Black males that value education by providing the proper support and keeping them engaged. Mentors should meet each Black male participants where they are, in order to spark a connection that will enable the mentors to build good relationships with the males in the program. The researcher found that having a good Black male role model was important to Black males that participated in the study. In Chapter Four, the AAMI Coordinator understood how important being a role model was. He stated, 'Programs such as this can influence Black males mentally, understanding the benefits of education as well as the negatives too. A degree does not guarantee a job so we prepare them in every aspect once they are involved in the program.' He also stated that 'AAMI assists in graduation rates of Black men because there is a system in place to make sure that they will be successful if they work within the confines of the program.' Referring to Rhodes and Dubois' (2008) study, they identified how DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found that those who reported having a mentoring relationship during adolescence exhibited significantly better outcomes within the domains of education and work (high-school completion, college attendance, employment), mental health (self-esteem, life satisfaction), problem behavior (gang membership, fighting, risk taking), and health (exercise, birth control use). In a successful mentorship, over a period of time, the mentee developed a special

bond with the mentor. Hence, having special bonds, such as these, tended to contribute to positive outcomes, because the mentees wanted to make their mentors proud.

Having Black male role models in AAMI motivated the Black male members to succeed. When they felt they were cared about, it made them more apt to listen and follow the mentors in AAMI. The AAMI Coordinator understood the importance of mentorship; so, he did what was necessary to meet them where they were. He also understood how they felt about challenges they faced, based off of him being a Black male himself, while at the same time allowing his members to express themselves. Taking the necessary steps to connect with the Black males in his program benefited him, because they were ready to listen to him and follow his lead.

Research Question 2: How can being in an African-American Male Initiative help Black males to be leaders and positive role models for younger Black Males?

Black males that participated in the AAMI program can be leaders and positive role models to younger Black males. Going through the program, the members underwent a developmental process that made them even better. They learned many different skills that helped prepare them to become successful in their careers. Members learned the importance of getting an education and how it benefitted them, by providing a decent livelihood. They also learned how to develop good work habits that would get them to the next level. The skills they learned were the essentials of leaders and improved the image of Black males. For example, they were taught how to network, manage time, interview, and dress for an interview, and how to be professional overall. Having these skills learned made the members of the program competitive for graduate school and jobs. AAMI members going to graduate school, then starting their careers and moving up the ranks

automatically made them the alternative to the typical Black male that was usually conveyed.

Another skill that was taught in the program was how to handle issues they would face in the future. This was a skill that had to be taught and was not something that was already known. Knowing how to handle issues was an important skill to know, because one could have the other skills down, but if they did not know how to handle issues or challenges they faced, it could be detrimental to their careers and they would not have the ability to survive a successful career. Having this type of training made the members aware that there were challenges that they would have to face and the different challenges that could possibly happen or occur. The training also taught them how to handle those different types of challenging situations, which was teaching them how to be cunning and strong which was imperative. These skills also played a part in their images. In the program, the members were taught how to be professional, which consisted of how to conduct themselves in a business environment and the importance of their image. Members having the understanding of how important their image was made them more conscious of how they dressed, their actions, and others' perceptions.

Furthermore, the gained respect contributed to these Black males to being role models to younger Black males. They were seen as success stories and positive examples in the community. Their success showed that it was possible for younger Black males to be successful in a positive way and outside of athletics and entertainment. With younger Black males desiring to be successful, the Black males that participated in AAMI would have the ability and desire to show them the way to success. The skills and other lessons learned in AAMI could be taught to younger Black males before they get into college.

AAMI members could show younger Black males the way to success and influence them to value education at a younger age. More Black role models were needed for younger Black males, which was positive, because more Black males that developed the skills, knowledge, understanding that education was beneficial to the African-American community. It would attract more Black males to positivity and setting goals for themselves. After understanding what leadership meant, some participants expressed how they wanted to become leaders in the future. One participant stated, 'I can see myself being a leader one day.' The AAMI Coordinator also discussed his desire to be a role model for Black males in college. During the interview, the AAMI Coordinator stated, 'I have always wanted to work with students that looked like me because I understand the importance of representation. When the opportunity arose to work with such a program I knew that this would be a great opportunity.' Due to the leadership displayed in the AAMI program, 92.8% of the members stated that they found Black male leadership important now.

Research Question 3: How are African-American males supported in a Black Male Initiative compared to other campus organizations?

Black males that participate in a program such as the AAMI gain skills and support that cater to their development and success. Although other programs could provide mentorship for professionalism and networking, programs such as AAMI were dedicated to connecting with Black males, with the understanding of the challenges that they faced and developing a training mentorship program to help them. In the AAMI they were trained on how to overcome different challenges that they would face as Black

males that were internal and external. One example of an internal challenge is being able to make good decisions and not succumbing to emotions, clouding judgment.

AAMI showed its members what was to be a man and how to develop a good work ethic supplemented with discipline. The program also informed its members on how to navigate the professional world and how to overcome the challenges that they would have to face as Black males. The support that was provided encouraged and motivated its members. Mentors of the program trained the members on pertinent skills that would help them to become successful, such as time management, organizational skills, self-control, communication skills, interviewing skills, networking, and how to dress professionally. AAMI credited its success to the success of Black males that went through the program.

Mentors in AAMI also focused on exposing its members to different experiences and people outside of the institution by taking them on field trips. AAMI participated in different events, such as conferences and symposiums. They also traveled to different cities to visit different educational sites, such as the first African American museum that was located in Washington DC. Every activity that was offered in the program was geared toward supporting Black males to improve their overall academic experiences and motivated them to persist in society.

Another way that the Black males in AAMI were supported was through counseling from mentors. The mentors had challenges as well, being a young Black male in America; therefore, they identified with their struggles and desired to show emotional support. Through their mentorship, they developed personal relationships with the members acting as a 'big brother.' This was an important aspect of AAMI because it was

what connected the members to the mentors. Through these relationships, it gave the members a positive male role model, which was important to them. The mentors showed the members that there was hope and that they could be successful. Having this type of support gave AAMI members a positive person to talk to, because they had to combat so much negative peer pressure and the feeling of neglect from administration on campus. These relationships made the program of value to the members, and also enriched their college experiences. Their experiences in school were what shaped their mindset about education. Therefore, the positive relationships with AAMI mentors were what caused the positive results and feedback from the members about the AAMI program.

Furthermore, most study participants that did not participate in AAMI had a different experience. Only one participant had an overall positive experience stating, 'I have no challenges as a Black man.' While the others stated, 'I think people may look at me like I am not going to graduate; being a Black man in a White man's world.' These responses showed a lack of support and understanding, which could greatly affect a college experience on campus. The negative responses could also reflect on how the campus handled discrimination and racism on campus. Although two of the interviewees were involved in other multiple campus programs they displayed strong feelings regarding the discrimination that they faced. Unlike the AAMI members, they did not show a sense of mental strength and maturity relative to how to handle these situations. One reason was that the AAMI members went through mentorship that helped them with conflict resolution and how to carry themselves. They also did not mention how the other programs or relationships with faculty and administration showed support to their needs. One student stated, 'The challenges I face in society are knowing that I am not

completely safe while I commute from destination to destination. Whether it be because of the threat of strangers or the threat of the police.’

Interestingly, two Non-AAMI member participants of the study stated that they had good relationships with faculty and administration, unlike the AAMI members. When asked about their relationships with faculty and administration, they mentioned how they made efforts to develop the relationship, but never mentioned how the other party made equal effort. They never mentioned how services were readily available to them and how the relationships benefited the students, like the mentorship through the African American Male Initiative. Also, these participants did not include if the faculty and administration helped them develop necessary skills to be successful when working with people of different backgrounds and with professional conduct.

Research Question 4: How does the African-American Male Initiative help Black males overcome challenges?

Through the training and mentorship of the AAMI program, the AAMI members were equipped with the skills, training, relationships, and knowledge that would help them to succeed. Along with academics, the focus was on properly handling challenges, due to the magnitude of the impact that these challenges presented to the members. AAMI members went through intense development and training that was geared to helping them to prevail, with the educating of the different types of challenges that the members could possibly face. The mentors had strong conversations with the members challenging their perceptions and beliefs. Also, they spent time with the members outside of school, exposing them to environments that were not familiar to them, to help them to grow and broaden their horizon. AAMI taught its members the importance of hard work,

with the purposes of stimulating a motivational drive within them. The purpose was to empower the students by providing them with the missing pieces that were needed for their success in the ‘real world.’ Topics of training ranged from education, professionalism, finances, relationships, and discrimination. Members learned how the decisions that they made affected their futures, due to the consequences that they faced. They also learned how to properly handle conflicts and interact with people of many different backgrounds. Moreover, these conflict resolution strategies implemented focused on giving the members understanding of the importance of knowing how to handle issues that may arise. With the understanding that not handling conflict the appropriate way could cause critical issues that could hurt them. This was teaching them to become mentally strong, which was well needed in order to survive.

Mentors also shared their personal experiences to give members examples of the realities that they would face in the future. These shared experiences also provided validity to the mentors’ testaments of their trials and tribulations. AAMI’s focus in helping Black males overcome challenges was preparation. They wanted to prepare their members so they could be at the appropriate level to be the most successful possible. Not only did AAMI want these Black males to succeed, but they wanted them to break stereotypes and change the negative connotation that young Black males carried in our society. Even though this was their goal, there were challenges that the mentors faced in the process of training and developing the members. These challenges usually consisted of budget issues or lack of support from faculty, staff, and administration on campus. Although, this was the case, the AAMI mentors used these situations as learning experiences for the Black males that participated in their program. Mentors show the

members that despite the challenges they may face, the goal was to continue to persist and use their minds to think of other ways to get things accomplished by coming up with a plan ‘B’ and ‘C’.’ However, non-AAMI participants had a different perspective. One non-AAMI participant stated, ‘I think people look at me like I’m not going to graduate.’ Another non-AAMI participant stated that he felt that he was a ‘Black man in a White man’s world.’

Implications

Based off of the results from the research, mentorship of Black males from older Black males played a pivotal role in their successes. The relationships that the members had with their mentors showed how it triggered a certain level of motivation. Participants in the study expressed a deep interest in their education and life after college. They expressed how the relationships and training had transformed them. Their mindset and perception evolved from being in AAMI. Members stated how they learned how to excel despite challenges they had to face. To add, they also mentioned how AAMI exposed them to people and environments that they never would have thought they would have experienced. Interestingly, the members of the program expressed the same feelings about AAMI and they all stated that the program helped them out and that campuses everywhere needed it. Not only did they learn how to overcome challenges and gained new experiences, they also gained new skills that would help them in the future. Overall, the program enhanced their college experiences.

AAMI changed their perception of education and life and stimulated an interest in valuing education. These results show how much of an impact that AAMI had on campus for their Black male participants. Their impact was one that was great, because it showed

that the mentors were successful in connecting with the Black male students that participated in the program. Black male participants also expressed how their grades improved in the program, causing them to desire a graduate degree; whereas, before they did not have this desire. It also affected their career choice as well, with most members greatly desiring entrepreneurship.

Also, the AAMI Coordinator also stated how past members had gone on to graduate from four year universities and graduate school. Members expressed a sense of purpose in the interviews. AAMI members showed a sense of passion in discussing the program, their education, and career goals compared to the non-AAMI members. The Black males that did not participate in AAMI, but participated in other on-campus programs were nonchalant in their responses, and did not show the same enthusiasm and passion that the AAMI members did about their education, career goals, and their involved programs. This showed that there was a true connection between mentors and AAMI members that had been progressively getting stronger each year.

While analyzing the data, the researcher developed five themes: value of education, support, challenges, impact of AAMI, and experience. Value of education showed that, in this program, the focus was on Black males in a post-secondary education institution. One of the impactful aspects from the study's results was that the AAMI program mentors were able to influence the members to value their education. Before the members started AAMI, their value of education was very low, only three of the participants said that they wanted to pursue education beyond high school. The responses that were given, when asked about their experience being a Black male at their Community College, can justify why they felt that education was not important to them.

The participants expressed that they believed the educators did not find them important. Most of the participants stated that they did not have a relationship with the faculty and staff on campus. However, Black male perspectives on education changed since being in the program. Prior to enrolling in the college, most of the participants did not desire to persist and get a college degree. Going to the college was not based on their willingness to learn, but on obligation.

However, since being in AAMI, association with educated Black male mentors caused an impact on the AAMI participants. Each student expressed interest in graduating with a degree. Some of the students decided to pursue a Bachelor's and attend graduate school. Also, AAMI members expressed interest in various career paths and showed much enthusiasm, expressing how they will reach their career goals.

Seeing changes, such as this, showed the impact of the mentors. It showed the level of support that the participants were receiving by being in AAMI. Each participant expressed how, through the program, the mentors focused on their needs. The AAMI program provided resources, equipment, and a learning environment to help the participants to be successful in their academics. One student stated, 'They have provided tutoring services, productive learning environment resources to do homework (Computers, printers, etc);' while another student stated, 'They have help me find scholarships that I need to help pay for some of my supplies. The have also supported me towards my goals and with just being able to have conversations and answer questions that I might have about the events that have taken place these past few years.'

Another good example of the support shown towards AAMI members was the intimate bond that was made between the members and the mentors. It is possible that

this occurred due to the relativity of the mentors and the AAMI members, which could be said to be applicable in this scenario, due to the members having mentors that looked like them on campus. AAMI members felt that the mentors valued and cared about them. One of the students stated, 'They are the only ones who value us.' Mentors showing support by being intentional on developing relationships with the members deemed to be an important part of connecting with them. After seeing the results, based on support from AAMI mentors, it showed that this was an area that the other faculty and administrators lacked on campus. With that being said, the data showed that the participants longed for support and relationship, which faculty and administration as a whole made very little attempt to do, if at all. Based on the responses gathered from the study, poor relationships and no support from parties outside of AAMI, mainly faculty and administration in education, was what caused the negative perspective of on education. It also limited the belief on how successful they could be in achieving a college degree.

Receiving support and having good relationships with AAMI mentors made a great impact on the AAMI members. Impact of AAMI was another theme that was used when coding and analyzing the data. AAMI members expressed their gratitude for the program and how it helped them. One participant, 'They helped me shape my vision, meaning they worked to give me the confidence I need to grow.' Another commonality that the members had was that they felt comfortable with the mentors. They did not feel threatened or out of place when they were among the other AAMI members and mentors. The program provided a safe place for them to be themselves.

Another analysis from the findings was that the members felt that AAMI helped give them a sense of purpose and equipped them with the necessary skills they needed to

be successful. Due to the program, members said that they learned study skills which helped them become more engaged in their course work and increase their GPA. Other skills they learned in the program relative to personal growth played a part in the positive transformation of the AAMI members.

AAMI's impact translated into the members being prepared for their future careers. Members were more eager to be successful men in the future, making a good living and using their education as the vehicle to get them there. It was invigorating to see how the AAMI members desired to own their businesses and work in various rewarding careers, such as being a college professor and working in computer science.

Another way that AAMI made an impact on AAMI members was affecting their view on leadership. AAMI members now had a value on leadership and understood the definition of true leadership. One of the participants in the study stated, 'When you are a leader you have to lead by example and be responsible for your actions because you never know who is watching.' Another member stated, 'A leader helps those around him so that everyone can help fight though the challenges that you are going to face with fighting oppression and supporting blacks all across America.' The members expressed the need for more Black males as leaders in society. Based off of the AAMI members' responses, the AAMI mentors were good representatives of true leadership. These core leadership values that were being expressed in the study showed to affect the members.

Next, overcoming challenges was another theme that was used in the coding and analysis. The members came in not knowing how to properly handle challenging situations and how to overcome them. Most of the AAMI members faced some type of discrimination in their lives and felt that they had to work much harder to prove

themselves than other groups. The members expressed how they felt that society looked at them. One member stated, 'I think white males and females have advantages over me with their environment, education opportunities and the way society views them but with black females I think it's more of me just proving myself to them that I can take on the responsibilities that they have had to take on themselves.' The next student added, 'Yes, I do especially since we live in a racist society.' AAMI members believed that these views of society that they had contributed to the challenges that they had to face, being Black males in the United States. Interestingly, they carried these views with them to the school environment. After undergoing developmental training in the AAMI, the members felt as if they received sufficient training to help them handle these challenges appropriately.

AAMI members expressed how much the training helped and benefited them. They felt they were receiving good advice and were more prepared to face challenges now, since being in the program. One of the members stated, 'They show you that you're not alone and that if you fight through the challenges you will be able to help those that are coming up behind you so that they don't have to go through the same thing.' Prior to becoming a member, this was a challenge the members had to face and with no clue on how to handle them. AAMI members said the program taught how to work well with others and deal with many different people. Another student stated that AAMI helped by 'informing me about racism in this country and how to overcome and maneuver'.

Teaching them how to overcome challenges showed how the mentors understood that educating young Black men goes beyond the textbooks. It also showed how much the mentors cared about the members. Mentors of AAMI have true heart and desire to see young Black men become successful and leaders.'

Lastly, experience was utilized as a theme when coding and analyzing data. AAMI members experience on campus was based on being in the campus organization. They did not participate in any other on-campus organizations. Outside of the challenges the AAMI members faced on campus, their time at the college was positive, because the program helped them out immensely. Interestingly, non-AAMI members had mixed feelings about their experience on campus, half of them stated that their experience was good and the other half stated the opposite. The Black male students that had the positive experience on campus were involved in multiple campus organizations. Based off of the data received from the Black male students that participated in the study, whether they were in AAMI or a different on-campus organization, being involved on campus enhanced the student experience for Black males. However, Black male students who participated in AAMI displayed more of a bond and brotherhood compared to the non-AAMI participants.

Based on the enthusiasm that the members displayed in the data when discussing AAMI, the program was beneficial to post-secondary institutions and Black male college students, because AAMI could provide a bridge between the institution and Black males. If the institution partnered with the organization to enhance the college experience for Black males and help them improve academically, it is possible that the number of Black males graduating college could increase.

Recommendations

When conducting a future study, the researcher should shadow the AAMI Coordinator to get a more in-depth experience. This would enable the researcher to see how AAMI was constructed and how the Coordinator operated the group. Another way to

limit the research is by becoming a mentor. Doing this would give the researcher an authentic view by becoming a part of the organization. With this, the researcher would be able to build relationships with the participants and gather key information. Having personal relationships with the members allowed one to be hands on with the study. The researcher would have good insight on the mindset and perspectives of the AAMI members.

The next recommendation to eliminate the prior limitations is by increasing the duration of the study. Doing this enables the researcher to get more information by being able to ask more interview questions and extending the survey. The researcher would have more time to develop relationships with the AAMI Coordinator and participants. Lastly, extending the research to other university campuses in the area. This would enable the researcher to compare AAMI programs in the city. It will also provide even more data, due to the larger participant pool.

After conducting this study the researcher felt that the AAMI did a great job at mentoring the Black male members in the program. However, there are some recommendations that could be made for the improvement of the program. One recommendation that could be made is to influence more Black males to work in education, whether to become teachers, principals, counselors, or School District Administrators. For years, Black male teachers were extremely hard to find and if found, hard to retain. Harper (2009) stated that the typical Black boy in a K-12 educational setting was taught almost exclusively by White women who combined an insufficient anticipation for his academic achievement with high expectations for disruptive behavior, intellectual stupidity, and a dispassion for learning that would ultimately culminate with

high school dropout (pp. 697-698). Dissecting Harper's (2006, 2007, 2009, 2012) research, which analyzed the lack of Black male leadership in the United States, educational systems illustrated how critical it was for more Black males to become educators and role models.

The researcher noticed in the data that the simple, but essential element of connecting with the Black male students was vital in mentoring them. All the steps described in this chapter must take place before trying to get Black males to buy-in to their message. From this the mentor could implement a strategy for helping Black males to understand the importance of valuing their education. The reason this is possible is they would feel that the mentor was genuine in their intentions, thus the mentee would feel that the mentor was truly on their side. Rhodes and Dubois (2008) cited that close and enduring ties appeared to be fostered when mentors adopted a flexible, youth-centered style in which the young person's interests and preferences were emphasized, rather than when they focused predominantly on their own agendas or expectations for the relationship. In order to adequately grab the interest of a young person, there has to be a concentrated interest in understanding their interests. Moreover, understanding this enabled the mentor to effectively reach the youth where they were.

Next, consistency and repetition was important in communicating the message of the importance of positive Black male leadership. Staying engaged with the members weekly or twice a week would keep them motivated. These sessions would hold the members accountable, because they would be provided the needed support and example of a good role model. Having mentor relationships in place for Black males gives them hope. Girbaldi (1992) stated, "Many of these negative indicators along with their last-

place ranking on many measures of educational performance and attainment have become so commonplace that it has caused many to view the majority of these young men's futures as hopeless and impossible to salvage” (p. 1). The results from the data correlated to the fatherless home problem in the Black community. Their goals will keep them on track and make mentoring sessions with them productive. This was the goal as a mentor, making every session with the mentees as fruitful as possible, because they should gain something each time.

Another important key to programs producing more Black males valuing education, was to make an impact by collaborating with the post-secondary institution in which the program was held. This was very important because the Black males that were enrolled there needed to see that faculty and administration were dedicated to their successes the same way that they were about other students in the institution. In collaborating with the host post-secondary institution, the program Coordinator should incorporate sessions where administrative personnel and faculty came and spoke to the members in the program. They could speak on different topics, such as study tips, how to be successful in college, or simply having a question-and-answer open forum or panel. It was important that the Black male members feel and see that there were other people outside of the program mentors that cared about them. They also needed to see that other ethnic and social economic groups cared about them. It was important to connect with Black males in this way, because it was the key to gaining their trust; and therefore, let their guards down. Traumatic events of the past, such as the integration of schools made an impact even to the time of this writing. Branton's (1983) study showed the hardship that African-Americans faced in attempt to receive equal opportunity in education. These

traumatic events were so traumatic in that they still affect African-Americans at the time of this writing (Branton, 1983, p. 262).

Black males, knowing that they had a support system, would make them more apt to receive the messages conveyed to them from these different groups outside of their program. "Here the evidence is clear that the risks faced by children, particularly African American males, in terms of health, welfare, and education are substantially greater" (Fashola, 2005, p. 55). Without the connection, they felt as if they were alone and no one really cared about them, especially those that had the greatest impact on their college experience. While conducting the study, the AAMI member participants mentioned that the main support that they received was through AAMI. Having support from faculty and Administration would provide a better college experience and could change the Black male perspective on education.

In addition to institutional support relative to developing good relationships with Black males, programs like the African American Male Initiative should expose their members to possible opportunities by bringing in people outside the institution to speak or present. Using this strategy helps with the development of the Black males in the program, because it provides them outside support and access. This access opens them up to a range of different opportunities that they may have not explored, just being in the program alone. In these programs, they are comfortable, because there are other males that look like them, older and in their peer group, with common interest and belief systems. Community supporters bring a different experience to members, which is a good thing. It helps them to become more knowledgeable to other cultural backgrounds, while at the same time gradually leaving their comfort zone. Another benefit is the possibility

of the members becoming more interested in branching out on their own to seek opportunities and build relationships outside of their own culture. These experiences show them that the world is made up of groups of different people that do care about them and want to see them succeed. Having these experiences can transition into developing a positive perception of life and being more optimistic about their possibility of becoming successful one day. Incorporating this in a mentoring program on campus provides a much richer experience for Black males. It shows them that education goes beyond the classroom. They will learn that education is a fulfilling experience that is beneficial to their wellbeing. It makes learning fun for them and they will see that it has a purpose that is geared toward the betterment of their future.

Another way that AAMI helped Black males to be leaders and role models to younger Black males was by the members graduating and moving up in ranks. In Chapter Four, participants in the study expressed desires of becoming a leader and a professional. AAMI alumni being in leadership roles not only showed younger Black males that they had the ability to achieve the same amount of success, but was also instrumental in helping them gaining that success. With them being in a leadership position, they knew what it took to get there and have the power to hire younger Black males as interns and employees in the future. These leadership roles were results of the mentorship of Black males in the African-American Initiative program. It was a testament to the effectiveness of the program, showing how beneficial it was for Black males in post-secondary institutions, which was also beneficial for other post-secondary institutions to have such a program, as well.

Lastly, AAMI and programs like AAMI, could promote HBCUs to its Black male members. While conducting the study, some participants expressed an interest in attending a HBCU. Attending an HBCU had a benefit of providing support to Black males and could help with their development, preparing them for the 'real world.' A participant in Palmer and Shorette's (2015) study stated that the HBCU he attended intentionally encouraged those aspirations by designing their programs with graduate school in mind and reinforcing the idea that graduate school was the natural next step for students. A contributor to the success and motivation of these Black males at HBCUs is the Black male leadership. According to Gasman (2013), 70% of HBCU presidents were Black males (p. 14). At HBCUs faculty supported students by displaying concern, not only for their academic success, but also for their welfare. In Palmer and Young's (2009) research studies of Black students at HBCUs showed that these students experienced greater personal interaction with their professors than HWIs. Furthermore, Black males that attended an HBCU were more prepared to face a society of racism when they graduated. According to Palmer and Young (2009), for the participants in their study, perspectives on race and inequality became more apparent after graduating from their HBCU and pursuing graduate studies at a PWI.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the relationships developed due to the existence of AAMI improved the overall experience for the Black males that participated. Then, the students had seen an increase in their GPA, desire to graduate and go to graduate school, and then had a much better perspective on education. AAMI members being around the

mentors illustrated the ideal positive Black male and gave them individuals to model after. AAMI thoroughly taught their members the true meaning of manhood.

Furthermore, AAMI was a needed program for Black males on college campuses throughout the country. AAMI members showed how much they enjoyed being in the program. When conducting the study, the members displayed a sense of passion and pride for the programs. One of the key factors in the relationship between AAMI members and mentors, was the mentor's willingness to meet the members where they were. In the study, the AAMI members mentioned how much the mentors cared about them and how they tried to understand and meet their needs. AAMI members felt that this was what the faculty and administration failed to do, just out of sheer apathy. This shows that Black males desired to be cared about and just wanted people to try and understand them. With the complexity of the Black male 'issue' in education and in society at the time of this writing, the simple, but yet significant solution was caring. In the study, the main cause of dissatisfaction and poor campus experience was the lack of support the AAMI members received from key personnel on campus. This was their biggest complaint, which affected their perception on education, causing them to not value it.

Moreover, once they received the support they needed and were engaged by people that cared about them, it changed their view on education, as well as their view on life. AAMI members showed motivation at excelling in life. Receiving something simple as support and being around people that cared about them encouraged them to be future leaders and not a statistic. The mentors being Black men made more of an impact, because the members were engaged with people that looked like them; but, just older and

experienced. There were very few Black male role models for young Black men, even in education. For this reason, it was harder for them to find people that could relate to them.

Furthermore, understanding the needs of Black males was important when working in education. Their needs were often overlooked, which caused the negative outlook on education and positive decision making among Black males. Black males were the least represented group in education, but were seen as the biggest behavioral and academic problems; in which these problems infiltrated society. Being in a leadership role, this researcher will understand the importance of building and showing that he cares about meeting the needs of Black male students. This need for support, care, and relationship is required for all students of every background, but the group that required the most attention at the moment was Black males. In leadership, this researcher will make sure that he does the basic things to show that he cares, such as greet them and make an effort to get to know them. Although, he cannot gauge how many Black males would be affected by his leadership, he would do whatever he can to build relationships. Also, he would have an AAMI on campus, as well.

In conclusion, it is important to engage Black males and build positive relationships with them. Their perspective and experience in education is based on how they feel that they are treated and if they are cared about. This is important because there is such a low representation of Black males in education. If educators and administrators take on the responsibility of helping Black males, it can impact society in a positive way. It is possible that more Black males would want to be educators, which would benefit younger Black males, because they will have role models in education that look like them. Being intentional about helping our young Black men through education is key.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Did you always want to pursue education past high school? Why?
2. Do you feel that you have the support that you need? How so?
3. How does the African-American Male Initiative program affect your life?
4. What skills have you learned since being in this program?
5. What type of relationships do you have with your professors, administrators, and other students on campus?
6. Do you think that you have to work harder to prove yourself than white males, white females, and black females? Explain.
7. How involved are you on campus? Are you apart of any other campus organization?
8. What is your major? Has the African-American Male Initiative helped you in your education? If so, in what way?
9. What are your future educational goals? Do you plan to attend another college after STLCC? Why or why not?
10. What are your future career goals? How has the African-American Male Initiative prepared you for your future?
11. Do you face discrimination? If so, how have you handled it?
12. Do you believe that the African-American Male Initiative program will prepare you to overcome challenges that Black men have to face? How so?
13. Do you believe that a program such as this can produce more Black males that value education?
14. What is your prospective on leadership now that you have gone through the program?
15. How does this program compare to other campus organizations at STLCC?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What are you pursuing your degree in?
2. Why did you choose to pursue education after high school?
3. Are you a part of any other campus organizations? If so, what organizations are you a part of?
4. Please explain your experience being a Black male at this college.
5. What are your career goals?
6. What challenges do you face being a Black male at this college?
7. What challenges do you face in society?
8. What is your relationship like with administration and faculty?
9. Has your perspective on education and life changed since being in this program?
If so, why?
10. Do you believe that other post-secondary institutions need to have this program?

Appendix C: Coordinator Interview

1. Please give a brief description of your background. (Hometown, education, & hobbies)
2. What is your highest level of education?
3. What are your career goals?
4. What inspired you to become the African-American male initiative coordinator?
5. Do you believe that a program like this will contribute to more Black men graduating college?
6. Based off your observations and relationships with the members, has it made their college experience better?
7. Based on your experience as the Coordinator, how has this program influenced the participants? Did you see any progress in their academics?
8. What was your strategy for keeping the members engaged?
9. What are key indicators that let you know that your mentoring strategy is effective?
10. Do you believe that this program influenced the members mind as it relates to valuing education?
11. Do you have sufficient resources to ensure the program's success? If not, why?
12. Are there any improvements to the program that you think that can be made? If so, what areas need to be improved? How can you improve them?

Vitae

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EDUCATION

2018

Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership
Lindenwood University

Dissertation title: “A Case Study on the Experiences of Black Men Participating in an African-American Male Initiative at a Post-Secondary Institution”

Committee: Dr. Vanessa Cochran, Dr. Robyne Elder (Chair), Dr. Carrie Schwierjohn

MBA in General Business

Jul 2013

Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO

BA in Sports Management

May 2012

Lindenwood University, St. Charles, IN

TEACHING

Business Ed Teacher

2017-present

Vashon High School, St. Louis Public Schools

- □ Facilitator for six sections of Business Education.
- □ Planned and taught a project and research-intensive course based upon current events.
- □ Used instructional technology to enhance pedagogical technique.
- □ Taught in part with an innovative, concept to meet the needs of the 21st Century learner.

PROFESSIONAL

Human Resources Customer Service Rep (Recruitment),
Administration Building, St. Louis Public Schools

2016-2017

- Responsible for the recruitment of teachers.
- Traveled to different universities in the US to attend job fairs.
- Coordinated and planned the first ever substitute teacher and paraprofessional job fair for the district.
- Developed the strategic recruitment plan for the district to increase teacher recruitment efforts to build retention, sustainability, and quality.
- Developed marketing strategy for Saint Louis Public Schools Career Fairs.

- Coordinated the Student Teaching and Field Experience program.
- Responsible for posting jobs on district website and staffing needs for 10 schools in district.

**Admissions & Financial Aid Counselor
Admissions, Lindenwood University**

2015-2016

- Package students' financial aid award letter and offer scholarships.
- Build relationships with high school counselors in the Kansas City, MO and Kansas City, KS metro area.
- Mentor and build relationship with current and prospective students.
- Nominated counselor of the month in 3rd month of working for the institution. First African American to receive this award.
- Gave a presentation entitled "Building Relationships with High School Counselors 101: With Mike Gibson to help increase recruitment efforts and enrollment for Lindenwood University.

**Admissions Officer/Student Ambassador Coordinator
Enrollment Management, Harris-Stowe State University**

2013-2015

- Responsible for recruiting nearly 50% of 2014 freshman class.
- Responsible for recruiting the students in 2014 freshman class with highest ACT and G.P.A.
- Assisted in restructuring scholarships, policy, and practices.
- Awarded scholarships.
- Launched Student Ambassador Program.
- Was an integral part in shattering the 2014 First Freshman goal in first year.
- Successfully solved problems and was known as a problem solver.
- Traveled throughout the U.S. to recruit and give presentations.