


2017

# Mentoring Black Males: Discovering Leadership Strategies That Improve Their Future

Jessie Small  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jessie Small

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Review Committee

Dr. Robert Levasseur, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty

Dr. David Banner, Committee Member, Management Faculty

Dr. David Cavazos, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2017

Abstract

Mentoring Black Males: Discovering Leadership Strategies That Improve Their Future

by

Jessie L. Small

MA, Everest University, 2012

BS, Everest University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

August 2017

## Abstract

Within the last 25 years, Black males have experienced systematically devastating results in social, educational, and economic outcomes at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group; devastation that has led to Black males experiencing failure on educational, economic, and freedom levels. The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the leadership strategies used in a selected mentoring program in the southeastern United States to determine why these strategies have been effective in improving Black males' ability to navigate life's challenges. The conceptual framework for the study was House's path-goal theory of leadership. The research questions focused on the identification and characterization of successful leadership strategies in mentoring, the essential characteristics of successful mentor/mentee relationships, and the exploration of the factors critical for the implementation of successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males. Interviews of purposeful samples of 12 mentors and 10 mentees provided the research data. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative method. In this qualitative case study, understanding the mentee population, honesty, and developing trust were strategies that participating mentors believed to be important to helping Black males navigate life's challenges. These strategies enlightened program participants to their possibility of success; an enlightenment that created an unyielding desire to improve themselves and their communities. The results of this study may contribute to social change by motivating society and scholars alike to move beyond simply identifying the existence and persistence of the problem to implementing strategies based on the study findings to correct the historical inequality Black males face in higher education, economic gains, and freedom retention in America.

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## Dedication

First, I must thank God, my Lord and Savior. For the many times in my life that I have fallen, He has picked me up. For the many times in my life that I was lost, God helped me find my way. Without Him, my accomplishments and my existence would not have been possible. Secondly, I must thank my family, starting with Renassa Small, my beautiful wife of years, who has been and continues to be my biggest fan. She has supported me throughout this journey with understanding and unconditional love. I also thank my daughter, Sydney Small, who tested every nerve I had once she became a teenager, and my 3-year-old son, Jessie Small II, who always became extra energized and in need of extra attention whenever I attempted to write or study. It is for all of you that I strive to be the best that I can. It is God's grace combined with your love and support that has given me the will to fight hard and succeed. Thirdly, I would like to thank my mother, Nita Lovett, for being an excellent example of working hard and never giving up. Although the actions of my deadbeat dad forced her into single mother-hood she never gave up. With a sixth-grade education, she successfully raised five children, four boys and one girl, on her own without government assistance. Although we hardly had what we wanted, we always had what we needed. Lastly, I would like to say to the individuals who stated athletics would be my only avenue to success and my making it to the National Football League (NFL) would be the greatest accomplishment of my life. You were wrong; my beautiful family and my Ph.D. journey outweigh in importance the accomplishments of all the years I played in the NFL.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Walden University as a whole for allowing and directing me through this journey. I have met and received great insight from professors and classmates. I mentioned in my dedication that God helped me find my way when lost. When I was lost during this journey, God allowed my path to cross with that of Dr. Robert Levasseur. Dr. Levasseur has helped guide me through this journey by helping me find solid ground on which to begin my Ph.D. journey. The advice received from Dr. Levasseur has been a trail of bread crumbs, which helped me navigate through a journey in which a person can easily find him or herself lost. In addition, I would like to acknowledge Dr. David Banner, the content expert of my dissertation committee, and Ms. Libby Munson, the committee's URR expert. Many suggest that we as future scholars would one day stand on the shoulders of giants. Dr. Levasseur and Dr. Banner are two of those giants, and I have proudly stood on their shoulders.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Within the last 25 years, Black males have experienced systematically devastating results in social, educational, and economic outcomes at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group (Jackson, 2010); devastation that has resulted in Black males experiencing failure on educational, economic, and freedom levels. Failures perceived so devastating that some (Bush & Bush, 2010; Tolliver, 2013) have characterized Black males as an endangered species; a species that is at inordinately high risk for failure across virtually all life domains (Tolliver, 2014). In this study, I examined leadership strategies within a selected mentoring program with the purpose of evaluating these strategies regarding their effectiveness at improving Black male's ability to navigate life's challenges. Improving the Black male's ability to navigate these challenges is important to the United States on economic, social, and educational levels.

In 2015, the United States experienced major economic issues and concerns of global competitiveness. The majority of individuals from the United States who compete in the quest for global superiority are White males (Porter & Rivkin, 2012). Uneducated Black males may soon become a problem if the current trend of educational and economic failures continues. The U.S. Census Bureau projected that African-American, Hispanic, and Asian populations are expected to increase rapidly by 2050, some doubling in percentages, and comprising 50% of the U.S. population while White percentages are projected to decrease (Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2010). The likelihood of this projection becoming true creates the importance of addressing this demographic shift as current and

past literature has suggested a significant number of Black males are uneducated, unemployed, and/or incarcerated (Harris, 2013).

Preparing for this demographic shift requires helping Black males navigate life's challenges successfully. The preparation will require discovering leadership strategies designed to address Black males' current problems in American society. Problems suggested by some (Butler, 2013; Cree, Kay, & Steward, 2012; Richardson & Van Brakle, 2013) include educational failure, an inability to remain employed, and introduction to America's correctional facilities. Palmer et al. (2010) suggested Black males represent needed human capital; human capital that society must acknowledge. Providing Black males with the needed skills to obtain educational success, remain gainfully employed, and decrease the causal factors that result in their introduction to state and federal penal systems is critical to America's economic, social, and global success. The background, problem, and purpose that drive this study will be the focus of the next section.

### **Background of the Study**

There are many causal factors relating to the Black male's failure to navigate life's challenges. Some (Garibaldi, 2014; Palmer et al., 2010; Washington, 2013) believe the Black males' inability to persist is the result of limited exposure to guidance and leadership throughout their lives. Along similar lines, Dyce (2013) suggested Black males' inability to successfully navigate life's challenges resulted from the lack of leadership in the early years of their lives. Others (Department of Commerce, 2013;

Dyce, 2013; Harper, 2013) have shown many Black males experience educational and economic challenges resulting in Black male incarcerations rates that far surpass any other race.

However, some Black males that hail from similar backgrounds have successfully navigated the same educational and economic challenges that others have struggled with. Regardless of the cause, Black males continue to experience failure of completing an institution of higher learning on a massive scale (Harper & Davis, 2012). In 2013, only 17.4% of Black males graduated college with a Bachelor's degree, and only 1.5% with a Master's degree or higher (Department of Commerce, 2013). Failing the life challenge of educational success fosters an inability to remain employed, which increases the chance of introduction into a state or federal correctional facility (Harris, 2013).

Many scholars (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harris, 2013; Jarjoura, 2013; Witters & Liu, 2015) have shown concern over the failure of Black males to persist through life's challenges. However, most of the literature serves only to inform the scholarly world that this problem exists. Literature that serves only to inform creates a major gap due to the minimal amount of research focused on strategies to correct or lessen the impact of the problem.

Arguably, no child dreams of educational failure, economic limitations, or living in a state or federal correctional facility. However, a plethora of research suggests this is the fate of many Black males. There are many suggested issues (an absentee father, poverty, lack of leadership) believed to negatively affect Black males' ability to find success in American society (Groth, 2011). On the other hand, societal influences also

create roadblocks to success (Mishina, Block, & Mannor, 2012). Many young African American men believe that participating in sports, such as football and basketball, is where the potential for a better future lies (Hartmann, Sullivan, & Nelson, 2012). As a result, they focus their efforts on sports and sports alone, rarely, if ever, considering academics as a potential avenue for success.

In 1985, I focused on sports, academics were never considered a possibility. During my high school years, this concept of using athletics to succeed was embedded in my psyche by adult Black males, teachers, and coaches. Academia never existed as a possible avenue to success, only athletics. As a result, I accepted a football scholarship to Eastern Kentucky University with one goal in mind; making it to the National Football League (NFL). The plan worked, the Philadelphia Eagles drafted me in April 1989. I departed college in April 1989, failing to complete degree requirements; honestly, graduating was never the focus of my college experience. Believing sports was the only way to success resulted in an experience of educational failure for me, which may have led to economic limitations and incarceration had there not been an opportunity for me to play in the NFL.

It was not until April 15, 2007, that an experience of divine intervention changed my life. While driving past the Orange Park Florida campus of Everest University, there was a desire to enter and explore the facilities. Three hours later, there was a new student enrolled at Everest University. Once enrolled and attending classes, I quickly realized that making athletics the sole focus in my life placed constraints on any available options for my future. Little did I know that the decision to enter the campus of Everest



University would result in a journey neither I nor anyone who knows me could have imagined. Seven years later, I am in pursuit of a doctorate. The constant reminding experienced throughout my youth that I was only an athlete and had no scholarly potential sometimes still allows doubt to creep in and causes me to question my ability. Fortunately, a loving wife and family continue to believe in me and provide me with support during this journey.

I understand my reasoning for not finishing when at Eastern Kentucky University. I often wonder what might have happened with some degree of formal mentoring, a process which, according to Kunich and Lester (1999), is a teaching process beginning with nurturing children and continuing through their lifecycle of organizational and personal interrelationships during their youth. I wonder if the leadership strategies in mentoring would have helped when attempting to navigate the influenced belief that sports were the only avenue to my success. I might have earned a bachelor degree in 1989, instead of 2011. Furthermore, experiencing formal mentoring might have changed the way I navigated life's challenges. More importantly, this line of questioning led me to consider how valuable mentoring would be for current and future Black males when attempting to navigate the challenges they are sure to encounter.

Due to God's grace, I was more fortunate than many other Black males. However, if fate had decided to place a career-ending knee injury in the equation during the college years, this Black male might have experienced an inability to navigate life's challenges, becoming one of the 1 in 3 Black men who has experienced incarceration. Change will come, and America will require a diverse group of individuals to ensure its global

competitiveness. The leadership strategies in mentoring may provide a solution to the problem faced by Black males and improve the success of valuable human capital (Palmer et al. 2010). This study is important because it is time to move beyond simply informing the world of a problem that is decades old and work toward identifying and implementing strategies to correct or lessen the impact of the problem. Improving the problems faced by Black males has the potential of creating positive, educated Black males that are capable of providing the support needed to direct younger Black males to a position of positivity, improve the economy, and help improve the United States' position on a global scale of competition.

### **Problem Statement**

Failing to find success in American society, persisting through life challenges have proven difficult for many Black males (Miller, Barnes, Miller, & Mckinnon, 2012). Failing to compete at multiple levels has resulted in Black males falling behind mainstream America. Within the last 25 years, Black males have experienced systematically devastating results in social, educational, and economic outcomes at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group regardless of gender (Jackson, 2010). Many are remaining illiterate, unemployable, dying at an early age, or becoming incarcerated for a majority of their adult lives (Mauer, 1999). Butler et al. (2013) suggested Black males need particular attention because they face unique circumstances and problems. Problems that Groth (2011) believed resulted in the potential failure of attainment due to the lack of leadership and mentoring received throughout their lives.

The general problem is many Black males have not been successfully participating in mainstream America for decades with little intervention. The specific issue is that a gap exists in the literature regarding leadership strategies designed to improve life's circumstances for Black males in America. To address this gap in the literature, in this study I used a qualitative case study to examine leadership strategies utilized in a successful Black male mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. My focus was on identifying strategies that provide an ability to correct the problems faced by Black males when navigating life challenges. The population of this study consisted of Black male program participants and program mentors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

My goal with this qualitative case study was to examine the leadership strategies used in a selected mentoring program in the Southeastern United States and evaluate the effect of implemented strategies on their ability to help program participants' development or discovery of the skills necessary to navigate life's challenges. Discovered outcomes have the potential to decrease the Black males' introduction into Federal and State penal systems, improve their ability to persist to completion after entering an institution of higher learning, and help them develop the necessary skills to remain gainfully employed, thus creating a diverse workforce capable of assisting the United States in its quest for global economic superiority. In this qualitative case study, I examined the program-implemented leadership strategies. I elicited and evaluated these leadership strategies to determine their contributions to the successful outcomes experienced by Black male program participants.

## **Research Questions**

I developed the following research questions (RQs) to guide this study. The central research question was:

RQ1. What are successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males through life's challenges?

The research subquestions were:

RQ2. What are the characteristics of successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?

RQ3. What are the critical factors for successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?

RQ4. What are the characteristics of a successful Black male mentor/mentee relationship?

## **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework I chose for this study was House's (1996) path-goal theory of leadership. The characteristics of this theory are complex combinations of leader's personality; follower's needs, character, and values; the structure of interpersonal relations; and environmental settings (Murdoch, 2013). Ineffective leadership, lack of interpersonal relationships, and environmental issues are elements that many believe may hinder Black males' navigation of life's challenges (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013; Tolliver, 2012). Using the path-goal theory of leadership to frame this study provided me with the ability to explore these elements in the chosen mentoring program. The assumption of the path-goal theory is that leader's behavior is critical for good performance as a

function of its impact on subordinates' perceptions of paths to goals and the attractiveness of the goals (Murdoch, 2013). Murdoch (2013) further suggested the following two propositions are important elements of the path-goal theory of leadership.

Proposition 1 follows the theory that performance of the leader is typical and satisfying to subordinates to the extent that the subordinates see such behavior as either a direct source of contentment or as instrumental to future accomplishments. Proposition 2 follows the theory that the motivational performance of the leader will increase subordinates' effort to the extent that makes subordinates' desires contingent on the efficient arrangement, which complements subordinates' environment through coaching, guidance, support, and rewards necessary for effective performance. House's (1996) pathgoal theory of leadership provided me with the necessary elements and propositions to address the elements and effect of leaders' personality, followers' needs, interpersonal relations, and environmental settings within the chosen mentoring program of this study.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study was qualitative with a case study focus. This study was of an exploratory nature with the purpose of understanding leadership strategies and their ability to correct or decrease the poor success rates of Black males when navigating life's challenges. Using Yin's (2009) case study methodology, I examined the successful strategies used by leaders within a mentoring program. Upon completion of the study, data collected from interviews with mentors and mentees was evaluated to identify and assess the value of the leadership strategies used.

The case study approach provided me more valuable information than an ethnographic approach would have been able to. Although an entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case, the intent in ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration (Khoo, Rozaklis, & Hall, 2012). Case studies are empirical inquiries about a contemporary phenomenon that demands a high degree of depth, breadth, and rigor while paying careful attention to revealing evidence that supports the conclusions (Yin, 2009). Specifically, when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, the chosen case study method allows examinations using one or more cases from a specific setting or context which are usually from a bounded system (Yin, 2009). In this study, an exploration of the bounded systems occurred over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (see Yin, 2009).

This study entailed an exploration of the leadership strategies in a selected mentoring program in the Southeastern United States to gauge their effect on Black males' successful navigation of life's challenges. By focusing on the effect of the leadership strategies, I set out to determine the impact of the program and provide inferences about reasons for success or failure. This study needed an exploratory aspect because of the minimal amount of existing literature that addressed correcting the problem of Black males' frequent inability to find success in American society. This case study consisted of semistructured interviews with Black male participants of the selected

mentoring program, both mentors and mentees, to discover possible answers to the research questions that drove this study.

### **Definitions**

*Cat o' nine tail whip:* A whip, usually having nine knotted lines or cords fastened to a handle, used for flogging (Woodson, 2004)

*Disengagement:* The action or process of withdrawing from involvement in a particular situation, or group, emotional detachment (Palmer et al., 2010).

*Economic exploitation:* The use or manipulation of another person for one's advantage (Howard et al., 2012).

*Illiteracy:* A lack of knowledge in a particular subject, ignorance, the inability to read or write (Saylor Foundation, 2012)

*Mentor:* An experienced and trusted advisor, guide, guru, counselor, or consultant (Jarjoura, 2013).

*Social domination:* Relations that focus on the maintenance and stability of group-based social hierarchies (Clark & Dugdale, 2014)

*Social exclusion:* The failure of society to provide certain individuals and groups with those rights and benefits normally available to its members, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education, and training (Howard et al., 2012).

*Subordinates:* A person under the authority or control of another within an organization: a junior, assistant, or minion (House, 1975).

*Travesty:* Something that is shocking, upsetting, or ridiculous because it is not what it is supposed to be (Harper, 2014).

### **Assumptions**

It was necessary for me to make several assumptions to conduct this study. The first assumption I made was that the multitude of literature that has addressed the Black male's inability to succeed in American society and raised the consciousness of many would compel possible participants to engage in this study openly. Secondly, I assumed that individuals who experienced issues of this nature would be willing to openly and honestly participate. I also assumed that mentors of the chosen mentoring group would openly share their experience within the program and provide access to possible mentees. Lastly, I assumed there would not be a problem gaining participants on the college campus where I worked, which hosts the program, due to the familiarity shared between me and program mentors.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The purpose of this study was to explore and examine the leadership strategies of a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. The extent of this study focused on discovering the strategies that have proven beneficial to the success of Black males when navigating life's challenges. The factors I discovered and deemed beneficial created the need to educate future Black males to the existence of this program. Furthermore, introducing the discovered factors to other mentoring programs that focus on decreasing issues that hinder the positive growth of Black males could foster a better understanding of how to improve the success rate of Black males.

The delimitations of the study occurred due to a couple of reasons. First, I excluded Hispanic males, American Indian males, and Asian American Pacific Islander



males and other men of color that have experienced difficulties navigating life challenges from this study. Although the excluded men of color have also experienced trouble navigating life's challenges, my focus in this study was on mentoring programs for Black males. Another delimitation was that women of color, who are also facing similar issues, were not included in this study.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study lie in the fact that the purpose was to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of a certain aspect of a specific human experience within a formal mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. This fact precludes drawing broad inferences from interview data from other mentors and mentees at programs located in other areas of Florida or other states. This study was limited further due to the fact the targeted population was Black male program participants from a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. The last limitation of the study was that although many males of color, Indian American, Spanish American, and Asian American and Pacific Islanders face life challenges that are similar to or worse than Black males, they were not part of this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Significance to Practice**

Current literature suggests that Black males have negatively affected the economic, civic, and social levels of the United States for decades (Lee & Ransom, 2012). It is vital to discover solutions to the suggested adverse effect of Black men as a demographic shift resulting in ethnic and racial minorities becoming the majority by 2050

is predicted (Palmer et al., 2009). Palmer et al. (2009) further suggested Black males are significant human capital. Improving the Black male contribution to the United States is vital to economic, civic, and social outcomes (Lee & Ransom, 2012). Along similar lines, Palmer et al. suggested improving the abilities of African American males will prove beneficial to the African American community, U.S. economy, and U.S. global competitiveness.

### **Significance to Theory**

Exploring the leadership strategies within mentoring revealed the tools needed to assist current and future Black males in developing the necessary skills to manage life's challenges. Increasing the number of skilled Black males in African American society provides a needed resource with the potential to mentor and lead younger Black males away from elements that hinder their growth to a higher level of existence and accomplishment. Exploring the leadership strategies in selected mentoring models may provide insight into leadership strategies that lead to successful outcomes for Black males, which may further provide the ability to enhance Black male mentoring programs to generate positive results. With this knowledge, researchers may be able to create or improve mentoring models that focus on improving adverse outcomes of Black males.

### **Significance to Social Change**

Creating or improving mentoring models, which help alter the inability of Black males to find success in American society, would reduce the flow of Black males into the penal system. Altering the failure of Black males would improve the economy and create men of color with the ability and desire to improve the African American society and

assist the United States in its quest for global superiority. Improving the United States economically, civically, and socially through improving the Black males' ability to contribute positively will create positive social changes on educational, economic, and safety levels.

### **Summary and Transition**

A review of the extant literature has revealed the need to reset the agenda for men of color (Harper, 2014), specifically Black males. There has been little literature addressing leadership strategies designed to improve the status of Black males in American society. On the other hand, a plethora of literature utilizes a pathological discourse that "caricature Black men as lazy, incompetent, untrustworthy, and undeserving of respectability in our society" (Harper, 2014, p. 116). The majority of existing literature confines Black males to environments associated with drugs, crime, athletics, and academic failure (Harper & Davis, 2012). This association makes it appear that Black males are a plague upon society for which there is no solution.

Regardless of the literature portraying Black males as poor performing and troubled individuals with a bleak future that little can be done to correct, Black males desire to succeed. In fact, Smith (2005) suggested it is not that Black males seek to fail. A poll conducted by Junior Achievement Worldwide and the Diversity Pipeline Alliance revealed 89% of African American youths planned to go to college compared to 79% of Whites and 77 % of Hispanics (Smith, 2005).

In Chapter 2, I will present the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the literature addressing and informing the scholarly world of the Black male's inability to navigate

life's challenges. I will also examine the leadership strategies of mentoring as a possible solution to provide Black males with the needed direction and leadership to succeed. The majority of literature throughout the decades has served mostly to inform others about the problem. The fact that in 2013 Black males' enrollment in an institution of higher learning was a dismal 4.5% (Scott et al., 2013) suggested that there was a vital need to explore initiatives or mentoring programs with the ability to provide insight or a solution to this issue.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Some have suggested that lack of leadership (Scott et al., 2013) is a causal factor in why many Black males take the wrong path in life and make decisions that result in underachievement and underrepresentation. An underachievement that some (Barker & Avery, 2012; Gündemir, Homan, Dreu, & Vugt, 2014) suggested negatively affects the Black male's ability to succeed in American society. Many remain uneducated, unemployed, or incarcerated for the majority of their adult lives (Dyce, 2013). There is a massive amount of literature addressing the Black male's plight in American society; however, most literature serves only to inform of the existence of this problem. There is a grave need to discover and implement strategies designed to move beyond informing and work to improving the Black males' engagement and persistence (Barker & Avery, 2012).

In this study, the focus was mentoring, specifically formal mentoring, a process of structured and trusting relationships that bring young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement. This process is vital to developing or improving the competence and character of the mentee (Grimes, 2014). I elicited, compared, contrasted, and evaluated the successful leadership strategies used in the formal mentoring of a selected mentoring program in the Southeastern United States to determine their contributions to the successful outcomes experienced by Black male program participants.

Mentoring has proven its worth in personal and business forums for many decades

(Chronus, 2015). Within this study, my focus was to discover if leadership strategies in formal mentoring provide the same worth when focused on improving the Black male's status in American society. The inability of Black males to successfully persist through life's challenges is prominent within a plethora of literature, while current literature has been instrumental in raising public awareness (Harper, 2014). Awareness does not provide possible solutions to increasing the Black male's ability to navigate life's trials and tribulations successfully though.

The purpose of this study was to determine the critical success factors of a selected mentoring program through examining the leadership strategies used in program directives to help Black males realize their opportunity for successful outcomes. I conducted semistructured interviews to explore the essential elements of success in life as perceived by current and former program participants and mentors. In this study, I used the common elements that I discovered through data collection of the mentoring program to determine if the mentoring program provides the elements which the interviewed participants believed to be important in fostering a positive result.

In this study, I have presented suggested contributing factors to Black males' failure to navigate life's challenges. These failures begin because of educational challenges that contribute to unemployment that lead to Black males' introduction to state and federal correctional facilities. During the literature review, I will introduce literature that suggests Black males are failing educational attainment, experiencing economic limitations, and losing their freedom in massive numbers. I will further address mentoring literature and its value as it related to the improvement of the current state of Black

males' success in American society. My exploration of current literature revealed the catastrophic failures of Black males and the frequent adverse effects to the Black man, the Black community, and American society if the current tragedy remains at the status quo.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

There is a massive amount of literature addressing the Black male's failure of educational achievement, economic limitations, and his inability to avoid state and federal correctional facilities. To locate literature for this review, I conducted searches of journals, books, newspaper articles, and dissertations using databases and academic search engines. My main focus when searching the *Journal of Men's Studies*, *Teachers College Record*, *Journal of Negro Education*, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Business Source Complete was peer-reviewed articles published within the 2012–2016 timeframe. The keyword search terms I used incorporated *Black males*, *African American males*, *educational attainment*, *educational failure*, *Black males' unemployment*, and *Black males incarceration*. Other key terms were, *mentoring*, *mentoring Black males*, *mentoring African American males*, *higher education*, *Black males completion of higher education*, *African American males completion of higher education*, *African American males in prison*, and *Black males in prison*.

In this study, I focused on discovering leadership strategies that have improved the ability of Black males when navigating life's challenges. Because of this, a significant

amount of my exploration was focused on mentoring and found within the *Journal of Men's Studies*, *Journal of Negro Education*, *Journal of African Americans in Education*, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, and *ABI/INFORM Complete*.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The inability of Black males to navigate educational, economic, and freedom challenges has resulted in negative outcomes creating major concerns in American society. The lack of achievement of Black males is not a new issue of concern as Black males' failure of positive achievement has raised concerns in American society for many decades (Beasley, Miller, & Cokley, 2015). The continual failure of Black males has become so grave that some 20th-century scholars (Barker & Avery, 2012; Butler, 2013; Jones, 2014) have explored whether Black boys need separation from women and men of different races as suggested by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1935. There are many scholars (Beasley et al., 2015; Farmer & Hope, 2015; McPhatter, 2015) who have researched and presented factors that influence African American males' inability to pilot life's challenges or who explored the impact of increasing the Black males' ability to succeed. Conversely few (Harper, 2014; Toliver, 2012) have explored strategies to correct the problem.

My focus with this study was to explore leadership strategies in mentoring for the purpose of understanding implemented strategies contribution to improving the success of Black males in American society. In this study, I used House's (1971) path-goal theory of leadership to accomplish this task. Path-goal leadership, which was originally developed by Evans (1970) and modified by House, stems from Vroom's (1964)



expectancy theory, which suggested that an individual will act in a certain way with the expectation the actions will create a certain outcome (Lunenburg, 2012). Path-goal leadership creates a relationship that exists between a leader's style and follower's characteristics within an organizational setting (House, 1996). Path-goal theory is ideal for addressing the leadership strategies of formal mentoring programs designed to achieve specific outcomes.

According to Murdoch (2013), directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented are the four leadership styles that comprise path-goal leadership. Murdoch further hypothesized that subordinates will better benefit from the aggressive nature of the directive style of leadership, while supportive leadership creates a friendly climate with verbal recognition of subordinates' achievements. The participative leader assumes a consultative behavior, whereas the achievement-oriented leader creates, assigns, and expects subordinates highest level of performance during completion of given tasks (Sosik, & Godshalk 2000).

Informing the world that a dilemma which existed during days of slavery still exists in 2016 may create a sense of sympathy for Black males, but sympathy will not create a solution. Black males are experiencing failure on a massive scale (Dyce, 2013; Goings, 2015; Guy, 2014; Harrison, Martin & Fuller, 2015; Jones, 2014; Rose, 2013) and knowing this fact does not correct or improve the Black male's inability to succeed in life's pursuits. However, the knowledge that can be discovered using path-goal leadership may prove valuable to addressing the Black males' inability to persist through life's

challenges. Path-goal leadership identifies the need for immediate action, which may require aggressively dictating directives in a structured environment (Murdoch, 2013). The directive element, combined with the supportive, participative, and achievement oriented elements creates a nucleus with the ability to uncover existing or discovering new solutions to improve Black males' inability to navigate life's challenges. An inability that some (Dyce, 2013; Famer & Hope, 2015) suggested begins with educational failures and snowballs into unemployment and incarceration.

### **Educational Failures**

Historically, the scholastic opportunity for Black males did not exist until after the civil war (Toldson, 2014). The benefits of higher education belonged to those who were male, wealthy, and White. Some (Ciardello, 2012; Kovic, 2014) suggested a connection between the Black males' inability to navigate life's challenges and laws forbidding the education of slaves. However, the passing of the 14th amendment provided equal protection under the law preventing discrimination by race concerning school admissions (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). In 2016, armed with the legal rights and responsibility to be educated, Black males continue to fail this life challenge at alarming rates.

Many Black males that pursue educational endeavors fail to experience completion (Harper, 2014). In 2013, 17.4% of Black males that pursued higher education experienced Bachelor completion compared to 44.8% of Black females, and 54.5% of their White male counterparts (Department of Commerce, 2013). The 17.4% represented a 1.7% decrease from the 19.1% of the previous year (Harper, 2014). Harper (2014) further highlighted Black males lack of completion when revealing Black male

completion rate was 17.4% in 2011, which was a decrease from the previous 2010 year; and completion of Master programs was a mere 1.5%.

By calculating a continued reduction in the percentage presented by the department of commerce and Harper on a continued yearly decline, I found that within 10 years the proportion of Black males persisting beyond enrollment in Bachelor degree programs will be 0.4%. Those experiencing completion of a Masters or higher will be nonexistent. Black males are disappearing from college and university campuses throughout the United States (Dyce, 2013). Dyce (2013) further suggested that by 2070 Black males will disappear from institutions of higher learning if persistence beyond enrollment continues to decrease without implementation of initiatives or programs designed to lead and support Black males to successful completion of enrolled programs.

Anyone who takes the time to read about Black male's pursuit of higher learning could confidently conclude their future is bleak, that most do poorly, and that there is little that can be done to reverse the current downward spiral (Harper, 2014). Myriad literature (Dyce, 2013; Ellis, 2004; Harper, 2014) has reported on the Black males' inability to complete higher educational pursuits. Literature examining initiatives or programs with successful leadership strategies designed to direct and lead Black males to successful completion are minimal. There is a gap separating Black males from the American mainstream, and little has happened over the years to help eliminate or lessen this gap (Tolliver, 2012).

In this study, my focus was on methods of closing this gap separating Black males from mainstream America. I discovered methods by exploring successful leadership strategies used in a selected Black male mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. Erasing or lessening this gap by identifying leadership strategies designed to lead the Black male beyond pursuit to completion will prove beneficial to the betterment of the African American community, the safety of the United States, and U.S. global competitiveness (Palmer et al., 2009).

Arguably no child dreams of becoming a high school dropout or an individual who failed to enter or complete an institution of higher learning. Much literature suggests that many Black males are disappearing from college and university campuses like endangered species (Butler, Evans, Brooks, Williams, & Bailey, 2013; Dyce, 2013). An endangered species is a species that is at inordinately high risk for failure across virtually all life domains (Tolliver, 2012). Current research suggests, without intervention in the realm of educational attainment, which adversely affects the economic situation and freedom, Black males may soon find themselves on the endangered list (Tolliver, 2012). Along similar lines, Hart Research Associates (2012) suggested that Black males face violence, drugs, addiction, negative culture, and educational failure, elements that negatively affect Black males' ability to succeed. Along similar lines, Livingston and Nahimana (2006) suggested Black males have faced tremendous obstacles of chronic poverty, early school failure, high rates of school dropout, joblessness, fatherlessness, and increasing incarceration; barriers that negatively affect Black males as they struggle to achieve decency, dignity, and success in American society.

Failing to navigate these issues and concerns successfully creates uncontrollable, uneducated Black males that are on the verge of extinction (Dyce, 2013). Similarly, Livingston and Nahimana (2006) suggested the failure to navigate these obstacles has resulted in millions of Black males failing to lead healthy and productive lives. For years many have made excuses for the uneducated, uncontrollable nature of Black males, referring to their shortcomings as biological flaws (Welch, 2007).

According to Dyce (2013), creating excuses and failing to look for solutions have placed Black males in an endangered status. A status which has created a downward spiral leading to economic failures and incarceration on a major scale. Tolliver (2012) supported Dyce when suggesting Black males are perceived to be on the brink of failure across virtually all life domains and facing possible future destruction.

Within American society, education is the great equalizer (Dyce, 2013). Literature, however; reveals many Black males have failed to embrace this vision, resulting in many Black males lacking the ability to become gainfully employed, which contributes to their introduction to state and federal correctional institutions (Richardson, & Brackle, 2013). There is a gap separating Black males from the American mainstream. By the age of 17, the average Black male is four years behind the average White student, and Black 12th-grade males score lower than White eight graders in reading, math, United States (U.S) history, and geography (Harris, 2010). Black male's lack of educational attainment has been a national debate for many decades (Jones, 2014).

Within the margins of the democratic republic, there is a national crisis of American education focusing on Black male's lack of educational achievement (Dyce,

2013). Literature is laden with research (Ani, 2013; Dyce, 2014; McCray, Floyd & Yawn, 2012; Ray, 2012) surrounding the Black males' tragic accomplishments in educational achievement. Experts from Columbia, Princeton, and Harvard University agree there is a rapidly increasing population of poorly educated African American men that are becoming disconnected from mainstream society (Hines & McCoy, 2013). Poorly educated African American males that are overrepresented in juvenile detention facilities, prisons, and special education classes, yet underrepresented in secondary school honors, advanced courses, and on college campuses (Hines & McCoy, 2013).

African American males have experienced educational disengagement for many decades; a disengagement that has resulted in extreme levels of unemployment, illiteracy, and lack of preparedness (Palmer et al., 2009). Palmer et al. (2009) further suggested, this disengagement creates problems in education attainment for African American males that emerge in elementary school and continues to deepen through higher education. Along similar lines, Cuyjet (2009) referred to disengagement as academic achievement leakage, an event that occurs around the third grade and continues throughout the doctoral and advanced professional levels where bright, capable African American males encounter a slow destruction creating problems of educational attainment. Problems of disengagement and attainment that some (Garibaldi, 2014; Palmer et al., 2010; Washington, 2013) believe are a result of limited leadership received during the Black males' adolescent years.

Jones (2012) further supported Palmer et al. (2010), when revealing, within the last 25 years, black males have experienced systematically devastating results in social,

educational, and economic outcomes at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group regardless of gender, especially in the realm of educational achievement. Palmer et al., (2010); and Washington (2013) sentiments received support from Scott, Taylor, and Palmer (2013) who revealed college enrollment for Black males were 4.5% in 2013. Farmer and Wood (2015) further supported Scott et al., when revealing enrollment had fallen 2% in two years to 3.5% in 2015. Scott et al. (2013) further suggested poor achievement was due to critical problems that hinder Black males' completion of high school. On the contrary, other literature (Department of Commerce, 2013; Dyce, 2013; Harper, 2013) has shown many decades experienced an increase of Black male's enrollment in higher education. Although enrollment was suggested to have increased, and educational achievement has seen a significant increase from high school; persistence through college has remained in a dismal state (Bista & Jones 2013).

Whether or not enrollment has been a factor of Black males' educational failure; the fact remains, many enter, only a few experience completions. The inability to navigate successfully has been and continues to be the outcome of Black males in higher education (Wood & Palmer, 2013). Educational assessment of Black males in higher education has prompted some (Barker & Avery, 2012; Butler, 2013; Gibson, 2014; Tolliver, 2012) to suggest black males accomplish less than other races and ethnic groups in social and economic endeavors. Worst still their lack of achievement is incomparable when it comes to low educational attainment levels, chronic unemployment, dying at an early age, and introduction into a local or state penal system.

The issue of the Black males' educational failure has reached such disappointing states that some (Baker & Avery, 2012; Butler, 2013; Jones, 2014) believe Black males need particular attention because they face unique circumstance and problems. Butler (2013) further suggested that improving the achievements of Black males could only be accomplished if Black males become a distinct group, separate and apart from black women and all men of other races. W. E. B Du Bois shared Butler's belief in 1935 when he explored if Black boys need separate schools (Jones, 2014). Although W. E. B Du Bois insight of days' past are respected, it is not believed by this author the question posed in 1935 deserves consideration in the 20th century. This belief exists due to the fact, Black males' educational achievements are just as dismal if not worse at Historically Black Colleges and Universities than at White Colleges and Universities.

Regardless of the cause, or the venue, Black males continue to fall behind their female and White counterparts in college participation, retention, and degree completion rates (Harper, 2013). Black males' failure of educational attainment has prompted many (Farmer & Wood, 2015; Guy, 2014; Harrison et al. 2015; Palmer, Wood, Dancy & Strayhorn, 2014; Scott et al. 2013) to explore factors that contribute to the educational downfall of Black males. Suggested factors such as economics, family dynamics, lack of remedial education, lack of skills, confused identity, cultural change, educational support, and knowledge transfer. Gibson (2014) further suggested, campus racial environment, insufficient financial aid, lack of minority faculty and staff, lack of funds for intervention programs, and lack of guidance and support are other barriers that negatively affect Black males' successful completion of higher education.



Campus racial environment, and lack of Black faculty and staff as negative barriers to retention creates a dilemma due to the fact neither of the suggested barriers are issues at Historically Black Colleges or Universities; yet the negative retention rates and dismal completion of Black males are as significant if not worse. Nonetheless, I agree with the lack of guidance and support barrier, hence the scope of this study. Current literature reveals the perceived barriers are immense and they are addressed, presented again and again by many scholars illuminating issues that have been explored many times prior with the sole purpose of informing. Informing creates frustration through knowledge without action (Stegall, 2014). Armed with the massive amount of knowledge surrounding the underlying factors of the Black male's dismal educational achievement provides awareness of the problem. However, knowledge without action does nothing to remedy the fact that in 2013 a mere 17.4% of Black males graduated college with a Bachelor's degree, 1.5% with a Masters or higher (Department of Commerce, 2013).

Calculating a continued decrease in the percentage presented by the department of commerce and Harper, within ten years the proportion of Black males graduating college with a Bachelor's degree will be 0.4%. Those receiving a Masters or higher will be extinct. Dyce (2013) echoed the travesty of decreasing Black Male achievement rates by suggesting if higher education rates for Black males continue to decline without intervention, by 2070 Black men will disappear altogether from higher education.

Research of literature and statistical data revealed Black males' attainment, retention, and completion rates of higher education have been decreasing for many years (Harper, 2014). Conservation and graduation rates for Black males have continually

decreased; resulting in many colleges implementing programs specifically for Black males (Gibson, 2014). In fact, student affairs departments of many colleges have extended their facilities and support systems to address challenges and needs of socially, logistically and diverse Black males to improve recruitment (Bista & Jones, 2013). Bista and Jones (2013) further suggested the attention given by student affairs departments to improve recruitment of Black males may not address the challenges that create barriers to successfully navigating life's challenges; therefore, contributing to a consistently low retention and graduation rate. Along similar lines, Harper (2014) suggested, much has many colleges have done much to address the issue the Black male attainment, yet completion rate seems to have worsened. Even with improved enrollment rates, Dyce (2013) further suggested Black male baccalaureate degree attainment remains in a tragic state.

The tragic educational achievement of Black males has become so dire that some (Guy, 2014; Tolliver, 2013 and Washington, 2013) characterize Black males as endangered species. A species that is at inordinately high risk for failure across virtually all life domains. Guy (2014) also suggested Black males are an endangered species in the educational realm by equating their journey to salmon swimming upstream against an unyielding current, encountering bears, eagles, and waterfalls; many will begin the journey, but only a few will experience completion.

Leading Black males to educational completion is "an economic, civic, and social imperative" (Ellis, 2004, p. 2). Along similar lines, Palmer et al. (2009), suggested

American education must educate a diverse student population to ensure a competitive America in the world's global economy. Additionally, Palmer et al. (2013) suggested that by 2050 minority populations are expected to comprise 50% of the U.S. population. The failure to condition Black males to persist to completion will create negative outcomes.

Black males are necessary human capital that society must acknowledge (Palmer et al., 2009). Along similar lines, Harris (2013) suggested Black males represent an enormous pool of potential talent that need opportunities that provide them the ability to rise to greater heights and overcome barriers that stagnated the progress of past generations. One of the possibilities according to Brondyk and Searby (2013) is mentoring due to its ability to recruit, retain, and promote high potential talent. Furthermore, an increase in minority populations together with a decrease in the White population creates the urgency of addressing this demographic shift with American higher education leading a diverse student population to ensure a competitive America. (Palmer et al. 2009). Harris (2013) supported this when stating, the ability of Black males to reverse the current negative employment rates, and access high wage jobs, skilled markets, and upward mobility will require academic and occupational credentials.

Much literature suggests Black males' pursuit of educational success is in a state of disrepair (Harper, 2014). The scholarly world must move beyond simply informing of an issue that has hindered Black males for decades, and work to correct the problem. Black males are human capital that society must acknowledge (Palmer et al., 2009). Furthermore, Black males embody a remarkable collection of prospective talent that need opportunities that help them create the ability to rise to better heights and prevail over

barriers that stagnated the advancement of past generations (Harris, 2013), thus creating educated, Black men with the ability to avoid the perils of unemployment

### **Unemployment and Economic Failures**

The high documented unemployment rates of Black males in 2016 is not a new concern; Black male unemployment has persisted for decades prompting scholars, sociologists, economists, policymakers, and advocates to address what is believed to be an intractable situation (Harris, 2013). Harris (2013) posits there are many suggested causes of Black male's unemployment, some revealing modest results, but the lack of education is a significant contributor. Lack of education has led to many Black males discontinuing their educational pursuit. This discontinuation decreases skills needed to become and remain gainfully employed (Walker, 2012).

Upon conducting an investigation of the United States employment rates, I discovered that every race and gender is affected by unemployment to some degree. However, African-Americans, especially African-American males are affected to a greater extent (University of California Berkeley, 2012). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) supported the University of California Berkeley when suggesting African American male unemployment rate of 10% more than doubled the 4% of White males unemployed in 2016. The presented percentages do not account for the 15.6% of Black males incarcerated that same year. Many Black males have experienced unemployment for decades; an unemployment rate that some (Clark & Dugdale, 2014; Harris, 2013; Walker, 2012) suggested resulted from the Black males' minimal educational achievement.

The United States endured a great recession in December 2007 (University California Berkley, 2011). A recession considered to be the worst economic downturn since the 1930's. UC Berkley (2011) further suggested the United States, persisted through this financial downturn, and experienced economic growth in 2011 that created 1.6 million jobs, and continued to create more than 1,000 additional jobs each month during the second half of the year. In the midst of positive job growth, Black males' unemployment rates became worse while Black females and White males' unemployment improved (UC Berkley, 2011).

Allen (2014) supported UC Berkley when he suggested America experienced an improvement of jobless rates, but African-American men seemed trapped in a permanent recession. Allen (2013) further suggested that social scientist, economist, and other experts declared a lack of training, loss of public sector jobs and high incarceration rates heavily support the suggested permanent recession of Black men. Along similar lines, Harris (2013) when suggesting evidence has revealed that lack of academic preparation, lack of work experience, and lack of navigation support cripples the ability of Black male's employment opportunities. Harris suggested this was evident in 2012; 3 years after the recession the Black males' unemployment rate remained in double digits for every working age category, and Black male's employment has steadily decreased for over 40 years.

The concern of the Black male's negative economic effect on the United States has prompted many to explore the causal factors surrounding this negativity. Chronic poverty, unemployment, substandard housing, and family instability are some of the

many suggested causal factors surrounding the Black male's negative status in society. However, the common linking factor of the Black male economic drain on America in the majority of literature is a lack of education, which influences the existence of the other causal factors and diminishes economic gains (Bennett & Vedder, 2015). Criminal activity and uneducated Black males are synonymous; this is what the majority of literature leads the reader to believe.

Some (Groth, 2011) suggested there exist a direct link between lack of education, unemployment, and criminal activity. If there truly exist a direct relationship between illiteracy and crime; discovering leadership strategies designed to help Black males gain a sense of dignity has the potential to decrease the negative criminal impact of Black men in the United States, improve economic gains, and decrease state and federal correctional populations. The massive amount of literature that serves only to inform does nothing for transforming the Black male's status from burden to society to upstanding citizen.

Since the inception of the United States of America, Social imagery has become embedded within its landscape (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012). If we are honest with ourselves as a people, we will acknowledge that the negativity of Black males throughout history, whether prison incarceration, dead-beat daddy status, or dismal educational achievement rates encompass the fabric of society. Whenever an element that survives upon social domination, economic exploitation, and disenfranchisement creeps into societal thinking, it forms the experience of the diverse cultural group about a particular or perceived reality (Howard et al., 2012). When there is a lack of quality leadership and guidance, Palmer et al., (2013) suggested the reality of uneducated,

unemployed Black males in the United States whether particular or perceived causes harm physically, economically, and results in the incarceration of many Black males.

The purpose of this study was not to seek strategies designed to manage the problem; it is to assist in correcting the problem through examining leadership strategies intended to lead the individual. Specifically, transformational leadership, which Sosik and Godshalk (2000) suggested was consistent with requirements of effective mentoring. Managing the Black male's inability to navigate life's challenges is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole; no matter how hard one tries there is not a permanent solution. Addressing the temporary solution to this problem some scholars (Thomas, 2015; Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2013; Welch, 2007) revealed the failed attempt of the United States to manage this problem with the temporary fix of incarceration. It is time for society to become unconventional and look beyond managing this issue and look to leading it with a process that involves a long-term role-model relationship that is career and developmentally focused (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Because in 2016 the best-perceived solution is to incarcerate the Black male.

### **Black Male Incarceration**

Research has revealed that African-American males comprise 6% of the country's population, yet they represent over 50% of the penal population (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). Black males 18 and 19 years old experience prison at nine times the rate of White males; for Black males 20 to 24 years old the rate is seven times that of White males (Harris, 2013). Furthermore, 1 in 3 Black males will become a member of a state or federal correctional facility in their lifetime (Harris, 2013). In fact, there were a

greater number of Black males incarcerated, on probation or parole in 2016 than enslaved in 1850 (Price, 2016). Along similar lines, Levine (2012) suggested in the 2000s more African American males suffered incarceration than had jobs at the end of the decade. In the 2000s Black male employment paled in comparison to Black male incarceration rates.

For decades, there have been concerns about the adverse effect of Black male's criminal activity. Criminal activity that some (Clark & Dugdale, 2014; Steward, 2012) suggested has a direct link to lack of educational achievement. Along similar lines, Livingston and Nahimana (2006) suggested chronic poverty, early school failure and high rates of school dropout have increased urban incarceration. Livingston and Nahimana further suggested violent crimes have steadily declined over a 20-year time frame, however, the number of Black males in detention centers and prison continues to increase. This lack of achievement creates life challenges of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and criminal activity. Life challenges that many Black males fail to navigate successfully, resulting in the experience of high deprivation and becoming a burden to society (Clark & Dugdale, 2014).

Black males who remain illiterate become a burden to society criminally and economically (Banks, 2012). Price (2016) further suggested that this burden resulting from criminal activity has prevented Black males from voting and from living in public housing, as well as increasing their experiences of discrimination in hiring; has excluded them from juries, and denied them educational opportunities. Along similar lines, Harris (2013) suggested the existence of an insidious cycle that lacks skills, exposure, and educational prerequisites that trap Black males and expose them to crime, violence,



arrest, and incarceration. Elements that renders Black males' unemployable, and create unrelenting challenges that: diminish the Black male's ability to become a fruitful resident, decreases civically engaged taxpayers, creates a consumption on the tax base, diminishes community life and safety, and suppresses financial savings (Harris, 2013).

The high incarceration rate of Black males has resulted in significant deprivations of unemployment, lack of aspirations, poor mental, and physical health that hinder Black males through their lifetime (Farmer & Hope, 2015; Harper, 2014). Along similar lines, Clark and Dugdale (2014) suggested the lack of aspirations, poor mental health, and unemployment, elements that reveal a direct link to criminal activity has a strong relationship to low educational achievement. This relationship suggests events and outcomes of adults' lives are the results of educational and societal processes, that creates a combination of influences in which the amount of literacy obtained plays a major role (Clark & Dugdale, 2014).

Illiteracy is the linking component of poor life outcomes of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and crime that are ruining lives (Cree et al., 2012). Black males who remain illiterate become a burden to society; they are 47 times more likely to get incarcerated than male college graduates (Banks, 2012). The high probability of incarcerations stems from Black males experiencing unemployment, lack of aspirations, poor mental, and physical health, and great deprivations, elements linked directly to the lack of educational achievement (Clark & Dugdale, 2014). Black male's navigation of life's challenges is synonymous with failure; their future is bleak, they all do poorly, and there is little that can be done to reverse this tragedy (Harper, 2014). Harper's (2014)

suggestion may survive on the argument of oppositional culture which suggests Black males are not motivated to pursue excellence; and they devalue academic achievement (Harrison et al., 2015). This belief is what the majority of literature on Black males leads many to believe. This belief and the fact that the majority of scholars seek out the negative aspects of the Black males to report on, but rarely explore his positives attributes may be the result of Social Imagery.

The Black male's failure of education and economic instability has been managed for decades through incarceration with little impact on correcting this problem. The temporary fix of incarceration will confine the problem for a specific amount of time. At the completion of imprisonment, the problem returns to American society. Relying on the conventional wisdom that managing this issue through incarceration is the great equalizer may add injury to insult and create a similar global recession like the one that followed the financial crisis in 2008 (Kuehn, 2013).

The Black males' adverse effect reaches beyond the Black community; continuing to inform instead of finding a solution has the potential to create global implications. It is time to focus beyond the temporary fix of incarceration and concentrate on transforming the individual, not manage the situation. Incarceration is a temporary fix that locks up the problem; a problem that will one day be released back into society. The need to discover ways to transform the mindset of the individuals causing the problem is paramount. Failure to reach beyond conventional thinking and embrace the unconventional to improve the Black male's successful navigation of life's challenges may create negative global implications.

## **Global Implications**

The conventional wisdom in current leadership has become a barrier to innovation and success. The assumption that old ideas will always work creates roadblocks to success (Romero, 2012). The conventional wisdom that White males will continue to keep the U.S globally competitive, and that incarceration is the needed solution to curtailing the Black males' problem may prove detrimental to the economic status and future of U.S global competitiveness. Especially if the demographic transformation predicted by Palmer et al., (2009) of the U.S. population becomes a reality.

Regardless of the plethora of literature illuminating this issue; and the fact that Black males have experienced systematic failures for many decades, there is a misconception in the belief that Black males do not value positive achievement (Harrison, Martin, & Fuller, 2015). Correcting the disastrous state of Black males in American society requires much more than increasing the awareness of the problem. Information without action is frustration (Stegall, 2014). Stegall (2014) further suggested that it is possible to discover much by conducting research; however, failing to put knowledge into action creates frustration and a situation that becomes stagnant or continues to worsen (Harper, 2014).

Although some research has revealed, many Black males possess an inherent strength, which creates behavioral and emotional strengths that produce attributes such as, resistance toward societal systems, fearlessness in expressing their opinion, and respect for adults and peers (Lamert, Rowan, Longhurst, & Kim, 2006). Other scholars (Bell, 2014; Ford & Moore, 2013; Guy, 2014; Harrison et al., 2015; Scott, 2015;

Washington, 2013) have made it abundantly clear that an enormous portion of Black males is suffering a prolonged crisis. A crisis that is distinguished by the persistence of multi-dimensional Black-White achievement gaps, being written off by educators as unteachable, failure of juvenile justice systems to rehabilitate them, being ignored and excluded by mental health systems, and ill-equipped, welfare systems that are unable to respond to their multiple problems. Faced with problems like these, Tolliver (2012) suggested it is likely that Black males will experience downward socioeconomic mobility within current and future generations creating a negative global impact.

The gap separating black males from the mainstream of America continues, and little has been done through the years to help erase or lessen the gap (Tolliver, 2012). Along similar lines, Robinson (2012) suggested the majority of research designed to examine the Black males' inability to persist simply informs upon the problem. Literature examining improving experiences of ethnic minority groups are limited.

The plethora of literature addressing and informing the scholarly public of the dismal achievement rate of Black men reveals the utmost importance to explore and examine possible initiatives or programs that may correct or minimize the current negative achievement rates of the Black males (Grimes, 2014). With the focus of identifying a solution to this problem; leadership strategies will be examined, specifically strategies with the potential to transform the Black males mental and physical well-being. Suggestions made throughout this study advocates that failure of educational completion, economic limitations, and incarceration create a road map leading to the 20th-century Black male's inability to navigate life's challenges. Livingston and

Nahimana (2006) suggested chronic poverty, early school failures, and high rates of drops outs contribute to the Black male's inability to navigate life's challenges. Harper (2014) suggested the Black males' educational success is in a state of disrepair. Harris (2013) suggested unemployment of Black males is an intractable situation.

Enslaved Black men encountered the same factors often with deadly consequences, yet they found ways to persist. Some believe that Black males do not care about successfully navigating life's challenges (Harper & Davis, 2012). Much literature supports this theory; however, slave literature reveals the Black male possess an inherited innate desire to succeed. It appears the 20th-century Black male is losing that inherited innate desire to succeed and could learn a lot about navigating life's challenges from their enslaved ancestors.

It seems the trials and tribulations of African American ancestors, the lives lost, the bloodshed and the beatings endured in pursuit of educational, economic, and freedom endeavors have little meaning to today's' generation of Black men. The lack of achievement of Black males in 2016 would lead many to believe Black males are no better off now than they were during the days of slavery when Black males experienced mental and physical denial of all opportunities seeking educational, economic or freedom attainment (Woodson, 2004). Some (Milosevic & Bass, 2014; Ray, 2012; Soderlund & Geraldi, 2012) believe in creating a better future; one must revisit. Milosevic and Bass (2014) suggested looking to the past is an important way of discovering the importance of recent struggles that contributed to the present. Soderlund and Geraldi (2012) further

suggested an evaluation of the past has the potential to create an understanding of the importance of a current phenomenon, which may foster the desire for positive change.

Revisiting the enslaved Black males' historical navigation of life's challenge may provide the 20th-century Black male with an understanding of the struggles. An understanding of the persistence of their ancestors despite the possibility of death and constant dehumanization endured ensuring the rights they now possess to obtain an education at any time on any level (Mitchell, 2008). It is possible this understanding may help ignite the 20th-century Black males desire to navigate life's barriers to success.

In 2016, a Black male has the same opportunities as any other race to gain educational and economic stability and freedom. However, 10<sup>th</sup> century laws denied enslaved Black men access to education, economic gains, and freedom (Mitchell, 2008). Historical accounts taken from Slave narratives revealed the Black males desire for educational, and economic stability was strong; however, the struggle to attain this stability was brutal, and many times deadly (Woodson, 2004). Mitchell (2008) also revealed punishment of Black males seeking education, economic, and freedom could involve loss of privileges, imprisonment, whippings, beatings, mutilation, or death. According to Strickland (2014) violation for one slave resulted in a whipping from sunrise to the sunset. The owner would whip the slave until he was tired; rest then whip the slave again. To add insult to injury, the owner would sponge the wounds with a mixture of vinegar, salt, and pepper.

In 2016 law enforcement, there exists a three-strike rule. The three-strike rule sentences the offender to a much harsher penalty for each subsequent infraction; with the

third infraction receiving the final most devastating and unbearable penalty. The three-strike rule, although legally established in the early 1990s, is not a new concept (Apel, 2013). As it related to enslaved blacks and their educational, economic, and freedom pursuit, there was an unspoken three-strike rule. According to Woodson (2004), a slave would receive a whipping with a single braid whip the first time he was caught pursuing educational, economic or freedom attainment. The second infraction would result in another whipping using a cat o'nine tail whip. The third infraction would result in amputation or death, the final most devastating and unbearable penalty.

Problems, encountered by the 20th-century Black male, (single parent household, poor economic status) do exist. However, those problems while not disregarded appear minute compared to the threat of beatings, mutilation, or death encountered during slavery by Black men and women paving the way for their future, and the 20th-century Black males present. The rights and opportunities of the 20th-century Black males resulted from the ancestral sacrifice of blood, sweat, tears, and sometimes death (Woodson, 2004). Faced with punishments of this caliber, many slaves realizing that literacy was an avenue to mental and physical freedom (Clough, 2014) persisted despite the possible dangers; by devising creative methods to obtain educational literacy.

Some slaves gained educational and economic strength by observing White children during their study time. Some carried the books of White children to school, and would sit outside of the classroom, listen, and try to keep up with the lessons; others bribed poor White children with bread which they stored away from the Masters' table (Mitchell, 2008). Mitchell (2008) further suggested slaves who learned through these

creative methods would secretly meet out in secluded fields to teach other slaves the lessons which they learned. The enslaved Black male persisted and improved their wellbeing despite institutions which were initiated to extinguish his divine spark in an attempt to crush the bud of his genius. Although Black males naturally possess strong sagacity and a desire for success (Woodson, 2004), current literature depicts 20th-century Black males as individuals who does not care to navigate life's challenges (Harper, 2012) and choose to remain illiterate to existent paths of possible success.

Fredrick Douglas hypothesized those who remain illiterate confine themselves to a gloomy existence that creates economic limitations, and imprisons the individual mentally and physically (Saylor Foundation, 2013). Alluding to his days as a slave, Douglas revealed a combination of work, discipline, mental and emotional manipulation, and violence at the hand of slave owners transformed him into a brute (Saylor Foundation, 2013). Due to cruelties such as these, Douglas felt broken in body, soul, and spirit. His natural elasticity crushed, his intellect languished, his desire to read vanished, and the spark which once lingered in his eye was no more. Remembering his educational, economic, and freedom desires, Douglas lifted himself above the dehumanization, aggressively resisted and reestablished his manhood and his humanity (Saylor Foundation, 2013). Despite the deprivations of slavery, Douglas held firmly to the innate desire of surviving life's challenges (Woodson, 2004) Douglas persisted in becoming literate, refusing to be a slave in fact, regardless of being a slave in form (Saylor Foundation, 2013).



The achievement and persistence through whippings, beatings, amputations, and death demonstrated the extraordinary hunger of enslaved Blacks to navigate life's challenges (Saylor Foundation, 2013). Fredrick Douglas and other enslaved Blacks proved slave owners wrong that insisted enslaved Blacks did not have the ability for mental improvement nor was there any circumstance which would stimulate him to use his Intellectual powers (Woodson, 2004). Some literature suggests that the 20th-century Black male does not have the ability for mental improvement. However, the current dismal educational, economic, and imprisoned status of the 20th-century Black male would do little to prove former slave owners or anyone else wrong. Slave narratives revealed elements contributing to freedom, mentally and physically were imperative to enslaved Blacks; so important that some used clandestine means of extraordinary measures to move their dream to reality (Saylor Foundation, 2013). Current literature of the Black male status in American society would possibly make the ancestors of Black males roll over in their graves. Literature suggests the 20th-century Black male has lost the dreams of enslaved Black males, and they need assistance re-capturing the dream.

Recapturing the dream will not be an easy task. Because the mindset of society exists in a false reality due to the massive amount of literature that reveals and informs of the negativity of Black males. American society must evolve beyond the mindset of managing this problem and discover ways to lead change that transforms quickly and continuously, and produces powerful results (Kotter, 2015).

The plethora of literature addressing and informing the scholarly public of the dismal achievement rate of Black males reveals the utmost importance to explore and

examine possible initiatives or programs (Grimes, 2014) that may correct or minimize the current negative achievement rates of the Black males. One possible solution to help Black males change their mental and physical direction may be mentoring. Mentoring, specifically formal mentoring is believed by Some (Gibson, 2014; Grimes, 2014; Jarjoura, 2013 & Tolliver, 2012) to provide the elements necessary to transform the mindset of Black males to navigate life's challenges successfully. Along similar lines (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Hamburg, 2013; Thornton, 2014) suggested realization of this transformation may be possible through mentoring, a process that incorporates the needed strategies to successfully address and correct the inability of Black males to become successful. Furthermore, Kotter (2015) suggested that the mentoring process is comparable to the following elements (pp. 1–5):

- Create a sense of urgency: Craft and use a significant opportunity as a means for exciting people to sign up to change their organization.
- Build a guiding coalition: Assemble a group with the power and energy to lead and support a collaborative change effort.
- Articulate a strategic vision and initiatives: Shape a vision to help steer the change effort and develop strategic initiatives to achieve that vision.
- Enlist a volunteer army: Raise a large force of people who are ready, willing and urgent to drive change.
- Enable actions by removing barriers: Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that pose threats to the achievement of the vision.

- Generate short-term wins: Consistently produce, track, evaluate and celebrate volumes of small and large accomplishments and correlate them to results.
- Sustain acceleration: Use increasing credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't align with the vision; hire, promote, and develop a process with new projects, themes, and volunteers.
- Institute change: Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Taking into consideration Palmer et al.'s (2013) suggestion that Black males are human resources that society must acknowledge. And that mentoring is a process of human resource development that supports learning and knowledge transfer (Hamburg, 2013). I have asserted in this study that the improvement of the Black male's status from a burden on society to upstanding citizen may be possible through implementing strategies in mentoring programs that parallels leadership behaviors of supporting, motivating, inspiring, and developing.

### **Mentoring: A Possible Solution**

Fredrick Douglas once said it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men (McMillon, Simon, & Morenoff, 2014). If Douglas statement holds the slightest degree of value, mentoring may prove to be the most valuable solution for humanizing the quandary of Black men later in life, specifically when navigating life's challenges. Mentoring consists of a knowledge transfer and learning process where the experienced individual (mentor) guides a less experienced individual (mentee) with the

purpose of helping the mentee develop professional skills, attitudes, and competencies (Hamburg, 2013). Along similar lines, Sosik and Godshalk (2000) defined mentoring as the calculated combination of a more accomplished or knowledgeable person with a lesser accomplished or knowledgeable person, with the objective of helping the lesser accomplished person expand specific competencies.

The term "*mentor*," deeply rooted in Greek mythology, derives its meaning from the *Odyssey*, an epic poem where King Odysseus asked his friend Mentor to watch over his son while he was away fighting in the Trojan War. During the King's absence, Mentor coached and counseled Telemachus, Odysseus' son, guiding him in his development from infancy to early adulthood (Jarjoura, 2013). Mentoring has emerged as a promising and low-cost intervention for Black males in recent years; Miller, Barnes, and McKinnon (2012) and Gibson (2014) further suggested mentoring can create real, practical solutions to increasing the Black males' pursuit of a quality existence. Extensive documentation exists that support benefits of mentoring in the areas of career development and psychosocial enhancement (Brondyk, & Searby, 2013).

As explained by Ehrich and Hansford (1999), the focus of psychosocial enhancement is on helping the mentee develop a sense of competence and clarity of identity through role-modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling and friendship. Career development enhancement focuses on helping the mentee gain knowledge and prepares for career advancement through coaching, challenging assignments, exposure and visibility, and protection. These functions of mentoring parallel leadership strategies of support, motivation, inspiration, and development (Sosik et al., 2000). Along similar

lines, Clerpa (2008) suggested that mentors are leaders in disguise who inspires mentees to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more. Clerpa (2011) argues that if your procedures encourage others to dream further, learn more, and become more, you are a leader. Along similar lines, Sosik et al. (2000) suggested that mentors behave as leaders when they form values, perform as an example, and identify importance.

According to Bishop (2011), mentors are leaders who engage in deliberate action aimed at promoting learning that focuses on assessing the following needs

- Skills Enhancement- mentoring enables experienced, high competent staff, to pass their expertise on to others who need to acquire specific skills.
- Professional Identity- when younger employees are early in their careers they need help understanding what it means to be professional.
- Career Development- Mentoring helps employees plan, develop, and manage their careers. It also helps them become more resilient in times of change, more self-reliant in their careers and more responsible as self-directed learners
- Educational Support- Mentoring helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. Formal education and training complemented by the knowledge and hands-on experience of a competent practitioner.
- Organizational Development and Cultural Change- mentoring can help communicate the values, vision, and mission of the organization; a one-to-one relationship can help employees understand the organizational culture and make any necessary changes.

- Knowledge Management/Knowledge Transfer- mentoring provides for the interchange and exchange of information knowledge between members of different organizations, or individuals.

Many authors believe that mentoring parallels leadership, Clerpa (2008) suggested mentoring parallels leadership in the sense that mentoring like leadership facilitates continuity of organizational performance. Bishop (2011) defined mentoring as the voluntary union of a more accomplished or skilled person with a lesser capable or qualified person with the purpose sharing knowledge capable of assisting the lesser skilled person to grow and develop specific competencies. Bishop's definition parallels the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement; the ability of an individual to motivate others to forego self-interest in the interest of a collective vision and to contribute to the attainment of that vision; two leadership behaviors identified by Den Hartog and Koopman (2011). Kunich and Lester (1999) expressed the aspects of mentoring as verbs using an acronym to reveal the following aspects of effective mentoring.

- Model- mentor leads by example. Empathize- a true understanding of what the mentee is experiencing.
- Nurture- emphasis on development and understanding through a caring attitude. Teach- teaching the mentee.
- Organize- Organization is important for the mentor and the mentee.
- Respond- communication is vital in the process.

- Inspire- inspiration will have a profound, deeply rooted effect on the mentee.
- Network; Goal-set- introduction to other people that have the ability to help mentee is essential.

Even with citations of the many benefits of mentoring and leadership capabilities the scientific knowledge surrounding mentoring is under-developed (Miller et al., 2012). Few mentoring programs have been subject to rigorous scientific evaluation despite empirical evidence revealing the leadership capabilities that has fostered positive outcomes (Jarjoura, 2013). The use of mentoring has revealed positive results, however, mentoring is not a simple one size fits all solution; the aspects of relationships that define mentoring are numerous (Rameriz, 2012). In support of Rameriz (2012), Hamberg (2013), Brondyk and Searby (2013) suggested mentoring is far more inclusive than guidance and suggestions. There are complexities of context, roles, and conceptualization surrounding the actual understanding of mentoring (Brondyk & Searby, 2013).

The context of mentoring is prominent in personal and professional challenges. Whether the context is personal or professional, there will be unique characteristics that influence the mentoring needed to reach the desired goal (Brondyk and Searby, 2013). Brondys and Searby (2013) further suggested, when implemented in the correct context mentoring has proven to foster personal and professional growth. Brondyk and Searby posited that implementation might become tedious because relationships form according to cultural understandings of the purpose, which may create issues when attempting to

identify the best mentoring practice. Once navigating the tedious task of identifying the best practice, the benefits of mentoring are promising.

Mentoring helps develop autonomous skills, judgments, personal and professional mastership, expertise, trust, and self-confidence. Hamburg (2013) further suggested induction programs designed to maximize learning, focus on continuous professional development, support the development of new skills, career development, and easier transition in change management are contexts in which mentoring has proven beneficial. The suggestion made by Hamburg, suggest that mentoring is not a one size fits all implementation. According to Kunich and Lester (1999) mentoring is an opportunity and a risk. For these reasons, an in-depth understanding of goals and the outcome will be vital when deciding the form of mentoring necessary to reach the end goals. Along similar lines, Piasecki, (2012) suggested, proper mentoring requires positively identifying the correct problem to solve and goal to achieve.

Within any mentoring program, it is imperative to choose the right style of mentoring to help reach desired goals. Understanding that problems may occur due to the complexities of mentoring makes it of utmost importance to understand mentoring; its type, its relationship to the scope, and desired outcome of the organizational mission. There must be a working knowledge of the various types of mentoring styles,

- Natural Mentoring: initiated by the mentor (usually senior) reaching out to another. It is implicit between people with much in common.
- Peer Mentoring: occurs with individual at the same level providing skill training; individual providing support, empathy, and advice



- Situational Mentoring: Mentoring for a specific purpose or skill, which is short-term.
- Supervisory Mentoring: Advisor is a mentor and direct supervisors; possibility of a conflict of interest.

There are other forms of mentoring styles; however, the two most common types of mentoring are informal and formal.

### **Informal Mentoring**

Informal mentoring survives on relationships that develop on their own; typically based on common interest shared by the mentor and mentee. It occurs when the relationship between mentor and mentee is a spontaneous event where mentor and mentee forms a relationship out of mutual interest (Robinson, & Reio, 2012). Informal mentoring typically:

- Involves no minimum time requirement;
- May or may not involve frequent or regular contact between the mentor and mentee;
- May or may not include assistance by an organized service or organization;
- Involves guidance and support to persons only as a byproduct or secondary focus of the relationship;
- May or may not involve support or supervision for the mentee and the mentee's family; and
- Exists in the form of, youth programs, athletics, youth groups, religious instruction, and school volunteers.

## **Formal Mentoring**

Formal mentoring survives on a structured approach that includes training for mentors, alignment of programs to organizational goals, and measurable results. It is the process of designed and trusting relationships that bring young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement which is vital to developing or improving the competence and character of the mentee (Grimes, 2014).

Formal mentoring typically:

- Takes place for a minimum of 6 months.
- Involves frequent and regular contact between mentor and mentee.
- Is assisted by an organized service or organization.
- Focuses on providing life guidance and support.
- Includes support and supervision for the mentee and the mentee's family.
- Involves screening and training as well as ongoing support and monitoring of the mentor.

Once there is an understanding of the interior components of mentoring, it is important to understand what mentoring is and what it is not. According to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), (2012):

## **What Mentoring is Not**

- Mentoring is not a management strategy
- Mentors are not intended to be therapists
- Mentoring does not include assuming the role of parent, social worker, psychologist, cleric, or cool peer

- The mentor is not a source of a free ride, gifts or loans
- Relationships between the mentor and mentee do not always click; sometimes the match does not work; this does not suggest there is a problem with either the mentor or mentee.

### **What Mentoring is**

- Mentoring is a natural part of improvement; most mentees recognize an adult or older person as a source of support and leadership outside the family.
- Mentoring is a distinct approach to addressing the many needs of the mentee.
- Rather than enabling the mentee to focus on the unfortunate aspects of his/her life, effective mentors will help the mentee figure out how to solve their problems, expanding their horizons and exposing them to opportunities to which they might not otherwise have uncovered.

Therefore, distinguishing whether the problem, its relationships, and or goals would benefit more from informal or formal mentoring is vital to achieving the desired goal (Piasecki, 2012). The ability to distinguish the difference requires the correct mentoring process.

### **The Mentoring Process**

The mentoring process, according to Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, and Nichols (2013), can be a complex interaction that occurs between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise. This complex collaboration has the potential to incorporate interpersonal or psychosocial development, career, and educational development. However, it is important to remember all mentoring experiences are not

positive; some may be dysfunctional (Robinson, 2012). Mentoring is not a single concept element; nor is it a one size fits all solution. Mentoring is like a tree with many branches branching out to many options for many different problems. Jarjoura argued that tailoring mentoring to a specific need or goal is important. Jarjoura further suggested programs that do not have a clear vision, and specific targeted outcomes that are intended for mentoring intervention may have little or any impact. Because of the multiple possibilities of mentoring; identifying quality opportunities requires an essential understanding of the type of mentoring desired (Grimes, 2014; Murphy, 2012) to determine the best value for the purpose or problem of concern.

Mentoring is a powerful and popular way for people to learn a variety of personal and professional skills (Chopin, Danish, Seers, & Hook, 2013). However, Jarjoura (2013) informs that mentoring programs that do not have a clear vision and specific targeted outcomes that are intended for mentoring interventions may have little or any impact. Mentoring is both an opportunity and a risk (Kunich & Lester, 1999). This study focused on the value of mentoring; specifically, transformational mentoring among Black males who have experienced structured, formal mentoring, with oversight and clear and accurate organizational goals (Grimes, 2014). Leadership strategies in mentoring based on the fact that mentoring influences professional development in both public and private sector organizations. Mentoring has proven valuable in many organizations; and continues to advance as a significant contributor to leadership development (Artis, 2013; Srivastava & Jomon, 2013, Sun, Pan, & Chow, 2014).

The use of mentoring to tackle complex challenges has become a staple in many organizations. Research revealed that 71% of Fortune 500 companies utilize mentoring to address, skills enhancement, professional identity, career development, education support, organizational development/cultural change, and knowledge management techniques (Srivastava, & Jomon, 2013). Skills that are present in public and private school systems; skills, which many (Dyce, 2015; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Richardson & Brakle, 2013) believe has eluded many Black males for many decades. The failure to attain these skills has resulted in, Black males becoming uneducated, unemployed, and incarcerated (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

A longitudinal study conducted by Payne and Huffman in 2006, revealed individuals who received mentoring reported more job and career satisfaction, tended to be more committed, performed better, advanced rapidly, and expressed lower turnover intentions (Robinson & Reio, 2012). The suggested outcomes of a job, and career satisfaction, more commitment, performing better, advancing rapidly, and expressing lower turnover intentions parallel the concerns related to Black males' navigation of life's challenges (Robinson, 2012). In support of Robinson; Gibson (2014) suggested support systems of mentoring that provides formal leadership strategies have proven valuable to improving and transforming the Black males focus on successfully navigating life's challenges. In fact, other research revealed that mentoring within various organizations have addressed successfully elements that hinder Black male progress. Mentoring has resulted in skills enhancement, professional identity, career development, and education support. Other results were organizational development, cultural change; and knowledge

management/knowledge transfer (Farmer & Wood, 2015; Guy, 2014; Harrison et al., 2015; Palmer et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2013).

Chronus (2015) furthered suggested mentoring creates the ability to accomplish these elements, which will help foster success for the mentor and mentee. Literature addressing the value of mentoring within organizational settings is plentiful (Butler, Whiteman, & Crow, 2013; Enslin & Schulz, 2015; Kiran, Majumdar, & Kishore, 2012). However, literature exploring improving life circumstance of Black males through mentoring is limited (Robinson, 2012). Some (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Robinson, 2012; Tolliver, 2012) believe there are benefits and best practices of mentoring when exploring improving the Black males' ability to navigate life's challenges.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

When broaching the subject of Black males' inability to navigate life's challenges, there is one thing for certain. There is a significant amount of literature that addresses this issue; however, the past and current literature present knowledge that focuses more on informing than correcting. The world and scholarly community have learned over, and over of the fact, Black males face critical factors to access and success of life's challenges (Canton, 2012; Haslanger, 2014; Scott et al., 2013). However, little is known or revealed about the past or current literature suggesting a possible solution or corrective measures of this dilemma.

The pursuit of success in American society has haunted Black men for decades. Sadly, the literature review of slave narratives revealed a truth that seems to suggest enslaved Black males desire for educational literacy, economic success, and freedom far

surpassed that of the 20th-century Black man. Persisting through whippings, beatings, amputations, and the threat of death, the enslaved Black male struggles ensured the right of the 20th-century Black male to pursue his heart's desire. However, current literature makes it hard to ignore the fact that Black males educational, economic, and freedom complications are situations that need immediate attention.

There is a minute amount of literature exploring initiatives or program that may provide the necessary element to improve the status of Black males in American Society. It is time to move beyond simply informing of the situation and work to correct or improve the problem. Some (Grimes, 2014, Tolliver, 2013) believed mentoring may provide the needed direction to improving the Black male educational achievements in higher education. Jajoura (2013) suggested empirical evidence has revealed, Black males that participate in properly organized formal mentoring programs experience positive results. Results, which have shown to boost an already existent desire of Black males to navigate life's challenges successfully; yet, mentoring programs that have been subject to rigorous evaluation that explores their positive influence on Black males are few (Jarjoura, 2013).

Researchers have uncovered a massive number of suggested factors that hinders the Black male's success, which they use to inform rather than correct the problem. Exploring the current curriculums of the chosen mentoring program to the factors perceived important by currently enrolled and graduate program Black males may provide an avenue to direct future Black males to the program or programs that provide the critical leadership necessary for successful outcomes. Moreover, present data

necessary to improve the current curriculum of mentoring program or programs if deemed necessary.

Furthermore, improving the success of African American males will likely prove beneficial to the African American community, U.S. economy, and U.S. global competitiveness. Improving the ability of Black males to navigate life's challenges creates a needed resource with the potential to mentor and lead younger Black males away from elements that hinder their growth to a higher level of existence and accomplishment. Exploring the leadership strategies in selected mentoring models may provide insight into leadership strategies that lead to successful outcomes for Black males, which may further provide the ability to enhance Black male mentoring programs to generate positive results in educational and economic pursuits. Armed with this knowledge, future researchers may obtain the capacity to create or improve mentoring models, which may help increase Black male success in American society.

Creating or improving mentoring models, which help to create positive Black men, would increase Black males' educational accomplishment. Which would reduce the flow of Black males into state and federal penal systems. And create men of color with the ability to improve the African American society, improve economic gains, and assist the United States in its quest for global superiority. In the following chapter I will present the research method, research design, and the chosen rationale for this study



### Chapter 3: Research Method

When conducting a review of the literature on Black male's educational achievement, Black male incarceration, and Black male unemployment, the majority of literature I found led to the conclusion that many Black males are having difficulties navigating these life challenges. Failing to navigate these challenges make it difficult for Black males to find success in American society (Harper, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine leadership strategies in a selected mentoring program in the Southeastern United States and evaluate their ability to help program participants develop or discover the skills necessary to navigate life's challenges. The outcomes that were discovered have the potential to decrease the Black males' introduction into Federal and State correctional systems and improve their ability to persist to completion after entering an institution of higher learning. Helping them develop the necessary skills to remain gainfully employed; thus creating a diverse workforce capable of assisting the United States in its quest for global economic superiority.

In this qualitative case study, I examined the program-implemented leadership strategies. I elicited, compared, contrasted, and evaluated leadership strategies used in the program to determine their contributions to the successful outcomes experienced by Black male program participants. In this chapter, I will present the research design and the role of the researcher. Also described in this chapter will be the methodology, the logic of participant selection, instrumentation, the procedure of recruitment, and the data analysis plan. I will also present issues of trustworthiness and ethical concerns followed by a summary of the chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following central (RQ1) and subquestions (RQ2–RQ4) guided this study: RQ1.

What are successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males through life's challenges?

RQ2. What are the characteristics of successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?

RQ3. What are the critical factors for successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?

RQ4. What are the characteristics of a successful Black male mentor/mentee relationship?

I obtained answers to these questions from the participants of this study, mentors and mentees of a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States, with the purpose of discovering leadership strategies that may be beneficial in reversing the Black males' current inability to navigate educational failures, unemployment, and incarceration successfully. My focus with this study was exploratory, and the insight I desired was aimed at helping develop ideas for possible solutions to the problem of concern. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, qualitative research methods, rather than quantitative ones, were necessary to answer the RQs.

#### **Research Tradition: Qualitative**

Qualitative research materialized during the late 19th century to counter the deductive nature of positivism (Birchall, 2014). Birchall (2014) further suggested that qualitative studies explore phenomena of an ambiguous nature with the intent to generate

rich evidence of everyday experiences. Merriam and Tisdale (2015) echoed Birchall when suggesting that the qualitative approach is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. However, there have been questions raised as to the role of theory in the realm of qualitative research (Mitchell & Cody, 1993). Mitchell and Cody (1993) suggested that some scholars propose that qualitative research can enhance understanding and expand theoretical knowledge from a disciplinary perspective; however, others contend qualitative inquiry is purely inductive.

Judging the validity of qualitative inquiries can be to the extent that preconceived theory is absent (Mitchell & Cody, 1993). Qualitative inquiries allow the researcher to explore meaning, interpretations, and individual experiences (Birchall, 2014); whereas quantitative research is "deductive, specific, and measurable with the goal prediction, control, description, confirmation, and hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Merriam (2009) further suggested a qualitative approach is essential when the researcher seeks to understand the essence and underlying structure of a phenomenon. For this study I could have chosen a narrative analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, or grounded theory. However, I determined that the most suitable qualitative research design for this study was a case study, as I will explain in the following subsection.

### **Research Design**

This study was of an exploratory nature with the purpose of understanding leadership strategies and their ability to reduce the poor success rates of Black males when navigating life's challenges. I used Yin's (2009) case study methodology to

examine the successful leadership strategies used by mentors at a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. Instead of grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative analysis, or ethnographic methodology, in this study I used a case study design. The ethnographic design closely resembles a case study in the sense that it focuses on an entire culture-sharing group that a research might consider to be a case; however, the reason for using ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration (Khoo et al., 2012).

A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In this empirical examination, I explored a present-day phenomenon within its real-life context to understand unclear boundaries between phenomenon and context (see Merriam, 2009). Yin (2009) echoed Merriam (2009) when suggesting a case study involves the investigation of a present-day experience within its real-life circumstance. Merriam noted that case studies did not receive attention from a methodological perspective until the evolution of qualitative research methods, but they comprise antecedents in anthropology, sociology, and psychology. According to Merriam (2009), there are three characteristics of a case study:

- Particularistic: The study focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon.
- Descriptive: The end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study.

- Heuristic: A case study illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study, bringing about the discovery of new meaning and experience. (pp. 43–44)

Being particular and descriptive to the point where the study becomes heuristic was the goal of this study, which made the case study design an ideal choice.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher in this study was etic in nature, whereby I positioned myself as an objective participant (see Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). My role was to ask the questions during the interview sessions and gather data from the participants.

Obtaining the meaning of lived experiences is easier to accomplish through the use of flexible, exploratory questions (Merriam, 2009). There were no personal, professional, or supervisory relationships between me and potential participants. I presented all resulting evidence in a neutral context with both supporting and challenging data represented for the purpose of avoiding bias (see Yin, 2009). Presentation of information from different perspectives decreases biases and help foster an excellent study (Yin, 2009).

Concerns about ethical issues are prevalent in qualitative research. Some researchers argue that ethical problems in qualitative research reveal subtle differences from those in quantitative research (Fritz, 2008). Depending upon the research approach, I discovered a researcher may encounter concerns of procedural ethics, situational ethics, or relational ethics (Sarwar, 2012). Ethical issues that I had to consider within this study were as follows: respect for participants, confidentiality, avoiding harm, reciprocity, and feedback. I addressed the issue of confidentiality by not reporting private data that

identified participants. Ensuring the potential benefits for the participants are greater than the risk of harm helped to avoid harming participants. Addressing reciprocity, I expressed my appreciation to the participants for sharing their experiences. Finally, through feedback I provided all research results to the corresponding participant, allowing the participant the ability to approve or revise the data to ensure its accuracy. I addressed these possible ethical issues through integrity, objectivity, professional competence, due care, and confidentiality. It was important for me to be alert to situations that arised during planning that threatened these fundamental principles.

When planning a qualitative research study, Chenail (2011) suggested the researcher should:

- Reflect on what interests the researcher;
- Draft a statement identifying the preliminary area of interest and justify the scholarly and practical importance;
- Hone the topic focus;
- Compose research questions;
- Define the goal and objectives;
- Conduct review of literature;
- Develop the research design;
- Conduct self-assessment to determine strengths that will be useful in the study;
- Plan, conduct, and manage the study; and
- Compose and submit the paper. (pp. 1715–1721)

Along similar lines, Yin (2009) suggested the focus of the case study should reflect the full set of concerns from the initial design. Further, the researcher must be aware that it is necessary to evaluate and manage identified threats to ensure that they are either eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level (Chenail, 2011).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

After receiving study approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, reference # 11-18-16-0324190, I began this study by addressing my possible bias that may have resulted from personal preconceived notions and those that derived from theory (see Yin, 1989). Avoiding potential biases may be possible if the researcher is honest with the capabilities of asking questions, listening, adaptiveness, and grasp of issues studied (Yin, 1989). Yin (1989) suggested addressing these capabilities would assist the researcher in collecting data with minimal discretionary behavior, helping the researcher avoid equivocal evidence and biased views that may influence the direction of the findings and conclusions.

I gathered data from members of a bounded system located in the Southeastern United States through semistructured interviews. The interviews consisted of data retrieved from 12 mentors and 10 mentees from the selected mentoring program. The number of participants interviewed was to be 20 mentors and 20 mentees; however, the number turned out to be lower due to achieving data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new noteworthy categories or concepts emerge as a result of additional interviews (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

## **Sampling Strategy**

During data gathering and transcription, problems that may occur in qualitative research are representation, legitimation, and praxis (Onwuegbuzie & Leeche, 2007). To ensure the accurate representation of data, not influenced by my personal experiences, the investigation occurred through implementation of the sampling design that complemented the purpose of the research. The complementing strategy used in this study was purposeful study sampling, which helped me to concentrate on individuals based on specific characteristics (Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose of the study and guided me in the identification of information rich cases and individuals that purposefully form an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the focus was on a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. Many challenges are surrounding the identification, recruitment, and contact of potential participants. Within the mentoring program, a gatekeeper was identified to assist in the identification of the participants needed to drive the study forward (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015).

During this process, I conducted an exploratory conversation with professors, students, and community members for the purpose of identifying any individuals that may assist in identifying potential participants. When I received Institutional Review Board approval, I made inquiries to identify the person with the power to okay the research and direct me to possible participants. I contacted each identified participant by telephone or email correspondence to establish the interview type, time, and place.



During the process of collecting data and ensuring all ethical concerns, I conducted a continual analysis using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009).

Use of the constant comparative method allowed me to move forward, backward, between, within, and across interviews with the purpose of identifying common themes, or concepts (De Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2011). Within the constant comparative method, I developed and tested conceptual interview schemes through comparison, allowing me to check for the presence of new themes or concepts in previous interview data. Per Merriam (2009), the constant comparative method enabled me to identify patterns in data by comparing one segment of data with another segment of data to determine similarities and differences.

### **Instrumentation**

To discover the desired level of measurement within any study, the researcher must understand which instruments to consider. According to Sherman (n.d.), cognitive instruments that measure mental processes of thinking, memorizing, problem-solving, analyzing, reasoning; and aptitude are instruments that measure general mental ability, predicts future performance, and individual feelings. The study involved an exploration of the effects on the Black male's success of successful leadership strategies. With this purpose in mind, data were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix B). I was the primary instrument of data collection. I recorded, transcribed, member checked, and analyzed, using the constant comparative method, all interviews.

Qualitative interviews (face-to-face) proved valuable to discovering the sought after data. The format presented for data collection encompassed semi-structured

opened questions. The format of the interviews was a face-to-face design. According to Merriam (2009), interviews are useful when direct observation of participants is not possible, and there is the need for participants to provide historical information. The interview protocol allowed me to control the line of questioning. The necessary personal interaction between myself and the participants made interviews the best method of data collection.

Yang (2013) suggested that the researcher in qualitative research is an instrument of data collection. According to Unluer (2012), the researcher becomes an instrument with the responsibility to develop the capacity for independent, honest, and critical thought for the advancement of knowledge (Unluer, 2012). Developing the capacity for independent, honest, and critical thought is essential to the role of the researcher, yet equally important is the ability of the researcher to remain cognizant of his/her purpose within the research. Remaining cognizant requires the researcher to understand that when the research begins, the researcher becomes part of the setting or context he/she seeks to understand (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Collins and Cooper (2014) suggested becoming part of the setting or context may evoke strong feelings that cause issues of trustworthiness if the researcher does not possess emotional intelligence and strong interpersonal skills to help him/her honestly navigate obvious bias during the data collection process.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Locating and recruiting participants is critical to controlling bias and efficiently obtaining a representative sample (Palinkas et al. 2013). Decreasing the occurrence of

recruitment bias in this study occurred by identifying an individual from the mentoring program who was familiar with participants and willing to participate and had insight and experience to best inform on the presented questions and scope of the study. Merriam (2009) referred to this individual as being a gatekeeper; a person who can arbitrate access to a social role, field, or structure.

The gatekeeper identified the names of potential participants and initiated first contact for the purpose of providing the participants with a copy of the consent form, which contained an explanation of the scope and objective of the study. To ensure the possibility of participant participation, each participant received assurance that I, the committee members, and Walden University were trustworthy and had taken every precaution to protect their anonymity and confidentiality. The accomplishment of anonymity and privacy occurred through maintaining the confidentiality of data and anonymizing specific places in the dissemination of the study to protect identity (Thomas & Quandt, 1999). Once the participants agreed to participate, I inquired as to the interview type and time that was best for the participant. This allowed me to move forward in a manner that benefited the author and interviewee.

### **Data Collection**

I was the sole source of data collection, collecting data from mentors and mentees from a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States using an interview protocol. There are other methods for gathering data in qualitative methods; however, the personal interaction between myself and the participants made the other qualitative methods of direct observation and surveys less desirable.

### **Interview Protocol**

In this study, I collected data through semi-structured interviews. Zohrabi (2013, p. 255) suggested that interviews:

- Are good for measuring attitudes and most other content of interest,
- Allow probing by the interviewer,
- Can provide in-depth information,
- Allow proper interpretative validity, and
- Allows for very quick turnaround for telephone interviews.

On the negative end of the spectrum:

- In-person interviews are expensive and time-consuming,
- Participants perceive a low degree of anonymity, and
- Data analysis are often consuming for open-ended items (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 256).

Data elicited from mentors and mentees of the selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States was the source of information gathered. I conducted face-to-face interviews. Tape recorded data were collected from 12 mentors and 10 mentees from the selected mentoring program. The number of participants interviewed was less than 20 of each group due to the earlier than anticipated occurrence of data saturation for each group. Acknowledging and appreciating the value of the interviewee, I determined the location or type of interviews based on the time, ability, or inability of the interviewee to travel. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions presented to the participants through face to face or telephone dialogue. The interview process included open-ended questions for the purpose of allowing participants

to create options for responding and voicing their experience and perspective in as much or little detail as they felt comfortable sharing (Gustafsson, Blanchin, & Li, 2016).

The frequency of data collection events depended on discovered data or lack thereof. I informed each participant of the possibility of a follow-up interview and a need to verify or clarify received data. Verification of data occurred through member checking, "a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the data that recorded during a research interview" (Harper & Cole, 2012, p. 510). I did not realize the need for verification and clarification of the data until the conclusion of analyzing each participant's taped recorded data. The frequency of data collection depended on whether I acquired a clear understanding of the transcribed data.

The plan was to interview each participant for up to 60 minutes. However, each mentor or mentee was clear with their responses, which greatly decreased the interview time. Data collection was by tape recordings (of the interviews) and handwritten notes. My follow-up plan was a prevention plan. I conducted interviews of 12 mentors and 10 mentees before reaching saturation. However, I acquired the okay for a meeting from 30 participants in case some decided not to proceed with the interview. The participant briefing portion of the interview allowed each participant to elaborate further if there was something else they wanted to add. I informed the participants that Walden University would receive a report generated from the interview data. Each participant received an offer to obtain a copy of the draft submitted to Walden University. The process concluded

with me acknowledging my gratitude for the individual's willingness to participate and acknowledging my appreciation for his or her time.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis is the process of breaking down the whole into segments or parts; reassembling those parts to understand the integrity of the whole (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). For the purpose of this study, qualitative interviews were the chosen data collection method. The connection of data to research questions occurred through face-to-face interviews. Qualitative open-ended interviews were appropriate for connecting data to research that explore who, what, where, how, and why (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Other researchers have used qualitative investigations to explore and connect "mentors' perceptions of experience of the mentoring relationship; examine the perceptions of mentors regarding roles, expectation, purposes, and approaches; investigate the experience of mentor's dyadic relationship" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012, p. 15).

For this study, analysis consisted of four stages: transcriptions, organization, familiarization, and coding. The tape-recorded data required that I transcribe data to written form verbatim. I avoided writing summary notes of the recording, as summary notes are likely to bias the transcriptions, generating only sections that are relevant or interesting to the researcher (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

After transcriptions, organizing data into easily retrievable components was vital. I accomplished organization of data by assigning each interview a number or code; breaking up field notes into sections identified by date or context; giving pseudonyms or

code numbers to interviewees (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The conclusion of organization consisted of creating a secure password protected file that links pseudonyms and code numbers to the original interviewee. The process of transcription and organization are two elements that begin the process of familiarization. Through transcription and organization, the researcher becomes familiar with the data by listening to tapes, reading the transcribed data, and making memos or summaries before beginning formal analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

### **Coding**

The process of coding began with familiarization. Familiarization is the stage where researchers listen to tape recorded data, transcribe recorded data to written format, read and re-read before starting formal analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2001). At the conclusion of familiarization, I organized data into easily retrievable sections. This process included assigning a number or code to each interview and referring to interviewees with a pseudonym or code number (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The assigning of numbers or codes to each interview ensured that there was no mix up of data from one interview to the next. The use of pseudonyms or code numbers for interviewees helped to strengthen the ethical issues of confidentiality.

Once formal analysis started, I analyzed the data from each interview line-by-line in search of relevant words, phrases, sentences, and sections. As themes occurred during analysis, I assigned a code to them that made the themes easily retrievable (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The method of coding line-by-line creates value when analyzing interview data due to the fact that the researcher can separate data and extract meanings to

determine whether the data is comparable or contradictory to other research data (Charmaz, 2006). Line-by-line coding and constant comparative analysis, initially developed for grounded theory research, has become a versatile analytical technique (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2001). Line-by-line coding of each interview allowed me to conduct constant comparative analysis between interviews to discover any relevant words, phrases, sentences, or segments that were common across interview.

There were a variety of possible coding techniques, such as NVivo to cutting and pasting. I coded the data in this study by means of a color coding technique. When coding using color coding techniques, I used separate colors to signify different codes or categories (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Lacey and Luff (2001) suggested the weakness of this method lies in the fact that some "data may need to be coded under two or more colors, which may cause confusion for the researcher" (p. 26). However, the advantages suggested by Lacey and Luff when suggesting text does not need to be cut up, allowing all text units to remain in context, overshadowed the possibility of confusion mentioned by Lacey and Huff, making the color coding technique an ideal choice.

### **Constant Comparison Analysis**

I conducted a constant comparison analysis upon the completion of coding the second, and each additional interview. Although the original purpose of the constant comparison method was to analyze data collected over a series of stages in grounded theory (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012), the constant comparison analysis has become a fixture in various research types. In 2016, constant comparison analysis provided possibilities with talk, observation, drawings, photographs, videos, documents, and interview data



(Onwuebbuzie et al., 2012). The constant comparison analysis allowed me to look for relationships between concepts and categories through constantly comparing the concept or category until theoretical saturation occurred (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Ensuring Validity**

Ensuring the validity of qualitative research, whether it is content validity, empirical validity, or construct validity, is critical to the acceptance of any given research. Ensuring that all instruments, interviews, questionnaires, document reviews or test measurements, measures what they purport to measure are vital to ensuring content validity (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spires, 2002). Morse et al. (2002) suggested ensuring each instrument measures what it purports to can be accomplished by addressing the following five elements.

First, methodological coherence- guarantees similarity between the research questions and the mechanism of the method. Second, appropriate sample- must obtain the proper sample through collecting participants who have information of the research topic, which will guarantee competent and effective saturation of categories with optimal quality data and minimum dross. Third, collecting and analyzing data concurrently-this creates a common interface between what is known and what one needs to know. Fourth, think theoretically-thinking in theory forces the researcher to address macro-micro perspectives causing the researcher to move slowly ahead without making cognitive leaps. As a result, the researcher is constantly checking and rechecking (constant comparative). The constant comparative method helps create a solid foundation. Lastly,

Theory development-addressing theory development from a micro point of view of the data and a macro conceptual undertaking allows theory to develop as an outcome of the research process, rather than being adopted as a framework to shift analysis onward.

Implementing a verification strategy and addressing the elements mentioned above helped to ensure reliability and validity of data (Morse et al., 2002). Ensuring content validity began with instrument development. It is important to identify the specific domain of construct to measure. Creating criteria, which addresses relevance, clarity, simplicity, and ambiguity, assisted in determining the desired specific domain to measure.

Yaghmale (2003) suggested Literature reviews, interviews, and focus groups assist in determining the appropriate domain. Determining the appropriate domain provided a much clearer picture of limitations, dimensions, and components of the subject. Including experts (chair, content expert, and URR expert) to judge the developed content would help to ensure content validity. Furthermore, the creation of interview questions designed to explore leadership strategies in mentoring programs that have the ability to foster success in Black male participants helped ensure validity. Responses elicited from participants were presented verbatim. These steps address content validity, which further ensured empirical validity, therefore revealing the relationship between the measuring instrument and measured outcome.

### **Credibility**

Internal validity is essential within any research project. There is always the threat that the investigative data collected would falsely measure that which the study intended

to measure (Golafshani, 2003). Internal validity determines whether the research truly measures what it was meant to measure, or how accurate the research results are (Golafshani, 2003). The focus on internal validity was through ensuring construction of the study with an emphasis on the initial concept, notion, and question which, determines what data is relevant and how to gather it (Golafshani, 2003). Gathering data in the form of interviews, which will include open-ended questions, allowed each participant to provide as much or as little valid information as he or she was comfortable providing. This chosen interview design produced positive findings, due to the fact its design followed structured theoretical knowledge and the research questions that elicited only essential information (Muller, n.d.).

### **Transferability**

Transferability invites readers of research to determine relations between elements of the study and their experience. The concept of transferability focuses on the ability of particular findings to be transferred to another issue of similar context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy 2013). Along similar lines, Golafshani (2003) suggested transferability occurs when the results of research in one situation applies to other similar situations. Transferability relies upon the reader discovering sufficient similarities among the research and their experience that he/she believes the results would be identical in their circumstances. Anney (2014) suggested the point when the transfer of qualitative research to other contexts or other settings with other respondents occur is transferability. Some believe that case study research is transferable due to researchers' further suggesting questions, hypothesis, and future implications (Colorado State

University, 2016).

To ensure transferability in this study, the I focused on providing solid descriptive data and using purposive sampling. Anney (2014) suggested the importance of solid descriptive data to transferability by suggesting that thick descriptive data allows comparisons of one context to other possible settings. Anney further suggested the researcher can strengthen transferability through purposive sampling. Using purposive sampling allows the researcher to select individuals, groups, or institutions for the purpose of answering specific research questions; allowing the researcher to identify participants that are knowledgeable about the issues of concern. The inclusion of rich descriptive data and purposeful sampling allows other researchers to replicate the study using similar conditions in other settings, which supports transferability in the study.

### **Dependability**

Dependability of research depends on the stability of research findings and the data retrieved from participants of the study. In this study, the use of an audit trail, coderecode strategy, peer examination, Anney (2014, pp. 277-279), and respondent validation Lacey and Luff (2001, p. 23), ensured the dependability of the study.

- **Audit Trail:** Explores the inquiry process with the purpose of confirming the dependability of all decisions and activities that reveal how data were collected, recorded, and analyzed.
- **Code-Recode Strategy:** A process where data is coded once, then coded one more time two week later, at which time results are compared to see if results are the same.

- Peer examination: An examination where the researcher discusses his/her research process and findings with neutral colleagues.
- Respondent validation: Findings of the research are shared with the participants to check the accuracy of context or consent for use.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability allows the researcher to audit him/herself to ensure that biases do not affect the way he or she examines data or presents results. Confirmability focuses on ensuring the results of data are from the understanding and experiences of participants (Anney, 2014). Along similar lines, Houghton et al. (2013) suggested confirmability ensures the neutrality and accuracy of the data. Morse (2015) suggested confirmability occurs through the use of triangulation and audit trails.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Concerns about ethical issues are prevalent in qualitative research; the nature of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is subtle and different compared to quantitative research (Xu & Storr, 2012). Depending upon research approach, a researcher may encounter concerns of procedural ethics, situational ethics, or relational ethics. Procedural, situational, and relational ethics are a few of the many ethical issues of concern when conducting qualitative research. The ethical issues considered in this study were confidentiality, avoiding harm, reciprocity, and proper feedback.

Ensuring the correct ethical path occurred with an application for approval submitted to Walden University's Institute Review Board (IRB). Included with the application were copies of the proposed consent forms, and interview questions. Once I received IRB

approval, I worked diligently to ensure the autonomy of research participants, and to protect them from exploitation where the possibility of diminished autonomy existed (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005) pursuant to the core ethical principles of human subject research: beneficence, justice, and respect for the individual.

Collecting quality data is vital; however, storing such data is equally as vital. Qualitative researchers must decide how to store data; make the data easily retrievable, and protect the data from damage or loss (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). During course studies, I discovered NVivo, a program that provides value to qualitative researchers. Using Nvivo allows a researcher to store data in written, audio, or video form. Components in NVivo allow a researcher to write down thoughts, create memos to capture detailed observations or use links to connect items with similar themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). NVivo is a program that provides many helpful features; nevertheless, it is always advisable to have one or two backup plans. Fritz (2008) revealed the interesting data managing method of Johns Hopkins School of Health which consisted of the following five steps (p. 4)

- Choose and follow a clear file naming system,
- Develop a data tracking system,
- Establish and document transcription/translation procedures,
- Establish quality control procedures, and
- Establish a realistic timeline.

Proper data management occurred when I ensured field notes and transcripts did not contain personal identifiers; I decided to keep all data on an external hard drive that was password protected and locked in a Sentry digital lock safe. To ensure

confidentiality, I shared data only with research participants and members of my research committee at Walden University. The study concluded with an audit by me to ensure compliance.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented a description of the research methodology, research design, rationale, and role of the researcher. The purpose was to align and honor the scope and direction of the researcher to ensure ethical issues surrounding participant selection, validity, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability did not get overlooked because of researcher bias or chosen research design. This study involved an exploration of the value of leadership strategies in the selected mentoring program with the purpose of examining how the selected strategies affect on improving Black males ability to navigate life's challenges. In Chapter 4, I will present the research setting, demographics of participants, data collection, and evidence of trustworthiness.

## Chapter 4: Results

Throughout history, whether in the form of literature or news media representation, American society has consistently revealed its concerns and highlighted the dismal accomplishments of Black males' educational, economic, and incarceration rates. However, the voicing of concerns and highlighting the Black males' lack of accomplishments in no way helps to improve the Black males' educational, economic, or freedom in American society. For the status of Black males to improve, societal efforts must move beyond informing to action. The time to discover strategies that will prevent Black males from disappearing from mainstream America and help them become real resources in American society is now. There is a need to set out on this mission; for at this moment in time, the local news and the literature I have read suggested Black males are raised to go to prison, not educated to live in society.

This chapter will contain the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, study results, and summary. The following RQs guided this study:

RQ1. What are successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males through life's challenges?

RQ2. What are the characteristics of successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?

RQ3. What are the critical factors for successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?



RQ4. What are the characteristics of a successful Black male mentor/mentee relationship?

### **Research Setting**

The setting for this study was the northern region Florida. The director of the mentoring program provided contact information for potential participants and a venue for conducting the interviews. The research area was on the campus of a local university. The mentor sample of the study consisted of 12 African American mentors, eight males, and four females. The mentee sample consisted of 10 Black males in college as shown in table 1.

When preparing for this project and possible interviews, I realized this study would need quality feedback of a personal nature from potential participants. Because of this need, all participants had the opportunity to choose an area where they would feel comfortable when interviewed. This choice resulted in mentor interviews taking place in each mentor's personal office, which required visits to 12 different offices at various times and seldom on the same day. Thanks to the director of the mentoring program, interviewing the mentee population was not as stressful and did not require the degree of travel as needed during the mentor interviews. Each group was eager to share their experience and provide as much time and help as needed to enable me to understand which program implemented strategies they believed were necessary and critical to helping them achieve their goals. On the date of the interview, there were no known or suggested personal or organizational conditions that I was aware of that influenced participants or their experience.

### Demographics

The research population consisted of 12 African American mentors and 10 African American mentees. All participants were members of the chosen mentoring program located on the campus of a local university located in the Southeastern United States.

Table 1

*Number of Mentors*

Mentors	Participants
Females	4
Males	8
Total	12

*Note: Sexual orientation of Mentors*

Table 2

*Number of Mentees*

Mentees	Participants
Freshman	3
Sophomores	2
Juniors	2
Seniors	3

*Total*

10

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*Note: Educational classification of Mentee*

The interviewed mentors were Black males and females currently employed at the mentoring program at the time of data collection. The mentor participants were individuals who had graduated from various institutions of higher learning and were experiencing success in navigating life's challenges. The age range of the mentee participants was between 19 and 24 years of age. The mentee participants consisted of 10 Black males who were current or former participants in the mentoring program with college experience ranging from first-year to senior year.

### **Data Collection**

Being the sole source of data collection and realizing the need for personal interaction with the participants, I gathered data from the mentor and mentee participants using an interview protocol. The purpose of conducting interviews was to collect data that identified leadership strategies applied in the selected mentoring program to determine why this program has been effective in improving Black males' ability to navigate life's challenges. The interviews were semistructured to accomplish this goal.

The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions presented to the participants through face-to-face dialogue for the purpose of allowing participants to create options for responding and voicing their experience and perspective in as much or little detail as they were comfortable sharing (see Gustafsson, Blanchin, & Li, 2016). Realizing there might be issues surrounding the time, ability, or inability of the interviewee to travel, I gave the participants the opportunity to choose the location and

time of the interview. All of the participant interviews took place face-to-face. Because of time constraints of the mentors, the mentor's interviews took place in their personal offices, which resulted in interviews at 12 different locations. Interviews of mentees were localized to some degree, where three interviews took place in three separate locations and seven in the office of the chosen mentoring program.

I gathered interview data from each mentor and mentee using a Sony ICD-Px33 digital voice recorder. The data collection consisted of an initial interview and verification and clarification of retrieved data using member checking after the fact. Member checking is “a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview” (Harper & Cole, 2012, p. 510). I conducted member checking face-to-face with each mentor. At the conclusion of each interview, each participant had the opportunity to add any further comments. At the close of the interview, each participant understood there would be an analysis of the information and a submission of the report to Walden University of the findings.

### **Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, I chose qualitative, semi structured interviews as the data collection tool. Data connection to each RQ occurred through face-to-face interviews and member checking. The scope of this study was to explore who, what, how, and why of a chosen mentoring program, making qualitative open-ended interviews appropriate for the task. Qualitative investigations became a bonus when I discovered the capabilities of using them. Other researchers have used qualitative investigations to

explore and connect "mentor's perceptions of the mentoring relationship and examine the perceptions of mentors regarding roles, expectation, purposes, approaches; and investigate the experience of mentor's dyadic relationship" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012, p. 15).

For this study, my analysis consisted of four stages: familiarization, organization, transcriptions, and coding. I audio recorded the interview data, then transcribed it to written form. During transcription, I avoided writing summary notes of the recording. According to Lacey and Luff (2001), summary notes are likely to bias the transcriptions, generating only sections that are relevant or interesting to the researcher.

After transcriptions, organizing data into easily retrievable components was vital. For the purpose of data organization, I assigned each interviewee a number to identify the data placed in a Cambridge Limited Business Notebook with the identifying name of the participant. The identifying number also related to the participant assigned pseudonym.

### **Coding**

The process of transcription and organization were two elements that began the process of familiarization. Through transcription and organization, I became familiar with the data by listening to tape recorded data and reading the transcribed data before beginning formal analysis (see Lacey & Luff, 2001). The process of coding began with familiarization. Familiarization was the stage where I listened to tape-recorded data, transcribed recorded data to the written format, and read and reread the data before starting formal analysis (see Lacey & Luff 2001).

At the conclusion of familiarization, I organized the data into easily retrievable sections. This process included assigning the pseudonym, Participant 1(MT) representing Mentor Number 1, Participant 2 (MT) representing Mentor Number 2 and continuing in this format until Participant 12 (MT). Pseudonyms for the mentees were in the same format; the difference was in the figures which began with 13(ME) and ended with 22 (ME). The assigning of numbers or codes to each interview ensured that there was no mix up of data from one interview to the next (Lacey & Luff 2001). The use of pseudonyms and code numbers for interviewees helped strengthen my maintenance of the ethical issues of confidentiality.

Once formal analysis began, I conducted the analysis line-by-line in search of relevant words, phrases, sentences, and sections. Emergent themes occurred by assigning a code that made data easily retrievable (see Lacey and Luff, 2001). The method of coding line-by-line created value when analyzing interview data due to the fact that I was able to separate data and extract meanings to determine whether the data were comparable or contradictory to other research data (see Charmaz, 2006). I discovered line-by-line coding and constant comparative analysis was initially developed for grounded theory but has become a versatile analytical technique (see Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Line-by-line coding of each interview allowed me to conduct constant comparative analysis between interviews to discover any relevant words, phrases, sentences, or segments that were common across interviews.

There were a variety of techniques I could have used for the actual coding process including computer software such as NVivo or cutting and pasting. For this study, data

were coded using a color coding technique. When coding using color coding, separate colors were used signifying different codes or categories (see Lacey & Luff, 2001).

Lacey and Luff (2001) suggested the weakness of this method was in the fact that some "data may need to be coded under two or more colors, which may cause confusion for the researcher" (p. 26). However, the fact that text did not need to be cut up, allowed all text units to remain in context, and therefore, decreasing, but not eliminating all confusion.

### **Constant Comparison Analysis**

Upon the completion of coding the data from the second interview and each additional interview after that, I conducted an analysis of data using the constant comparison method. The constant comparison analysis has become a fixture in various research types; however, the constant comparison method has been used to analyze data collected over a series of stages in grounded theory (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2012). In 2016, constant comparison analysis is a versatile technique that researchers have used to analyze talk, observation, drawings, photographs, videos, documents, and interview data (Onwuebbuzie et al. 2012). Using constant comparison analysis helped in the identification of relationships between concepts and categories through constantly comparing the concept or category until theoretical saturation was reached (see Lacey & Luff, 2001).'

My transcription of interviews to written format was accomplished using Office 2016 Word. I used the color yellow to identify emerging codes and themes. A Cambridge Limited Business Notebook was used to document the codes and themes of each

participant. The organization of the book consisted of listing each RQ in the book and the identified codes and themes of each participant as they corresponded to the RQs.

Documenting similarities of codes and themes occurred with the use of a Bic Mark-it Permanent Marker set to color code similarities of participant responses by circling similar code and topics in the same color.

Some evolving themes were understanding mentee population, communication, patience, and honesty. Participant 9(MT) addressed understanding mentee population by suggesting the mentor has to get to know the mentee or young Black male to identify with the challenges and obstacles the young man may be facing. Understanding allows the mentor to provide positive reinforcement for good deeds, achievements, and accolades that the mentee may be achieving. Understanding further gives the mentor the ability to move through providing the support and the leadership needed to help the mentee reach a successful outcome. Along similar lines, Participant 14 (ME) suggested, "What was important to me was the fact that the mentor took the time to get to know and understand me; the things I was dealing with as well as my dreams for life."

Concerning communication Participant 4 (MT) suggested to lead young Black males you must be able to come to them on their level and be able to connect in a way that allows them to see you as someone they want to follow; you must be able to relate. Participant 17 (ME) suggested communication is imperative between the mentor and mentee because it lets the mentee know that the mentor cares about him and it holds a sense of accountability. Participant 2 (MT) suggested the number one thing a mentor need is an understanding spirit and patience. Patience allows the mentor to understand



and recognize that he and the mentee are two different people that have different views in life and comprehends at various levels. Participant 19(ME) proposed mentoring can be hard work, but it is paramount for the mentor to be patience because he may not completely understand our issues, and if he quits on us we may quit on ourselves. I will discuss other discovered themes and codes later in the Study Results section of this chapter

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is important within this research project. Addressing internal validity was accomplished through the construction of the study by focusing on the initial concept, notion, and question which, determined which data was relevant and how to gather the data (Golafshani, 2003). Using interviews that included open-ended questions allowed each participant the ability to provide as much or as little valid information as he or she was comfortable providing. The chosen interview design, produced positive findings, due to the fact the selected interview design was purpose designed according to structured theoretical knowledge and research questions that elicited only essential information (Muller, n.d.).

#### **Transferability**

This study has the potential to incite readers to determine any existing relationship between the elements of this study and their lived experiences. The concept of transferability focuses on the ability of particular findings to be transferred to another issue of similar context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy 2013). Transferability relies

upon the reader discovering sufficient similarities among the research and their experience that he/she believes the results would be identical in their circumstances.

The focus of this study was on providing full descriptive data using purposive sampling to ensure transferability.

Anney (2014) emphasized the importance of full descriptive data to transferability by suggesting the researcher can compare one context to other possible settings. Anney further suggested the use of purposive sampling allows the researcher to strengthen the element of transferability. Using purposive sampling allowed this researcher to select individuals for the purpose of answering specific research questions; this allowed for the participants that were knowledgeable about the issues of concern. The inclusion of rich descriptive data and purposeful sampling will allow other researchers to replicate the study using similar conditions in other settings, which supports transferability in the study.

### **Dependability**

Dependability of research depends on the stability of the findings backed by the data retrieved from participants of the study. For this study, dependability required a four-step process. First, an audit trail was used, which allowed me to explore the inquiry process with the purpose of confirming the dependability of all decisions and activities that revealed how records collection and data analysis occurred. The second step was a code-recode strategy, after coding data on multiple occasions, there was a comparison of data. The third phase was a peer examination; peer examination consisted of discussing the research process and findings in the dissertation with the committee. The final step

was respondent validation or member checking; during this process, the conclusions of the investigation were shared with the participant to check the accuracy of context and consent for use.

### **Confirmability**

The guarantee of confirmability occurred through an audit conducted to ensure that biases from my past of being a struggling Black male raised by a single mother did not affect the way I examined or presented results. The audit trail helped ensure the results of data were from the understanding and experiences of participants (Anney, 2014). The focus was to ensure the neutrality and accuracy of the data. I did not share interview data from participant to participant to help accomplish the neutrality and accuracy of data. There was also member checking conducted to ensure the discovered themes were satisfactory to each participant.

### **Study Results**

This section contains the findings from analyzing the data related to each research question.

#### **RQ1**

Table 3

*Mentors' Perspective of Successful Leadership Strategies Suggested by Mentors*

Strategies	Participants
Understanding population	10 of 12
Mentee development	09 of 12
Leading by example	06 of 12

Communication	04 of 12
Caring	04 of 12

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Table 4

*Mentees' Perspective of Leadership Strategies*

Strategies	Participants
Understanding Population	10 of 10
Mentee Development	9 of 10
Leading by example	10 of 10
Knowledge	05 of 10
Guidance	04 of 10

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Mentors believe successful mentoring is the result of implementing mentoring strategies such as understanding the mentee population, development of the mentee on a personal and career level, and leading by example (Table 3). Ten mentors suggested that understanding the mentee population was vital to success; whereas nine suggested the importance of mentee development on the personal and professional levels. Seven mentors believed in the importance of leading by example.

Participant 3(MT) suggested "I recommend understanding your clientele because mentees are diverse. Some come from good homes, others come from broken homes, with parental or financial issues. If their needs are unknown how can they be guided to a successful outcome." Along similar lines, Participant 5(MT) suggested, a mentor should have knowledge of the population which they are mentoring. They need to know where

the mentee came from, how the mentee thinks, who the mentees parents are, and why the mentee reacts to certain things the way he does.

When addressing mentee development, Participant 7(MT) advised it is important to help Black males understand they all have certain talents that are within them and get them to use those talents to achieve high success in everything they do. Whether it is educational, community service or career does not matter the focus is on helping them to develop their success. Participant 10(MT) suggested mentee development is important and it must consist of activities and knowledge that is going to develop the whole person, holistically, mentally, spiritually, physically, and economically.

Also mentioned as an important leadership strategy was leading by example for which Participant 5(MT) stated you must set a good example, because mentees may not always listen to what you have to say, but they are always watching what you do. Along similar lines, Participant 2(MT) suggested it is easy to talk to Black males and say, pull up your pants, do well in school. However, the mentor is not studying, if he is not making good grades, if he is not professional, the mentee will see this, and he will not take the mentors' advice, especially if the mentor is saying do this, but he is doing something different.

Ten mentees suggested understanding the mentee population was vital to mentee success; nine believed mentee development and eight leading by example (Table 4). When addressing the importance of understanding the mentee, Participant 17(ME) advocated that a mentor must understand we have our minds and different thinking processes. Having personal knowledge of who we are and our desired accomplishments

will help the mentor understand how to get us to the desired. Participant 22(ME) mentioned a lack of understanding from his first mentor, which almost resulted in his leaving the program. The mentee stated, his freshman year mentor; mentee pairing was with a mentor who continuously tried to get the mentee to do things the way he did. The mentor thought the ways that worked for him would work for the mentee. The mentor failed to understand or did not care to understand that the mentee did not take things in as quick as he did. The reason the mentee joined the mentoring program was to find someone to help him better himself, but the mentor's way of trying to help the mentee better himself, caused the mentee to question the whole mentoring process, the mentee considered quitting".

When addressing mentee development Participant 18(ME) identified the ultimate goal is to become the best person you can be and try to achieve what you desire to achieve. If the mentors are not developing the mentee, what's the point of having a mentor? Participant 20(ME) suggested mentee development should be the top priority above anything else. When addressing leading by example, Participant 21(ME) put forward, that mentees tend to look up to mentors for guidance, and if they live a positive lifestyle, mentees will follow; most people follow or copy traits of the people they admire. Along similar lines participant-13(ME) suggested show me what I need to do; instead of just telling me how come down and help me.

## **RQ2**

Table 5

*Mentors' Perspective of Characteristics of Successful Leadership Strategies*

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Characteristics	Participants
Communication	12 of 12
Integrity	08 of 12
Transparency	05 of 12
Consistency	04 of 12

Table 6

*Mentees' Perspective of Characteristics of Leadership Strategies*

Characteristics	Participants
Communication	09 of 10
Integrity	07 of 10
Trust	05 of 10
Honesty	03 of 10
Transparency	03 of 10

Nine mentors suggested communication, seven mentioned integrity, and five mentioned transparency (Table 5) as characteristic of successful leadership strategies. Participant 6(MT) submitted that successfully implemented strategies creates a characteristic of emotional intelligence, which help mentors discern other people emotions, other people feelings, which allows the enhancement of communication among both mentors and mentees; contributing to identifying strengths, weaknesses, and biases.

Along similar lines, Participant 11(MT) suggested the characteristic of communication helps create a clear understanding between mentor and mentee. Without communication, implementation and application of strategies would fail. Ineffective communication would create an issue concerning how to use the strategies, what to target, how to achieve the desired outcome.

Also mentioned as characteristic of successful leadership strategies was integrity. Participant 12(MT) mentioned integrity is an important feature of implemented strategies for integrity includes, honesty, transparency, and principal. Without any of these elements, failure will happen. Participant 12(MT) received support from Participant 8(MT) who advocated that there must be integrity because being honest was the most important characteristic. The mentor must do the right thing when he thinks no one is watching because the mentee is always watching. Participant 12(MT) tell new mentors when you think no one is watching, they are watching. Integrity will foster respect and trust of the mentee.

Nine mentees suggested communication was an important characteristic of successful leadership strategies; whereas seven suggested integrity, and three transparency (Table 6). Concerning communication, Participant 14(ME) suggested for us to have a fighting chance mentors have got to be able to talk to us, they have to be able to explain what they plan to do to help us reach our goals. Participant 15(ME) conveyed communication is essentially the key to any and every relationship; it is a needed element between mentor and mentees.



Mentees also suggested integrity as an important characteristic. Participant 19(ME) stated the integrity for me is all about the mentor being honest about what he is here for; what is he trying to add to my experience; is he just saying he is going to be helpful or is he truly being helpful. Participant 14(ME) stated mentors have got, to be honest about what they are trying to achieve, how they plan to achieve it and understand what works for one of us may not work for the other.

### RQ3

Table 7

*Mentors' Perspective of Critical Traits Needed by Mentors*

Critical Factors	Participants
Patience	11 of 12
Integrity	09 of 12
Understanding	07 of 12
Knowledge	04 of 12

Table 8

*Mentees' perspective of Critical Mentor Traits*

Critical Factors	Participants
Patience	08 of 10
Integrity	09 of 10
Understanding	07 of 10
Awareness	4 of 10
Knowledge	3 of 10

Eleven mentors suggested patience, nine suggested integrity, and seven suggested understanding (Table 7) as essential mentor traits. Concerning patience, Participant 5(MT) suggested a mentor must be patience, he or she has to be willing to see the change. Everyone is different, everyone is going to require different techniques to get them to move forward. The mentor has to be able to look into the mentees' mindset to ensure change. For this to happen, there must be patience.

Along similar lines, Participant 6(MT) stated when you are a mentor that does coaching you have to have patience. Patience is tough and a huge thing when it comes to change and to mentoring because people change at different rates, people get information at various times so if the mentor becomes impatience with the mentee it does not allow the mentee to be themselves. Trying to rush the mentee through the process or trying to rush them to make a decision can impede progress; a mentor must have a high level of patience.

When addressing integrity Participant 8(MT) stated integrity is important; a mentor must have integrity and be trustworthy, they have to be someone the mentee can trust because most of the time mentors are individuals whom mentees are going to call before their parents. They will tell the mentor things they would not tell their parents, so the mentor has to be someone they trust. Participant 9(MT) suggested all of what is needed or as much of what is necessary is integrity because a mentor has to gain their confidence, so they will take heed to whatever it is you are trying to provide them support for and trust you to help lead them through any experience good or bad.

Another trait mentioned as a critical mentor trait was understanding. Participant 2(MT) suggested a mentor has to be understanding. The mentor must understand that he and the mentee come from two different places, they come from two different backgrounds, are two separate people that may have two different sets of views on life. The mentor must be someone who guides his mentee; he has to be understanding and patience.

Eight mentees suggested patience; nine integrity, and seven with understanding as important mentor traits. When addressing patience; Participant 16(ME) suggested different students come in with different personalities and dealing with various issues from life; so a mentor has to keep calm and try to address the situation and do whatever they can to help them. Participant 19(ME) suggested the process is going to be hard, but it is important for a mentor to be patience because you never know what their issues are and if you want to help them patience is key, because if you quit on them, they may quit on themselves. Integrity was address by Participant 13(ME) who stated, help get me on the right path and if I am doing something wrong tell me, even if you have to give it blood raw. Participant 17(ME) suggested as a mentor you should be honest and understanding because as a mentor you should have already endured some of the issues I am facing and know how it feels to be in my shoes.

When addressing understanding, Participant 20(MT) stated, a mentor must remember that we are all from a different background and we all have different issues, so the mentor has to be able to sit there and listen without his judgmental hat on and a what's wrong with you type of attitude. Along similar lines Participant 14(ME) stated the

mentor has got to be understanding, he must understand that what worked with one guy may not work with me or any other guy, because we all come from different places and have different goals, life experience and desires.

#### **RQ4**

Table 9

*Mentors' Perspective of Characteristics of Black Male Mentor/Mentee Relationship*

Characteristics	Participants
Honesty	11 of 12
Long term	09 of 12
Consistency	06 of 12
Communication	04 of 12
Transparency	03 of 12

Table 10

*Mentees Perspective of Characteristics of Black Male Mentor/Mentee Relationship*

Characteristics	Participants
Honesty	08 of 10
Long term	09 of 10
Consistency	05 of 10
Open-Minded	3 of 10

Eleven mentors mentioned honesty, nine mentioned long term, and six mentioned consistency (Table 9) as necessary features of the Black male mentor/mentee relationship. Participant 3(MT) stated honesty is vital in the mentor/mentee relationship.

"From my experience many Black males are reluctant to open up. I do not know if it is a male thing, but they are unwilling to open up, so the mentor has, to be honest, and show he cares." Participant 6(MT) proposed when there is a high level of honesty mentees can be honest, and the mentor can be effective in mentoring. When honesty is known the mentee will share and not feel like they cannot express whatever is going on in their lives. The mentee knows he can be honest and share whatever is what is going on without the fear of being judged.

When addressing long-term, Participant 1(MT) stated a continued relationship is important, even after the mentee has gotten to the point where they are a little bit successful, or they feel they have reached their milestone you still have to continue to be there. Participant 3(MT) suggested the mentor/mentee relationship is about longevity. It is not a semester thing; it is not a summer thing; the mentor sees the mentee to the end. Many times it is about money or another job opportunity comes up, so there is a high turnover rate, but if it is going to be successful mentor must see the mentee to the end, the mentor must commit himself to the mentee.

Participant 11(MT) suggested mentors must be consistent; consistency with mentees helps build a stronger relationship, which helps build trust allowing the birth of a strong personal relationship. Participant-12(MT) stated, a colleague once told me Mentoring works because of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. It has got to be consistent, and it cannot be here today gone tomorrow because that is what they have had their whole lives, parents there, parents not there, the teacher there, the teacher

not there. It is because of their familiarity with inconsistency and the desire for change that they seek our help.

Eight mentees suggested honesty, nine suggested long-term, and five suggested consistencies were valuable characteristic of the Black male mentor/mentee relationship. When addressing honesty, Participant 22(ME) suggested if I cannot trust that you are working to make me better, why would I want to be in a relationship with you, I can do bad by myself. Participant 14(ME) stated first and foremost there has got to be honesty among the mentor and mentee. The mentor cannot lie to the mentee, and the mentee cannot lie to the mentor. Each has, to be honest, and truthful, the mentee must be honest and truthful letting the mentor know what he is going through so he can give him support with whatever problem he is having. Moreover, the mentor must be honest to the possible outcomes of taking one path over another.

When addressing long-term Participant 18(ME) suggested the relationship should be long-term, because you never know what will happen in the future. The mentee may have to come back to that mentor for help with a problem, or just want to tell him how he is doing in life or to say thanks for mentoring me Because of your guidance this is what I have accomplished. Participant 21(ME) suggested a good mentor/mentee relationship will last a long time. The relationship with my mentor began in 2011, and to this day we still have a relationship, he is like my brother, my mom even takes care of him.

When addressing consistency Participant 20(ME) stated my mentor was not a good mentor just because of what he taught me; it was also because of how he tended to me. Being able to talk to him whenever made me stick around because I knew he was a

reliable person. He always had my best interest, and I could speak to him anytime. If I could not talk to him at that exact moment, he would always text me back and say hey man I am doing something I will call you back. Along similar lines Participant 22(ME) advised I was always able to contact my mentor and talk to him either by phone or in person at any time, he was there for me whenever I needed him. I never had any doubt that if I needed him, he would be there.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a presentation of the finding gathered from transcribed and analyzed interview data. I also included a review of the data collection protocols used as well as a description of the processes for gathering, transcribing, and coding of the study data. An important discovery that I shared was the importance mentors and mentees placed on implemented strategies of honesty, leading by example, and improvement of the mentee's personal and professional skills.

During the transcription of interviews, it became clear that the majority of the mentors shared a common thought pattern. For example, in response to Question 1, 10 of 12 mentors believed understanding the mentee population was essential to success. Nine of 12 believed mentee development was significant, and 6 of 12 believed in the value of leading by example.

The discovered information from interview data suggested the mentee population shared the importance of these strategies. All 10 mentees mentioned the importance of the mentor understanding his goals and abilities, 9 of 10 referred to the importance of personal and professional improvement, and all 10 referred to the importance of a mentor

moving beyond verbal directions to teaching and leading by example. Chapter 5 will include a restatement of the purpose and nature of the study, my reasons for conducting the study, and a summary of key findings for further research. I will also present the implications for positive social change of the study.



## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In the year 2017, the literature consistently includes messages informing society of the Black male's inability to navigate life challenges. This information is prevalent with the negative economic, educational, and freedom challenges of Black males in American society. The inability of Black males to navigate life challenges is a decade old concern dating back to the days of slavery. The concern over the Black males' inability to find success may be warranted; however, if authors continue to focus only on describing the problem and not exploring programs or strategies to foster success, the Black male and American society may be destined for a future of educational and economic hardship. The purpose of this study was to examine leadership strategies in a selected mentoring program in the Southeastern United States and evaluate the effect of implemented strategies on improving the Black males' development or discovery of necessary skills to navigate life's challenges. This study was of an exploratory, qualitative case study with the purpose of understanding leadership strategies and their ability to decrease or reverse the poor success rates of Black males when navigating life's challenges. Key findings suggested that when mentors understand and use leadership strategies related to understanding the mentee population, understanding mentee development, and leading by example, success is likely to be the result.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that the major factor preventing Black males from navigating life's challenges is the lack of leadership. Without proper leadership, Black males' ability to find success decreases (Scott et al., 2013). The opinion that

emerged during interviews with the participants was that Black males' ability to successfully navigate life's challenges will significantly improve with properly implemented leadership strategies.

My findings closely related to and confirmed the peer-reviewed literature of leadership strategies and mentoring that I previously presented in Chapter 2. The data I received from program participants suggested that leadership strategies and a firm mentoring foundation are significant factors that create a solid foundation to help Black males navigate life's challenges. The relationship between my findings and the elements presented in Chapter 2 was evident in many aspects of the literature reviewed; in particular, the peer-reviewed literature that explored elements of leadership strategies and mentoring. According to the literature, Black males are having difficulties successfully navigating life's challenges and encountering failures that have created problems of economic, educational, and freedom attainment (Groth, 2011). Garibaldi (2014) suggested the Black males' problems with navigating life's challenges is the result of limited leadership received during the Black males' adolescent years. Along similar lines, Scott et al. (2013) suggested the lack of leadership is a causal factor of many Black males making wrong decisions and taking the wrong path in life, resulting in complications that foster underachievement and underrepresentation.

Addressing this problem requires immediate action, which may include aggressively dictating directives in a structured environment (Murdoch, 2013). For this reason, Murdoch (2013) proposed formal mentoring, a process of structured and trusting relationships that bring young people together with caring individuals who offer

guidance, support, and encouragement, as a possible solution to decreasing the Black males' inability to navigate life's challenges. Murdoch (2013) also suggested that subordinates would benefit from proper leadership strategies used selectively to support the individual's development, such as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership.

Directive leadership has an aggressive nature; supportive leadership creates a friendly climate with verbal recognition of subordinates' achievements, and participative leadership focus on consultative behavior (Murdoch, 2013). Murdoch (2013) further advocated when using achievement-orientated leadership, the mentor creates, assigns, and expects the subordinates highest level of performance during completion of any given task. As a result of analyzing the interview data, it became clear that each mentor and mentee suggested the importance and value of each leadership style suggested by Murdoch as it related to their experience while participating in the chosen mentoring program.

I discovered Participant 13 (ME) supported of directive leadership when he suggested the mentor must be direct. The mentor must tell the mentee what he perceives to be wrong with his chosen path, his attitude, or his work ethic. "He must give honest responses, even if they are blood raw." Along similar lines, Participant 14 (ME) suggested mentors must not sugarcoat anything; they must be direct and genuine, pointing out that "The mentor must tell you what you need to hear, not what he thinks you want to hear."

Participant 3 (MT) relayed the importance of participative leadership when he specified that many Black males enter college wanting to pursue a major which may be beyond their ability. Instead of telling the mentee success in the chosen field may not be possible, the mentor explains in detail what is necessary from the mentee when pursuing the chosen major. After educating the mentee on the facts, the mentor asks for the mentee's input. If the mentee decides to change majors, the mentor does everything in his power to help the mentee start the new process. If the mentee insists on pursuing the first major, the mentor continues to provide the same quality of support.

When relating the supportive leadership style, Participant 1(MT) indicated it was important to help the Black male raised in a single parent household realize he could do anything he wants regardless of what his situation may have been and regardless of what he has experienced. Further, Participant 1 (MT) stated he informs his mentees if they have a problem come to see him; if he cannot find the answer for them, he will find someone who can. Along similar lines, Participant 2(MT) believed the proper support system was crucial to success. Due to lack of support, he has witnessed many young Black males falter due to issues of depression related to dealing with family matters (trying to help family members back home), which interferes with their ability to succeed on campus while trying to progress through their degree program.

Participant 14(ME) confirmed his experience of achievement oriented leadership when he suggested his mentor would advise and direct him on how to approach a task, even if he was unsure of the task. His mentor always expected and required his best performance. Participant 7(MT) advocated that achievement is remarkable and to help the

mentee achieve, the mentor must know the mentee's skill set. If the mentee is a great organizer, there may not be the need to help him improve his organization skills, but the mentor may be able to show him how to conduct effective organization in his community, how to use his talent to help others, or how to use that talent in an industry setting.

Proper leadership is critical in fostering successful outcomes for Black males, both on personal and professional levels. According to Hamburg (2013), leadership is necessary to help develop autonomous skills, judgment, personal and vocational mastership, expertise, trust, and confidence; all factors which mentors and mentees echoed as important throughout the interview process. Some (Gibson, 2014; Grimes, 2014; Tolliver, 2012) believe mentoring creates an avenue to introduce proper leadership skills.

Another important discovery that I made during the research process was that Black male mentees were beginning to understand they had the ability to improve, which created a transformation of mindset; a transformation that occurred through formal mentoring. The process of mentoring provided the elements necessary to transform the mindset of the program participants (Grimes, 2014). Bishop (2011) reported that mentors were leaders who engaged in deliberate actions aimed at promoting learning that focused on assessing mentees need of skill enhancement. Skill enhancement such as professional identity, career development, educational support, organizational development and cultural change, and knowledge management/knowledge transfer (Farmer & Hope, 2015). The importance of promoting learning as suggested by Bishop was evident

throughout the process of interviewing the participants and transcribing and analyzing the data obtained from both mentors and mentees.

Both mentors and mentees addressed the importance of personal and professional skill enhancement of the mentee. One mentor stated that he focused on strength building through the use of Strength Finders, a concept that suggests everyone has 34 specific skills. The mentor has his mentees take an assessment test associated with Strength Finders to help identify the mentee's skill set. Once the mentor has identified the skill sets of the mentee, he and the mentee focus on the top five skills, working to improve and enhance those skills. One mentee confirmed his perception of the importance of skill enhancement when he suggested it was important for the mentor to understand and help him accomplish what he needed to accomplish and educate and guide him in areas where he was weak.

Through formal mentoring, the participants begin to realize and understand their accomplishments. Formal mentoring is a process which Hamburg (2013) suggested helps develop autonomous skills, judgments, personal and professional mastership, expertise, trust, and self-confidence. Elements which both mentors and mentees suggested were necessary elements for a successful outcome.

The interview data I gathered from mentors and mentees confirmed and supported the literature suggesting the importance of proper leadership strategies to helping Black males navigate life challenges and the importance of mentoring to the process. Ensuring that Black males successfully navigate life challenges are important on the individual, family, organizational, and societal levels. Because successful Black males are important

human resources that, if properly developed and put to use, will help decrease the country's economic and safety concerns.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study lies in the fact that the purpose was to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of a certain aspect of a specific human experience within a formal mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States. The use of purposeful sampling of participants precluded drawing broad inferences from interview data from other mentors and mentees at programs located in other areas of the United States, and therefore, eliminating the ability to generalize the findings. The targeted population was Black male program participants from a selected mentoring program located in the Southeastern United States, which further limited the results of the study. Lastly, although many males of color, Indian Americans, Spanish Americans, and Asian American and Pacific Islanders face life challenges that are similar to or worse than Black males, they were not included in this study.

### **Recommendations**

My primary recommendation for further research is for society and scholars to move beyond simply informing the world of the Black males' inability to find success in American society and explore, develop, and implement leadership programs and strategies to improve the Black males' ability to successfully navigate life's challenges. The massive amount of informational literature and media coverage, whether newspaper or television, has been instrumental in raising public awareness, yet simple awareness does not provide solutions to decreasing or eliminating the Black males' current rate of

decline. Failing to navigate these issues and concerns successfully creates uncontrollable, uneducated Black males who are on the verge of extinction (Dyce, 2013). Expanding similar studies beyond the borders of the Southeastern United States would create an opportunity to gather data vital to developing positive Black males and improving their success rate.

Many Black males are experiencing difficulties navigating life challenges. A review of the literature in Chapter 2 suggested there is a rapidly increasing population of poorly educated African-American males with economic issues that are becoming incarcerated and disconnected from mainstream society (Hines & McCoy 2013). Addressing these concerns is essential to the whole of American society on the individual, family, social, and organizational level. The disappearance of Black males from mainstream America makes it necessary to examine leadership strategies in other programs that seek to improve the status of Black males located in other parts of the United States that expand beyond the borders of Southeastern United States. Broadening the scope of research has the potential to reveal if the strategies implemented by the program located in the Southeastern United States are as effective in other environments or if the environment in which that program exists requires mentors to develop and implement other strategies.

From my personal experience environmental factors negatively affect many Black males, and due to this fact, many believe their environment defines them and so do not expect to move beyond that environment. According to Vrooms' expectancy theory, an individual will act in a certain way with the expectation the action will create only that



which they believe is possible (Lunenburg, 2011). Low expectations keep the Black male confined in body and mind to an area that society and their false belief their environment defines them and traps and destroys any belief that they are bigger and better than the situation and environment in which they were born.

A further recommendation of mine would be to examine the effect of leadership strategies on a different participant pool. In this study, I focused solely on Black males in a college setting. Exploring this type of research with the same focus conducted on younger Black males before entering college could discover or introduce leadership strategies to Black males during a time when they first begin to make decisions that will start to form the type of man they will become.

Black males have experienced systematically devastating results on social, educational, and economic outcomes at a higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group (Jackson, 2010). Correcting this devastating issue is important because Black males represent a tremendous pool of talent that need opportunities that provide them the ability to rise to greater heights and overcome barriers that deteriorates their progress (Harris, 2013). Palmer et al. (2013) suggested that by 2050 minority populations will comprise 50% of the U.S. population. Failing to condition Black males to persist to completion will create negative outcomes; which makes it critical to examine further research focused on improving the Black males' ability to succeed. Experiencing systematically devastating results in social, economic, and educational outcomes is not an experience limited solely to African American males. Other men of color experience difficulties navigating life's challenges, creating another recommendation for further research.

Other further research that may be beneficial would be to address the limitation within this study. Further research that expands beyond the border of the Southeastern United States could provide rich, contextualized understanding of the human experience in formal mentoring programs located in other areas of the United States. Limiting the study to the Southeastern United States eliminated the possibility of drawing broad inferences from interview data gathered from other mentors and mentees at programs located in other areas of Florida or other states.

Another limitation to explore would be the restriction of the participant pool. The study focused solely on Black males; however, many males of color, Indian American, Spanish American, and Asian American and Pacific Islanders face life challenges that are similar to or worse than Black males, yet other men of color were not a focus of this study. This study focused only on men, which limits the study further because Black females, Indian American females, and Spanish American females have their experience of difficulties navigating life challenges in American society. Further research focusing on the leadership strategies in mentoring programs that focus on the female population may reveal if the same leadership strategies prove beneficial when mentoring females or if gender is an important factor when implementing leadership strategies for mentoring Black, Indian American, or Spanish American females.

In summation, the recommendation includes moving research beyond the information that simply informs of the existence of the problem. The need to conduct research that explores the possibilities of improving the Black males' ability to succeed is now. A good start would be to expand this research beyond the borders of the

Southeastern United States to examine leadership's effect on other males of color located in other areas of the United States. Lastly, research the influence of leadership strategies through mentoring on females of color.

### **Implications**

This research has the potential to create positive social change on many levels. A positive educated Black male will focus on improving himself on an individual level. Once he has improved himself he will work to improve his family by educating his children to help build society, not destroy it.

### **Individual**

The lone Black male is the level where decreasing or correcting the current problem will begin to foster social change that positively affect family, organizational, and societal levels of American society. Researchers have revealed that Black males possess an inherent strength, which creates behavioral and emotional strengths that produce attributes such as, resistance toward societal systems, fearlessness in expressing their opinion, and respect for adults and peers. However, many Black males have been programmed to believe their environment defines them and escape is possible only through athletics or entertainment. I know this to be a fact because I was one of the young Black males trapped by this false belief.

Because of the constant reminding that I was an athlete, not a scholar by family members, high school teachers, and coaches, I placed all my efforts into athletics, working diligently to get drafted to the (NFL). The hard work paid off, and I became a second-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Eagles. Unfortunately, I left the college

experience, failing to graduate. Honestly, making it to the NFL was the only reason I entered an institution of higher learning, there was never a desire or focus to graduate. The subjected programming created the false belief that athletics was the only avenue to success. Survival in the NFL lasted for five seasons, which was cut short because of a career ending injury. The football career was over, and I possessed only a high school education that limited career opportunities. Depression set in, with a degree of failure and inadequacy. A level of depression from being inadequate remained with me for many years until Godly intervention prompted a return to school.

Reentering an institution of higher learning focusing only on the educational aspect was the beginning of me realizing the possibility of academic success was achievable. The realization that I was bigger than my environment enlightened me to the fact that it was not the environment or the situation that I was born in that would define me. I realized the definition of Jessie Small would be determined by the actions that I would take. This realization created the desire and ambition for me to improve myself, on a personal level and become an example for my family and younger Black males experiencing what I once experienced. Social change occurs on an individual level the moment one Black male experience success and uses that success to improve the status of himself, his family and other young Black males helping them to improve their situation. Furthermore, successful Black males work to improve the family, organization, and societal fabric of their community.

**Family**

In many Black families, the nucleus is not complete. The missing element is commonly the father. The single mother struggles to ensure her children have that which they need. Ensuring that the family has what is necessary often results in the mother working two sometimes three jobs. Working to that extent eliminates any time to pursue higher education. Many times, the mothers who raise Black males have less than a high school education. The lack of education eliminates the mother's ability to share with her son the value of higher education. Lack of education limited my mother's ability to share the value of academic importance. My mother did not finish high school and was unable to share with me the value of entering and completing an institution of higher learning. She pushed the value of graduating from high school because that was all she knew. Once the Black male has found success and the desire to improve on an individual level, he will change the dynamic of the family. He will be more prepared to provide for his family by protecting and educating the children and helping them realize the value of higher education so they will know without a doubt that success is important and they too can succeed. His actions will contribute to creating a generation of prepared Black males' eager to enter the organizational workforce. A generation of Black males prepared for life will work to build their community and society, not destroy it.

**Organizational**

Evidence has revealed the lack of academic preparation, lack of work experience, and lack of navigation support cripples Black males' employment opportunities (Harris,

2013). Improving the Black males' employment opportunities is vital because Black males represent a tremendous pool of talent that is important to American's economic future. Providing Black males with the possibilities that create the ability for them to rise to greater heights create an avenue for them to increase the skills needed to remain gainfully employed.

Creating this opportunity is critical to the success of America's economic future. Especially if the predicted 2050 demographic shift where the minority population comprises 50% of the U.S population comes to fruition (Palmer et al., 2009). The predicted 2050 demographic shift may prove disastrous for the American economy if there is a failure to help current and future Black males successfully navigate current challenges. In this study I focused on identifying or discovering leadership strategies that will improve the Black males economic, educational and freedom challenges. Identifying or discovering leadership strategies that help correct these problems will foster social change by creating the elements necessary to transform the mindset of Black males, helping them to navigate life's challenges successfully.

Successful navigation would increase the Black males' educational accomplishments. Success would reduce the flow of Black males into state and federal penal systems and create men of color with the ability to improve American society by reversing the current 40 years increase of Black male unemployment. Employed Black males would improve economic gains and assist the United States in its quest for economic superiority.

**Societal/Policy**

Black males with a mindset focused on improving self, family, and economic gains is a needed resource for societal growth. Positive thinking Black males will positively affect society. They will influence the professional development of younger Black males through skill enhancement, professional identity, career development, organizational, and cultural change.

**Conclusion**

The literature review in Chapter 2 contains the findings of many studies which reveal that Black males are having difficulties navigating economic, educational, and freedom challenges in the United States. The constant reminder of this fact has programmed America on the individual, the family, and societal levels to believe there is no viable solution; that the plight of Black males is in an intractable situation. When constantly reminding, an individual, a family, and society that a problem exists and there is no solution, that individual, that family, and society will become programmed to that belief. Without any contradictory information or findings, they become trapped in a false reality.

During this investigation, I discovered that Black males respond positively to leadership strategies when properly implemented and introduced to them by experienced mentors. It is time to move beyond simply informing society that a known problem continues to exist. It is time to explore and discover the strategies needed to lead current and future Black males to a degree of success they never dreamed possible. It is time to

set out on this mission; it is time to provide Black males the needed skills to live, instead of letting them live to go to prison.



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### **Interview Questions**

1. What are some successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males through life's challenges that are part of this mentoring program?
2. What are the characteristics of these successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?
3. What are the critical factors for developing and implementing successful leadership strategies for mentoring Black males?
4. What are the characteristics of a successful Black male mentor/mentee relationship?

### **Closing Comments**

Is there anything more that you would like to add?

I will be analyzing the information you and others gave me and submitting a report to Walden University of my findings. I will be happy to send you a copy when it is available if you are interested.

Thank you for your time