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Phenomenological approach to understanding the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program: An African-American male retention program at a midsize predominantly white institution

Glenn L. Herring

Eastern Illinois University

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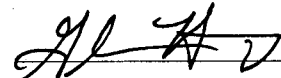
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A Phenomenological Approach to Understanding the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program:

An African-American Male Retention Program at a Midsize Predominantly White Institution

(TITLE)

BY

Glenn L. Herring

THESIS

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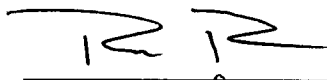
Master of Science in College Student Affairs

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Summer 2013

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program and all men associated with the program past, present, and future. I would like to especially thank Mr. D'Wayne S. Jenkins for inviting me to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring meetings as well as being a Brother, friend, and mentor. Your contributions to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring has had a tremendously impact on the mentors and mentees in the program. Aaron, Rovion, Bruce, Nick, Omar, James, and I have continued the foundation set by you, with the focus of keeping S.T.R.O.N.G. the tie that binds all of us. To you, Brother Jenkins, this piece is respectfully dedicated as well.

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ABSTRACT

Using phenomenological inquiry, the purpose of this present research was to explore the phenomena of the African-American undergraduate male experience in a retention program at a Midsize Midwestern predominantly White institution. Through data analysis the principle researcher examined the perceptions of the participants to understand the impact of the program. The participants accounted for their shared experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program during the 2011-2012 academic school year. Collectively the participants articulated a greater sense of awareness to their self-perception due their socialization at the site location. The participants also warranted feelings of confirmation biases, an increased obligation to the program, and the need for counter space. The principle researcher addresses the themes emerged from data analysis and provides implications for the future direction and guidance for the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

“We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.”

Carter G. Woodson

Black males throughout the course of history have experienced academia disproportionately than any other diverse population of students; these men have historically been disenfranchised in the education system by its Eurocentric curriculum (Howard, 2008). Early in this nation’s history enslaved Black Americans became involuntary minorities by White Americans. For more than 200 years Enslaved Black Americans were denied basic human rights. For example, it was forbidden for slaves to read and write and were punished if discovered to have attempted to practice such educational freedoms (Bullock, 1967). The deleterious punishments extended to slaves on plantations underpin White superiority by inciting fear conditioning slaves to develop an inferior identity (Ogbu, 2004). As for the aftermath of post-emancipation proclamation, an estimated 90% to 95% of the Black adult population was reported as illiterate (Temperley, 2000). For higher education, only a few northern institutions were willing to allow Blacks admission into their regular programs, ascribing this common belief widely accepted that Blacks were inherently incapable of benefiting from higher education (Wallace, 1993).

Smith & Fleming (2006) argued nearly 300 years of slavery and Jim Crow laws set the precedent for the exclusion and denial of African-Americans admission in higher education. Despite many insurmountable obstacles set before African-American students, higher education was still sought out and achieved by a few with the assistance of a few institutions. Middlebury (1823), Amherst (1826), Bowdoin (1826), and Oberlin (1850 & 1862) were among the nations few selected institutions that granted African-Americans students the opportunity to attend and graduate (Smith & Fleming). However this victory was achieved nearly two centuries after the founding of higher education in the United States with Harvard in 1636 and did not come with the shortcomings of educational pursuits of many African-Americans. John Chavis, a Presbyterian minister and teacher in North Carolina, is said to be the first Black to attend an American college or university in 1799. Orthow (2001) accounted for the life of John Chavis, an alleged ancestor of the author, as a patriot serving in the Revolutionary War of 1775-1783. After Chavis's service in the war, he became a free slave and taught both free Black students and White students from some of the most prominent families in the state of North Carolina, and is believed to have studied under the tutelage of President John Witherspoon at Princeton University (History of North Carolina Education, 1985). Alexander Twilight was the first known African-American to graduate from an American college in 1823. Subsequently, Edward Jones and John Brown Russwurm graduated in 1826 from Amherst College and Bowdoin College two weeks apart from each other respectively. As for context to the inclusion of African-American women in higher education, Lucy Ann Stanton is noted as the first Black woman to receive a certificate from Oberlin College in 1850 (Lawson & Merrill, 1983). It would take another 12 years

for Mary Jane Patterson, the first Black woman to receive a college degree (Perkins, 1983). The accomplishments of the Black educational pioneers that have matriculated through higher education did not come without hardships and exceptions as many Blacks suffered laws that prohibited their educational attainment and those who pursued degrees were subjected to the racial climate of the Antebellum Era (1781-1860).

The period of 1880's to the 1960's was known as the Jim Crow era. Jim Crow was a racial caste system that categorized Black people as second class citizens. Originated by a White minstrel show performer by the name of Thomas "Daddy" Rice, Jim Crow would span more than half a century portraying Black people as unintelligent, inferior, and subservient to White people. In addition, there were "Jim Crow" laws which were enforced by many of the states and cities and forbade most common laws like intermarriage, ordered business owners and public institutions to separate their black and white clientele (Litwack, 1998; Klarman, 2004). In *Plessy v. Ferguson* 1896 the U.S. Supreme court declared Blacks and Whites to use separate facilities citing "separate but equal" as constitutional (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Prior to *Brown v. Board* (1954, 1956) rules that favored access to education for Black Americans was unpromising during the era of "separate but equal". The Supreme Court's decision to desegregate schools increased enrollment for Black Americans in predominantly White schools but still warranted unfavorable White attitudes fostered during the Jim Crow Era.

Through racial discrimination, segregation, and the marginalization in higher education, Black people have persevered (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011) but at what cost? On the continuum, these challenges presented a lack of educational opportunities and strides in achievement for African-Americans. Specifically focusing

on African-American males in higher education, there have been slight increases in enrollment post *Brown v. Board* (1954, 1956). However, implications for retaining African-American males based on their lived experiences in retention programs has been scholarly neglected. Current research shows that only 47% of Black male students graduated on time from U.S. high schools in 2008, in comparison to 78% of their White male counterparts (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008). Research also reported that Black male students are less prepared than others for the rigors of college level academic work (Bonner II, & Bailey, 2006; Loury, 2004; Lundy-Wagner, & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). A report in 2002 revealed that Black men comprised only 4.3% of students enrolled at institutions of higher education which was the exact same percentage as in 1976 (Harper, 2006a; Strayhorn, 2010). In 2012, Harper collected data on four cohorts of undergraduates which reported that a six-year graduation rate for Black male students attending public colleges and universities was 33.3%, compared to 48.1% for students overall. Conversely, there has been limited scholarly attention with regard to the Black male experience in retention programs in higher education (Bean & Hull, 1984; Cuyjet, 1997 & 2006; Tinto, 1993). These statistics are an indicator of the deficits Black males face in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to explore the phenomena of the African-American undergraduate male experience in a retention program at a midsize Midwestern predominantly White institution. Using phenomenological inquiry, the focus of this study was to seek the commonly shared experiences of the participants to understand the impact of the S.T.R.O.N.G. (Successful Teaching Relative to Overcoming

Negative Generalities) MENtoring program at the site location. The participants accounted for their shared experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program during the 2011-2012 academic school year.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the present study.

1. What are the perceptions of Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program as it relates to gender and racial differences at a predominantly White institution?
2. How do Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program conceptualize their identity and campus involvement at predominantly White institutions?
3. What are the challenges and successes Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program experience while enrolled at a predominantly White institution?
4. What impact does the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program have on the perceived Black male experience at a predominantly White institution?

Significance of Study

In higher education, the retention of African-American males has added to the discussion of what is needed to resolve the many challenges this population encounters on college campuses. Nationally 67.6% of African-American males who enter college fail to graduate within six years, which is the lowest graduation rate among gender and race in higher education (Harper, 2009). At the site location significant factors impact the need to assist with the retention of African-American males. Among these factors are

social integration and academic achievement. At site location there were 1,280 undergraduate African-American students enrolled for the fiscal year 2010. The African American male population was 509 and of the 509 males 156 (27%) grade point averages fell below a 2.0 for spring 2012 (Office of Minority Affairs, 2012). The present study was designed to allow African-American males the opportunity to narrate their experiences as participants in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program. The relevance of this study was significant due to the lack of scholarly research conducted exclusively on the experiences of African-American male participants in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program at the site location.

Limitations of the Study

The present study was a phenomenological analysis of information gathered from the personal experiences of five African-American males involved with the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program during the 2011-2012 academic school years and presently enrolled at the site location. The limitation effectively excludes all African-American males who have not been involved with S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring outside of the 2011-2012 academic school years. Another limitation was the exclusion of any female participation in this present study. The data analysis of this present study was subject to the researcher's own biases including gender, race, and ethnicity. The findings should be considered the perceptions of African-American males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program and not a comprehensive analysis of all undergraduate African-American males at the site location.

Definition of Terms

Counterspace: A physical place where a person of racial/ethnic difference to the status quo can feel safe and release tension felt (racism, prejudice, bigotry, etc.) around others in the environment (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000)

Stereotype threat: A dilemma that has penetrated and influenced much of American life, according to Steele and Aronson (1995).

Microaggressions: Subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Phenomenology: A variant of qualitative research aiming to study the nature of human events as they are immediately experienced within their real-world context – resisting the prior use of any concepts or categories that distort the direct experiential basis for understanding events (Yin, 2011).

Racial battle fatigue: Signs of stress expressed through frustration, anger, exhaustion, physical avoidance, psychological or emotional withdrawal, escapism, acceptance of racist attributions, resistance, verbally, nonverbally, or physically fighting back (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

African-American/Black male: U.S.-born citizen of African ancestry, Caribbean's, native Africans, and other international students of color were excluded from the sample, as their college experiences may tend to differ from those of their U.S.-born Black counterparts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In this paper, African-American and Black are used interchangeably to refer to persons whose ancestral origins lie in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Summary

Understanding the African-American male experience in higher education throughout the course of history provides context as to how these men experience the college campus and what institutional factors are needed to provide adequate support. In this present study, phenomenological inquiry was selected as a framework to investigate the meaning of the real life conditions through the perceptions of African-American males in a retention program at the site location.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

“And now what I have briefly sketched in large outline let me on coming pages tell again in many ways, with loving emphasis and deeper detail, that men may listen to the striving in the souls of black folk.”

W.E.B. DuBois

The purpose of this chapter was to explore literature reviewed on African-American male experience in higher education. This literature review was to focus on previous research on the experiences of African-American males as it relate to retention and matriculation on the college campus. This section also included research on institutional factors: mentoring programs, African-American faculty, gender role stereotypes, and the racial climate. Research in this chapter also provided context to how African-American males construct their identity at a predominantly White institution which included their involvement, stereotype threat, microaggressions racial battle fatigue and counterspace.

Retention Efforts

Simmons (2013) stated that the retention of students is a frequently discussed and commonly studied within higher education. Retention is defined as the "ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation" (Seidman, 2005 p.14). The first indication of retention being a challenge for African-American males in higher education was the case of John Chavis in 1799. Orthow (2001) wrote that her descendant never completed a degree from Washington and Lee University. Unfortunately due to the

lack of historical documentation, John Chavis's experiences at the university are unknown and reasons why he did not complete the degree (Orthow).

The U.S. Department of Education (2009) reported consistent lower graduation rates for racial and ethnic minority students when compared to White students. Grayson & Grayson (2003) suggested these students have been engaged poorly with the academic and social environments, also contributing to lower persistence through graduation. For many minority students at predominantly White campuses, attempts to engage the academic and social environment may act as a deterrent to persistence. Unintentionally when these students racial identity is assailed within a predominantly White environment this leads to microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). These students must constantly contend with many aspects of Whiteness due to exclusion of their cultural identity in the environment (Quaye, Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009). When minority students are not reflected in the classroom they feel isolated as opposed to an environment such as a Historically Black College where faculty, staff, and other same race peers can provide an outlet for advice and support (White & Lowenthal, 2011).

In regards to the curriculum, the diversity of the student body is often not represented in the classroom (Quaye et al.). Much of the curriculum at a predominantly White institution reflect the predominant student population and present their culture as the standard, often making other racial and ethnic groups feel not included or valued (Quaye et al.). For many minority students they are experiencing an educational built with intent was to assimilate immigrants and other racial/ethnic cultures into this American educational identity (White & Lowenthal). This American educational identity

has increased the educational gap for minority students whereas they become disengaged from the learning process (White & Lowenthal). Consequently, these students drop out of their institution, with minimal prospects of returning. Faculty should find ways to incorporate the contributions of minorities within the classroom to reverse such a deleterious trend for minority students (Quaye et al.).

Mentoring Programs

Merriam (1983) defined mentoring as:

... a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, a relationship in which the older member is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger. The mentor helps shape the growth and development of the protégé.

The term mentor dates back to Greek mythology originating from Homer's *Odyssey* (Fox, 2006). The "mentor" during battle, was an appointment to protect families until the men came home from the war. The term mentoring has been used ever since to describe a relationship where an individual receives advice, coaching and/or counseling from a more senior wise counsel. The term mentor has been generally used in the human services field to describe a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé. Mentoring is a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction and encouragement aimed at the competence and character of the protégé (DuBois & Karcher 2005). According to Miller, Mullett, & Van Sant (2006) the last two decades of formalized youth development practice known as mentoring has played a major role in shaping the discussions youth and adult partnerships. While mentoring tends to be a controversial topic, many researchers have

described mentoring as a positive tool, affording mentees the opportunity for growth and exposure to individuals from all walks of life.

LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997) described mentoring as a successful way to bond with African-American males and help them matriculate to graduation. Below are descriptions of select mentoring programs highlighted by LaVant, Anderson & Tiggs created for the retention of African-American males at colleges and universities.

the faculty mentoring program-university of louisville.

The Faculty Mentor Program at the University of Louisville assigns a faculty mentor to all African American freshmen admitted to degree-granting units. Mentors are selected from all colleges of the university, and specific assignments are made on the basis of the student's proposed major. Therefore, a common interest exists between the mentor and mentee, which facilitates the relationship. The mentor's role involves proactive contact by phone, letter, and electronic mail whenever possible, culminating in sustained bimonthly or monthly face-to-face contacts. The mentor also serves as the mentee's principal adviser. Early contacts are vital as students are greeted and introduced to the program during the summer orientation and registration period. Mentors document their contacts and continue to track the African American mentees throughout their college career and often after graduation.

the student african american brotherhood (saab).

In 1990, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) was founded by Tyrone Bledsoe on the campus of Georgia Southwestern University. The organization is established to provide student development intervention and support to African American men enrolled in college; it is further designed as a black male development model. One

of its goals is to assist African American men in developing a more complete understanding of their responsibilities in being U.S. citizens. Leadership development and training is also an important initiative of this organization. To accomplish its goals, educational and cultural activities are offered to all student participants. Services such as tutorial assistance, career planning and counseling, cultural and social activities, personal development opportunities, community service, and spiritual enrichments are offered. All of the programs of this organization are designed to promote positive thinking and promote high self-esteem in African American men. SAAB currently exists on three other college campuses: North Carolina Central University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Albany State University in Georgia. By offering these services, role models, and mentoring through this innovative approach, the chances for successful college matriculation for African American men are greatly enhanced.

the black man's think tank.

One successful mentoring program for African American men can be found at the University of Cincinnati. The program is run by Eric Abercrombie, director of the African Cultural and Research Center and the Office of Ethnic Programs and Services. Abercrombie created the Black Man's Think Tank in 1993. The Think Tank provides an arena and forum for black male academicians to discuss issues and concerns that confront black male students in higher education. As a result of their discussions, a decision was made that the Think Tank would spearhead a mentoring and leadership program matching undergraduate black male students with black male professional staff. Abercrombie explains that students often fail not because of academic reasons but because they do not know how or are unable to set priorities, balance male-female

relationships, or learn to sacrifice. Emphasis is also placed on being committed to “our people” and giving back and serving as peers and mentors to younger brothers and sisters. One of Abercrombie’s protégés, Lee Jones, director of the Office of Multicultural Student Services at Washington State University and assistant professor of educational leadership, states that Abercrombie has influenced the work he has done with young African American men while at Washington State University and Ohio State University. Jones also established a mentoring program at Washington State entitled 100 African American Men. It brings black male students together to address issues that affect them. African American male freshmen and transfer students are identified and assigned a male faculty mentor upon admission to WSU.

the black male initiative.

In an effort to encourage black youth in inner cities to enter colleges and universities, Texas Southern University established the Black Male Initiative in 1990 to encourage black youth to continue their education. The program promotes the values of education and provides workshops and other informative events that bring successful role models to the forefront. Successful business and community leaders participate and provide inspiration to the students. The program assists students in understanding their capabilities and talents and offers them several opportunities to maximize their potential.

The Need for Black Faculty

Alexander and Moore (2008) identified challenges and strategies African-American faculty have at predominantly White institutions. The authors examined two cases of institutionalized racism and its ramifications on faculty becoming acclimated to the university. The first case at Ohio State University concerned the merit system among

faculty that rewarded faculty for being productive and performing at high levels within their respective fields. Unfortunately, the authors admit this process is a subjective assesses of the performance of faculty. The merit system is based on a point system and the criteria for making points are based on the administrators' perspective of faculty work ethic and contributions to the institution and in their respective field. This subjective merit system has implications for the marginalization of African-American and minority faculty impacting their ability to receive raises, tenure, and recognition. The second case revealed why the social and psychologically impact of being a numerical minority within a predominantly White institution. In this case the institution utilized African-American faculty members as the face of diversity for the institution which required a heavy teaching and to serve on many committees concerning minority and diversity topics. The authors posit implications for minority faculty who legally defray such discrimination. The proposed reason for the overuse of Black faculty was to provide minority students with an opportunity to see themselves reflected at the institution in various settings to enhance acculturation to the campus. This perspective seems to show that minority faculty has concerns and needs, if not more than minority students. Ultimately, it is an institutional problem embedded in the fabric of the culture of predominantly White institutions.

Allison (2008) examined the identity negotiation and communication strategies that Black professors use when working in predominantly White institutions. The first set of participants was comprised of eight African-American professors (three men and five women) who all taught for the same mid-size, predominantly White institution in the rural southeast. The second set of participants included eight Black professors (four male

and four female), but they represented five different predominantly White institutions. The findings reported that Black professors do not communicate differently in the classroom significantly from their normal communication behaviors. However, Black professors are strategic in communicating their value as being professional, credible, and approachable by both their colleagues and their students. The findings suggest Black faculty members are conscious of the intentionality needed to create and establish their identity with colleagues and students at a predominantly White institution.

Brown (2009) explored the teaching relationship between African-American male teachers with African American male students. This study was designed to highlight how teachers shaped the classroom experience to meet the social and academic needs of African-American males. The participants were nine African-American male teachers, most having teaching experience and some with a military service background. The teachers' interactions with African-American male students were recorded, detailing their communication strategies and approaches. Three themes emerged from the data collected that described their performance styles as enforcer, negotiator, and playful. The findings showed that African-American male teachers understood how to effectively instill the needed dispositions of African-American male students through their various performance styles. The research suggests that conditionally admitted African-American male students have a negative self-image often developing stereotypical threat where they begin to subscribe to negative stereotypes about their race which negatively impacts performance abilities (Aronson & Steele).

Gender Stereotypes

African American males have been categorized throughout history as physically aggressive, threatening, sexually promiscuous, and uneducable athletes (Harrison, 2009; Hoch, 1979; Segal, 1990). During the enslavement of African people in this country, African men were socialized as “Black Beasts” which gave rationale for this population to be control, and rendered inferior to Whites (Bullock, 1967; Gossett, 1965; Gould 1981; Turner, 1977). Many enslaved Africans males were considered a physical threat and were beaten and killed to maintain the conditioning of slavery (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011). As time has progressed, African American men have still carried this social stigma and being violent and aggressive. Black rage was a term used during the civil rights era, to define Black male manhood as anger and frustration over denial of manhood (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Segal, 1990; Turner, 1977). Riots and protests alike were born from the anger of the Black men as opposed to need for social justice, human rights, and equal treatment.

Plant, Golpen, & Kuntsman (2011) explored threat related to race and gender to understand the influence on decisions to use force. Plant et al. conducted two tests in particular that involved participants’ likeliness to shoot a perceived assailant solely based on race and gender. The participants were White male and female psychology students who were administered a computer based simulation test. The test generated random photos of White females, White males, Black Females and Black males all with superimposed items various items like guns and cell phones. The participants were instructed to shoot if they felt a threat was clear and visible. The participants scored the highest error on shooting unarmed Black males more than any other race or gender in the

simulator. The findings suggest that racial bias towards Black males as being dangerous and a threat is an automatic cognitive thought process among Whites.

Another stereotype among African-American males at predominantly White campuses is the majority are football and basketball team players (Harrison, 2009). Such generalizations have caused serious challenges limiting the social and academic engagement of African-American males being stigmatized as “dumb jock” as opposed to being considered student athletes (Kirk & Kirk 1993). Harrison (2009) conducted a qualitative investigation targeting the issues of student narratives (N=167) about the contemporary issue related to recruiting high-profile African American male student-athletes. The participants were majority female, and the racial breakdown included: 73.6% White, 13.4% Asian-Americans, 9% African-American, 3% Hispanic-American, and 1% other. The participants were asked a series of questions while watching a video related to a recruiting event at a white campus for an African American football player. From the data analysis, African-American male football players were perceived to be “sex objects” and “athleticized” as opposed to being educated. Harrison suggested that recruitment activities for competitive athletes have perpetuated this branding of African-American male athletes as sex symbols and uneducated.

Racial Climate

African-American students experience exclusion, racial discrimination, and alienation on predominantly White campuses (Allen, 1992; Turner, 1994; Carter, 2006). By comparison African-Americans at Historically Black Colleges and Universities reported “feelings of engagement, connection, acceptance, and... encouragement” (Allen, p.39). African-American students at predominantly White institutions reported feelings

of anxiety and fear being the only one or one of a few African-Americans in a particular environment (Carter 2006; Feagin, Vera, & Imani 1996; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Anxiety among African-American students causes the need for increased company of other African-Americans for their support. Feagin et. al also reported that “a recent survey of Black students at mostly White universities found they were so concerned about intellectual survival that they were unable to devote as much attention to their personal, social, and cultural development as they should” (p.75).

Rankin & Reason (2005) found ethnic and racial minority students to perceive the campus climate as not accepting and racist as opposed to their White counterparts. African-American students also refrained from seeking assistance and the necessary resources for college success due to fear of past racial discriminatory experiences on campus and the potential for those experiences to be repeated (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Feelings of social isolation, depression, negative feelings towards the institution, and negative self-perception formed from the racial tensions on campus, especially at predominantly White institutions (Wilson & Constantine, 1999).

Harper & Hurtado (2007) merged 15 years of research on the racial climate of college campuses in a qualitative study involving multiple institutions. Harper & Hurtado developed nine themes through data analysis with broad themes of exclusion, institutional rhetoric, and marginality. In the research compiled by Harper & Hurtado, participants reported having difficulty describing places on campus where segregation didn’t exist. They described the residence halls, dining halls, student organizations, and Greek life on and off campus as places that are segregated due the racial tension. A Black student referred to Greek Row as “Jim Crow Row” (p.16). Members of the Inter-

Fraternity Council allegedly blamed Black Greek organizations for the lack of racially integration chapters at a predominantly White institution. The findings in this study has implications for further assessment on racial climate within higher education as beginning to create culturally diverse and inclusive learning environments.

In addition to the racial tensions experience by minority students in college, the lack of access to higher education for lower socioeconomic Black youth is of significant concern compared to those of a high socioeconomic background (Smith, 2008). Lack of access for low socioeconomic minority student members of underrepresented groups limits their options for college in addition to how they perceived their success in college (Carter, 2006). Parents of low-income Black students are often incapable of exploring college choices which inhibits their children from obtaining a college education. Smith conducted a qualitative experiment on parental involvement and socioeconomic status to see the impact on college assistance. The participants were three single Black females who described their parents' involvement during their years in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Smith found that low socioeconomic status parents, specifically Black parents, are often very involved in their children's education but not issues that pertained to college. These factors suggest the challenges Black students faces in regards to choosing higher education are in part socioeconomic status as well as parental involvement and knowledge of the collegiate environment.

Involvement

Sedlecek (1999) examined 20 years of research exploring black students on White college campuses and found eight non-cognitive variables that impact their level of being engaged and involved on the college campus. These non-cognitive variables are positive

self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understanding how to deal with racism, demonstrating community service, goal setting and immediate needs, available strong support person, successful leadership experience, and knowledge acquired in a field. Black students on White college campuses will acculturate to the institution based on their level of achievement in each of these non-cognitive variables.

Baker (2008) examined student involvement related to academic performance based on underrepresented students' participation in six different types of student organizations. The participants were African-American and Latinos students selected from 27 different colleges. Baker found academic performance varied by gender, race, and the type of student organization. The findings suggest that student involvement within student organizations must meet the unique individual needs of underrepresented student to impact academic performance.

Cuyjet (1997) explored the needs of African-American males in college and found similar themes as to the success of African-American males being active, involved, and retained at the college level. Specifically dealing with African-American males' level of involvement on the college campus, research has identified the need for African-American males to have leadership opportunities in student organizations as a means to increase participation and involvement (DeSousa and King 1992; Harper, 1975; Rooney, 1995; Wright, 1987). Membership into minority based student organizations such as black fraternities contribute as well to developing leadership in African-American males while increasing their involvement. In addition to participation in student organizations, athletics serve as a means to facilitate social adjustment, self-esteem, and college completion among African American male students (Pascarella and Smart 1991).

Identity Construction

Davis (2008) stated that African-American males entering higher education were likely to be from a variety of backgrounds. Although certain general characteristics can be attributed to African-American college men, any population of African-American men is not a monolithic body with little or no within-group diversity. Some African-American males come from predominantly White suburban schools while others come from inner city ones. They also are varied in class, lower socioeconomic status, and can be academically talented or academically underprepared. So although we cannot ignore the generalizations that can alert us to some of the challenges African-American male students may face in adapting to the culture and environment of our campuses and in preparation to address those needs, we must not make the mistake of applying these characteristics (and our proposed solutions) universally to each African-American man enrolled. Interventions must include opportunities inclusive of high-achieving African-American men as well (Davis, 2008; Fries-Britt, 1997; Harper, 2003).

stereotype threat.

Steele & Aronson (1995) first used stereotype threat to explain how people automatically subscribe to negative stereotypes associated with one's group. Stereotypes threat is not a term exclusively used for African-Americans, however the term developed from a study on African-Americans and the intellectual test performance ability (Steele & Aronson). Though the term is relatively new, historically the notion that one experiences anxiety when their race becomes the target of racial biases and or prejudices has been well researched, (Allport, 1954; Carter, 1991; Goffman, 1963; Steele, 1997). Steele & Aronson conducted a series of tests with White and Black participants. The various tests

simulations revealed that where select Blacks participants had to identify their race prior to taking the test, they underperformed. The Black participants that did not have to select a race scored higher than their white counterparts in that section test. The findings suggest that standardized testing could create higher levels of anxiety for African-American where they perceived their race is a factor. The study also has implications that the underachievement of Blacks on standardized tests appears to be a societal that needs to be addressed.

racial microaggressions.

Racial microaggressions are daily negative, racial insults that can be verbal, behavioral, or environmental and either intentional or unintentional (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Many that are responsible or contribute to microaggressions experienced by someone else are unaware (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). Sue, et.al contends that there are three forms of microaggression which are microinsult, microassault, and microinvalidation. These forms of microaggressions cause minorities to suffer from racial discrimination and bias that invalidate their thoughts, feelings, and essentially their reality. Smith, Hung, & Franklin (2011) explored racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue among Black men in high school, with some college, and who had completed college. There were 661 total participated in this study. The most significant findings reported men who completed higher level of education showed higher levels of mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES) related to microaggressions and racial battle fatigue. This study found why African-American males in college can experience a disconnection from the collegiate experience if they perceived the environment as a daily battle with racism tensions.

racial battle fatigue.

Racial battle fatigue is born from microaggressions in that the culmination of daily insults overtime can become frustrating and exhausting, thus creating racial battle fatigue (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Smith et al. examined the experiences of 661 Black men. A structural equation modeling approach was used to analyze the data. The findings reported that as educational attainment increases toward college completion, both racial microaggressions and societal problems contributed to more than one third of the cause of MEES. The results suggest predominantly White environments are prime contexts for producing racial battle fatigue among Black men.

Smith, Allen, & Danley (2007) examined the psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue with 36 Black male students. All of the participants were students enrolled at elite predominantly White institutions. All the participants were asked about the social and academic experiences at their respective institutions and reported feelings of “frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear” (p.562). Two themes emerged from the data analyses which were “anti-Black male stereotyping and extreme hypersurveillance and control” (p.561). The participants reported the importance of the microaggressions that took place in three specific domains on campus which were academic, social, and public settings. All the participants reported their campus environments as being more hostile to African-American men than any other group. The findings add more context to the racial climate experienced by African-American men and the need for predominantly White institutions to provide inclusiveness and acceptance within the environment.

Counterspace

Predominantly White institutions lack spaces free from racial tensions for the Blacks and other minorities on campus. Researchers have suggested that Blacks are still an underrepresented population in higher education which makes the need for counterspace more critical (Grier-Reed, 2010; Thompson, Gorin, Obeidat, & Chen, 2006). Grier-Reed also “reported that these students experienced more racial conflict, more pressure to conform to stereotypes, and less equitable treatment by faculty, staff, and teaching assistants than their White counterparts” (p.181). To provide an adequate description of the psychosocial benefits of counterspace, researchers have found stereotype threat, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue to be interrelated ideologies creating a racially toxic environment, criminalizing African-American male on college campuses (Smith et al. 2007). Grier-Reed (2010) examined the importance of African-American students networking as a means to combat the racial tension at predominantly White campuses and provide counterspace needed for meaningful, empathetic relationships to form. Grier-Reed described an African-American student network at a large Midwestern predominantly White institution. This network was developed by two faculty members and it held weekly lunch meetings. The meeting provided a place for Black faculty, staff, and grads to interact with Black students on their academic, social, and personal experiences. Students in the program report the meetings as a place of non-judgment, authentic relationships, and an informal environment where they could voice their opinions. This program provided insight to the structure needed to create counterspace for African-American students at predominantly White institutions.

Summary

Much of the research presented in this section presents the infrastructure of predominantly White institutions as being embedded with racial tension. The challenge of retention of African-American males in such environments requires the need for further research to be explored to gather a holistic approach to this problem.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

A qualitative research design was sought out to explore seek the commonly shared experiences of the participants to understand the impact of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program at the site location. The participants accounted for their shared experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program during the 2011-2012 academic school year. The focus of this chapter was to describe the methodology used, the participants, S.T.R.O.N.G., the site location, data collection, instrument used, and the treatment of data.

Qualitative Research Design

In order to obtain a rich description of the lived experiences of African American undergraduate males in a retention program at a predominantly White institution, a phenomenological research design was used. This methodology was selected to illustrate the perceptions of the participants, and how they make meaning of their experiences. The phenomenological research design encompasses the essence of qualitative research enabling the researcher to focus on the lived experiences in a real-world context of the participants (Hays & Sigh, 2012 and Yin, 2011). The lived experience that is shared by participants is the main assumption in phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2009). According to Hays & Sigh qualitative researchers in this theoretical framework aim to determine the intentions of the participant, by viewing their phenomenon with a fresh perspective to understand and interpret the lived experiences from the participants' point of view. The concept of phenomenology is credited to the German philosopher Edward Husserl (Hays & Sigh). Traditionally phenomenology was used to understand the social

crisis post World War I with its early roots in philosophy. Today phenomenology has long since evolved and has been used in many disciplines such as mental (Hesse-Bieber & Leavy, 2007), counseling research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Singh, Hays, Chung, & Watson, 2010), and educational settings as well (Alerby, 2003; Cornett-Devito & Worley, 2005).

Participants

Participants in the present study are members of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program at a midsize Midwestern predominantly White institution. All participants selected were given pseudo-names for the purposes of reporting and anonymity. The participants were reflective of their experiences as a member of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program and were required to have been a member for the 2011-2012 academic year. The participants' names reported below are the pseudo names agreed upon by both the principle researcher and each participant.

participant 1: Monty is an African-American male originally from the south suburbs of a large metropolitan city. He currently is a senior by credits but not graduating until the following 2013-2014 academic school year. Monty was first invited to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program as a freshman by his Advisor and has continued to return back every year. Majoring in Management Information Systems, Monty is very active on campus. He works for Campus Dining and currently is a three year member of S.T.R.O.N.G., a member of the Black Student Union, and a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (The institution's local chapter). Shortly after the conclusion of his interview, Monty became a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

participant 2: Edgar is an African-American male and a graduating senior majoring in sports management. Edgar is originally from a north suburban town just outside of a large metropolitan city. He is a member of the Student Athletic Advisory Council, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and has served as a Peer Leader for Office of Minority Affairs. In addition to Edgars' involvement on campus, he has been a member of S.T.R.O.N.G. for two years and was recruited to the institution as a student athlete on the track team. Edgar stated he was invited by the Advisor for S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring to attend a meeting after he was initiated into his fraternity and decided to attend.

participant 3: Steve is a sophomore and an African-American male undergraduate majoring in finance. Steve is originally from a well-populated large metropolitan city. Steve was first introduced to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring Program by his freshman cousin (both of which were freshmen at that time). Steve is a former student athlete for the football team. Steve has been a member of the S.T.R.O.N.G. for a year and is involved with the African Student Association and a member of the Entrepreneurship Club at the host institution. Steve also works off campus for a telecommunications company and a company that provides services for persons with disabilities.

participant 4: Jack is an African-American male undergraduate majoring in business finance. Jack is originally from a smaller west suburb located approximately 30 minutes from a larger metropolitan area. Jack stated his first involvement with the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring Program was attending a forum titled "The Willie Lynch Letter". Jack stated it was a good forum and furthered his interest to attend a meeting.

Jack has been a member of S.T.R.O.N.G. for one year and is also a part of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and the Black Student Union. Jack became a member of S.T.R.O.N.G. prior to joining his fraternity. Jack also has served as House manager for his Fraternity House on campus.

participant 5: William is an African-American male undergraduate majoring in public relations. He is originally from a south suburb of a large metropolitan city. Unlike the other participants, William is a transfer student and in his first semester attended a forum titled “The Willie Lynch Letter” hosted by the men in S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring. William stated after the forum he was invite by the Advisor for S.T.R.O.N.G. to their weekly meetings. William has been a member of S.T.R.O.N.G. for a year and is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and the Black Student Union. William also works on campus in the Dining facilities and has worked off campus for a local grocery store.

S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program

The purpose of the S.T.R.O.N.G MENToring Program is to stimulate the minds of our underrepresented male students and foster a climate that will enhance their abilities to overcome challenges that may hinder them from graduating. S.T.R.O.N.G.’s main purpose is to cultivate our students into successful business and community leaders and to assist underrepresented male students in becoming acclimated to the host institution and the local community.

The S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program is designed to assist students in meeting objectives that are set forth for the program. The program assists underrepresented male students in becoming acclimated to the host institution and the local community.

Activities are developed that bridge the gap between faculty, staff and students which focuses on the issues that directly relate to the adjustment, persistence and academic achievement of underrepresented male students. Activities are also created that address the academic, social, and cultural needs of underrepresented male students. Resources and services are provided that will address their unique needs. The program aims to strengthen underrepresented students' academic skills and abilities and aid them in adjusting to the rigors of life in and after higher education. The program offers a variety of workshops as well community service opportunities. (See Appendix A for a list of statistical tables on the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program)

Site Location

The site for this present study is a mid-size university with a total student enrollment of 10,417 located in a rural farming community. The university offers 47 undergraduate programs, 27 graduate degree programs, 7 post baccalaureate degree programs, with a faculty to student ratio of 1:15. The majority of the classes are taught by full-time professors; teaching and research assistantships are limited to a few academic programs. The Black/African American student population consists of 511 men and 887 women; comprising 14.5% of the minority student population (Carnegie Classification, 2010).

Instrument

Many qualitative researchers utilize a protocol as the instrument of choice within this design approach (Yin, 2011). A protocol is a series of prescribed questions that guide the interview process. A pilot interview was conducted by the principle researcher with the advisor of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program. The purpose of the pilot

interview was to refine the test questions to answer the research questions. The questions utilized within the protocol for this project can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

For this present study participants of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program were sent an invitation via email about the study and asking for voluntary participation. This invitation requested participants to reply if interested in partaking in the study and provided information on how to contact the principle researcher. In the initial contact with the participants, the principle researcher inform the participants about the nature of the study and the confidentiality of the consent form (See Appendix C). The principle researcher described the one-on-one interview (to be conducted by the principle researcher) regarding their experiences as African-American undergraduate males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program at the host institution. Six participants responded to the email invitation to participate in the present study and at the conclusion of data collection only five participants completed interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, using open ended interview questions. The interviews ranged from approximately 25 to 35 minutes in length and were audiotaped then transcribed for clarification purposes. Once the transcriptions were complete, the principle researcher, as suggested by Yin (2011) began a Five-Phased Cycle to interpreting the data. Each participant was informed by the principle researcher possibly having a follow up session for accuracy of the transcription to further explain, clarify, or elaborate their experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program. The principle researcher added informal and para-language observations taken during the initial interview for clarification of verbal meanings. The interviews were held on campus taking into

account the noise levels in traffic for the purpose of confidentiality of the space. Each of the five participants signed a consent form voluntarily participating in the study and was informed that the principle researcher would keep all interview materials locked in a file cabinet and transported with the principle researcher for three years. At the said time the principle researcher will shred and discard of all materials related to the interviews to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

Treatment of Data

At the conclusion of the data collection, the participant interviews were transcribed, coded, and proof read for accuracy to the lived experiences reported by the participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudo- name for purposes of reporting and anonymity. Data analysis as suggested by Yin (2011) involved a Five-Phased Cycle of steps described as compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding in order to code the data. The compiling phase consisted of separating notes and organizing interviews into a database in the order of which they were created. In the disassembling phase, the principle researcher (PR) creates themes based on the sequences possible in the original transcription. In this second phase, the PR created level one codes at times using items in the original text or data. These codes were closely related to the actual words used by the participant (Yin). In the reassembling phase, the PR coded all of the interviews again with a focus on looking for emerging themes or patterns from the level one codes during the disassembling phase. The second level codes categorized in this phase are broader larger themes derived from the level one codes (Yin). In the concluding phase the PR gathered new themes about the significance of the study and the importance of the findings.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Using the research questions that guided this present study the purpose of this chapter was to report the findings and provide insight as to the perceptions of the African-American male undergraduate experience. Reported in this section are the thematic categories and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program as it relates to gender and racial differences?

The first thematic category constructed from the personal interviews was the awareness of self-perception based on social integration among gender and race.

Social Integration

The participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program and to describe the relationships with the same race opposite sex and other racial groups outside of the African-American race on campus. Through data analysis the following subthemes emerged as 1) positive same race opposite sex peer perceptions, 2) disconnection from other racial groups, 3) negative stereotypes and 4) barriers to academic achievement.

positive same race opposite sex peer perceptions.

Several participants reported positive interactions and perceptions with their same race opposite sex peers. Two participants described their relationships as being “respectable”. William reflected in his interview:

Well I’ve actually earned a lot of respect from my female counterparts to be honest. At times I was the main person speaking for S.T.R.O.N.G. I always

make the announcements in BSU (Black Student Union) for S.T.R.O.N.G. and just the times I had to speak, I was speaking as a representative of S.T.R.O.N.G. so when I said something that people found endearing they looked at it as a reflection of what S.T.R.O.N.G. is teaching.

Steve echoed William in his interview focusing more on the interpersonal interactions, "... I mean I like women so but just as far as on a respectable level, I respect everyone. Everybody gets my upmost respect if it's deserved in my eyes and if that's how I perceive that person." Monty added:

Comfortable. I don't have any problems with any of them (Black females) or feel a certain way about any of them. I kind of just keep them all in the same open-minded area within myself of everyone being cool, here for the right reasons of academics and leadership and uh yeah comfortable.

The participants viewed their relationships with African-American women as respectable and comfortable meaning they felt accepted by and could trust them. The findings reported in this section validate the importance of same race opposite sex peer relationships with African-American males' perception at the university.

disconnection from other racial groups.

As the participants reflected on their relationships with other racial groups, their descriptions changed drastically in comparison to their same race opposite sex peers. Steve's account for his relationship with other racial groups was described as:

Isolated at this point. It's really isolated and I really don't want to say it's anybody fault outside of mines. Coming to Eastern is really the first time I was really in a concentrated area with other ethnicities outside myself in a very vast

scale on a day to day basis so I'm really trying to learn why there's a barrier first just between the different races as far as interactions and because the way campus is structured, it doesn't really help as far as how people interact. It's real clicky so I think it's about who you know and who you want to know but as far as right now it's really kind of separated just due to lack of trying to meet new people.

Steve continued showing some ambivalence as to why he is not trying to meet new people outside his race and stated:

...I can't really answer that right now. I'm not going to say I can't answer it. I really say there is no excuse. There's really no excuse why I'm not interacting with other people (racial groups) outside of I just haven't done it. I'll just have to step outside my comfort zone one day I guess.

Jack was the only participant to identify multiple racial groups in his narrative.

Jack stated:

It could definitely be better. I don't have too many friends that are different races. I had a roommate (on campus) that was Filipino my sophomore year first semester and we became really cool but he joined a fraternity and moved into their house that fall semester but during that period I hung out with him and some of the guys on the floor that were different races. I used to go to different, like white parties all that type of stuff. It's not a bad vibe but it could definitely be better.

Monty also described his experience on campus with other racial groups:

Well my freshman year I stayed in a dorm and the floor was predominantly White. We were all cool, there were really no "oh my gosh he's Black keep the

doors locked” type things going on. We were all just cool and kicking it when we were on the floor. After freshman year I moved over to an apartment and I really stayed to myself besides class, class work, and organizations. I really didn’t hang out with too many people I knew. Some of my floor mates from freshman year I still know them and I’m still cool with them the same as if it was freshman year and some of the new White people I have met are cool like in my classes or whatnot. I don’t really hang out or introduce myself outside of meetings or class or things of that nature, but the ones I do know I’m pretty cool with and get along with easily.

The participants are starting to develop views and opinions of other racial groups on campus due to their exclusive participation with their same race peers and the lack of social integration with other ethnic/ cultural groups on campus. This has created isolation based on comfort where the members begin to only participate or become involved with people they are comfortable with like same racial/ethnic group and cultural experiences.

negative stereotypes.

In addition, the participants were asked if their race has played a role in how they were treated or perceived on campus. Monty recalls an incident on campus involving minority students as a reason why he was perceived as a threat on campus based on negative stereotypes of his race. Below is Monty’s recollection of the incident:

Well just (White) students around campus in general. There has recently been a couple of events that took place that is looked upon as it being the minorities are in the wrong of the situation and so due to those situations around campus as a whole it kind of puts other students (White students) shedding a bad light on the

minorities around campus and so I have seen a couple of students speed up a little bit when I'm walking behind them or double checking themselves to make sure you know, I'm not trying to assault them or anything of that nature.

Monty questions his own association as being a minority on campus as possibly being a negative. Aronson and Steele (1995) describe Monty's feelings as stereotype threat whereas he experiences a situation on campus that targets his racial group. Now Monty is associated with being a part of the incident solely based on him belonging to that racial group. Monty continues stating:

Just because the awkward looks, walking behind them (White students) makes me feel like I've done something wrong or makes me look like I've done something wrong if somebody were observing us walking and it just puts me in a bad place mentally... Well my thoughts about this is like, man I must be some bad guy like, my thoughts are like I might as well taken action so that the way they feel can be of reason. You know what I'm saying? But of course I don't do it, I try not to act out on thoughts and just try to keep my head. I just (pause) I just try to keep calm about the situation.

Edgar, from a different perspective, describes membership into a Black Greek fraternity as reason to why he has been treated differently on campus. Edgar is the only athlete of the participants and specifically talked about his relationship with his White track coach and the "silent treatment" after joining the fraternity. Edgar stated:

He would never say anything directly to me... He would say stuff to the assistant coach like "aw is he quote unquote pledging?" or "why is he coming late to practice sometimes?" As far as him, he was just ... It's hard to describe, we never

really talked about it, he knew I was initiated and it was more like a silent treatment because of what I did and I was never really given an explanation for the silent treatment. I was still doing my work and practice. I was still performing well on the track, so it really wasn't any reason for him to feel that way, it was just what I was a part of that made him feel that way so he just pretty much gave me the silent treatment and didn't really give me much attention as he would usually do.

Edgar's interview gave insight as to a regular occurrence of subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visually) directed towards persons of color defined as micro-aggressions (Solórzano, 2000). When asked if he has been treated or perceived differently solely based on being an African-American male on campus, Edgar stated:

I can't really think of anything because I try to strive to not give anyone a reason to downplay me or say anything bad about me being African-American. I tried to have my g.p.a. (grade point average) up there, I try to stay involved on campus, I try to stay out of trouble when it comes to fights and partying or getting tickets and stuff like that, and I pretty much done that about 90% of my whole career at this university. So I've really never had a problem with that because of my race. I've always heard comments about other people in my race because of maybe he got in trouble at a party, maybe "these Black kids, that's all they do is party and get in trouble" or things like that. I've never really had things like that or those situations happen to me.

After being asked his feelings towards "I try to strive to not give anyone a reason" and the comments he heard about others in his race, Edgar shared:

It's hard. It's hard because typically you know by numbers African-Americans don't have the best g.p.a.'s by numbers, usually Caucasians have the better ones but when you really look at things there are Caucasians that don't have the numbers as well but they are never looked upon as "aw that's just a quote unquote Caucasian not doing anything with their life" but when it's an African-American it's like "aw they're never going to be anything because they're never going to strive to be better" things like that it just comes from, just even back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, we get that stereotype of just always being below the standard, and it kind of sucks because to be quote unquote below the standard because who sets the standards anyway? So just having to strive not to give them a reason, it is tough because you want to do things that other people, other races can do, but because of your race you got to think twice sometimes about what people can say and what you may do in public and that's probably like never going to change.

The participants in this section all described daily negative interactions verbal and non-verbal that has contributed to how they were treated and perceived on campus at some point. Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso (2000) described these daily negative interactions based on one's race as microaggressions. These microaggressions are detrimental to how the participants create their reality on campus and have begun to perceive the campus as an environment where they are considered a threat without just cause.

barriers to academic achievement.

Participants Jack and William described their observation and interactions in the classroom as being barriers to their educational pursuits. The two participants also reported race played a factor in how White students and faculty interacted with them.

Jack described his experience as the non-participation of White students in an African-American history class. Jack replied:

Yes. Definitely when I was in my African-American history class as far as social movements class even though it was an African-American studies class it still was predominantly Caucasian students in there and the overall vibe for most people that was African-American was really attached and emotionally tied to what we were talking about compared to the others students in the class. So one day when a certain topic came up, it was one (Black) girl who got very emotional to the point where her voice was cracking, compared to most of the Caucasian students sitting closer to the back not saying too much, not really voicing their opinions about the topic that we had. So definitely on this campus certain classes have played a role in how I feel as a Black man. It's like more hesitant or less opinionated on the type of topics that involve Black folks because they (white students) don't want to step on anybody's toes or anything on that type of level. You don't want to get someone to the point where they are mad at you specifically so that really was the vibe of the class. Not too many Caucasian students voiced their opinions.

William described the interactions between faculty and students as being more intimate where both student and faculty are White and less intimate when the faculty is White and the student is Black. William stated:

I look at some student-teacher relationships with Caucasians and it's just a little bit more intimate than if it was with a Black person (student) and you know I asked around because maybe it was just me tripping or something but I asked one

of my guys who had the same class with me and he was like “yea she ain’t racist, but she don’t [explicative] with Black people like that”.

When asked about the difference between the two expressions his friend mentioned, William added:

She’s just a little bit more intimate, relaxed, and laid back with like White people and it’s just not quite the same. She like, cuts it off a few steps with Black people. The joking can only go so far and you can only get so close. I think White folks can have a little bit more intimate relationships with Black folks.

The participants in this section described White faculty and students as having a lack of intent or obligation to interact or connect with African-American students. Jack added that White students in the class were afraid to speak up in class in fear of upsetting African-American students. This reinforced the participants’ decisions to only interact with African-Americans on campus. Overall the participants feel disconnected to the classroom experience and wanted intimate contacts with White faculty and students.

Research Question 2: How do Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program conceptualize their identity and campus involvement at predominantly White institutions?

The second thematic category that emerged from the data analysis was the development of isolation based on comfort.

Isolation Based on Comfort

Each participant in this present study selected to be involved with only organization or others students they are comfortable with. For the groups on campus that their participants do have that same level of comfort they become isolated. All five

participants were asked questions related to their campus involvement and relationships with other Black males on campus. All five participants in this present study were all members of multiple extracurricular activities where the majority of the members are African-Americans. The participants' memberships include Black Student Union (BSU), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLO's), and the African Student Association (ASA). As it relates to their relationships with other Black males on campus the participants described their relationships with other Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program as a positive relationship. The following subthemes that emerged from the data analysis were 1) supportive peer relationships, 2) self-defeating prophecy, and 3) out-group homogeneity bias.

supportive peer relationships.

When asked about their relationships with other Black males on campus and how that has had an impact on them, all of the participants reported positives supportive relationships. William stated:

It's crazy people actually look up to me. I've earned a lot of respect from a lot of younger people and it kind of just drives me to do better... Just carry myself better. Like it's times where I could be immature, or say things that are funny at times but not quite appropriate but still acceptable in that situation, but I'll refrain from it because I don't want them to see that I at times cut up for something that I believe in but I'll tell them not to cut up in that same inappropriate sense for issues that might be less important to them or just an issue period.

Monty described his relationship with other Black males on campus as “comfortable”.

Below is Monty’s description of that relationship and the impact it has had on him:

...I know a couple of underclassmen and I try to be a positive role model for them and let them know I am heavily involved and part of executive boards and I do things around campus, so I just kind of keep that image as a leader, you know mentor mentee without the title type thing if that makes any sense just show them that there are good things that we can do around campus and still be cool.

Steve describes how his views changed of Black males since being on campus and in S.T.R.O.N.G. Steve stated:

When I see other African-American males on campus I want to say I’m really getting off that isolation stage cause due to the area where I was currently before this school it’s a lot of ignorant people and interacting with a lot of people usually got you in trouble so it’s kind of one of those things where I’m adapting to my environment. This environment is real new to me from being able to walk down the street at night and it being alright to only going to class 15 hours out the week so the interactions is, I’m a little more open to meet new people to find out how people can help me and how I can help the next person and just try to find the good and be optimistic about everything that I encounter and each person that I meet and not try to be pessimistic.

Participant in this section reported positive interactions of themselves and other African-American men on campus. William and Monty both reported being role models to younger men on campus and in S.T.R.O.N.G. Steve described his relationship with other African-American males on campus as adapting. Steve also explained his positive

outlook on his relationships with other African-American males on campus as being new. Steve also is the youngest participant in the study being a sophomore and is beginning to develop a new perspective of African-American males at the site location. For William and Monty they are behaving in ways they perceive they should as upperclassmen. When asked if their campus involvement was based on being members in S.T.R.O.N.G., the participants were divided as to whether or not their campus involvement was directly related to their membership in S.T.R.O.N.G. Jack stated:

Like I said earlier the opportunity (to get involved) was meeting people from different organizations. It didn't matter if you were in BSU, a different fraternity, or whatever. Everybody came together for a common goal you know just talking about things that affect Black men in general so I was able to meet guys from different backgrounds, who had different experiences, and had different opinions so I was able to meet people who was completely different from me and get their opinions on different topics we talked about in the meetings and it was very helpful for me just to be able to see a different perspective.

Steve talked about his involvement related to being in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program all through-out the interview. Steve's described his involvement from previous events he has been a part of and stated:

...Just recently we did a program in the union, Life as a Black Man, just something to come together as a team to put on an event and last year we did a presentation about different types of Black men that are attracted to women on campus. Just different little events that we put together, we come as a team to try to express ourselves.

When Steve was asked directly about his involvement related to S.T.R.O.N.G. he stated:

Like I mentioned earlier, throwing the different events from month-to-month or whatever events that we do. Also just the networking, before the meetings start they talk about different things that are happening on campus and different things you can get involved in. Just meeting people in the organization itself has made me go into other organizations like [a member of S.T.R.O.N.G.] in the group introduced me into the entrepreneurship club and we're actually working together through different business opportunities that I have presented to him and we're just working forward with that. That's just one of the things that I use as far as networking in the program and it's really just the networking in itself that has introduced me to new programs. [A mentor] actually put me on to tutoring, I told you my major is finance, and he put me on to tutoring in Old Main. You know, just different resources out there.

The contrasting part of this section was the participants all described S.T.R.O.N.G. as an opportunity to network and get involved on campus, yet they only sought participation in organizations they were comfortable with like primary African-American based organizations. However, S.T.R.O.N.G. has presented them the opportunity to get involved

self-defeating prophecy.

Self-defeating prophecy is "the expectation elicits behavior that produces results opposite of what was expected" (Bushman, Baumeister, & Stack 1999 p.368). Two participants stated their campus involvement was due to negative perceptions and expectations of minority student on campus. Previously Monty described his feelings of

how he is perceived which he replied “puts me in a bad place mentally”. Using that statement, Monty segued into his involvement stating:

...With people kind of looking down on me as I'm walking or stuff like that, earlier when I came here freshman, and sophomore year, it kind of made me feel like okay let me be a part of some good things or let me become an executive member of an organization or something so people can see that African Americans or minorities in general are doing positive things...so it won't look like we're just out here going to class were not even going to class or out here doing malicious things.

Edgar also described becoming involved on campus as a result of negative expectations of others in his race. Edgar stated:

It has pushed me to be more involved because when you think about it, it's not that many African-American male leaders on this campus and me being in some of the organizations I'm in, it's pushed me to be more involved, it's pushed me to have my g.p.a. higher, it's pushed me to take more leadership roles within predominantly Caucasian settings. I run, pretty much I run another organization with student athletics and I'm one of the only African-American males in there and I'm pretty much looked at as the one that does the most work in there, a leader, and the advisors respect that and the athletic directors respect that as well, so that's one of the impacts that it has had on me to just push myself to be different.

When Edgar was asked about other student organizations he's a part of, Edgar stated:

Student athletic advisory Council, pretty much what we do is, enhance the student athlete voice within student athletes to administration. Help out with like student athlete issues. I also help out with the conference which is all the schools in the conference to help out with things that need to get done as far as like conference championships, just things that have to do with the student athlete experience and we tried to improve on that. The National Pan-Hellenic Council which is the minority Greek Council here, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, and then I was a peer leader for Minority Affairs.

Monty and Edgar both described their involvement being related to the negative perceptions of being a minority on campus. In Monty's reflection, he states "it put me in a bad place mentally" when white students act or treat him as if he is a criminal just because of the reputation minorities have on campus. Monty also stated those incidents have caused him to join organizations to combat the negative perceptions of minorities on campus. There was a sense of unrest in the speech and physical disposition as Monty and Edgar described their respective situations. This is known as racial battle fatigue where constant microaggressions build up and physical and mental exhaustion begin to set in (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Edgar stated the coach gave him the silent treatment for joining a fraternity. Edgar felt only way to challenge this situation was to prove he can be in a fraternity, hold a leadership position, while being a student athlete. In varying ways these participants have exhausted themselves to prove they are not the typical minority student.

out-group homogeneity bias.

Out-group homogeneity is a term used to describe intergroup relationships and is defined as the tendency to perceive their own group as a heterogeneous set of differentiated persons and the other group as a homogeneous set of very similar or undifferentiated persons (Vandeselaere, 1991). Unanimously all the participants in the present study identified S.T.R.O.N.G. as being the only group where their voices are equally heard and individual differences add value to the group. Even when asked about the leadership structure in other African-American/ minority based groups, all of the participants described not having an equal voice. Steve stated “We’re a democracy.” Steve also referenced the entrepreneurship club which is not ethnically based and stated:

As far as with the entrepreneurship club I only went to one meeting and the one I went to was kind of laid back and reserved. The people in there kind of talk in between their intergroup and their an RSO and it wasn’t a lot of big discussions it was more so just one person talking telling everybody everything and telling them what we were going to do at the upcoming events and that pretty much was the meeting but I really don’t want to judge it right now because that was my first time.

Monty stated:

I’m not sure about the Greek life because I’m not Greek, uh so I’m not sure how they run things but I know a couple other organizations that I’m a part of they are really structured you know we have agendas, follow this agenda, do this agenda, you really can’t say what you want at any given time you know you have to pertain to that agenda and make sure that agenda gets carried out the way it

should be, whereas in S.T.R.O.N.G., we...you know we just talk. Talk about whatever we need to.

Steve described S.T.R.O.N.G. as:

More so as far as leadership structure like far as being laid-back it's more so like I said the grads are there more for guidance than telling you what to do so it's more so the actual body coming up with an event and actually want to do the event then somebody having a board cause that's one good thing about S.T.R.O.N.G. I feel it's not a board telling or directing people to do this or you know probably having more influence on what is going to be put out there to the campus than the actual body so it's more laid-back because people are able to voice their opinions and their opinions was heard and potentially brought the whole campus as a whole so that the good laid-back atmosphere so you wouldn't have to worry about a board or somebody that has some type of authority or something I want to call it, being over you saying no that's not good or something like that so that's the more laid-back atmosphere about S.T.R.O.N.G. that I really like.

Each participant described S.T.R.O.N.G. as a laid-back environment. This suggests that the men felt comfortable and not pressured to participate or the lack thereof. In addition the participants have also formed opinions of other groups as being the same. The participants have come to have pre-dispositions about minority based and other organizations outside of S.T.R.O.N.G. This justifies their isolation from other groups based on their level of comfort. Monty talks about a hard structure and the agenda that guides other meetings whereas S.T.R.O.N.G. is a place you can just talk. Steve described another meeting outside of S.T.R.O.N.G. as people being over you like an authority

figure that basically tells everyone what to do and when to do it. This suggests the men are biased when it comes to other groups that are different from the S.T.R.O.N.G.

MENtoring program.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges and successes Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program experience while enrolled at a predominantly White institution?

The third thematic category emerged from the data analysis was the participants' increased sense of obligation to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program.

Obligation

The participants in this present study were asked questions related to the accomplishments, areas of improvement, and essentially why their continued participation in the program persists. All the participants reported a sense of obligation by their responsibilities of helping the younger members in the group, role modeling behavior, and identifying necessary areas of improvement to better assist the members in the group. In addition, the participants reported the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring meetings as a place where they felt welcomed and personally and academically supported. The following subthemes that emerged through data analysis were 1) academic and personal resources, 2) lack of academic accountability, and 3) early awareness and recruitment.

academic and personal resources.

When the participants were asked about the accomplishments of the program, the men described their academic and personal gains as being a part of S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring. William describes the grade point average achievements of the group and

ways those expectations has helped him academically and personally as well as other members in the group. William stated:

S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring, last year we were at a 2.3 cumulative g.p.a. for frequent attenders. We took it to a 2.7 or a 2.9 for frequent attenders. That's damn good. Then I noticed that the frequent attenders are, a lot of them are constantly planning their future. I wasn't lackadaisical about it but I was just taking baby steps. I had another year but it came to a point where I was trying to apply for grad schools last year and it came to a point where I was looking into jobs, and doing all the networking I could. I had a folder full of business cards just because I didn't find out the importance of networking till that very same like fall and spring. At times in this day and age it seems like it's not really what you know, like levels of education that will get you in the door, but it's who you know that will get you pass. I mean sometimes you'll just be in the door for an interview and that interview can get cut short or just come to an end.

William also added:

And then the information in S.T.R.O.N.G., like the teachings that the [advisor and mentors], those teachings that they try to impress on us really has benefitted us a lot. Like now we have freshmen who are already planning on going to grad school and that was like something people had waited until March of their senior year to start trying to apply and find somewhere to go.

Monty explained his need for the mentoring program and the impact it had on his life.

When asked if he needing mentoring, Monty stated "Yeah. I didn't have a father growing up so with the [the advisor] being there for me and other facilitators at the time it

was kind of a way for them to keep me on my toes. I looked up to them as father figures.” Monty continued:

I’ve benefited from it by staying on my toes. As far as academics, making sure that I’m getting my homework because the facilitators strongly suggest it or provides that assistance if I need it, and other benefits of just having an escape place where I can just go to talk you know, it’s like an advisor advisee mentor mentee type thing where you know what I’m saying you just go talk, get it all off your chest, let it out, structured ways to handle a situation, or...just puts me in a good place being there letting me know that I have other people that go through the same things I go through, or can assist me when I need to talk or things of that nature.

Edgar stated:

I know it helped me learn about the black graduate school association, and that really helped me having those mentors in there to help me strive towards my future goals. Another thing I’ve learned is that there are different aspects as to how the media portrays African-American males. We know like, the broad aspects of it but we broke it down into categories like week by week and things that we could do better ourselves first on this campus and to reflect in the community. I’ve learned more of those things I think and I took out of it just being more accountable for myself and with my surroundings and how I act in public in certain areas and how I can act in my own personal space as well.

The participants in this section see the value in being a part of S.T.R.O.N.G. and how it has helped them personally and academically. Edgar stated being a member has

made him knowledgeable and aware of graduate school and to strive towards future goals. Monty shared his need for a mentor and how the mentors and advisor served as a father figure in his life. William stated a major accomplishment for the group was an increased grade point average for frequent attenders. This gives insight that these men have gained a sense of commitment to the group and have acknowledged personal and group accomplishments.

lack of academic accountability.

The participants were also very transparent about the program's challenges and areas of growth. The participants reported the need for more structure and accountability as far as the academic initiatives in the program and recruiting and retaining members.

Monty stated:

...There have been a couple of times where we haven't met the g.p.a. requirement that we have set for each other so I feel that we need to have a consequence for not meeting that goal requirement so that we can stay on top of it in the future... A consequence as far as like what kind of consequences? I know seldom we get pizza brought in, or maybe sometimes someone will think "hey let's bring in snacks for the group", take that away. I know we all get really hyped about some of our events that take place in the month of February, get one of those taken away from us so we know rather than event planning we need to be in our books, yeah I think that's about it, I don't see any monetary consequences or anything of that nature to happen.

Jack echoed Monty's statement saying "Also as far as an improvements I can possibly say we can always, we don't have a bad g.p.a. overall, but our g.p.a. as far as the

organization I mean as far as the program we can always improve in education.” The participants acknowledged the need for academic accountability in this section. Monty provided options to increase the academic performance by brainstorming consequences to motivate members to reach their personal academic goals which would improve the group overall.

early awareness and recruitment.

Two participants mentioned recruitment and retention of members as a challenge for the program. Edgar stated:

I think we could do better with recruitment as far as getting people to the meetings and retaining them. I think we could do better with trying to get a couple more events going or a couple of community service things out there maybe just once a month or something like that or even make the Black Male Summit like making that a stamp of S.T.R.O.N.G., making that bigger every year. Make that something different every year and just making it known that every year the Black Male Summit will be conducted by S.T.R.O.N.G., this is what we do and things like that. Just making it known for especially the incoming freshmen and maybe doing orientation, and for gateway saying that S.T.R.O.N.G. is somewhere you need to go to keep you guided in the right direction your freshmen year. It’s a great place to start and stay there as well.

Monty also added:

We can improve on event planning, sometimes we will have an event coming up and it will only be five or six of the 15 or 20 that are in there trying to take care of that event. We can improve by membership, having more people come because

the same 10 or 15 that are in there understand how good the organization is and we should bring more people in that are like us that need that talking to or that comfortable feeling of a brotherhood...

The participants viewed the program as an opportunity to bring more African-American males into the programs almost as a rite of passage. They talked about the program providing guidance and direction for members and the earlier the connection is made, more African-American men can benefit from the program. Another area of improvement was the retentions of members stated by both Monty and Edgar as well. Monty stated the program needed more males to help out with forums and hosting programs. Edgars added retaining members once they attend a meeting as an area of improvements. These men have identified benefits and areas of growth for the S.T.R.O.N.G MENToring program which are contributed to their successes and challenges at the institution. In spite of the areas of growth or challenges with the program, the men never disassociated themselves from the group, offerings ways to improve which solidifies their loyalty and obligation.

Research Question 4: What impact does the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program have on the perceived Black male experience at a predominantly White institution?

The final thematic category that emerged from the data analysis was the psychological impact of counterspace.

Counterspace

Counterspace is a place where a person of cultural difference to the status quo can feel safe and release tension (racism, prejudice, bigotry, etc.) experienced by others in the environment (Solorzano, 2000). All of the participants in this present study were asked

questions about their first impressions of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring meetings and interactions with the members. In additions, all the participants were asked about their continued participation and if they wanted to include any additional information to the principle researcher not addressed in the interview. The subthemes that emerged from the data analysis were 1) automatic acceptance, 2) no judgment zone, and 3) personal investment.

automatic acceptance.

The participants all reported feeling welcomed as their first impression and interactions with the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program. Edgar recalled his first encounter with S.T.R.O.N.G. as:

Welcoming. Everybody would speak to each other. When we'd break up in groups, nobody would overshadow ideas or downplay anybody's idea, and we would joke around with each other even if we didn't know each other. I met a few new people in there. Just everybody seemed to be on the same respect level. Nobody acted like different because I was in a fraternity or somebody else wasn't in a fraternity, that was not the case or anything...

Steve echoed Edgar's statement stating:

Welcomeness if anything. Everybody in the organization or program in itself are resources. I mean it's all about how to utilize the people that are around you. I feel like anybody you can talk to in the program. It's not really anybody that's trying to outshine anybody. It's just not those types of people in the group. I mean everybody is there to help everybody and it's just unity in the group in itself.

William stated:

I was welcomed in with open arms. I definitely spoke out and they always welcomed my opinions because a lot of times I had something to say on a lot of issues or just referring to those times where they had been in a spot I once was in. I just let them know my experience and ways they could get out or overcome their particular situation.

The participants all described their first encounter with the S.T.R.O.N.G.

MENtoring program as welcoming positive place. In addition each of the participants' described this counterspace where they felt accepted, embraced and included.

no judgment zone.

The participants reported not being judged as something they valued and appreciated in the program. Edgar stated:

I saw that it was a good look on just being a role model especially being a black male and then being in a fraternity the topics that were talked about were very good for young African-American men and I felt like I could contribute my words and wisdom being upperclassmen. I like the advisors in there, they were cool, the people in there were cool. I felt like it was just a nice environment, no egos in there, everybody just made their opinions. It wasn't too much judgment in there, and it was just one day out of the week so I felt like it was beneficial just to go there, learn different things and spread knowledge around...

Edgar also stated earlier in the interview that

...It was just no judging in there and I really appreciated that because you know we can get like too social status with things like that, but that was pretty much the

main thing. Just welcoming and everybody being respectful and open-minded to things and just having a good time were in there and just being open with each other different situations that we have.

Monty stated:

I feel like it's important because some organizations or clubs that you become a part of is really formal and some doesn't like so much structure, some like to just come and have an escape where you can just talk about whatever like a barbershop type feel how you go and get your hair cut you know you talk about Suzanne and Billy or you can talk about politics and Obama winning the presidency it's just really an informal place where we all can just come feel each other and hang out and still get things done... We can express how we're feeling or thinking about how classes are going. Sometimes we get as informal as talking about some of the events that's going on campus and why they went to bad, or what they could have done better, or you know talking about each other even. It's just a really comfortable feeling when you go in there.

The participants in this section described how they appreciated S.T.R.O.N.G. meetings as a place free from judgment. Edgar stated that people are not worried about social status and that everyone shares information beneficial for the group. Monty refers to the S.T.R.O.N.G. meetings as a barbershop type feel. The experience of the Black barbershop is embedded in the Black community as a cultural space where Black men old and young gather for the social experience, adding to the discourse on topics that are important or culturally relevant to Black men as well as the ritual of being groomed

(Alexander, 2003). The participants viewed S.T.R.O.N.G. as a safe space and part of their community at the site location.

personal investment.

The participants were each asked if they had any further information for the principle researcher to include about the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program that was not addressed in the interview. Below are the statements of each participant in terms of the impact the program has had on their experience at the university. Monty stated:

S.T.R.O.N.G. is important to me. It's important because like I've said throughout this interview it's a real homebody, comfortable feeling where we can go and talk about whatever. S.T.R.O.N.G. is important to the other guys that are in it I'm sure as well. The same way because we all can just let go, you know, just not worry about who's going to say what or worry about the consequences of talking about a professor or something of that nature. S.T.R.O.N.G. is really important to me and I'm sure it is for everyone else in there too.

Edgar stated:

I enjoy it when I can get there, when I can get out of practice or if I'm not at a meet. I have no problem just putting it in my scheduled to go there. Even if it's just sitting there talking or whether we get food or not things like that. I do enjoy it. I try to encourage people to come. People may not think of it as being beneficial until they get there but I enjoy S.T.R.O.N.G.

Steve stated:

I'm just glad to be a member. It's opened a lot of doors for me and networking has helped me find tutors, get the right teachers, good professors, join different organizations and also just connected me to somebody I can come talk to.

Jack stated:

Mainly the purpose of the group is, as I mentioned before, is about growth but it's also about educating each other, helping each other. More so like you said, how Black males are together on this campus as far as what is the relationship, this brings that relationship closer together. The people that you normally don't hang out with will come to this program seeking some type of empowerment so it's a very positive group. I feel like it serves a good purpose on this campus because, like I said, different people come together, different backgrounds, different groups of people, hang out and come together to have a good educated discussion. So that's one of the major things I would like to relate as far as the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program.

William stated:

It gave me motivation, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of accountability. It wasn't that I didn't have that, but it was like, wow when I found out that they were averaging our grade point averages to see the successes of it? When I'm finding that there are younger people looking up to me and coming to me for advice, I felt like I'm responsible and accountable like I don't want them to see me doing anything that I'm saying "hey that's not particularly a great idea to do in S.T.R.O.N.G." but I'm out doing it. As far as like staying on top of my grades I

try to do that. I like when they run to me in the library or run up to me when I'm just getting off work and we'll chit-chat for like 15, 20 minutes, or a half hour whatever have you, and then just that comfortability factor.

The participants each identified S.T.R.O.N.G. as a place that's of importance to them. When asked if there were anything of importance for the principle researcher to know about the program, participants described the program as a "homebody" feel where they can be honest about issues and express those issues without consequence or judgment. Many expressed being grateful for the networking opportunities and academic support provided they would have not sought out otherwise. Jack shared the importance of S.T.R.O.N.G. was the educational forums and discussions that has personally help him grow. William disclosed that S.T.R.O.N.G. has provided him with a sense of motivation, responsibility, and accountability. This is evident how he described being a positive role model for the younger guys in the program. The participants have found a space that is culturally relevant for them. Many of the resources provided in the program are offered to every student yet the different becomes a matter of if they are engaged, feel connected and accepted within the environment to be entitled to the resources provided.

Other themes

In qualitative inquiry the principle researcher has the freedom of discretion to explore topics initially unrelated to the study if the participant discloses such information and it is of significance to the participants' experience (Yin). In addition to the themes constructed within the research design, two themes emerged not accounted for in the present study that had an impact on the participants' experiences at the site location. The

following addition themes were 1) living off campus and 2) and negative racial undertones related towards being a minority.

Living Off Campus

Four of the five participants in the present study lived off campus and the one participant living on campus resided in apartment style housing. Living on campus creates a forced sense of community and social interactions on a daily basis. Without these daily interactions as a result of living off campus, the participants' have decreased their opportunities to social integrate with other racial groups on campus. Two of the participants living off campus described their social involvement while living on campus.

Monty stated:

Well my freshman year I stayed in a dorm and the floor was predominantly White. We were all cool there were really no "oh my gosh he's Black keep the doors locked" type things going on. We were all just cool and kicking it when we were on the floor. After freshman year I moved over to an apartment and I really stayed to myself besides class, class work, and organizations. I really didn't hang out with too many people...

Jack stated:

I don't have too many friends that are different races. I had a roommate that was Filipino my sophomore year first semester and we became really cool but he joined a fraternity and moved into their house that fall semester but during that period I hung out with him and some of the guys on the floor that were different races. I used to go to different, like white parties all that type of stuff. It's not a bad vibe but it could definitely be better.

Both Jack and Monty described being comfortable with students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds when they lived on campus. Once they moved off campus their daily interactions decreased overall and especially with racially/ethnically diverse groups.

Negative Racial Undertones Towards being a Minority

The word “minority” has many definitions which suggest negative racial undertones. Unanimously all the participant stated negative stereotypes associated with being a minority at the site location. Due to these negative stereotypes of being a minority, the participants described having to take on leadership positions and being self-conscious of their actions due to being a minority. William described being uncomfortable at times in an all-White class and explained that language used by White students is often offensive. William elaborated:

So I mean sometimes they are ignorant as to the things you should not say and it's not that they haven't caught up with the times. It's just that they are not educated on the words that they are using. It's perfectly fine to use the word minority but when you say colored, that can be very offensive or in the wrong context people of color can also be offensive and I'm looking around like are you directing that towards me or are you trying to solicit a response from me because I can say something towards that because that's not the proper vernacular for the college setting or to mentioned in general.

When asked which terminology he prefers, minority or person of color, William stated:

I would prefer neither. I would like to be multicultural. Minority means a rarity and not the common group. Just person of color, I want to eliminate. I only like

the people of color term when it can be in a certain context, but I would prefer just multicultural or just a different ethnicity because colored was in fact a racial slur at one point.

Monty mentioned earlier, feeling hurt about the perception white student have about minorities on campus as a result to an incident involving a Black male. Monty stated:

...I feel hurt I want to say, just because the things that has been going on around campus has shed light well has shed a bad light on the minorities around campus and how it hurts me, me not being able to feel comfortable around my own school.

Participants in this section provided descriptions of the racial tension in classroom and showed signs of anger and frustration. Williams' speech accelerated, his body language became more aggressive and his tone grew louder. Monty expressed feelings of being hurt by the negative attention all minorities received due to a specific incident involving specific people. Also, Monty described taking on leadership positions on campus was a means for him to negate the negative stereotypes on campus about minorities. Monty and William both showed patterns of behavior consistent with racial battle fatigue.

Summary

In Chapter IV the individual participant interviews were compared for data analysis following Yin (2011) Five-Phase Cycle by the principle researcher. The thematic categories and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis were: awareness of self-perception based on social integration by gender and race, isolation based in comfort, an increased sense of obligation and the psychological impact of counterspace.

The following subthemes emerged were: positive same race opposite sex peer perceptions, disconnection from other racial groups, self-defeating prophecy, barriers to academic achievement, supportive peer relationships, negative stereotypes, out-group homogeneity bias, academic and personal resources, transparency about areas of improvement, early awareness and recruitment, automatic acceptance, no judgment zone, and personal investment. Additional themes found outside of the interview protocols were the impact of living off campus, and the term minority being associated with negative racial undertones.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide context to the meaning of the perceptions of the African-American undergraduate male experience in a retention program at a predominantly White institution. The findings were discussed in this chapter along with recommendations for the field of student affairs, the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program, and future researchers.

Discussion

In this present study the first thematic category that emerged from the data analysis was the awareness of self-perception based on social integration by gender and race. The following subthemes were positive same race opposite sex peer perceptions, disconnection from other racial groups, self-defeating prophecy, and barriers to academic achievement. The second thematic category that emerged from data analysis was isolation based on comfort. The following subthemes were supportive peer relationships, self-defeating prophecy, and out-group homogeneity bias. The third thematic category emerged from data analysis was the increased sense of obligation to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program. The following subthemes were academic and personal resources, transparency about areas of improvement, and early awareness and recruitment. The final thematic category that emerged from the data analysis was the psychological impact of counterspace. The following subthemes were automatic acceptance, no judgment zone, and personal investment. Additional themes found outside of the interview protocols were the impact of living off campus, and the term minority being associated with negative racial undertones.

Social Integration

Sedlecek (1999) examined 20 years of research dedicated to the involvement of African-American students at predominately White college campuses. Sedlecek found eight non-cognitive variables which were positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understanding how to deal with racism, demonstrating community service, goal setting and immediate needs, available strong support person, successful leadership experience, and knowledge acquired in a field. Sedlecek argued that African-American students show institutional commitment based on the level of involvement related to these non-cognitive variables.

Similarly to several of Sedlecek's non-cognitive variables, the participants in this study identified a support person, dealing with racism, and self-image (the impact of negative stereotypes) when asked about their involvement. The participants reported having a strong support system with African-American females on campus. William stated "Well I've earned a lot of respect from my female counterparts" and continued on to describe a meeting where African-American females were supportive of his ideals based on his level of respect and involvement with S.T.R.O.N.G. For William, this is a comfortable experience so he will continue his involvement with African-American women on campus.

The participants also described situations where race has played a negative role in how they were treated or perceived on campus (dealing with racism) which has also impacted their involvement on campus. In this section the men never found a connection or how to address racially biased incidents which would help them articulate their rights as a student and not avoid interactions with other racial groups on campus. Monty

described an incident in the community involving African-Americans and after the incident, White students would give him awkward looks and walk faster or slower when in close proximity. Monty stated those types of occurrences “put me in a bad place mentally”, but overall he tries to keep calm. Later in the interview Monty described not feeling comfortable at school and only interacting with the organizations he’s involved in. Jack describes dealing with racism in the classroom setting has impacted his self-image. Jack talked about how White students would sit in the back of class and not participate in an American-American history class. Jack perceived that the White students would not participate in fear of making the few African-American students in the class angry. Later in the interview Jack also reported limited involvement with other racial groups.

Isolation Based on Comfort

For the participants in this study, isolation based on comfort was present due to their prior negative experiences causing them to engage in relationships and organizations that were primarily African-American. Each participant valued the experience in S.T.R.O.N.G. and sought out to replicate that experience in other African-American based organizations. The participant’s memberships included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Black Student Union, African Student Association, and Historically Black Greek Lettered Fraternities. The participants not discovered that their involvement was due to their level on comfort. The participants talked about the various leadership structures as reasons for not participating in other groups. Steve had no reason why he is not involved and interacting with other outside his race other than he’s just not doing it. Then at the end of Steve’s comment he stated “I’ll

just have to step outside my comfort zone one day”. A clear reason as to why Steve is not involved or interacting with other races outside of his own. The racial tension at the site location will not subside for these men if they do not step outside their comfort zone and intellectually challenge the biased treatment they have received which has negatively impacted their social integration and involvement.

Obligation

Based on previous research African-American males who partake in leadership opportunities increased their level of involvement and institutional commitment (DeSousa & King 1992; Harper, 1975; Rooney, 1995; Wright, 1987). These men have become obliged to their leadership positions, organizations, and therefore become invested in the institution.

Similarly for the participant in this study, this increased sense of participation made the men feel obligated to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program. The participants showed an obligation to S.T.R.O.N.G. due to the person and academic support they received as members. Monty added that “I looked up to them as father figures” describing his personal support he received from the mentors and the advisor. William and Edgar both talked about the program preparing them for graduate school. In addition, the participants also described areas of improvement for the program which also showed a sense of obligation to the program. Monty stated “...we haven’t met the g.p.a.(grade point average) requirement that we have set for each other so I feel that we need to have a consequence for not meeting that goal requirement”. Jack echoed Monty’s statement and stated “we could always improve in education”. Even the men’s

descriptions of the areas of improvement started with “we” as opposed to “them” or “the program” supporting their sense of commitment and obligation to the program.

Also the men talked about recruitment and awareness which also showed their obligation to all African-American men on campus. Edgar and Monty both talked about retaining members. Edgar proposed increasing the number of community service and education forums hosted throughout the year. Edgar also stated attending freshmen and new student orientation and inviting the new African-American male population to S.T.R.O.N.G. as soon as they arrive to know they have a place to go to on campus for support. Monty talked needing more dedicated members and stated “...sometimes we will have an event coming up and it will only be five or six of the 15 or 20 that are in there trying to take care of that event”. These men have expressed their obligation to the program by explaining the areas that work well, areas of improvement, and brainstorming ways to make the program better.

Counterspace

Grier-Reed (2010) argued meeting the socio-emotional needs of African-American students at predominantly White campuses was just as important and their academic needs. These students needed a place on campus where they can develop trusting relationships, receive encouragement, and cope with racial microaggressions. DuBois & Karcher (2005) found mentoring relationships provided the encouragement, trustworthy relationships, and relieves stress-related issues for all students.

The participants in the study had similar experiences consist with the current literature. Unanimously all the participants described the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring as counterspace. The participant expressed feelings of automatic acceptance, not being

judged, and personal investment. Monty referred to the meetings as “like a barbershop type feel how you go and get your hair cut you know you talk about Suzanne and Billy or you can talk about politics and Obama winning the presidency”. William described his initial interaction with the members of S.T.R.O.N.G. as “I was welcomed in with open arms”. Edgar throughout many parts of his interview stated his appreciation for not being judged by members and the freedom to express his ideas among the group. Steve described being personally invested in the program because of all the opportunities afforded by being a member. Steve elaborated:

I’m just glad to be a member. It’s opened a lot of doors for me and networking has helped me find tutors, get the right teachers, good professors, join different organizations and also just connected me to somebody I can come talk to.

In this section it’s evident that the participants were able to build trustworthy relationships, received personal and academic support for encouragement, and become personally invested in the program.

Living Off Campus

Braxton & McClendon (2001) found that living within residence life increases social integration, institutional commitment, and decreases retention rates. Braxton and McClendon described the first-year experience for students in the residence hall and the various components that add to the collegiate experience. Typically there are housing staff members that live within the halls and supervise staff and student staff creating an environment where safeguards are in place. Special programming and academic initiatives foster social integration among the residents and with staff. For student peer groups this

community living promotes three indicators of development which are attitudes, values, and interests.

For the participants in the study, living arrangements in terms of how they were socialized based on their living arrangements was not a part of the study. However, Monty and Jack both reflected on their experiences living on campus and then described their social interactions after moving off campus. Monty stated while living on campus that “We were all just cool and kicking it when we were on the floor.” After moving off campus Monty stated “After freshman year I moved over to an apartment and I really stayed to myself besides class, class work, and organizations. I really didn’t hang out with too many people I knew”. Monty social interactions went from high contact daily to merely not at all based on the difference from living on campus to off campus. Jack described the difference between now and freshman year living on campus. Jack stated:

...I don’t have too many friends that are different races. I had a roommate (on campus) that was Filipino my sophomore year first semester and we became really cool but he joined a fraternity and moved into their house that fall semester but during that period I hung out with him and some of the guys on the floor that were different races. I used to go to different, like white parties all that type of stuff.

In this section the participants described their social interactions with other racial groups had suffered due to moving off campus.

Negative Racial Undertones of being a Minority

Aronson & Steele (2005) found performance ability was compromised when one felt their group identity was the target of bias or prejudice treatment and automatically

associated with negative stereotypes. Aronson & Steele defined this as stereotype threat which is not a term exclusively used African-Americans but for any group of people associated with negative stereotypes.

The participants found similar experiences relative to Aronson & Steele's research specifically being categorized as a minority at the site location. Monty felt like White students were avoiding him when walking on campus because he is associated with being a minority on campus. Monty described "walking behind them (White students) makes me feel like I've done something wrong or makes me look like I've done something wrong if somebody were observing us walking and it just puts me in a bad place mentally". William was asked which terminology he preferred, minority or person of color, after feeling offended by the way White students in class referred to African-Americans. William stated:

I would prefer neither. I would like to be multicultural. Minority means a rarity and not the common group. Just person of color, I want to eliminate. I only like the people of color term when it can be in a certain context, but I would prefer just multicultural or just a different ethnicity because colored was in fact a racial slur at one point.

Within the environment, the term minority being associated with negative racial undertones impacted these men daily. It's an identity for them which has brought about some beneficial and not so beneficial ways to counteract.

Conclusion

The perceptions of African-American undergraduate males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring program explored in this chapter is multifaceted when considering the culture

of the institution, threshold for diversity within the student body, and the institutional efforts in regards to retention. Further exploration of research is needed on the African-American male experience and the retention efforts at predominantly White institutions to provide a holistic ideal of the issue. Cuyjet (1997), Davis (2003), Flowers (2006), and Harper & Quaye (2007) found specific factors that enhance retention, institutional commitment, and matriculation to graduation for African-American males in college. Much of the literature discussed in chapters I and II provide a contextual perspective of the state of African-American males in higher education. Simmons found retention to be one the most explored topics plaguing African-American males and although many have found the problem and solutions, where is the recourse? Where is the implementation of the proposed factors or solutions? Due to the is a lack of data on the experiences of African American male in retention programs, are researchers giving the “silent treatment” as phrased by Edgar who expected assistance from his track after joining a fraternity. Harper & Hurtado (2007) argued that issues of retention of African-American males were hindered by institutional rhetoric of efforts to recruit, hire, and retain faculty and staff of color as a means to attract and retain African-American males at predominantly White colleges and universities. William stated “White faculty could have more intimate relationships with African-American students” during the interview where he described teacher-student relationships. In contrast to researchers stating the need for Black faculty and tending to their needs (Alexander & Moore, 2008; Allison, 2008; Brown, 2009), William statement provides context to African-Americans wanting an intimate relationship with the faculty present regardless of race. Why is it that predominantly White institutions are still behind in this regard as opposed to Historically

Black Colleges and Universities? Researchers have found White students at historically Black colleges and universities reported open friendly environments, no direct experiences of racism, and strong supportive relationships with students and faculty (Closson & Henry, 2008; Elam, 1978; Hall & Closson, 2005; Libarkin, 1984; Nixon & Henry, 1992). For the participants in this study, their collegiate experience thus far is not the same as reported by their White counterparts at historically Black colleges and universities. These men have described feelings of isolations, racially negative stereotypes and attitudes on campus, and a classroom with White faculty and students either afraid of or uninterested in them. Therefore, the reflections of the five participants offer a forward step in progression towards understanding and addressing the challenge of retention that African-American men face at predominantly White institutions.

Recommendations for the Field

Faculty should seek ways to connect African-American males outside the classroom setting. This will provide opportunities to build intimate intellectual relationships and allow the racial tension in the classroom to subside and to be conducive to the educational pursuits of all students. DuBois & Karcher (2005) suggested mentoring as the most beneficial way to bridge the faculty-student gap.

Recommendations for CSA professionals

Student Affairs practitioners should actively engage with African-American males and educate them on the benefits of becoming involved with all areas of student affairs especially Residence Life & Housing (i.e. student leaders, resident assistants, community service, etc.). Braxton & McClendon (2001) found that living within

residence life increases social integration, institutional commitment, and decreases retention rates.

Some retention/mentoring programs are not registered student organizations and lack in resources needed to be self-sustaining. Student Affairs professional should seek opportunities to be mentors, advisors, and advocates for culturally diverse and underrepresented groups on campus. The solution is not recruiting, hiring, and retaining faculty and staff of color. It's using the staff will have as catalyst for change and training them on the unique needs of all students.

Recommendations for the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program

The program should incorporate faculty mentors to assist with academic initiatives and areas of accountability for the participants. Each participant expressed positive feelings about the academic support (resources) but S.T.R.O.N.G. needs faculty to be involved with these members to educate them on academic expectations and in establishing measureable academic goals.

Grier-Reed (2010) emphasized the importance of counterspace on the college campus for African-American students at predominantly White institutions and this held true at the site location in this present study. In addition, the program needs a social justice lens to avoid the biases these men are creating based on their participation with only African-American and minority based student organizations.

In the past S.T.R.O.N.G. members have voluntarily assisted with orientation and other back to school activities on campus. In order to recruit and retain African-American males at the beginning of their collegiate experience, S.T.R.O.N.G. needs to be on the agenda for many of the said back to school activities and not just volunteers.

Recommendations for future research in this area

This research has provided some insight as to the areas of attention that African-American males need to in this environment. For future research on S.T.R.O.N.G. the perceptions of other racial group interactions with this group need to be explored to provide a holistic picture of the themes presented in this study.

Future research should also evaluate the program measures of success related to the actual retention statistics of the students enrolled. The challenge with this research was not to be presumptuous and define success for the program but rather explore the participants' experiences to discover the phenomena that exist.

Summary

In developing this present study, there were key factor that needed to be addressed. The literature and connection to the population, the method sections and interpretation of the phenomenological research design. I found this present study beneficial as an assessment to the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program and to identify areas of growth, challenges, and implications for the future of the program. To grapple with the various aspects of the campus environment, these men needed a place to vent, feel accepted, and validated. There are a number of psychosocial factors at play for these men, yet ultimately their reality was based on their perceptions and how their peers, students, and faculty perceived them.

Researcher's Reflection

Yin (2011) described the significance of reflecting yourself in qualitative research as a means to inform the reader the multiple lens of the principle researcher that can influence the findings made by your declarative self. In keeping true with the nature of

qualitative research, this reflection is an opportunity for the principle researcher to introduce background information to be transparent as possible to the reader.

I am an African-American male in pursuit of a master's degree of science in College Student Affairs at the site location. I am also a member of a Historically Black Greek Lettered Organization and have been involved with the fraternity for eight years. I grew up on the Southside of a large urban metropolitan area where violence and impoverished communities surrounded my world. However, prior to attending the site location the term minority was vague and foreign to me. I grew up in a working class neighborhood that was primarily composed of African-Americans. I attended an elementary school, high school, and college where my race was never a huge factor in how I was treated or perceived. Many of the schools I attended were predominantly African-Americans. I have also served as a mentor for the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program for a year and a half now. I knew the participants prior to this present study but all the procedures detailed in the methods section were followed and their participation was completely voluntary. I have experienced more incidents, I perceived to be racially biased or prejudiced, in my adulthood than in my childhood or adolescence. I come from a family rooted in strong values, morals, and a keen sense of awareness of African Ancestry. I am a man of no regrets but live by the motto treat people as you would want them to treat your child (hopefully with understanding and a kind heart). Finally, I would like to leave the reader with this food for thought. The key to unlocking human relationships is deeply rooted in knowing thyself.

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APPENDIX A

S.T.R.O.N.G. MENTORING PROGRAM STATISTICS

FALL 2011 & SPRING 2012

Table 1

Grade Point Average by Classification

Breakdown by Classification	Number	Average GPA
Freshman	9	2.33
Sophomore	7	2.73
Junior	11	2.53
Senior	9	2.95
All Classifications served	36	2.54

Table 2

Cumulative Grade Point Average Breakdown

Breakdown by Cum GPA	Number	Percentage	Average GPA
Cum GPA 4	0	0%	4.00
Cum GPA 3.0 and Above:	6	16.6 %	3.35
Cum GPA 2.0 but less than 3	26	72.22 %	2.53
Cum GPA 1.0 but less than 2	3	8.33 %	1.73
Cum GPA < 1	1	2.78 %	0.52

Table 3

Academic Standing

Academic Standing	Number	Percentage
Good Standing (all classifications)	32	88.9 %
Freshman	7	77.77 %
Sophomore	7	100.00%
Junior	11	100.00%
Senior	7	77.77%
Not in Good Standing (all ethnicities)	4	11.11%
Warning/Probation	3	8.33 %
Academic Dismissal	1	2.78 %
Withdrawal (all classifications)	1	2.78%

APPENDIX B

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this present study.

1. What are the perceptions of Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program as it relates to gender and racial differences at a predominantly White institution?
2. How do Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program conceptualize their identity and campus involvement at predominantly White institutions?
3. What are the challenges and successes Black males in the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program experience while enrolled at a predominantly White institution?
4. What impact does the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program have on the perceived Black male experience at a predominantly White institution?

Interview Protocols

1. How did you hear about S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring?
2. Why do you continue to participate in S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring meetings?
3. What did you know about S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring prior to attending your first meeting?
4. What were your first impressions of S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring?
5. Initially, how were you treated by members of S.T.R.O.N.G.?
6. What are some accomplishments of the S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring program?
7. What areas can S.T.R.O.N.G. improve?

8. How have you benefited from S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring?
9. As being a part of S.T.R.O.N.G., have you met new people you otherwise wouldn't have met? In what ways has being a member of S.T.R.O.N.G. provided you with opportunities to connect with others?
10. How would describe your relationship with your female counterparts on campus?
11. How would you describe your relationship with other Black males on campus?
12. How would you describe your relationship with other racial groups on campus?
13. Tell me about a situation where race played a role in how you were treated or perceived at your current institution?
14. What's the leadership structure like in S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring? Is that important to you?
15. How has being a part of S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring helped you get involved on campus?
16. Are you a part of any Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) on campus? Greek Life?
17. What are the differences/commonalities between S.T.R.O.N.G. Mentoring and RSO's/Greek Life?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Phenomenological Approach to Understanding the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program: An African-American Male Retention Program at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Glenn L. Herring and Dr. Richard L. Roberts, from the Department of Counseling & Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. To participate in this study you will need to be an African-American male undergraduate who is currently a member of the S.T.R.O.N.G. (Successful Teaching Relative to Overcoming Negative Generalities) MENToring program. You need to have been a member of the program during the 2011-2012 academic school year. You will need to pick a pseudo-name for the purposes of reporting and anonymity.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the present study is to explore the phenomena of the African-American undergraduate male experience in a retention program at a Midsize Midwestern predominantly White institution. Using phenomenological inquiry, the focus of this study is to seek the commonly shared experiences of the participants to understand the impact of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program at the site location. You will be asked to account for your experiences as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program during the 2011-2012 academic school year.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in interviews conducted by Glenn L. Herring, the principle researcher, which will be semi-structured, using open ended interview questions. The interviews will range from approximately 25 to 35 minutes in length and will be audiotaped then transcribed for clarification purposes. Once the transcriptions are completed the principle researcher, as suggested by Yin (2011) will begin a Five-Phased Cycle to interpreting the data. You will be informed by the principle researcher possibly having a follow up session for accuracy of the transcription to further explain, clarify, or elaborate on your experience as being a part of the S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring program. The principle researcher will add informal and para-language observations taken during the initial interview for clarification of verbal meanings. The interview will be held on campus taking into account the noise levels in traffic for the purpose of confidentiality of the space. You will sign a consent form voluntarily participating in the study and will be informed that the principle researcher will keep all interview materials locked in a file cabinet and transported with the principle researcher for three years. At the said time the principle researcher will shred and discard all materials related to the interviews to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Your participation in this present study is completely voluntary and at any point you have the right to withdraw from the study.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no short-term or long-term potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) to participate in this study.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are no benefits to participate in this study other than contributing to research on the said topic.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION (*Optional*)**

There are no incentives being offered for participation in this present study.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of storage in a locked file cabinet in my office to ensure the security and confidentiality of the data. The principle researcher, I Glenn L. Herring and Dr. Richard L. Roberts will be the only persons with access to the audiotaped interviews for transcription and coding purposes.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Glenn L. Herring
1020 Greek Court
Charleston, IL 61920
glherring@eiu.edu
217-581-6887 office
773-386-0681 cell

Dr. Richard L. Roberts
2109 Buzzard Hall
rlroberts@eiu.edu
217-581-2400

• **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
 Eastern Illinois University
 600 Lincoln Ave.
 Charleston, IL 61920
 Telephone: (217) 581-8576
 E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

 Printed Name of Participant

 Signature of Participant

 Date

I hereby consent to the participation of _____, a minor/subject in the investigation herein described. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time.

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

 Signature of Investigator

 Date