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The influence of mentoring on the academic trajectory of a 17-year-old Black male college sophomore from the United Kingdom: a single case study

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ABSTRACT

There has been a national- and state-level call for colleges and universities to develop targeted mentoring programs for Black males. However, there is limited published scholarship that has investigated the experiences of non-U.S.-born Black males in these college mentoring programs generally, and at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) specifically. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the experiences of a 17-year-old Black male college sophomore from the United Kingdom who enrolled in a HBCU male-focused mentoring program. Findings reveal that he benefited from pre-college mentoring as he developed strategies to respond to racist encounters during his K–12 schooling in the United Kingdom. In the university mentoring program, he benefited most from one-on-one mentoring opportunities with university officials. Implications for universities and future research are discussed.

Introduction

There has been a national- and state-level call to mentor young Black males from legislative and philanthropic institutions as well as for-profit and nonprofit organizations from the public and private sector (African American Male Workgroup, 2010; Harper, 2012; Majors, Wilkinson, & Gulam, 2001; Taskforce on the Education of Maryland's African American Males's, 2007; The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015; Toldson, 2008, 2011). The call to action has been for both individual men and collective organizations to take responsibility for this task. President Barack Obama instituted a policy initiative called *My Brother's Keeper* to help provide support in the form of mentorship to young men of color. Although this initiative and others have received praise, it is not clear what research has informed the program. There is little research on the effectiveness of college mentoring

programs, specifically those that target Black males (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). However, existing research includes insights from high-achieving Black males who credit mentoring as a part of their success (Jett, 2011; McGee & Martin, 2011; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2013). Therefore, mentoring programs deserve more attention.

In conjunction with a national focus, there has been a call for two- and four-year colleges and universities to institute mentoring programs for their entire student bodies generally, and for Black males specifically (Riddick, Griffin, & Cherwitz, 2011; Sutton, 2006). More than their non-Black counterparts, Black male collegians experience difficulty with academic achievement, college dropout and graduation rates, and career attainment (Denson, 2008; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Wood & Palmer, 2014). Many universities have responded to this problem by setting up mentoring programs to support this unique segment of the student body (Palmer et al., 2013).

There are scholars who have focused on mentoring programs for Black males, but what is missing from the literature are first-hand accounts of Black males that investigate their experience in university mentoring programs (Kendircks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013; Zell, 2011). Furthermore, the perspectives of foreign-born Black male students studying in the United States are absent. Despite demographic and cultural differences, as Bush and Bush (2013) contended, 'there is something unique about being male and of African descent' (p. 10). Given this uniqueness, there is a need for research delineating the experience of foreign-born Black males attending historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Thus, the purpose of our qualitative single case study was to examine the experiences and perspective of Tim Walker (pseudonym), a 17-year-old, United Kingdom-born, Black male sophomore enrolled in a male-focused mentoring program at a HBCU in the United States.

Literature review

Given that Tim attended school and participated in mentoring programs in both the United Kingdom and the United States, in the first section of this literature review, we provide a discussion of mentoring programs for Black males in the United Kingdom. In the second section, we synthesize the literature on the experiences of Black males in United States higher education institutions. In the third section, we analyze university-mentoring programs for Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Lastly, we review the literature on HBCU mentoring programs with a focus on outlining the necessity of our study with the HBCU mentoring program literature.

Mentoring programs for Black males in the United Kingdom

As mentoring has continued to receive more attention in popular press as remedies to improve educational and workforce outcomes for Black males in the United

States, the United Kingdom has also developed mentoring programs aimed at positive development for adolescents and crime reduction (Medina, Ralphs, & Aldridge, 2012). For instance, the Mayor of London created the *Mayor's Mentoring Program* which targeted Black boys between the ages of 10–16 who resided in areas known for gang activity (Small, Riley, & Foster, 2014). Preliminary outcomes from the program suggested that the participants' attitudes and effort in school increased as a result of this program.

Two particular limitations of the implementation of mentoring programs and research investigating these programs is that mentoring initiatives are often focused on working with at-risk students generally and Black males specifically. They have a propensity to engage in gang and criminal activity or do not have a large sample of Black males to make any generalizable claims. For example, Medina et al. (2012) evaluated the *Gang Mentoring* pilot program, which was aimed at the siblings of gang members and had a goal of 'building resilience among young people considered at-risk of gang membership' (p. 17). Findings from this study indicated that youth participants had an improvement in attitude and improved their academic outcomes. In addition, because of the short duration of the program and limited afterschool and weekend activities, mentors were unable to sustain their mentorship with students after the program ended.

In another example, Roach (2014) investigated the effectiveness of a school-based mentoring program on student bullying. While Roach provided insight into the effectiveness of mentoring, the study sample only consisted of 3% of Black students placed in the mentoring group and 4% in the control group. Given that students of color generally and Black males, in particular, are highly likely to have negative encounters with peers and others because of their race (Brown & Jones, 2013; Christian, 2005), there is a need for studies to investigate in more depth the experiences of Black students in mentoring programs. Because of the limited research on the experiences of Black males in the United Kingdom, there is more research needed to explore the experiences of Black males participating in such programs. Furthermore, research is needed on the experiences of United Kingdom-born, Black males who participant in mentoring programs in the United States due to the similarities in schooling and societal experiences such as facing racism and being targeted as gang members and at-risk students.

Black males in United States higher education

There is a growing body of research focused on the academic and social experiences of Black males in college (Bonner, 2010; Goings, 2016, 2017; Harper, 2012; Jett, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Strayhorn, 2014; Wood & Palmer, 2015). Major themes emerging from studies of Black males provide insight into the impact the roles in which the university environment (Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2011), faculty and peer relationships (Fries-Britt, Burt, & Franklin, 2012), structured and unstructured mentoring (Palmer et al., 2013), spirituality

(Jett, 2011; Wood & Hilton, 2012), and family (Palmer et al., 2011) play in Black male academic and social development. Researchers primarily have focused on Black males' academic and social experiences at PWIs (Goings, 2016). Based on the results of this research, challenges that Black males face with predominantly white faculty and peers have been brought to light. While the focus has been on PWIs, scholars have begun to focus on Black males' experiences at HBCUs.

HBCUs are institutions created prior to 1964 with the mission of educating African-American students. While the demographics of HBCUs continue to include more non-African-American students, they have provided opportunities for many African-American students from underserved communities (Walker, 2015). Scholars exploring the Black male student experience at HBCUs have found that faculty and peer interactions positively impact Black male academic and social development (Goings, 2016; Shorette & Palmer, 2015; Palmer et al., 2013). While scholars such as Palmer et al. (2013) shed light on the experiences of Black men in a mentoring program at an HBCU, little is known about non-U.S.-born, Black males participating in HBCU mentoring programs. More importantly, given that HBCUs are continuously becoming more diverse (Palmer, Maramba, Ozuna, & Goings, 2015), there is a need for more studies that focus on the experiences of non-U.S.-born Black students' experiences in mentoring programs.

Mentoring programs for Black males in U.S. higher education

Many universities have responded by establishing mentoring programs to support Black male college students. As a result, researchers have examined Black males' involvement in mentoring programs at community colleges (e.g. Bass, 2011; Ray, Carley, & Brown, 2009). For instance, Bass (2011) found that Black males in these settings experienced increased cumulative grade point averages as a result of their participation. Fewer researchers have examined mentoring programs at four-year universities (e.g. Harris, 2012), especially HBCUs (e.g. Kendircks et al., 2013; Palmer et al., 2013; Zell, 2011). Himelhoch, Nichols, Ball, and Black (1997) found that faculty mentoring of HBCU students was a predictor of students' persistence and dedication.

Interestingly, scholars have discussed the importance of mentoring for Black males but have vastly different definitions of what mentoring actually is (Brown, 2009). There are a number of different formal and informal mentoring program structures, including one-on-one, group-based, peer, faculty/staff, race-based, gender-based, intergenerational, academic, work-based, career-based, school-based, faith-based, and community-based (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Miller, 2008; Taylor, 2007). The general premise of university-based mentoring programs, particularly for Black males, is to promote academic success, retention, and persistence in college (Brown, 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Zell, 2011). Although many mentoring programs seek to impact the academic success of Black males, participants in these

programs typically experience benefits in other areas of their lives as well, such as personal relationships and finances.

Historically, Black males have had isolating experiences at PWIs because both students and faculty confront and challenge their academic ability (Fries-Britt, 1998; McGee & Martin, 2011). In order to combat these isolating experiences, several PWIs have developed initiatives and mentoring programs focused exclusively on empowering Black males. For example, the University of Georgia System's (UGS) African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) was created to increase the retention and graduation rates of Black males (AAMI, 2012). At the various UGS campuses, Black males have the opportunity to participate in mentorship opportunities geared towards helping them succeed academically and navigate the cultural politics of college campus. The AAMI has seen significant results, nearly doubling the amount of Black male college graduates between 2002 and 2010 (AAMI, 2012).

Brown (2009) and Zell (2011) also found that mentoring programs on college campuses benefit Black males. For instance, Zell (2011) reported that in addition to improvements in grade point average, the participants in the Brother 2 Brother (B2B) mentoring program believed the program developed their sense of belonging on campus, which provided them the confidence to join other student groups. Programs such as B2B are important at PWIs given that there are relatively few Black males on these campuses; the ones who are their need support.

Establishing mentorship opportunities for Black men at HBCUs

HBCUs, too, have formal and informal (student-faculty) mentorship programs and opportunities. Researchers have contended that, compared to PWIs, HBCUs provide a nurturing and supportive environment for all Black students, specifically Black males (e.g. Bonner, Alfred, Lewis, Nave, & Fritzell, 2009; Goings, 2016; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Riddick, 2006). For example, Kim and Conrad (2006) found that HBCUs provide more opportunities for positive student–faculty interactions. For Black males, these interactions are important as they provide the basis for formal and informal mentoring opportunities that can afford access to future internship and career prospects. Himelhoch et al. (1997) found that faculty mentoring of Black HBCU students was a predictor of students' persistence in college. Lewis, Ginsburg, Davies, and Smith (2004) noted that Black college students tend to gravitate towards same-race faculty to aid in their adjustment to the university environment. Additionally, Palmer, Wood, and McGowan (2014) posited that Black males benefit more than Black females from student–faculty interactions on HBCU campuses. Researchers on mentoring have indicated that one-on-one mentoring has yielded consistent positive results for participants and is the most effective form of mentoring (e.g. DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

Although researchers have shown the importance of student–faculty interactions in the development of Black males at HBCUs, Palmer and Maramba (2012)

discussed how some HBCUs have had to shift their focus from teaching institutions to research institutions in order to compete with PWIs. This shift impacts Black males' opportunities to develop relationships with faculty members. Palmer and Maramba found, through their interviews with four HBCU student affairs practitioners, that after transitioning to research institutions, faculty members (particularly untenured faculty) 'were less inclined to go beyond their prescribed duties (i.e. teaching), to follow procedures to promote student success' (p. 112). This institutional shift for HBCUs is unfortunate, because it changes faculty members' priorities from teaching to research and gaining tenure. As a result, they lose their alignment with the HBCU history of supporting underserved students. Black men in particular, who benefit from formal and informal mentoring opportunities, can be adversely impacted.

Several HBCUs have developed mentoring programs to combat low rates of graduation and retention for Black males. For instance, Palmer et al. (2013) describes the Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence (MILE) program at a mid-Atlantic HBCU as an initiative that seeks to 'promote the retention and persistence of Black males' (p. 67). The MILE program provided opportunities for participants to engage in reading groups, reflective journaling, community service activities, and bonding retreats. The researchers discussed how the MILE program produced positive outcomes, such as increased GPA and, as reported by the participants, increased opportunity to request support and guidance from other men in the program. Given the benefits of mentoring programs such as MILE, it is problematic that there are so few studies that discuss the experiences of Black males in these types of environments. To our knowledge, there are no studies available that explore the mentoring experiences of HBCU Black male students who attended K–12 institutions in countries outside of the United States. Thus, our study fills this gap in the current literature.

Theoretical framework

Critical race theory in education (CRT; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and the Scholar Identity Model (SIM; Whiting, 2009) are two theoretical frameworks used to investigate Black male students' racialized primary and secondary school experiences in the United Kingdom, school-based mentoring experiences and undergraduate male mentoring programs. To contextualize our theoretical framework, we first provide an overview of CRT and SIM separately and then briefly describe why we use both theoretical frameworks in this study. There are three propositions of critical race theory in education: '(1) race is a significant factor for determining inequity; (2) the U.S. is based on property rights; (3) race and property provide an analytical tool for understanding social, school, and mathematics inequity' (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48). The aforementioned scholars, Ladson-Billings and Tate, illustrate the significance of critical race theory in the field of education. Advances in critical race theory in education indicate that there are five defining elements:

(a) race and racism are endemic and permanent features of American society and structures;
(b) it challenges the dominant ideology;
(c) it is commitment to social justice;
(d) it centralizes the experiential knowledge of people of color;
(e) it uses an interdisciplinary approach to better understand racism, sexism, and classism. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26)

Whiting (2009) defined scholar identity as Black males 'perceive themselves as academicians, as studious, and as intelligent or talented in school settings' (p. 227). Scholar identity is derived from Whiting's research on increasing the representation of Black males in gifted and talented programs. Whiting argued that 'if educators (along with families and community leaders) can nurture a scholar identity within these otherwise capable students, then more [Black] males will achieve their potential in school and life' (p. 227). He contended that school, family, mentors, and communities support scholar identity development. He also contended that there are nine constructs of scholar identity: (a) self-efficacy; (b) willing to make sacrifices; (c) internal locus of control; (d) future oriented; (e) self-awareness; (f) need for achievement; (g) academic self-confidence; (h) racial pride; and (i) masculinity. We are not aware of any studies that have used scholar identity to examine the experiences of Black males who are born outside of the United States.

We add to the current research literature by applying critical race theory in education and scholar identity theory to examine the racialized experiences of a Black male born and attended primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom and a HBCU in the United States. Critical race theory provides the theoretical lens to examine his racialized experiences in school and with White students. It also provides a lens to examine the Black male's views and perspectives of race and racism encountered in his experiences. Given the importance of mentoring to Black males' ability to establish a scholar identity and the theoretical assumptions of CRT, these particular frameworks allowed us to generate a holistic view of how a Black male addresses issues of race and racism, succeeds in academic settings and understand how mentoring influences their success in school and college.

Method

Our study is a part of a larger ongoing mixed method study in which we examined the effectiveness of a United States historically Black college and university (HBCU) university-based male mentoring program; and Black males' self-perceptions and self-efficacy, academic experiences and achievements, and retention and graduation rates. The data presented in this study focus on Tim Walker, a student who participated in the university-based mentoring program. Although Tim is a part of larger study, we use a single case research design because it allows us to focus on the experiences and nuances of one participant (Yin, 2009). The single case

research design is sensitive to individual differences and allows us to examine how Tim's mentoring experiences and participation impacted his academic and social development. Given the lack of research on Black male in mentoring, examining Tim's case provides us with an in-depth examination into his experiences and how his mentors and mentoring program impacted his academic trajectory and his desire to pursue a Ph.D. in history. A single case design also helps to provide new insights into how the phenomenon of mentoring impacting a Black college student's experiences. Our study was guided by the following qualitative research questions:

(1) What are the primary and secondary school, higher education, academic and social experiences of Tim Walker, a Black male college student from the United Kingdom who participates in a United States HBCU university-ty-based mentoring program?

(2) How does Tim's perceptions of and experiences in a mentoring program at his United States-based HBCU impact his academic achievement and involvement in campus organizations?

Profile of Tim Walker

At the time of data collection, Tim Walker was a 17-year-old Black sophomore who attended Leadership University (LU; pseudonym), an United States HBCU. He was raised in a two-parent household in the United Kingdom and attended diverse schools as a child and teen. Unfortunately, Tim's father passed away when he was only in primary school. The grief of such a loss led Tim to a series of academic and behavior problems that marred his school performance and reputation. While Tim was reared and received his formal K-12 education in the United Kingdom, he had many experiences, particularly those dealing with racism, that mirrored those of United States-born Black males. Therefore, his experiences speak to the commonality of the racial struggles Black males share across geographic regions and the CRT notion of the permanence of racism (Howard, 2013; Terry, 2010).

In secondary school, Tim participated in a school-based mentoring program that helped change the trajectory of his personal, academic, and social development. He graduated from secondary schools at 16 and later moved to the United States. Tim's mother felt he was not ready for college, so she enrolled him in high school again, once in the United States. However, after only a few months of high school, Tim knew he needed more of an academic challenge. He applied for admissions to LU and was accepted. He found the academic and social environment optimal for his growth and development.

He took the initiative to participate in a university-based mentoring program without being prompted by a faculty or staff member. Most of the males who participated in the program have been prompted to do so by a faculty or staff member. Tim has been actively involved in the program since his freshman year.

As a sophomore, he holds two major leadership positions on campus in Black male student organizations and has a passion for giving back to community and peers.

We focused on Tim for two main reasons. First, the leadership positions that Tim held were usually acquired by upper class men in their junior and senior year (see, Harper, 2012 for more about Black males in leadership positions from college). Tim was voted to the leadership positions in his sophomore year by peers. Based on the males in the mentoring program, the focus and maturity that Tim exhibited was distinguished and typically displayed by junior and senior male students on campus. Second, Tim was further distinguished from his peers by his decision to pursue a doctorate in African and African-American history. As a sophomore, Tim started to meet with faculty in prospective doctoral programs, present at conferences, study for Graduate Record Exam, and prioritize his academics. Tim learned that he has to prioritize his academics over his leadership and membership in student organizations and socializing with peers. In essence, he infused Whiting's (2009) SIM construct of future orientation into his decision-making. In our study, we sought to further validate the usefulness of SIM by illustrating how a Black male from the United Kingdom developed his scholar identity.

University mentoring program

The university mentoring program was developed to help male college students reach their fullest potential personally, socially, academically, and professionally. The ultimate goal of the program is to help improve males' achievement, retention, and graduation rates. The mentoring program has identified four main goals: (a) strengthen the secondary-to-higher-education pipeline to enable more males to attend college; (b) increase graduation rates at the university; (c) improve university employees' knowledge of male issues to better serve students; and (d) provide strong leadership to confront the challenges facing males in the community and beyond. The university mentoring program uses male employees to provide one-on-one and group mentoring to help male students succeed. Throughout the academic year, participants have monthly face-to-face meetings with their university faculty and staff mentors, participate in group mentoring activities, attend speaker events, and engage in community service.

Data collection and analysis

Qualitative methods were used in this study to capture Tim's life experiences and the impact of mentoring on his academic trajectory. The qualitative data collection for our study has consisted of interviews, observations, transcript analysis, and field notes. Data collection for Tim occurred over two years in multiple contexts (e.g. researcher and mentors offices, meeting rooms, and mentoring events). After an initial informal interview with Tim to discuss his participation in the study and answer any preliminary questions, a member of the research team was assigned

to be the primary person responsible for collecting data on him. The assigned researcher who conducted the interview reviewed the transcript against the audio recording to ensure accuracy. The research team interviewed Tim using structured, semi-structured, and informal interview approaches that allowed for flexibility when interviewing (Creswell, 2007).

The research team used four interview protocols: (a) college academic, social, and career experiences; (b) K-12 educational experiences; (c) mentoring experiences, and (d) biographical profile. The theme of race was integrated into each of the protocols. At least two members of the research team participated in interviews. The interviews ultimately took on a conversational tone where the researcher allowed the participant the freedom to discuss his experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin described qualitative interviews as extensions of conversations that speak to '(1) the uniqueness of each participant with whom he talks, (2) the participant's distinct knowledge, and (3) the different ways the participant interacts with the interviewer' (p. 14). They also argued that researchers must develop a conversation–partner relationship rather than an interviewer–interviewee relationship (Rubin & Rubin). Our interviews with Tim lasted from 30 to 100 min for each interview protocol and were recorded with an electronic recording device.

After the interviews were conducted, they were professionally transcribed and then analyzed by the research team. The first and second authors reviewed the transcripts initially and then shared with the research team for review, analysis, and discussion. NVivo software (a qualitative data analysis tool) was used to code data and search for emerging themes from the interview. Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated, 'coding data is the formal representation of analytic thinking' (p.155). Members of the research team coded the data separately and then met to discuss the codes. The team also searched for emerging themes separately and then collaboratively developed the themes at research meetings. All authors contributed to the development of unifying themes that represented Tim's experiences. The two theoretical frameworks were also used to guide and explain the results. The research team sought to find themes that highlighted Tim's academic, social, and mentoring experiences that influenced him to seek out mentoring prior to college. The research team sought to highlight Tim's academic standing, leadership positions, and the impact of a college mentoring program and other pre-college mentoring experiences that influenced his desire to earn a Ph.D. in history.

Trustworthiness of data

Maxwell (1996) described four conceptual dangers (description, interpretation, theory, and generalization) in establishing validity in qualitative research. The conceptual danger of description is that the researcher will be unable to fully describe everything he/she saw or heard. To address this, our interview was recorded using an electronic device. Also, the interviewer took notes to ensure accuracy, and an

electronic reflection journal was kept to record insights about Tim's experiences with mentoring.

Member checks with Tim were used where he was provided interview transcripts and multiple opportunities to review our presentation of his experiences to circumvent Maxwell's (1996) second conceptual danger, interpretation. The danger of interpretation is that the researcher may impose his/her belief or meaning 'rather than understanding the perspective of people studied and the meaning they attach to their words and actions' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 89–90). Tim was provided the manuscript to review, provide feedback, and conduct member checking (Creswell, 2007). He confirmed that the manuscript accurately represented his views, experiences, and ideas. While we recognize the importance of member checking, we also recognize that memory distortion could have impacted the data Tim reported. Even though generalization does not directly apply to single case research design, in-depth rich descriptions of the participant and his experiences were used in the presentation of findings in our study to ensure trustworthiness. Single case research design does not allow our study to be replicated or generalize the findings to other Black male college students.

Findings

The findings from our study capture the experiences that led Tim to seek mentoring before and during college. Furthermore, they speak to the university mentoring program and mentors perceived influence on Tim's desire to earn a Ph.D. in history. There were two themes that were derived from the data. In the first theme, 'the reinforcement of racial pride through racial encounters,' we discuss the racialized experiences he had during his K–12 experiences as a student in the United Kingdom and United States and how these experiences established Tim's racial pride. We also discuss how these experiences influenced him to seeking mentorship. With the second theme, 'the benefits of mentoring on Tim's academic trajectory,' we highlight how Tim's mentorship experiences influenced his desire to succeed in college and seek a Ph.D.

The reinforcement of racial pride through racial encounters

The first major finding describes how Tim's racial pride was reinforced through racialized experiences during his K–12 experiences as a student in the United Kingdom. For a majority of Tim's K–12 experience, he attended school in the United Kingdom. Throughout his K-12 experience interview, he discussed racial encounters with White male students from his elementary and secondary school years. Tim stated:

> Yeah, to be more specific, for elementary [school] I faced a lot of racial stigma when I was at elementary school. … It was the first time I was called the N word …, the first time I actually learned about a lot of prejudices. … I got Black friends, White friends, Asian

friends, Mexican friends. This is the time period where I actually started to see it come out and then see those differences sprout up. Throughout elementary school, there was a large group of the White guys who had their own set [group], their own camaraderie … I was ostracized because I didn't acquiesce to a lot of the racial stigma going on, and it was the same way in secondary school.

Consequently, these racial encounters led Tim to get into fights with White male students who offended him. He recalled the fights:

A lot of times I would get into fights with them because of somebody saying something which I may not like which I may find offensive, such as the time where I was called the N word. Then, as a result of those fights, a lot of people at the school started to fear me and dislike me because they knew that if they said something, then it will be a problem. As a result, I was ostracized because of that. It was the thing where, yeah, I had my self-respect and I had my dignity and I wasn't letting anybody say this, that, or the other, or talk to me in a disrespectful way.

Tim was outspoken and courageously confronted racial issues in elementary school. He refused to let anyone talk to him in a manner he deemed disrespectful. Tim found it disturbing that his Black peers allowed offensive racial acts to be done to and around them. He explained:

One thing I did realize about a few of them [Black students] is they would still be involved in those White groups, and then the White boys could be saying anything to them. I can remember one time one of the dudes was sitting at the bench and then they throw a banana skin in front of him and then he doesn't do anything. I remember situations like that, something, which I wouldn't stand for, and they just acquiesce to it and just willingly accept it.

Tim felt his unwillingness to tolerate racism distinguished him from his same-race peers and ostracized him from other peers in school.

During our conversation with Tim, it was quite apparent that he developed his own coping mechanisms to combat his experiences dealing with racism in school. Moreover, Tim often discussed having a low tolerance for racism and racial discrimination. He came to the realization that his personal discoveries of Black history played a role in his development of self-knowledge and impacted his intolerance for injustice. When asked about his lack of tolerance for racial prejudice, the conversation went as follows:

Researcher: It sounds like you had something within you about race that you didn't tolerate, and I am trying to see where that came from.

Tim: I feel like, for me personally, that came from learning more about my history, because unlike them [Black classmates], I was always studying Malcolm X. I was always studying Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. DuBois.

Researcher: At a young age?

Tim: Yeah, at a young age.

Researcher: Before the [mentoring] program?

Tim: Yes, sir, yeah.

Researcher:	Who introduced you to them?
Tim:	It was my own personal discovery. You know how you may be searching through YouTube one day and then you get caught up on the wrong side of YouTube and you come across a Malcolm X video, and that sparked up [my interest].

As Tim encountered racism in school, he found it important to develop a strong sense of racial identity. Through his various experiences learning about Black history, he developed a sense of inner-strength that would allow him to overcome racial encounters. Unfortunately, his reputation often preceded him because of the physical altercations he had been in in response to racial epithets. However, in part, it was his desire to change others' perception of him that led him to seek mentoring opportunities. His experience in a school-based mentoring program and university-mentoring program will be discussed in the next section.

The benefits of mentoring programs on Tim's academic trajectory

The second major finding from our study was that throughout the course of Tim's education, he participated in two mentoring programs that significantly impacted his personal, social, and academic growth and development. Moreover, these opportunities compelled Tim to consider earning his Ph.D. In the subsections that follow, Tim's experiences in both mentoring programs are discussed.

Tim's experience in a school-based mentoring program

The first mentoring program Tim experienced was in the United Kingdom. The focus was on helping improving the personal, social, and academic growth and development of students in his school. Initially, it was the loss of his father that led him to mentoring. He further explained:

> When I was younger, this was maybe around 9 or year 10, which is in the United Kingdom [8th grade in the US] … I was getting involved in the wrong things … I had a lack of guidance at that particular time, and there just really wasn't a lot of support around for me at that particular time. My father passed away at a young age. I really didn't have a male role model in my life.

Tim began to perform poorly in school because, without a male role model, he felt his life lacked structure. However, things began to change when Tim met Mr. Andrews, the man who eventually became his mentor. Tim recounted:

> There was a man by the name of Mr. Andrews, a Black man who came my school. He used to work with the Black boys and the Black girls with their academics, with their personal life. To provide inspiration and motivation just to provide guidance and counseling. At first, I wasn't a part of the program because he only spoke with certain people. I wasn't sure what the criteria were to get into the program. I made sure that I was able to get into the program because I saw the positive effects which the mentoring was having on my friends … I noticed a change as far as their attitude toward work. They were definitely becoming more hard working, realizing the bigger picture of their education. I approached [Mr. Andrews] one day. I asked for the right to get involved in [the

mentoring program], and I was able to push my way through the administration to be able to become a part of the program.

After getting to know Mr. Andrews more, Tim explained how the mentoring opportunities turned his life around and developed his passion to further his education:

When I was in those events with him, it was Mr. Andrews speaking to maybe about five to seven young Black men. He was just going over just life lessons with us. He spoke about temptations, he spoke about not giving into your temptations, to be more responsible, and just to make sure that you practice delayed gratification. Because, basically, he got us to think long term, to see the big picture rather than what can we do right now to reach an end. He just changed our mentality, so from his work, which he had done with me and the other Black boys and Black girls at the school, it completely changed my life around me. For [Mr. Andrews] to come into my life and provide that guidance and counseling, that was very beneficial because I started to do much better in school. I started just following all of his practices and his teachings. I feel like the program of mentorship, it taught [my friends] some things, but it didn't teach them all of the lessons, which I personally internalized [about race].

The mentoring program helped Tim improve academically, taught him life lessons, and helped him change his outlook on life. Thus, when Tim completed high school in the U.S. at the age of 16 and enrolled at LU, he sought to continue his mentoring experiences. Moreover, his experience in LU's mentoring program inspired him to pursue his Ph.D. in history.

Tim's experience in the university mentoring program

After secondary school, Tim participated in a male mentoring program at LU. In particular, he found the one-on-one mentoring, program activities, and male camaraderie particularly beneficial. He discussed the benefits of the one-on-one mentoring:

I first got involved with the male mentoring program maybe about a year or so. Well, last semester, I had Mr. Summers from information technology [as my mentor]. We scheduled a couple of meetings that semester, and I think more than the programs, the [one-on-one] meetings are a little bit more beneficial personally. The reason being, I'm able to sit down with somebody who's been through what I'm going through. Then just be able to learn from their mistakes, learn from their recommendations and what they may suggest to me. I could potentially implement that, and then it could alleviate some of the issues [that] I'm going through. This semester, I have the president of the university, and I met with President Thomas at the start of the semester.

In this quote, Tim describes how one-on-one mentor meetings were beneficial. He went on further to explain how one-on-one mentoring helped him refocus his academic and leadership responsibilities. Tim explained:

We spoke about my academics. We spoke about also my involvement on campus, serving as the BMO [Black male-focused campus organization] president and Mr. Black & White [an university ambassador position]. He just suggested to make [myself] more education centered. Sometimes we may be in our leadership positions and they take over our life. What he suggested was, school comes first. The age-old thing which all of our parents say is, school comes first. He really asserted that. I followed that guideline,

so for this semester compared to last semester, I pretty much restructured everything as opposed to last semester, where I let everything consume my life before my studies. Then, luckily, it didn't have an effect on that, but this semester created more time for studying. I push back on a lot of my responsibilities. I started to delegate work a lot more to everybody else.

Tim's mentors led him to restructure his leadership responsibilities and extracurricular activities to focus more on his academic and career goals. Prior to discussions with mentors, Tim was considering running for a leadership position in the student government association. He explains how his focus has changed:

> For right now, that's not really my focus as more so looking into the professional organizations with history. One thing I said to myself in the next year is [that] I am going to dedicate a lot of my life to history and being a history major because I really want to study as much as I can and learn as much as I can. This is the best time to do so. I am not more so focusing on SGA. I am going to start focusing on myself and history.

During our interview, Tim often discussed how his personal mentor really guided his decisions about becoming more serious about his academics and how to balance his schoolwork with his campus involvement.

Beyond one-on-one mentoring, Tim described how group mentoring sessions and male guest speakers (peers, employees, and alumni) helped him develop his desire to succeed in college further. Tim said:

> In particular, I will say the mentor-mentee meetings were the most beneficial aspect. [The program with] mentors and the mentees …, we spoke about what we are going through with the students, Black male students in college right now. Then, how we could go about transcending those issues and finding solutions. I feel that was probably my favorite program because it takes a village to raise the children. It was just extremely powerful, the fact that you've got mentors and mentees sitting in one environment and just strategizing.

Tim found the camaraderie between the mentees and mentors powerful and beneficial. It helped him strategize solutions to issues male college students encounter. He also benefited from the guest speakers who shared their wisdom. Tim recalled an impactful experience with a guest speaker:

> Tim: I do enjoy some of the events which the male initiative hosts. I can remember they brought a brother from Boulder Enterprise, I believe. I forget his name.
>
> Researcher: Darius Boulder
>
> Tim: Yes, sir, Darius Boulder. That was really good because that provides inspiration to people, and I'm speaking for myself. It provided inspiration to see somebody who graduated from the university, like I said, who's been through what I've been through. He went on to become CEO or CFO of a major company. I feel that that plays a pivotal role as well. One thing I do like is having the support of having men around you. This was when I first got involved with the male initiative program, maybe about a year or so.

Because the university mentoring program provided Tim an opportunity to interact with Black male alumni who were successful, he developed a sense of racial

pride. In addition, Tim developed a strong internal belief that if others have made it (e.g. Darius Boulder), then he could preserve and succeed in college and in life, too. While Tim participated in the university mentoring program, some of his outside mentorship opportunities influenced his desire to further his education and obtain a Ph.D. in history.

The influence of mentorship on Tim's desire to pursue a Ph.D. in history

As a result of Tim's participation in the university mentoring program, he began to develop relationships with other male and female faculty members outside of the mentoring program. Because of the advice he received from the university president, he also began to focus on his academics and find mentors both inside and outside his major that would push him to consider thinking about furthering his education. In fact, it was a female faculty member who planted the seed to pursue a Ph.D. in history. Tim explained:

Tim: I thought about what I wanted to study, what I wanted to do in life, and throughout life I have never been this passionate. I have never been this hungry. Only when I'm studying history, because from a young age, I didn't know a lot about my history. I was always left in the dark, wondering, and I've always had that burning desire to find out more about Black history. As a result of that, I sat down thinking of what careers I want to do. I don't really want to deal with a 9:00 to 5:00. I don't really want a government job. What I'd rather do is study my passion and then be able to pass that information onto other people. So I said, why not becomes a teacher? Then I said to myself, you know what, why not becomes a professor? I sat down with different professors around campus and did my research. That's when the conversation of grad school came up.

Researcher: Did you come up with it on your own, or did your professor introduce it to you?

Tim: It was actually Dr. Anew. I was a computer science major at first coming into [the university], and I spoke to her because she was English. I thought about going into history, so she said, 'Okay, but I'm going to tell you right now, Mr. Walker, if you are going to do history, you got to get a bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. It's no joke.' Dr. Anew planted the seed. She basically said,

You know what, if you want to become a professor, it's a great career, very rewarding career, and you can do it. You got to go to grad school and you got to work hard and you got to get your master's and your Ph.D.

Tim's passion and desire to learn history along with guidance from influential professors helped him decide to pursue a Ph.D. in history. As this professor planted the seed, other advisors and mentors helped him further develop his education plans. During our interview, Tim described how male advisors and mentors helped him further develop his career plans:

Researcher: Have any of your other mentors contributed to your career aspirations?

Tim: Absolutely. The advisor in my organization, Dr. Sharpe, at the university, he has a general idea of what I want to do. He's the type of person who be like,

'Okay, so that's what you want to do. This is what you got to do. These are some good schools to attend. Contact these people, and they should be able to assist you. Dr. Porter was very influential.' I would say that Dr. Anew planted the seed, but Brother Porter fertilized the seed. Because I spoke about going into history, and then Dr. Anew told me what I needed to do. Dr. Porter got me connected with people at another university where I plan on going to grad school. He said, 'You know what, if that's what you want to do, then contact Dr. Rucker at the department of history.' You know Dr. Rucker [an alumni of the university] in the history department. Yeah, he's my advisor. I just came from his class as a matter of fact. When I look at Dr. Rucker, that's someone I truly aspire towards. The way that he conducts himself as a man, as a professor, and as a person. His success in his own field and the fact that he's currently doing what I want to do. Not so much as a mentoring standpoint, but he's just been an inspirational role model right there.

Tim used informal and formal mentoring experiences to shape his academic, post-secondary, and career goals. Important to Tim's career aspiration was his ability to think about the future. His ability to develop this skill was nurtured by his various mentors and advisors. Throughout Tim's interview, it was apparent that 'the village' did in fact raise him, and as a result, he seeks to further his education and become a mentor for the next generation of Black scholars.

Discussion

Tim's experiences can be used to expand discussions of race and Black males' racialized experiences (Martin, 2007). His narrative suggests that Black males in both the United States and the United Kingdom face racism in school settings. Tim experienced a number of racially motivated encounters with White males in the United Kingdom. His reactions to these encounters led him to be further marginalized by school discipline policies. Critical race theory recognizes that race and racism directly influence the everyday lives of African-American boys and men (Howard, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Like many Black males in the United States, Tim's experiences in the United Kingdom demonstrate how issues of race and racism impacted his daily life in school. His experiences also speak to the international need for support and preparation of young Black men on how to deal with racially motivated encounters.

Tim's experiences confirm one of the foundational tenets of critical race theory: Black males are, in fact, resilient and resistant (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These narratives of Black males being resistant to injustice and resilient in education settings must be highlighted more in scholarly literature to counter deficit-oriented narratives, such as the trope that Black boys see academic achievement as 'acting White' (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Stepping away from deficit discourse and examining how Black males are successful will provide more insight for educational stakeholders on the types of programs (e.g. mentoring) and policies needed to

matriculate, retain, and graduate Black males from secondary schools as well as colleges and universities.

Tim self identifies as Black, but his narrative raises larger questions about his racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development and the use of CRT and SIM to explain his experiences. Thompson and Davis (2013) argued that there is a difference between racial and cultural identity development among Black male students. To these scholars, racial identity development pertains to the ways social constructions of race shape Black students' racial identity, whereas cultural identity pertains to Black students' developing ethnic identities that connect them to their cultural heritage in Africa. Tim's narrative demonstrates that Black males can possess both racial and cultural identities that help them connect to their cultural heritage in Africa. It is clear that Tim is not African-American even though he also self identifies as a person of African descent. In this regard, Tim's narrative helps to understand that a Black British male takes into account their African heritage. Tim's narrative can help researchers understand that connections to Africa are also important to understanding Black males' racialized experiences in America and abroad. Tim's knowledge of self and Black history played a major role in how he addressed racial encounters at school. This was one of the attributes Tim felt his peers did not possess – knowledge of self and Black history. Tim's self-education and mentoring programs played a major role in helping him develop his scholarly, racial, and cultural identities.

Interestingly enough, Tim's experiences also raise concerns about racial and ethnic identities used to research African-American males throughout the K–16 pipeline. At first glance, it would be easy to assume that Tim is an African-American male college student. However, his accent makes his nationality clear. By participating in this study, Tim further explored his United Kingdom roots. His narrative serves as a reminder that HBCU students are not all African-American; they hail from the African diaspora. However, they share common experiences that unite them. This realization suggests that researchers should expand their conceptualizations of Black males to include those who were not born in America. Tim's primary and secondary schooling experiences are very close to those of Black American males. Exploring the academic experiences of Black males in the United States and abroad has the potential to expand the educational community's knowledge of their academic, social, and racialized experiences as well as support structures that help them navigate educational environments fraught with racism.

For Tim, participating in a school-based and college mentoring program played a major role in helping him become future oriented. The mentoring programs helped him see himself as a Black male academic scholar who could accomplish anything he set his mind to. His experiences and perspective highlight the importance of mentors and mentoring programs in the academic success of Black male students. Mentors from his school-based and college mentoring program helped Tim prioritize his academics. In secondary school, his mentor helped him see that he had to be smart and do well academically to have a better life. Tim's academic

trajectory changed from troubled youth to academic scholar because of his participation in mentoring programs. Tim's narrative also highlights the importance of university alumni being involved in mentoring programs to help students see and learn from men who have graduated from the same university. These men help male college students visualize their futures. Tim's mentor helped him position his academics over his leadership positions on campus. This advice led Tim to delegate responsibility, thereby becoming a better leader and student. The formal and informal mentoring Tim received in high school and college played a major role in encouraging him to pursue a Ph.D.

Through his mentoring experiences, Tim employed aspects of Whiting's (2009) notion of scholar identity. In particular, he developed self-efficacy, internal locus of control, future orientation, self-awareness, a need for achievement, academic self-confidence, racial pride, and masculinity, all of which helped him achieve academically in secondary school and enter college at a young age with the same tenacity. Tim's mentoring experiences provided him the opportunity to fully understand the need to make sacrifices to construct a scholar identity. What was important to Tim's scholar identity development was the influence of mentorship. Therefore, it is important that universities provide opportunities for formal and informal mentorship for their Black male students. Given the national attention on Black males via *My Brother's Keeper* and other initiatives, our findings can help enhance and inform the conversation about Black male collegians and how initiatives that focus on their mentoring experiences can address their positive development, both academically and personally.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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