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The R Factor: Centering Race in the Mentoring of African American College Students

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THE R FACTOR: CENTERING RACE IN THE MENTORING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy

by
Bridgette Coble
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Advisor: Dr. Frank Tuitt
Abstract

Mentoring provides personal support, academic assistance and career guidance to college students of color whose experiences have been documented to be very different from those of their White counterparts. Achievement inequity, problems of persistence, experiences of racism and student reports of feeling marginalized and misunderstood threaten the ability of students of color to succeed in college. While it may be assumed that race plays a central role in the mentoring relationships of students of color, this assumption may be misguided. The existence of formal mentoring programs and informal mentoring relationships that support students of color does not necessarily ensure that the confounded issue of race is appropriately embedded as a shaping force in the mentor/mentee association. This paper will deconstruct the assumption that approaches to the mentoring of students of color automatically consider race by applying Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to examine if and how race is present in the relationship between mentors and their African American student mentees at predominantly White institutions of higher education. Using phenomenological research design, this study brings race out of the rhetoric of higher education and places it in the center of examination to uncover student perceptions of race and how it operates within the mentoring relationship to help us better understand how we ensure high quality mentoring can be actively applied in our efforts to support the success of college students of color.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

“Race and racism need to be centered in research, offering direction where race has been ignored, include it, where it has been marginalized, center it, and where it has been problematized, theorise it.” Hylton (2005)

The experiences of students of color attending predominantly White four-year colleges and universities have been the topic of a substantial amount of higher education literature (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005; Orfield, Marin & Horn, 2005; Steele, 1997; Turner, Lising Antonio, Garcia, Vigil Laden, Nora & Presley, 2002). The focus however, has rarely been on their exemplary academic performance, valued contributions or joyous experiences (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007); instead attention has primarily highlighted the persistent inequities and problematic phenomena which take place in the relationship of the student of color and higher education (Bray, 2002; Orfield, Marin & Horn, 2005; Rendon, 2002).

Student encounters of facing barriers to college access, lack of racial group representation (Price & Wohlford, 2005), unwelcome campus climates (Kraft, 1991; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003; Price & Wohlford, 2005; Sedlacek, 1999; Suarez-Balcazar, 1998), overt and covert racism
(Hurtado, 1992; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Sculco, 2002), racial group misperceptions (Teranishi, 2002), academic achievement inequities (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002; Garibaldi, 1991; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Smyth & McArdle, 2004; Steele, 1997) and stereotype vulnerability (Osborne, 1997; Steele, 1997), permeate the United States literature in its attempt to discern and deconstruct the barriers that keep students of color from a positive academic experience and successful completion of a bachelor degree.

This reality has become a major area of concern as more and more reports highlight the value that a college education has to a person’s long-term social mobility and quality of life (Carter, 2006; Karen & Dougherty, 2005). In fact, it has been shown that the attainment of any type of postsecondary degree results in increased net income (Carter, 2006), more involvement in civic activities (Cabrera, La Nasa & Burkum, 2001) and greater labor market advantages (Grubb, 1999). Swail (2000) may have summed it up best when he stated, “the opportunity to go to college is perhaps the ultimate testament to the American dream” (p. 85).

**Background of Study**

When we consider the literature outlining the persistent struggles of college students of color in successfully accessing and completing college, it becomes clear that there is still work to do in this area. While progress has been made since the days when a college education was reserved for the elite and the White (Thelin, 2004), there persists a great need to enhance the college experience for students of color attending predominantly
White institutions. Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges have provided an alternative for students of color interested in pursuing postsecondary education and with their commitment to cultural concerns have been reported to provide more social and psychological support, higher levels of satisfaction and greater likelihood that students will complete their degrees (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998).

However, most students of color are attending predominantly White institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1993) where master scripts continue to be the foundation of the curriculum.

Master scripts position the White experience as the standard for success (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and thereby discounts or ignores differing realities.

Ladson-Billings (1998) asserts that in the U.S., whiteness is positioned as the norm and points to the following statement by Swartz (1992):

“Master scripting silences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, white, upper-class, male voicings as the “standard” knowledge students need to know. All other accounts and perspectives are omitted from the master script unless they can be disempowered through misrepresentation. Thus, content that does not reflect the dominant voice must be brought under control, mastered, and then reshaped before it can become a part of the master script” (p.341).

Master scripting in higher education influences the curriculum and the campus culture and operates as a silencer of diverse stories, positioning dominant views and values as the standard. The lived experiences of the student of color, which are often loaded with stories of discrimination, ostracism and marginalization, have no place in this curriculum which often leaves the student of color burdened by feelings of isolation, disconnection, guilt and shame since their own lived experience is not represented or considered (Ladson-Billings, 1998).
Mentoring has increasingly become a strategy utilized within higher education to support retention and enrich the experiences of undergraduate students (Jacobi, 1991). Many colleges and universities have implemented mentoring programs as the literature on undergraduate education has begun to substantiate its importance (Bernier, Larose, & Soucy, 2005; Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Robinson Kurpius, & Dixon Rayle, 2006; Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring has also been broadly applied as one strategy to support the academic progress of underrepresented students in higher education (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005; Haring, 1999) and for college students of color it has become often utilized to help offset reports of persistent inequities and troubling retention rates (Bray, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Orfield, Marin & Horn, 2005; Rendon, 2002; Steele, 1997; Turner, Lising Antonio, Garcia, Vigil Laden, Nora & Presley, 2002). Formal mentoring programs have been designed to support students of color in multiple ways including: career development, leadership development, student persistence and academic success (Allard, Dodd, & Peralez, 1987; Dunphy, Miller, Woodruff, & Nelson, 1987; Evans, Bourassa, & Woolbright, 1985; Hicks, 2005; Moore, 1982; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988; Shandley, 1989). With such an emphasis on the use of mentoring as a method to help students of color navigate the college experience, it is imperative that mentoring relationships are examined and continually evaluated for effectiveness to ensure that any impediments or barriers to their effectiveness are removed.

Race has received extensive attention in the mentoring literature, specifically in the area of mentor/mentee matching (Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee, 2002); however the focus has been primarily on exploring whether race similarity impacts mentee satisfaction.
While this is a valuable area for study, it is not the only place for the study of race within the mentoring relationship. Same race relationships may not be an option at predominantly White institutions where access to mentors of color is limited (Lee, 1999). In these cases, it is imperative that mentoring still be an option, but there might be a need to explore strategies that support the assurance of prosperous relationships. Thus, the specific research question to be examined in this study is:

**How, if at all, is race present in the mentor/mentee relationship for African American college students attending predominantly White colleges and universities?**

This study attempts to address the existing definitive gaps in the literature about mentoring as a multicultural programmatic strategy, by targeting one unique component of mentoring for undergraduate students of color attending a predominantly White university. The concept of race guides this work as the central focal point of study in determining how mentoring for students of color differs from mentoring of all students. When considering this research question, it becomes important to disclose the nature of race as it will be discussed for the purpose of this thesis. The assumption of this researcher is that race is a socially constructed concept (Allen & Chung, 2000) based primarily on physical differences that actively operates to differentiate groups of people.

Recent research has highlighted how the history and ideology of race has served to ensure human separation based on physical traits that may or may not represent cultural, national or ethnic similarities (Gabard & Cooper, 1998; Lee, 1999; Machery & Faucher,
Allen and Chung (2000) speak of “America’s unique racial and ethnic reality (that) was shaped by a history that included the enslavement of Africans, the conquest of Indians and Mexicans, the exploitation of Asian and other nonwhite labor, and past-and continuing- racial/ethnic discrimination” (pg. 796). Race must take on the priorities of the era in order for it to remain a divisive tool for human categorization. In this way, race is like a parasite that attaches itself to whatever “organism” will sustain its survival. It has attached itself to economic disparity muddying the waters of class issues (Allen & Chung, 2000). It has rearticulated itself in the political arena where it hides in the shadows of public awareness disguised in a coat of color blindness and neutrality and redefines itself during influxes of immigration (Allen & Chung, 2000).

It is unfortunate but very real, that the essence of racism, along with other forms of oppression, exists to support the priorities and interests of the dominant hegemony at the expense of those who reside on society’s margins (Allen & Chung, 2000). Race, as a complex and evolving social construct, shows up in our society in many ways and those interventions that attest to support students of color will best serve those students when facilitators maintain currency on the race “status quo” per se. Race as a socially constructed social category therefore includes all people whose physical characteristics and/or self-identity align with American categories of African American/Black, Asian American, Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Native American. Additionally, the terms race and racism must also be deconstructed and defined for the purposes of this paper. Race, as a social construction, was originally developed to categorize groups of people for the
purpose of distributing or withholding privilege and power, but as a result racial groups
developed their own unique identities, ways of knowing, navigation skills and overall
cultural experience that has become a source of empowerment and agency (Grande, 2000;
Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Villalpando, 2003). The effects of this cultural
experience cannot be denied and must be considered in the study of people of color. Race is
not only a negative social construct, but it is also a powerful force in the development of a
new intellectualism that acts as an exudative agent in the development of pride,
self-esteem, connection and empowerment (Villalpando, 2003).

The term race, for the purposes of this paper will be used to represent both its
socially constructed nature as well as its role as an empowerment tool. Similarly, there
must be a discussion of the politically charged term, racism. The term alone generates
negative reactions and a desire in many to change the subject. America’s history as a racist
country goes back a long way and many Americans prefer to think of only as an ugly
practice from long ago (Parker, 1998). This paper will consider racism as a current and
active force embedded within the culture of the nation. Racism is considered, not as a
character flaw of an individual, but more as a shaping force in the development of
American policy, practices and institutions. All Americans have been affected by racism
and therefore are challenged individually with how to personally move beyond racist
practices and beliefs (Parker, 1998). Race manifests itself in everyday social interactions
(Hylton, 2005) and these practices are old and part of the American fabric. Critical Race
Theory helps us uncover the more contemporary face of racism in higher education by
pointing to new terminology and representations. Campus climate, academic achievement,
standardized testing, all tainted with racism, are all areas where higher education administrators see evidence of racial disparity and continue to struggle with the implications of racism (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Horn, 2005).

References to students of color in this paper include African American/Black, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Native American populations. Given the malleable nature of race and the unique experiences people of color in the United States face as a result of racial categorization, it is of interest for this researcher to examine how mentoring relationships which provide support to college students of color respond to and embrace the lived experiences of student participants. Mentoring is of particular importance since its strategic role is often to address and remedy the many problems college students of color face. This study will build upon the existing literature by examining how race is present within this unique relationship with the assumption that intentional attention to race and racism will support the longevity and effectiveness of the relationship. With all we know about the struggles of students of color attending predominantly White institutions, it is necessary to interrogate the role that race plays in this “savior” intervention, of sorts and direct attention towards strategies that support high quality mentoring approaches.

This thesis begins by applying the lens of Critical Race Theory as a framework to describe how the experiences of college students of color differ from their White college peers. A review of the literature will provide background and insight into the multiple barriers students of color encounter when they begin their journey towards obtainment of a postsecondary degree. Literature on racial identity development is also included to help
explain how racial identity is experienced and expressed differently across and within racial groups, how mentees may be affected by their own racialized experiences and how this might affect their relationship with their mentor. Finally, the literature that describes mentoring and highlights strategies that have proven helpful in supporting students of color will guide an understanding of what works in terms of ensuring their academic success and degree completion. The method applied to study the presence of race within the mentoring relationship will draw again from the Critical Race Theory framework through the development of counter-narratives which tell the story of how race is present in the lives of African American college students and within their mentoring relationships as well as explore their perceptions regarding the importance of race within their lives. The final analysis will outline findings that help us understand how to better support college students of color during the mentoring relationship which ultimately supports their academic success.

Theoretical Framework

*Critical Race Theory*

Critical Race Theory will be applied in this research study as both a theoretical framework and research methodology. The application of this framework supports the structural nature of racism and will be used to examine how racist systems continue to operate to marginalize people of color. Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged out of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as a framework that centers race in the examination of legal systems (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000; Lynn & Parker, 2006). This viewpoint
challenges the dominant ideology of race neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy and asserts that race has contributed to all manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage. CLS developed as a framework to deconstruct legal doctrine to expose the ways that “legal ideology has helped create, support, and legitimate America’s present class structure” (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1350). CRT was a natural outgrowth of this work as scholars critiqued CLS for its exclusion of racism (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000; Ladson Billings, 1998).

CRT emerged as a theory that examines legal doctrine from the premise that the structure of the legal system maintains social domination and subordination (West, 1995) and has been expanded as a strategy for understanding issues of race and racism in education specifically in terms of educational inequity (Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995). Both legal and educational research have been on the forefront of theory and policy development that is based on the notion that people of color are inferior (Tate, 1997).

Although the belief in the genetic inferiority of people of color has been scientifically disputed (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997; Ladson Billings and Tate, 1995), the paradigm has been legitimized and has contributed to past research that is based on a premise that has “raised doubts on the benefits of equitable social investment in education and other social services” (Tate, 1997, p. 202). The unfortunate result has been the structural manifestation of racism so deeply embedded into societal foundation that its presence is undetected to most.

It is this structural and ingrained feature of racism that CRT seeks to expose. Delgado (1995) explains how this ingrained feature of racism makes it difficult to confront
and notes that most racial remedies address only the extreme and shocking types of injustices. In 1993 McCarthy and Crichlow implored researchers for the development of race theories. They asserted that society needed a tool to help expose and make visible the omissions and blind spots within the traditional constructs of educational research in order to recognize the significance of race in the United States (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). Critical Race Theory provides us with such a tool. Lynn and Parker (2006) summarize the six unifying themes recognized by CRT as follows:

- CRT assumes that racism is endemic to American life.
- CRT challenges the dominant ideology of race neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
- CRT asserts that race has contributed to all manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
- CRT requires recognition of experiential knowledge of people of color
- CRT is interdisciplinary
- CRT actively strives to end racial oppression as part of a broader goal to end all oppression.

CRT considers racism as an invisible force operating at all levels of society and shaping the experiences of people of color. The invisible nature of racism in the U.S. makes it challenging for many people to accept the first theme of CRT, yet the theory challenges us to accept this tenet as reality and then seek out and uncover how the endemic nature of racism has been manifested in our past and current societal experience.
Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Harris (1993) & McIntosh (1990, 1993) describe the property value of Whiteness within a capitalistic society where property has been a key component of power attainment. Property differences, both explicit and implicit, have been manifested from slavery and military conquests to school funding and intellectual property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and are woven into the fabric of America. Whiteness has become the ultimate property as the cultural practices and behaviors of Whites have retained a property value. It is with this in mind that we can begin to extrapolate and understand the constant gaps we see between Whites and people of color in academic achievement. For example, CRT’s assertion that racism is endemic to our society makes us not surprised to find that in education, even when we hold class constant, African American students do not perform equal to their White counterparts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). From this perspective, we can reject notions of deficiency of people of color and instead turn to the oppressive conditions where higher proportions of people of color are poor (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and the value of Whiteness has reigned supreme as the desirable treasure.

CRT also challenges the dominant ideology of race neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy. The concepts of equal opportunity and color blindness have been sought as a means for justice in civil rights discourse (Tate, 1997). The central component of color blindness suggests that to acknowledge a person’s race is inappropriate and corrupting to meritocratic practices (Gotanda, 2000). Instead, racial differences are to be ignored so as not to influence decision making; however Crenshaw (1988) asserts that a belief in colorblindness is illogical given the reality that there exist populations of people
who have historically been oppressed and marginalized only because of their skin color. Frankenburg (1992) warns that our interest in overlooking race can be viewed as supporting a racist social structure. Instead of fighting the ugliness of racism, colorblindness allows it to persist and flourish. How can this same society not be attentive to race, when, in fact, generations of these populations have entire lived experiences of differential treatment because of it? It is not logical or responsible to behave as if this reality did not exist. The belief that we can ignore our history and assume that every member of society starts from an equal playing field is absurd, racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), and allows us to avoid the real consequences of a racialized chronicle of events that have created political, economic and societal wounding and inequity.

Additionally, Gotanda (2000) considers colorblind ideology self-contradicting in its very definition. A medically colorblind person never recognizes color and therefore cannot differentiate color or absence of color unlike a nation of people for whom race is a social construct used to categorize populations of people since its inception. These very people are expected to repress what they see and deceive themselves into believing that race, a socially complex construct, is no longer recognizable (Gotanda, 2000). This act, in itself, keeps us from healing wounds which have resulted from hundreds of years of racial oppression and instead pretend that this current practice of color blindness makes us no longer racist. It is necessary to break out of this illusion and acknowledge the absurdity of this practice. It is as Bonilla-Silva (2003) says, “In racial matters, as in therapy, the admission of denial is the preamble for the beginning of recovery” (p.183). CRT challenges the generally accepted notion that racism is practiced by individuals and
requires us to accept that racism is embedded in the roots of our society and plays a critical role in the disadvantages experienced by some and the advantages received by others (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Racism is not an individual act, but is part of the foundation of U.S. culture manifesting in different forms (Lopez, 2003) some of which are easily recognizable and others that are more difficult to identify. This more covert operation of race in society becomes concerning since its invisibility is assumed to mean it no longer exists (Lopez, 2003). The reality is that racism is still very alive and well.

The Civil Rights Act of 1968 supported the use of affirmative action to remedy years of racial discrimination (Yosso, Parker, Solorzano & Lynn, 2004) and had a positive impact in areas like higher education where the numbers of students of color enrollments increased. Interestingly, the legislation that has eliminated affirmative action programs was based on the premise that such remedies were no longer necessary, yet data reflect large drops in student of color enrollments in systems where the ban has taken effect (Affirmative Action Facts, 2009). If racism is truly an issue of the past, student of color enrollments should remain steady without affirmative action programs in place. Secondly, all the legislative and public attention on Affirmative Action shadows the ever existing reality that the continued use of standardized testing as a requirement to access higher education is skewed in favor of White students (Romero, 2003). If we really want to eliminate all race based programs that provide access to higher education, a critical review of standardized testing would be a logical place to begin investigation.

Additionally, the impact of race on academic access, performance and achievement (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000) cannot be underestimated. Racial
disparities persist as achievement gaps continue to differentiate access to higher education for people of color as compared to Whites. In 1999 the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 39% of all traditional college aged Whites were enrolled in degree-granting institutions compared to 30% of African Americans and 19% of Hispanics (Price & Wohlford, 2005). Barriers to educational attainment include limited financial resources, inadequate academic preparation, misinformation and unawareness about the realities of college and unsupportive campus climates (Heller, 2005; Price & Wohlford, 2005). CRT would assert that all of these barriers are results of the racial disadvantages ascribed to people of color in a racialized society. For instance, while all American citizens are assumed to have certain inalienable rights, the experiences of people who live on the margins of society make the ability to exercise those rights elusive (Lopez, 2003).

The intersection of race and racism is the focus of CRT and necessarily so since issues of race are so often ignored (Lopez, 2003), but multiple subordinate identities (gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.) complicate the discussion and account for more complex experiences of disadvantage. However, CRT asserts that race is a central factor in all experiences of disadvantage (Solorzano, 1997) and poses its own complexity that is not addressed by other identities of disadvantage. This is evident in the racial segregation that is reflected at all levels of the U.S. educational system. The hope that social mobility would miraculously close the achievement gap has waned as gaps persist for Blacks and Latinos living in integrated, largely middle-class suburbs like Evanston, Ill., and Montclair, N.J. (Johnston & Viadero, 2000). What has been surprising and contradictory to assertions that socioeconomic disparities outweigh issues of race, is that achievement gaps
continue to persist for African American and Latino students regardless of socioeconomic background. Johnston and Viadero (2000) assert that the race of a child will predict “their success in school, whether they go to college, and how much money they will earn as adults.” (p.1). They also predict that by 2019 Whites will outpace African Americans (twice as likely) and Latinos (three times as likely) in college degree attainment (Johnston & Viadero, 2000). Educational structures such as magnet or Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Advanced Placement and college preparatory education have historically reflected enrollments where students of color are underrepresented (Yosso, 2002) posing another concern since such programs are critical components of the education pipeline that support access to higher education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001).

CRT provides a lens through which to examine these and other factors contributing to racialized experiences, and therefore can also be applied to an examination of how race is present within the mentor/mentee relationship. This author’s assumption is that race has impacted the lives of the college student of color and continues to present complexities affecting the experience of the student attending a predominantly White college or university. In order for the mentoring relationship to be effective, there must be some unique attention to race as a factor in the lives of all participants. How might mentoring relationships address the embedded nature of racism in the U.S.? Are mentors able and prepared to facilitate discussions on colorblind notions and their effect on students of color? Does the mentor actively work to educate the mentee of color about the systematic nature of race and racism and advocate on the student’s behalf when necessary? Does the mentor encourage dialogue that supports counter narratives that may describe the student’s
reality? These are all questions influenced by CRT that will help guide the course of this study to determine how mentoring relationships are attentive to this very dynamic and important construct that we know as race.

The next chapter will provide insight into the multiple barriers faced by students of color in higher education which offers the background necessary to understand why mentoring has been applied so broadly. This chapter will also set the stage for recognizing that institutions are grounded in climates and practices that are racialized and marginalizing. Additionally, the next chapter outlines the literature on race salience and racial identity development, both of which are important constructs for helping deconstruct unique differences within populations of color. One size does not fit all and any attempt at addressing racial inequity must also be attentive to the variety of ways identity is perceived and performed within in-group populations. Finally, the next chapter will highlight the literature on mentoring strategies that have been affective for college students of color and present some considerations for enhancing the mentoring relationship.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

While the postsecondary doors of access have opened up substantially to diverse students (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Bragg, 2001; Dougherty, 1992) the literature continues to point out the persistence of racial inequity within higher education. The student of color college story is laden with struggle and reminds us that that historical racist legacy that we want to forget still permeates our society (Marin & Yun, 2005). Unfortunately, initial reactions to learning about the discomforting reality that racial disparity exists was a campaign to project assumptions of deficiency onto the person of color (Ladson-Billings, 2004) and engage in a discourse of cultural depravity and disadvantage (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Strategies did not seek to repair broken structures, but instead sought to “fix” or “control” populations deemed to be “at-risk” (Ladson-Billings, 2004). In education this has resulted in low expectations of teachers and lack of academic rigor in classrooms serving students of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) as well as expectations of deviant behavior (Davidson, 1996; Phelan & Davidson, 1993). It is only recently that considerations of structural racism have come into the discourse taking the burden off of the individual and putting it onto the systems and institutions that have been created within our society. It is from this vantage point that this paper addresses the experiences of college students of color.
Experiences of College Students of Color

Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence

Issues of access are prevalent as students of color are peripherally represented in postsecondary education. While overall increases in the number of students of color going to college have been promising, the gap between these students and their White counterparts continues to increase (Karen & Dougherty, 2005; NCES, 2005). For example, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 60.6% of Asian and 42.8% of White 18-to 24-year-olds were enrolled in degree-granting institutions in 2005 as compared to 32.7% of African Americans and 24.8% of Hispanics (NCES, 2005). Native American students continue to be the most underrepresented group in higher education with enrollments of 18-24-year-olds at 18% (Freeman & Fox, 2005; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007).

Not only is the degree of representation a problem, but a review of completion rates for college students of color give rise to even more concern (Carter, 2006; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Thompson, Gorin, Obeidat, and Chen, 2006). A troubling gap exists between the college completion rates of students of color and White students (Carter, 2006). The American Council on Education reported that only 40% of eligible African American students went to college, with only 46% of the 40% graduating within 6 years (Grier-Reed, Madyun & Buckley, 2008). When we look to higher education, we find that large populations of Black and Latino college students are enrolled in community colleges. The disproportionate numbers of college students of color enrolled in two-year or nonacademic postsecondary education (Perna & Titus, 2004) becomes troubling when we consider the increased social mobility opportunities provided by a four year degree and the
reports on limited access to financial assistance at community colleges which also serve mostly lower income populations (Bragg, 2001). Community colleges enroll about 77% of African American students and 70% of Latino/a college students compared to 3% of Whites (Renner & Moore, 2004).

Nearly 64% of the entire student population enrolled in community colleges is required to take remedial or developmental classes (Deil-Amen, Rosenbaum, & Person, 2005) to make up for a high school education that failed to prepare them for college. Remedial classes do not offer college credit but are required prerequisites to access college level, credit-offering courses. Some would also assert that community colleges are often complicit in reproducing social stratification by focusing on developmental education as opposed to a rigorous academic concentration (Keene, 2008). This is also troubling when we consider the gaps in degree attainment between the four-year and two year schools (Dougherty, 1992). This is not to say that community colleges do not offer a labor market payoff, but their high rate of attrition, thinly spread resources and lower earning potential of the Associates versus the Bachelor’s degree raise valid questions about the likelihood for success in these environments (Bragg, 2001; Deil-Amen, Rosenbaum & Person, 2005; Dougherty, 1992; Karen & Dougherty, 2005; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Lewis & Middleton, 2003). In 1995 and 1996 only 7.9% of African American and 15.4% of Hispanic students enrolled at community colleges completed an associate degree within six years, as compared to 17% of their White counterparts (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005).
Students of color who successfully transition to a four-year institution continue to face multiple challenges that make the journey towards obtaining the degree arduous often to the point where the student gives up. African Americans are reported to be half as likely as Whites to acquire a four-year degree six years after completing their senior year of high school and lag behind White students who share similar socioeconomic status by approximately 13% (NCES, 2005). Similarly, a little over 15% of Latino/a students who begin their education at four-year institutions complete their degrees compared to 34% of Whites (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005) and while Native American students have more recently experienced higher college admittance rates (Jackson & Smith, 2001), only 0.67% of all undergraduate degrees are awarded to Native American college students (Silas, 2006). An historical review of the literature shows that catastrophic levels of student persistence are tied to lack of student engagement, faculty interaction, financial resource support and cultural dissonance (Carter, 2006).

Unwelcome Campus Climates & Cultural Stress

Any consideration of campus climate should take into account both the internal and external societal forces that help shape the racial context of a campus. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen (1998) described four dimensions of an institutional context that influence campus climate. These include the institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of students of color, structural diversity which reflects numerical representations of various ethnic/racial groups, psychological climate of perceptions and attitudes between groups and the behavioral climate which is characterized by inter-group relations on campus. Godwin and Markham (1996) challenge college administrations to
recognize the role bureaucracy plays in affecting the campus climate, particularly for students of color. They assert that bureaucracy is the framework within which our everyday activity takes place and that attention must be paid to the properties of bureaucracy and the problems they may present for students, especially the first year student. Students are greeted by college bureaucracy from the first day they set foot on campus. The admissions office, financial aid, housing resources and registrars services all provide examples of how often a student is “touched” by bureaucracy. Godwin & Markham (1996) point to the contradictory and complex realities of bureaucracies where in one light it “combines rules, specialization, hierarchy, impersonality, and records to create an orderly, efficient structure that processes work quickly” (p. 662). But at the very same time these systems can become rigid, alienating, oppressive and formidable agencies of power that “subordinate individual independence” (p. 663). Bureaucracies can pose a unique challenge for our students of color who may arrive at the campus with a predisposition towards anxiety and frustration when encountering bureaucracy (Godwin & Markham, 1996) based on previous experiences. This is one example of how campus climate can be a contributing factor for student stress.

For students of color on predominantly White campuses, there also often exists a “cultural stress” that is associated with being a member of a minority group in majority environments (Attinasi, 1989; Smart & Smart, 1995; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). African American students have reported experiences of exclusion and racial alienation on predominantly white campuses (Allen, 1992; Chavous, 2002; Turner, 1994). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have developed a transactional model of stress that has been applied to
African American college students (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). This model focuses on the interaction between the person and the environment with the theoretical premise being that stress is generated when an individual perceives the demands of a situation to exceed available resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When considering the academic experiences of African American students, this model highlights the environmental incongruence that often occurs which places many African American students at risk to suffer from emotional, psychological, social and academic troubles (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). While some of this anguish can be attributed to an individual state of psychological distress, there exists some responsibility on the institution for supporting and maintaining the existence of oppressive structures and climates (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007).

For Black men, the intersectionality of race and gender on a predominantly White college campus poses a unique type of stress that has been referred to in the literature as “racial battle fatigue” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and has been shown to pose a detriment to their educational achievement throughout the entire course of their P-20 education. Racial Battle Fatigue is the condition that occurs as a result of a constant coping with physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional racial microaggressions (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Smith, Allen & Danley’s (2007) study contained narratives describing the reality of the African American male college student and were summarized as follows:

“African American male students in this study confirmed in their own words, by telling their own life experiences, that racial encounters produce painful psychological stress responses. Although we did not ask how constant environmental stressors affected academic achievement, we do know that the majority of these students became more determined to overcome the racial and academic obstacles they encountered. Each reported feeling anger, disgust,
distress, and a diminished sense of belonging on their respective campuses. We were told that having to respond constantly to negative stereotypes, debilitating actions, and White people’s ability to interfere with their dreams was not an easy task. Without a doubt, these men are survivors—resilient fighters” (p. 573) Instead of enjoying the privilege of being in the role of the learner, students of color at predominantly White institutions often find themselves educating the class and/or the professor on topics of ethnicity and race (Martinez Aleman, 2000). These interactions often become combative and defensive and contribute to a draining of the student’s emotional and intellectual energy (Martinez Aleman, 2000). The role of the college professor is of particular concern when we examine the student of color experience. Students have reported that faculty are often primary perpetrators of discrimination directed towards students of color (Martinez Aleman, 2000). This places students of color at a disadvantage given that the interaction between students and faculty has been reported to be a critical component in academic success (Holmes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999; McCormack, 1995 & 1998; Pascarella, 1980; Rienzi, Allen, Sarmiento, & McMillin, 1993). In addition, campuses may continue to tolerate and support historical, racist symbols, practices or rituals. Bill Bray (1997) describes this in his recount of his college experience at Dartmouth:

“The Indian symbol—a degrading, stupid-looking caricature of an Indian that was usually found drunk near a rum barrel—was the unofficial college mascot for many years, looked upon with pride by many old alumni. When I looked at it, though, I saw too much of home to find anything funny or heroic about it” (p.269).

Practices such as these are usually embedded into the culture of a historically predominantly White college or university campus and tend to go unrecognized by leadership (Duster, 1993).
Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions

Racism has been defined by Lorde (1997) as, “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (p.496). Other definitions exist, but the theme that arises from most point to three important points (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000):

1) one group believes itself to be superior
2) The group that believes itself to be superior, has the power to carry out racist behavior
3) Racism affects multiple racial and ethnic groups

Racism can be practiced overtly or out of ignorance, both of which reinforce racial boundaries and stifle productive dialogue across racial and ethnic differences (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2001). Studies continue to depict racist practices towards students of color on college campuses (Suarez-Balcazar, 1998) and describe how their very presence on campus is scrutinized and their talents as well as their academic preparedness are doubted (Davis, et al., 2004; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001; Steele, 1997). African American students attending predominantly White universities have reported being harassed, mistreated, and targets of institutional and individual discrimination (D'augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Jay & D'augelli, 1991; Parker, 1998) by university administrators, faculty, and classmates (Booker, 2007). Confederate flags have been “slapped” onto the faces of Black college students, and White fraternity members have called Black students ‘niggers’ during college parades in the presence of college administrators who did nothing (Feagin, 2000). Some studies show that African American students are more likely than
Whites to be the target of differential treatment and stereotyping by other students, faculty members, campus police, teaching assistants, administrators, and staff (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998). This differential treatment has been recognized as providing some insight as to college retention rate differences between White students and students of color by some researchers (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Serra Hagedorn, 1998).

Of particular concern is the treatment of African American males. The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice have published reports that show African American male students as primary targets of verbal and physical abuse and racially motivated hate crimes (Carroll, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001 & 2004). Not only are African American students reporting racist interactions on campus, but study after study has provided evidence that students of color from all backgrounds have experienced and encountered racism and various degrees of discrimination by other students or faculty (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). Interestingly, Lopez (2005) found that Latino students attending a highly selective predominantly White university experience very little stress related to minority status upon arriving to campus, but reports increase over the academic year.

Racial microaggressions continue to be a practiced form of racism in U.S. society (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000; Delgado, 1989) and in some ways, pose more of a concern than overt forms of racial domination (Kennedy, 1989).

Racial Microaggressions are described by Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez and Willis (1978) as the “chief vehicle” for proracist behaviors as they are subtle “put-downs” whose cumulative weight creates a never ending burden for its recipients. Racial
microaggressions are expressed in multiple ways ranging from a college professor who ignores the contributions of people of color when selecting class readings to student peers who avoid working on group assignments with a student of color for fear of receiving a poor grade (Solozano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Smith (2007) states that these microaggressions can “range from racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatment, stigmatization, hyper surveillance, and contentious classrooms to personal threats or attacks on one’s well-being” (p. 554).

The invisible nature of racial microaggressions make them difficult for people of color to recognize even as they grapple with the harmful effects (Pierce, 1974) described as mental, emotional, and physical strain that are often exhibited by people of color as various psychophysiological symptoms such as increased illness, tension headaches, jumpiness, chronic pain, elevated blood pressure and pounding heartbeat (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2006), all of which characterize the many forms of racial and cultural stress described earlier. The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) summarized the experiences of diverse college students as follows:

- Needs include a wide variety of specific programs and services;
- Have had powerful and alienating experiences with racism, discrimination, and stereotypic responses;
- Have experienced campus attitudes and behaviors that isolate them;
- Have experienced campuses that socially, physically, or programmatically communicate to them that they do not belong or are not welcome;
• Have experienced a campus culture and value system that may not be consistent with their own background;

• Feel the pressure to be exemplary, a phenomenon that is particularly strong for members of visible minorities whose numbers are small in the institution.

(Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005).

These experiences point not only to overt and covert racism, but the even more complex issue of racial misperceptions. The problem posed by misperceptions is that even when students of color are present on the college campus and active members of the college community, stereotypes and misperceptions frequently pervade in the minds of many faculty, staff, students and administrators and often negatively color the student’s experience. For example, many students of color who attend predominantly White colleges are considered to be affirmative action quotas rather than academically prepared scholars (D’Souza, 1991) even as evidence continues to emerge suggesting most students of color are admitted based on the same criteria and standards as majority students (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998).

Lewis, Chesler and Forman (2001) categorize racial stereotyping into two different strains. The first is described as Academic Stereotyping which is where the previous quota example would fall. It is described as an automatic assumption that a student of color is not as academically prepared for college level courses as their White counterparts. Strain Two, Behavioral Stereotyping, reflects misperceptions regarding expectations of interpersonal behavior and cultural styles (Lewis, Chesler & Forman, 2001). This category is grounded in the assumption that all students of color are experientially expert in
their group minority experience (Lewis, Chesler & Forman, 2001). Common perceptions of Asian American students laude them as the model minority and educationally successful (Hacker, 1992; Nakanishi, 1998) and a study by Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr (2000) supported this in their finding that Asian American students, were more likely than Caucasian students to be burdened by the pressure to conform to racial stereotypes of high academic performance and social behavior expectations of being shy and quiet in order to be accepted by others. This categorization “Asian American” does not reflect the subgroup diversity that is present within the term, resulting in a general disregard of the variations of ethnicity, class, and immigrant statuses represented with the broad term, each of whom live very different lives (Teranishi, 2002). Teranishi also found that while Chinese Americans were more likely to identify as Asian American, Filipino students overall did not identify with this classification. So for Asian Americans, issues of race and education are often ignored due to a false belief that this particular population of students has no need to address this topic (Teranishi, 2002).

**Academic Inequities**

Racial academic inequities continue to persist in higher education. These disparities are not fully explained by variations in individual student differences such as socioeconomic status or skill differences as inequities continue to be evident amongst racial subgroups who share the same class background and skill ability as their White counterparts (Blum, 2004; Kraft, 1991; Steele, 1997). Studies have found that high achieving Native American students were just as likely as their lower achieving White counterparts to struggle academically at predominantly White campuses (Benjamin,
Chambers & Rieterman, 1993). The cultural incongruence (Harris & Kayes, 1996) that often exists between students of color and predominantly White institutions has been cited as a contributor to academic achievement disparities between students of color and White students (Hudson, 2003; Jacobson, Olsen, Rice, Sweetland, & Ralph, 2001). The literature often uses the term academic underachievement when discussing such disparity. Again, the problematic assumption of deficit rears its head as the issue becomes one of individual flaw instead of the impact that years of racist institutions have had on the student of color. Critical Race Theory, one of the theoretical frameworks guiding this research, would challenge us to place the burden onto the institution; therefore, the term academic inequity will be used to describe the phenomena in this study and the focus of the study will be on institutions of higher education. This issue is not a reflection of the students themselves, but a result of the unfortunate outcomes that societal racism has created in the lives of college students of color. The ugly manifestation has not only affected the relational lives of students as they interact with racist systems, but has also affected them internally.

Claude Steele (1997) and others (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002; Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2004; Osborne, 1997; Steele and Aronson, 1995) have pointed to the role that in-group stereotypes and negative perceptions have played in the academic performance of students of color. The very perception that others consider people of color less capable academically has been proven to negatively affect academic performance (Steele, 1997). Claude Steele (1997) has identified a social-psychological threat that arises when an individual is required to perform a task for which a negative stereotype exists for in-group
members. Even when the individual has performed the same task well in the past and has developed an identity around an ability to perform well, the existence of the stereotype threatens performance. Stereotype Threat has been shown to affect members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists (Steele, 1997). What is particularly perplexing about this condition is that the threat is situational and is triggered only by one’s awareness of the stereotype’s existence. This makes it particularly problematic since there is no way to eradicate a negative stereotype. Students of color arrive on college campuses aware of the negative perceptions society has developed about ethnic and racial groups.

More concerning is the detrimental effect Stereotype Threat has on high performing students of color (Steele, 1997). Students who have developed an identity where academic ability is primary, have become what Steele (1997) would call “domain identified”. Students tend to identify with domains within which they can excel (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002). This domain identification promotes high self-esteem and self-confidence and necessitates success within the domain in order to sustain this self-concept (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002). Stereotype Threat, then, has the most impact on those students who have developed an identification as an academic, our best and our brightest or as Steele (1997) would say, the academic vanguard. These are students who have experienced academic success, expect to succeed and have no internalized doubt regarding the group stereotype. Steele and Aronson (1995) examined how the existence of racial stereotypes has interfered with the ability of Black students to achieve high scores on standardized tests. Their work demonstrates how test scores change based on whether or not students are required to indicate race before taking the test.
The experiences described above provide insight into the experiences college students of color are having across the board. The literature cited does not center on one particular racial group, but instead sets the tone for the far reaching impact race has on our campus communities and highlights the broader issues affecting all students of color regardless of which particular racial groups they represent. It is also important to note that there are differences in experiences base on racial group membership that the broader lens may not specifically address and focused study of unique groups can provide better understanding of how the broader descriptions are lived. This literature review does however reflect the commonalities that inform us of how students of color are experiencing our campus communities and is enough to demonstrate the need for interventions such as mentoring to help offset the negative impact of racism which is still alive and well in the 21st century.

Racial Identity Development & Race Salience

In addition to the experiences that appear to be affecting college students of color as a population, each student is also developing an internal identity as they progress through college. When we examine mentoring programs for undergraduate students attending predominantly White institutions, we find the population consists mostly of traditional aged college students. This poses a unique dilemma based on the reality that undergraduate student participants may have less life experience, are at a very early stage in developing their personal and professional identity (Mehlman & Glickauf-Hughes, 1994) and are often
transitions from late adolescence to early adulthood (Jacobi, 1991). This reality challenges mentors to provide guidance and emotionally support student participants (Shore & Anderson, 2008) through this journey of identity development. For the traditional aged college student of color identity development often includes racial identity awareness. Racial identity development is just one component of the student’s journey towards adulthood, but poses very unique experiences especially for students of color in the United States. These experiences can challenge a student’s sense of self and their relationship with others.

Racial identity is defined as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1993, p.3). Researchers began exploring the concept of racial identity development as early as the 1960’s as an extension of Erik Erikson and James Marcia’s adolescent identity research (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Multiple models have emerged that explore the formation of cultural or racial identity and most draw from the seminal work on Black identity developed by William E. Cross, Jr. in 1971 (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Cross, 1971; Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Want, Parham, Baker & Sherman, 2004; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Phagen-Smith, 2002). Cross (1971, 1991, 1995) originally developed a five-stage model or typology describing the identity development of African Americans where transition from non-Afrocentrism to Afrocentrism to multiculturalism signifies healthy racial identity development (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993; Cross 1971, 1991, 1995; Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Want, Parham, Baker & Sherman, 2004). The original theory has
undergone several revisions all of which are based on a psychology of Nigrescence which is a psychology of becoming Black (Cross, 1971, 1995; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The most recent revision is referred to as the Expanded Nigrescence Model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001) and considers emergent findings on Black racial identity (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross & Worrell, 2001). The Expanded Nigrescence Model is applied in this study.

In this model, the original five stages of racial identity development discussed by Cross have been collapsed into four stages within which several identities are described (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Although the representation of stages indicates a linear developmental process, it is often assumed that a person may move through the stages in non-linear ways (Tatum, 1992). Latter stages may present encounters that require the individual to revisit earlier stages and racial identity development is assumed to occur across an individual’s life span (Parham, 1999). The four stages in the expanded model are: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion and Internalization (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Also introduced in Cross’s work is the concept of race salience where the importance of race and the extent to which it is considered a relevant part of one’s self-concept (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith 1998; Vandiver, 2001) is reflected throughout various stages (Cross 1991, 1995) and is captured across two dimensions. Thus, race can be viewed in terms of its degree of importance and its valence or direction (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Race salience can range from low to high in importance and from positive to negative in valence (Vandiver, 2001). Race can be viewed as not important with
a neutral valence or very important with either a positive or negative valence (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002).

The first stage, Pre-Encounter describes a preexisting, non-Afrocentric identity that is most likely going to change (Cross, 1995; Cross, 1995; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). In this stage, the African American individual absorbs the beliefs and values of the dominant group and supports the notion that it is better to be White (Tatum, 2004). There are three identities that make up the Pre-Encounter stage including Assimilation, Miseducation and Self-Hatred (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Individuals with the Assimilation identity do not consider race important to them and have a pro-American orientation (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Race salience is low for this group with a neutral valence because race is not a factor in their concept of self (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross & Worrell, 2001). The Miseducation mindset describes a negative view held by the individual of Blacks in general as a result of Eurocentric educational systems (Cross, 1991). This mindset supports a distorted view that does not consider historical realities. The Self-Hatred identity takes miseducation to an extreme degree and the individual personalizes the negative stereotypes resulting in low self-esteem (Vandiver, 2001). The salience of race is high for these individuals and takes a negative valence.

Cross’ second stage, Encounter describes a period where an event or a series of events occur and challenge the individual to reconsider his or her views on race (Vandiver, 2001). This encounter may cause confusion, alarm or even excitement, but whatever the emotion associated with the episode, the individual makes a personal connection that opens him or her up to new information regarding race (Cross, 1995). As the individual
progresses as a result of events that force a focus on racial identity, the individual begins to experience anger, confusion and feelings of alienation. This journey can be particularly difficult for the African American student who is enrolled in a predominantly White university. The support of a mentor who is racially aware and open to engaging the student in dialogue and activities to facilitate positive growth can be extremely important.

Stage three is called Immersion-Emersion and represents the period of transition where the individual has not yet made a change, but has made the decision to move towards change (Cross, 1995). This in-between stage can create a great deal of anxiety as the individual begins to explore the unknown. Two identities are represented during this stage; 1) Intense Black Involvement, and 2) Anti-White. An individual can exhibit one or both identities. A dualistic worldview often emerges where the individual sees that which is White as problematic and that which is Black as superior (Cross, 1995). The individual will initially immerse himself or herself into the world of Blackness learning everything he can and surrounding himself with Black people and Black culture (Cross, 1995).

This is often a time of inspiration and creativity from which great ideas emerge (Cross 1991). Alongside the inspired and creative energy exists a range of intense and potentially destructive emotions including rage, anxiety, guilt and depression. The intensity of emotion characterizes the immersion component of this stage, while the calming of these emotions describes movement to Emersion. The immersed individual often progresses to Emersion where the romanticized notions and oversimplified ideologies wane and a more advanced state of identity develops (Cross, 1995). The
individual is now able to consider race from a more informed and calmer place that supports personal growth, appreciation of role models and a more serious commitment to Black issues (Cross, 1991).

The fourth and final stage in Cross’s model is called Internalization and centers on Black acceptance where the individual is now comfortable with his or her Blackness (Vandiver, 2001). There are three identities represented in this stage. The Black Nationalist identity describes people whose only salient identity is Black and whose focus is Black empowerment through involvement in political and social activism (Vandiver, 2001). The Biculturalist identity describes those who incorporate two cultural identities as salient and the Multiculturalist identity includes a matrix of three or more cultural frames (Vandiver, 2001). This new identity is internalized and operates to defend and protect the individual from psychological threats that exist from living in a racialized society, as well as provides a sense of belonging and creates a foundation from which to engage with people and situations beyond the world of Blackness (Cross, 1991). The person is calmer and more at ease with self and becomes more open and sophisticated in his or her concept of Blackness (Cross, 1991).

The Cross Expanded Model of racial identity development highlighted in this paper is by no means meant to represent all available theories proposed by racial identity theorists, but is presented as the seminal work informing most theories to reflect the body of knowledge that points us to the internal nuances that take place within an individual and may influence one’s perceptions of race and racism. The Cross model is also appropriate here because this study centers the exploration of race on the mentoring relationships of
African American college students attending predominantly White institutions and Cross’ work not only centers on Black identity development (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995) but the most recent model applies an instrument that was validated on samples of African American college students attending predominantly White universities (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002).

Table 1
Overview of Cross’s Expanded Racial Identity Development Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Pre-Encounter</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Encounter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three identities</td>
<td>Fluid period</td>
<td>An event or series of events trigger new awareness about “Blackness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation</strong></td>
<td>Pro-American, Mainstream</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive or Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Salience – Low, Neutral Valence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miseducation</strong></td>
<td>Blacks are bad people. Belief in Blacks ability to overcome and fit in. Sees no real problems with American society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Salience – High, Negative Valence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Hatred</strong></td>
<td>Blacks are bad, I am bad. Internalizes negative stereotypes. Result of extreme miseducation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Salience – High, Negative Valence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Stage 3 | Immersion-Emersion | |
|---------|-------------------|
| From intense emotion, to calmer engagement with Black issues | |
| **Intense Black Involvement** | Romanticized notions of Blackness. Individuals may don new clothing, language and participate in activities that glorify African heritage | |
| **Anti-White** | Strong opposition to all things White | |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Internalization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolution between the old identity and the new world view. More flexibility, openness and security with new identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internalization-Commitment</strong></td>
<td>Participates in activities that address concerns faced by African Americans and other oppressed populations. Not all individuals reach this stage. Many may level off at stage 4 where there is acceptance of new identity but no involvement in relevant issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By positioning race salience and racial identity development as key factors in the establishing a high quality mentor relationship, we begin to acknowledge that race is actively affecting the lives of college students of color and must be considered as part of the mentor/mentee relationship. It is not assumed that the mentors all have a high level of racial awareness in order to support the student, but it is asserted that the mentor’s willingness to engage in race dialogue and education encourages the type of self-reflection that will enable them to participate more fully in the relationship with their mentee and lead to better outcomes than the mentor who is unwilling to explore issues of race.

*Mentoring College Students of Color*

Since the 1980’s, mentoring has increasingly become a strategy utilized by higher education to support retention and enrich the experiences of undergraduate students (Jacobi, 1991; Terrell & Wright, 1988). The research on mentoring reflects widespread usage of mentoring programs to provide psychosocial and personal or vocational and career guidance (Haring, 1999). Many colleges and universities have implemented mentoring programs as the literature on undergraduate education has begun to substantiate its importance (Bernier, Larose, & Soucy, 2005; Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Robinson Kurpius, & Dixon Rayle, 2006; Jacobi, 1991). Higher education literature has not reached a consensus on its definition, but mentoring is loosely comprised of supervisors, role models, teachers or peers, providing guidance, support, opportunities or advice to a protégé, mentee, peer, or student in the interest of supporting the others’ personal, academic or professional development (Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring has also been defined as
a relationship between a senior person (mentor) and a junior person (mentee) where the senior helps the junior protégé make a successful transition into a new environment or provides psychological and social support (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005; Haring, 1999; Lee, 1999).

With the absence of a widely accepted operational definition of mentoring (Jacobi, 1991) these types of relationships take many forms, all of which have proven effective in various settings (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). Several definitions of mentoring exist within the higher education literature and each contains some unique variations, but all reflect the same theme of facilitation by a more experienced individual to support the success, growth, development or socialization of a less experienced individual (Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, occur as part of a program or one-on-one and exist for a short period of time or endure over the course of a lifetime (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005).

Jacobi (1991) outlines five components for effective mentoring for undergraduate students which include:

1) Relationship is focused on achievement or acquiring knowledge
2) Consists of support, direct assistance, and role modeling
3) Has reciprocal benefits
4) Relationship is personal in nature
5) Mentors should have greater experience, influence, and achievement within the mentoring setting
Jacobi’s work does not focus on the needs of students of color and most studies conducted to examine race and mentoring have focused on the process of matching program participants based on race (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002; Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee; Thomas, 1993). Conversely, even while a mentoring program may target students of color, it has been shown that in most formal mentoring programs, the mentor volunteers are White (Grossman & Tierney, 1988). This may not be a problem since studies have been inconclusive on whether or not same race matches are more effective (Liang & West, 2007), but it does point to the very necessary reality that cultural incongruence may play a role in mentor/mentee relationship and should be addressed in training and ongoing support.

The literature on multicultural competence for counselors can be helpful here. Although mentors are not counselors, there are some similarities in terms of the nature of the relationship with people of color. The 2003 American Psychological Association (APA) Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice and Organizational Change for Psychologists clearly outlines the harm incurred when a counselor adopts a colorblind racial perspective with clients of color. This racial ignorance has been shown to inadvertently affect the therapeutic process and may similarly negatively impact the mentoring relationship. Findings suggest that counselors who adopt high levels of colorblind racial ideology or who do not acknowledge race and racism may be unable to build a strong therapeutic relationship with clients of color, particularly African Americans (APA, 2003).
Mentoring has generally been shown to be valuable to students who find themselves in culturally different environments (Freeman, 1999) especially if they are able to identify with others on a cultural level (Tatum, 1997; Madrid, 2004) and while same-race pairings have been inconclusive in proving more effective in supporting students of color, the importance of cultural or racial affiliations have been shown to be of critical importance to the success of students of color (Villalpando, 1996). This has been found to be true for even the high-achieving students. For Native American college students the opportunity to form networks with other Native American students resulted in more success academically (Anagnopoulos, 2006) and in one particular study the perception of being mentored was the strongest factor supporting Native American student persistence (Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 2001). Villalpando (1996) concluded that “peer groups empower and nourish academic success and foster the development of a critical cultural consciousness by understanding the members’ condition as racialized students within the academy” (Villalpando, 2003, p. 633).

No single person is the perfect mentor who is able to provide everything the mentee needs (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005); in fact the more effective relationships expose both participants to a larger, broader community of support. Networking has proven empowering and enables individuals to develop their own way using the expertise and nurturance of the mentor as well as the connections and shared stories of others (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). The mentoring relationship must include a cultural component that supports the empowerment and support of the unique experience of the college student of color.
The mentor plays a key role in the relationship and retains the primary responsibility for crafting structured activities, social interaction and other strategies so facilitate the growth and support the progress of the mentee (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). High quality mentoring is said to be dynamic, reciprocal, supportive, nurturing, protective and intentional enhancing the retention and advancement of the mentee (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). The mentor is also challenged with helping the mentee set goals and develop skills for success which requires the ability to provide constructive criticism. As stated earlier, stereotype threat poses a real problem in the academic achievement of anyone who is a member of a group for which a negative stereotype exists. Critical feedback may be especially threatening to students of color especially if the mentor is White. The feedback, which is meant to support student success, may be encoded as judging and may negatively impact the student’s self-confidence. The result can be a lack of motivation to succeed and withdrawal of the student’s participation in the relationship (Cohen, Steele & Ross, 1999). Cohen, Steele and Ross (1999) conducted an experiment to examine the impact of stereotype threat on African American students who received criticism from a reviewer who they thought was Caucasian. This study introduced the terms “unbuffered criticism” and “wise criticism”. Unbuffered criticism feeds the notion that the student has been judged in light of a negative stereotype (Cohen, Steele & Ross, 1999). Wise criticism is attentive to stereotypical bias and the student’s academic ability is assumed rather than doubted (Steele, 1997). The outcome of implementing wise criticism is a minimization of the conditions for stereotype threat. Their findings indicate that unbuffered criticism lowered student motivation. The mentor must be able to convey
faith in the student’s intellectual ability, without “dumbing things down” and without expressing inauthentic praise (Cohen, Steele & Ross, 1999).

It is also important that the mentor is able to focus on the needs of the mentee and avoid pushing their own agendas (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Baldwin Grossman, 1988; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). It is not helpful to try to transform the mentee into someone new, but more important to just get to know the student. Keeping in mind the degree of race salience will impact the student’s perception of what feels supportive, the mentor should let the mentee lead the way in determining the direction of the relationship (Morrow & Styles, 1995). Haring (1999) points out that while many participants may hold an amorphous view of mentoring as positive, they may often lack a clear understanding regarding the purpose of the relationship or program. Secondly, the general assumption that the mentee is the recipient of assistance because of some deficit or lack does not sit well for many students of color (Sipe, 1988). In fact, despite all of their good intentions to support student empowerment, this type of situation does not foster mentee agency. Mentoring is important and serious work requiring committed engagement to the mentee. The mentor does a student of color no favors by going against the social realities operating to shape the student’s life. It becomes necessary to consider race as a critical component of the relationship whether it arises as a result of in-depth dialogue and conversation, student advocacy and support, or program involvement and participation. Somewhere in the relationship with the student of color, race needs to matter.
There are 15 functions reflected in the mentoring literature that guide the role of the mentor (Blackwell, 1989; Burke, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1984). These functions are outlined in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Functions Guiding the Role of a Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer acceptance, support and encouragement</th>
<th>Offer protection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide advice and guidance</td>
<td>Act as a role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist in bypassing bureaucracy and helps mentee get access to resources</td>
<td>Enhance mentee social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the mentee and provide opportunities</td>
<td>Assist with socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate value and goal clarification</td>
<td>Provide sponsorship and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as a coach</td>
<td>Stimulates acquisition of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information</td>
<td>Provide training and instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support visibility and exposure</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Regardless of whether the mentoring relationship is formal or informal, it is clear that the role of a mentor is significant and can have great impact on the life of the mentee. It is also clear that the very existence of a mentoring relationship or program does not guarantee its effectiveness. When considering how to support students of color, the literature gives us direction and offers insight to the factors necessary to improve their college experience. Increased efforts to promote college access to more diverse students must be partnered with progressive and sustained support to ensure they successfully complete their degrees (Rendon, 2002). Research suggests that the quality of student interactions with members of the college community impacts their adjustment to college (Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005). Additionally, research on non-traditional student
populations indicates that validating experiences are particularly important to student development (Rendon, 2002).

Rendon (1994) asserts that “Validation is an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and interpersonal development” (Rendon, 1994, p. 44). The literature that describes the experiences of students of color has clearly shown that the predominantly White college campus may not naturally engage validating spaces and may, in fact, operate in opposition to this type of supportive process which is so critical for students of color. Rendon (1994) describes two types of validation with the Theory of Validation. Academic validation takes place when in-and-out-of-class agents take action to assist students to “trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student” (Rendon, 1994, p. 40). Interpersonal validation occurs when these same agents actively support the student’s personal development and social adjustment (Rendon, 1994). If the campus itself is not a space for validation, then it becomes necessary that agents or mentors in this case, take an active role in developing a relationship with their mentee that is validating. Mentoring relationships with college students of color who are attending predominantly White institutions should reflect these validating experiences if they are going to be effective in supporting the student’s success. Both the mentor and the mentee’s personal characteristics affect the effectiveness of the relationship and research indicates that the flexible, accessible, empathetic, respectful, honest and tolerating mentor/teacher have the most impact on students (Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005).
Many mentoring programs often match a college professor with a first year student and aim to minimize the difficulty many students face when transitioning from high school to college (Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005). Studies have shown that these programs improve study skills, motivation, college and personal adjustment for the traditional aged student. Experts assert that the most significant predictor of positive mentoring results is based on whether or not the mentors and the mentees share a close, trusting relationship (MENTOR, 2005). Best practices for developing that type of relationship are embedded in the design of the program, if there is a formal program, as much as in the individual motivation and interest of the participants (MENTOR, 2005). In regards to race, the higher education literature reflects conflicting perspectives in regards to whether or not same-race mentoring relationships are more effective than cross-race relationships (Johnson, 1989; Meznek, McGrath, & Garcia, 1989; Moses, 1989; Oestereichen, 1987; Pounds, 1987; Rowe, 1989). The reality for predominantly White institutions is that there may not be an option to offer same race matching, yet because the leadership and campus community at these campuses are traditionally White, students of color may have less access to informal networks and other sources of support (Jacobi, 1991). Additionally, as stated in the literature review, the experiences of students of color attending predominantly White institutions of higher education are grounded within climates of marginalization and hostility (Jacobi, 1991; Johnson, 1989; Ugbah & Williams, 1989). We need to consider race from a broader scope when considering relationship effectiveness. Representational diversity is only one area to consider, more importantly is how can we support high quality mentoring relationships regardless of mentor race? Similarly, sources of problematic
relationships have been shown to result in dysfunctional mentoring relationships where poor matching, mentor incompetence, mentor neglect and abandonment, relational conflict, boundary violations have sabotaged the relationship effectiveness (Spencer, 2007).

When we consider the components necessary for high quality mentoring (Jacobi, 1991), the problem that exists may not be in the recommended components themselves, but more in how they are interpreted. How does a mentor determine what is reciprocal or appropriately personal for their mentee? What might be unique to the student of color experience that might shape the nature of the relationship? How might race “show up” within these five components and how does the mentor respond? Jacobi’s work can be very helpful in the development of race-centered mentoring approaches, especially if attention to race becomes a primary foundation of the work. Unfortunately, there is no mentoring research that even suggests if and how race is represented within the relationship of the mentor and the mentee. It is from this place that this research launches. It becomes of primary importance to assess how race shows up in the mentoring relationship and examine its effect. This assessment and examination can provide the insight needed to further explore mentor training and preparation, matching strategies, support resources and program design to support more effective mentoring relationships for college students of color. It is the assumption of this researcher, informed by the conceptual framework guiding this study, that race is a component of our everyday experience and plays an important role in our development, cultural beliefs, ability to trust others and environments we seek out for comfort and support. Why wouldn’t it play a role
in the mentoring relationship and why wouldn’t we want to understand how it might shape the lives of students of color? This insight begins to help us better address student needs and develop a better understanding of how to truly support the success of our young people of color who will become the future leaders of our nation.

Barriers to mentoring have been identified as limited resources and poor administration, lack of trust within the relationship and the reputation or image mentoring has within the campus culture (Dunn & Moody, 1995). Of the three barriers cited, there is one that specifically arises from the actual mentoring relationship; trust. Trust has a direct relationship to one of the primary outcomes of high quality mentoring and that is the development of social capital. Social capital refers to an intangible construct where one has access to privileged channels of information and resources as a result of their social relationships (Smith, 2007). Coleman (1990) asserts that individuals can access one another’s skills, knowledge and valuable resources through strong social networks and that social capital is created based on mutual trust and shared expectations of those engaged in an interpersonal relationship (Coleman, 1990). Coleman outlines four components of how social capital created that include the establishment of norms, reinforcement of sanctions, development of close bonds and the transmission of knowledge, skills and resources within social networks (Coleman, 1988, 1990). All four components require some level of trust to be effective. Without trust, social capital is not transferred and the relationship misses a critical opportunity.

There is evidence that students of color carry a sense of distrust towards the predominantly White campus (Willie, 2000) This is of particular concern since student
trust is a foundational element influencing whether a student chooses to attend or graduate from a particular college or university (Ghosh, Whipple & Bryan, 2001). This has been asserted as an influence for all students, how then do we expect students of color who are enrolled at predominantly White institutions to establish trust in the institution given what we already know about their experiences? Trust is most likely not an internally guiding force for the student of color and the PWI, therefore, interventions are needed. Mentorship is such an intervention. These types of relationships can support the development of trust, maybe not in the institution, but in a member of the campus community. This trust acts becomes a vital component to establishing the type of relationship that can effectively support the student’s ability to successfully navigate the college landscape.
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Introduction

The study of race has been approached in multiple ways including racial phenomena comparisons and individual experience analysis (Burkhalter, 2006). Each approach differs significantly but both assume the relevance and omnipresence of race as an important social phenomenon (Burkhalter, 2006). Qualitative research centers on inquiry into the meaning individuals make of a social condition or a human problem and assumes that reality is subjective and determined from multiple realities (Creswell, 2007). The focus is on the socially constructed nature of reality and the “intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). This approach to research situates the researcher in the work and incorporates interpretive practices to help make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This study appropriately aligns with the nature of qualitative research as it explores the phenomena of race. It centers on the lived experiences of students of color who participate in college mentoring relationships in an effort to explore their perceptions and personal encounters with race.
Research Design

This research is a phenomenological study. Phenomenology helps us to ascribe meaning to particular phenomena experienced by individuals (Creswell, 2007). Its goal is to explore individuals experiences with a phenomenon and reduce it to a universal essence (Creswell, 2007) containing a description of what they experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). There are four philosophical perspectives which ground phenomenological research (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990):

1. A return to the traditional tasks of philosophy which incorporates the original Greek conception of philosophy as a search for wisdom.
2. Philosophy without presuppositions which requires the researcher to suspend all judgments about what is real.
3. The intentionality of consciousness which assumes that consciousness is always directed toward an object and the reality of an object is related to our consciousness of that object.
4. Refusal of the subject-object dichotomy which positions the reality of an object within the subject’s or participant’s perception of the object.

Within all four perspectives, there is the notion that the phenomena can only be understood through the interaction between ourselves, our perceptions and our experiences (von Eckartsberg, 1998). Husserl (1964) termed this the notion of intentionality where human knowledge is conceived as “a relational phenomenon wherein consciousness and object together constitute one irreducible totality” (Churchill and Wertz, 2002, p. 249–250).
There are several approaches to phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007). This study uses the philosophical hermeneutic approach of phenomenology which provides a guide for meaning making and interpretation that not only contributes knowledge to the understanding of the phenomena, but also raises new questions (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). The term *hermeneutics* has been used in ancient and modern times to mean ‘interpretation. Other approaches to phenomenology focus less on interpretation and more on descriptions. The researcher is expected to set aside his or her own experiences and consider a fresh perspective to the phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 2007). In this practice, bracketing is often used as a technique for keeping researcher views from influencing analysis. These techniques are valuable in many cases, however; in this particular research study a consideration of essential themes and the researcher’s personal knowledge of the topic provide important insight to the analysis and meaning making. Historically, philosophical hermeneutics emerged out of the shift in perspectives surrounding traditional phenomenology that positions empirical methods in the foundation of phenomenological study. Several theorists challenged these views and posited the need for interpretation where the researcher brings important information to the study through personal experience and knowledge (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011).

This philosophical view embraces an understanding of being-in-the-world where the researcher becomes involved as an agent of the interpretive process (Garza, 2007; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Vandermause & Fleming, 2011) and meanings derived by the researcher exist “only in relation to the attitude and set of the researcher” (Giorgi, 1985, p. 15). From this school of thought arises a consideration of not only the participant lens,
but also that of the researcher where his or her perspective becomes an interpretive frame which brings meaning to light (Garza, 2007). This approach embraces a complexity that is often avoided in research and challenges the researcher to make explicit the filters, biases, or other influences which guide our interpretations (Garza, 2007).

Methodology

This study is shaped by a social constructivist worldview where the research is reliant on the views and perceived experiences of the participants regarding the presence of race and racism in their mentoring relationship. These views are subjective, yet valid and provide insight to the experiential, historical and cultural norms that are present in the lives of perceptions of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Thus, inquiry is inductive as meaning is sought through the patterns and stories that emerge from participant voices (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Newman, 2000; Schwandt, 2001)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was applied earlier as a theoretical framework which helped to shape the research question and situate this particular study within the scholarly literature. Critical Race Theory was also positioned as a methodology since it posits that the voices of people of color provide legitimate knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) and while students of color are holders of this knowledge, their voices and stories often go untold, their experiences devalued, misinterpreted or “omitted within formal educational settings” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 106). CRT was applied as a pervasive interpretive lens that guided research procedure, analysis and presentation (Creswell, 2007). Richards and Morse’s (2007) concept of methodological congruence is applicable here in that all
aspects of the research are interconnected. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define critical race methodology as:

“... a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process; ... (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color.” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24).

Critical Race Methodology is a theoretically grounded approach to research that positions race and racism in all aspects of the research process (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). This approach views the experiences of people of color as a source of strength and posits their unique perspective as a counter narrative. The counter narrative gives voice to the out-group, whose stories circulate within the experiences of those who reside on the margins, but often are not heard by those in power (Delgado, 1989). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert that, “the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. . . .Without authentic voices of people of color it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (p. 58). These voices represent the reality of people of color and must be revealed before any attempt at improving mentoring relationships can take place. The counter narrative challenges the dominant view and instead acts as legitimate knowledge that can be used as a “tool for exposing, analyzing and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Similarly, storytelling has a powerful impact on members of the dominant group. Stories that support and maintain structures of privilege
and oppression inhibit self-examination; however the counter-narrative (the story told by those who reside on the margin) can shake up the unconscious practice of ethnocentrism and contribute towards the racial consciousness of others (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Unique to this particular study is the application of CRT methodology within the framework of hermeneutic phenomenology which positions the voice of the researcher within the narrative. This responds to two important concerns within phenomenological research and CRT methodology which is disclosure of the lens of the researcher and giving voice to those who are often silenced. In this study, the researcher shares not only the race of the participants, but also a similar undergraduate college experience of attendance at a predominantly White institution and participation in a mentoring relationship. The narratives that result provide rich insight into the lived experiences of this unique student population. CRT methodology ensures that the stories that are not often told become a tool for analyzing and challenging dominant stories which continue to be viewed as the norm (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and contends that one must name his or her own reality and that stories provide members of marginalized groups a vehicle for self-preservation as well as a balm that can work to heal the wounds caused by racial oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Unit of Analysis and Participant Selection

The literature review grounding this work reviews the experiences that many college students of color are having in postsecondary education and provides a broad snapshot of the common themes affecting all students of color. However, literature also
suggests that racial groups differ in many ways and that the political and social climate as well as cultural and psychological variations can create a context that makes each racial group’s experience unique (Cross, 1995; Hu & St. John, 2001; Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). In an effort to narrow down the multiple factors affecting differences amongst racial groups and to better align analysis of racial identity development to Cross’s (1971, 1995) theory on Black identity development, the focus of this particular study is on African American students. African American students are cited throughout the literature on college students of color and have been the focus on many strategies for interventions (Booker, 2007; D’augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007; Jay & D’augelli, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Parker, 1998; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

African American people have a unique history of citizenship-property transformed into citizen—(Ladson-Billings, 2004) in the United States and pose an important focal point for examination. Furthermore when considering the literature on culturally sensitive research, the focus on one particular racial group supports the assumption that there exists a shared knowledge and understanding regarding phenomenon (Tillman, 2001). Tillman (2001) also asserts that the “knowledge and experience of African Americans is often subsumed under the category of minorities, people of color, and women and minorities. . . there is a need to consider research frameworks that can help researchers to more fully capture the experiences of African Americans—their struggles as well as their successes” (p.3).

Finally, culturally sensitive research is purported to consider whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret participant responses within the context of the phenomena being studied (Tillman, 2001). As an African American
As the primary unit of analysis is the student mentee, 8 traditional-aged college students who identify as African American or Black and who have been in a mentoring relationship within the last five years (either formal or informal) while in college, were selected for the study. The student mentee is the primary recipient for the benefits incurred in the formation of a mentoring relationship. It is recognized that there is a reciprocal nature to the interaction between the mentor and mentee and that the role of race is not limited to the mentee’s experience (Jacobi, 1991; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Additionally the design of mentoring programs, which may include specific strategies that recognize and/or address race and racism within their approaches as well as the structural nature of race as purported by CRT may be actively operative in the mentoring relationship. While all of these are also important considerations in the study of race and mentoring, they are beyond the scope of this work and will not be the focal point for this particular study. There is also a great deal of information that can be extracted from the views of the mentor, but that, again, is not the purpose of this study. This study instead centers on the stories of the student of color who is engaged in a mentoring relationship in an effort to uncover their perceptions and experiences as the recipient of the mentoring intervention regardless of the intent, perceptions or actions of the mentor.

Consistent with the premise of Critical Race Theory, this study centers knowledge on the student of color whose experience is often never considered (Billings & Tate, 1995;
Delgado, 1989) and assumes that race is embedded in the societal structure that impacts these students’ lives. In this study, the views of the mentee reflect the truth as they know it and that is a critical data point to understand. Very often, perception is reality and our strategies for working with students of color should be determined by the student who is situated to benefit from this experience.

Purposeful sampling was applied to this study. All participants were traditional aged (18 to 24) college students attending a predominantly White university in the Western region of the United States during the mentoring relationship. Two institutions in were selected for recruitment of participants for this study. One is a public land grant institution and the other is a private, urban university. The selection of two schools with very different campus climates provided insight into common themes that might be reflected in the experiences of other African American students regardless of the type of predominantly White institution they attend. The researcher’s goal was to have a balance of participants from each institution. Student participants were involved in formal, informal and supervisory mentoring relationships and although it was not an original requirement, all but one had African American mentors. An attempt was also made to ensure gender balance in the selection of participants.

All participants indicated on a selection questionnaire that they identify as African American or Black. Criteria used to select participants are outlined in Table 3 below.
Table 3

Eligibility Requirements for Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Involved in a mentoring relationship with an administrator, faculty or staff member within the last 5 years</th>
<th>Identify as African American or Black</th>
<th>Traditional-aged student (18-24) at the time of the mentoring relationship</th>
</tr>
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The actual correspondence used to recruit participants is outlined in the Eligibility Requirements for Participants (Appendix A). Of the 8 participants, 7 of them had been in mentoring relationships with faculty or staff and five identified their supervisor as their mentor. Three were involved in formal mentoring programs and one had a mentor who was affiliated with a religious organization in the community. Below Table 4 describes the gender of each participant along with the race and gender of their mentor. Pseudonyms have been applied to each participant to protect their identity.

Table 4

Demographic Breakdown of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mentor Race &amp; Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Alexander</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ty</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were recruited from both campuses in multiple ways including solicitation through formal mentoring programs on campus, multicultural centers and advocacy offices, African American faculty/staff referrals, student organizations and student referrals. Once a referral was made, a formal email invitation along with eligibility requirements was sent to all potential participants (See Appendix A). A questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to those who expressed interest to collect demographic data, learn more about participants and assist with selection. Informed consent provides an opportunity for research participants to understand the purpose of the research being conducted, main features of the research design and become aware of potential risks (Kvale, 2007). An informed consent form was sent along with the questionnaire with instructions for the participant to review it before the first interview (Appendix C). These forms were collected before the first interview began and a signed copy of each consent form is on file with the researcher.

For their participation, all participants were given a $10 gift card to local eating establishment near their campus at the end of their second interview. Participant identities were kept confidential. Faculty, staff and students who referred students for the study were not informed of who actually was selected.

Data Collection

Data was collected through interviewing which provides an opportunity to investigate how the experience of individuals contributes to our understanding of large scale social issues (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). Although many interview techniques are
utilized in qualitative research, Vandermause & Fleming (2011) assert that to support the trustworthiness of the study, the style of interviewing should align with the methodology being used. CRT methodology supports the telling of counter narratives, eliciting a need to apply an interviewing style that encourages story telling. Additionally, this study centers on a particular phenomenon within a unique relationship; race and mentoring, so a standardized open-ended interviewing approach was applied (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This style of interviewing begins with the development of fixed questions asked of all participants in a particular order but the nature of the questions allow for participants to respond freely (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Standardization partnered with open ended questions helps to introduce an issue or area of inquiry to the participant and facilitate follow-up to participant responses (Kvale, 2007). This style is exploratory in nature as it positions race and racial identity at the forefront of the questioning and supports the telling of participant stories. This technique became particularly helpful since each participant expressed varying views of and comfort levels with race and their racial identity. Although every participant was asked a set of similar questions, the additional probing, clarification and conversation was unique to the participant and the interaction of that participant with the interviewer.

Participants are complex. Holloway and Jefferson (2000) assert that researchers should consider participants as psychosocial subjects where psychic influences (unique perspective developed as a result of participant responses and perceptions of life events) and social influences (systems of meaning derived from real events in the external world) are recognized throughout the interview and analysis process. This view challenges the
researcher to consider the intricate process of meaning making and its influence in the interview process. With this in mind, the researcher considers that all participants:

- may not hear the question through the same meaning-frame as that of the interviewer or other interviewees;
- are invested in particular positions in discourses to protect vulnerable aspects of self;
- may not know why they experience or feel things in the way that they do;
- are motivated, largely unconsciously, to disguise the meaning of at least some of their feelings and actions;” (Holloway & Jefferson, p. 26).

The influence of phenomenology was helpful in considering the complexity of participants and helped shape the interviewing process as the interviewer was attentive not only to participant responses to questions, but also to what it means to be in the world for both participants and researcher. The researcher remained open to unexpected or unfamiliar responses and made space for an interactive exchange to manifest (Vandermause, 2008). Often this resulted in dialogue and the emergent narrative became a co-creation between the researcher and the participant (Crist & Tanner, 2003).

The conventional interview has been primarily an avenue to transmit knowledge through a carefully structured conversation while minimizing the potential for bias and error as a result of the interviewer’s ability to keep the process in check (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). This methodology has been criticized as it aligns qualitative research with quantitative epistemology where the participant is presumed to have knowledge that can be obtained by applying a semi-structured technique (Kvale, 2007) and assumes that the interviewer should control the interview (Briggs, 1986). From this viewpoint, the interview is not supposed to be a conversation and the resulting formality of the question-and-answer method tends to suppress respondent stories (Briggs, 1986; Holloway
& Jefferson, 2000; Quinn, 2005). Researcher’s must accept that the participant is “telling it like it is” and is self-aware, transparent and willing and able to disclose information to the interviewer (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). This approach engages a power dynamic that places the researcher in a clear position of authority since the interview structure and questioning is determined without input from the participant (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). The traditional question-and-answer interview approach can be limiting because the interviewer sets the agenda by selecting the theme and topics; by ordering the questions and by wording questions in his or her language. The approach fails to consider the possibility that the interviewer questions may be problematic and that the participant’s response is often shaped by their backgrounds and their interaction with the interviewer (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000).

Establishment of rapport is most important when using this approach. The interviewer must convey an attitude of acceptance and respect that demonstrates the views of the participant are valued (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This style is more systemic and disciplined than many informal, exploratory interviewing approaches because of the predetermined order of questioning, but is still considered interpretive because of the open-ended nature of the questioning. In hermeneutics phenomenology the interpretive process begins immediately as researcher and participant engage with each other (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Gadamer (1975) described an integral interaction between two worlds, perceptions or stances that can include conversing with a person, text or idea which require openness and flexibility. Establishment of rapport early on in the interviewing process helped to minimize participant discomfort and build trust. The
discourse within Critical Race Theory posits the difficulty in acknowledging race and racism in U.S. society. This reality partnered with the view of participants as psychosocial subjects requires a particular focus on the process of interviewing and the development of a process that encourages free-flow responses and minimizes imposition of researcher preferences.

In philosophical hermeneutic interviewing the intent is to capture the nature of the phenomena being investigated and the researcher becomes a facilitator as well as a translator of the meaning that is co-created during the process (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Through the framing of questions and the ensuring dialogue which occurs between the researcher and participant, students often learn more about the phenomenon than they had expected. Furthermore, it is crucial for the researcher to ask questions in a way that draws out the story without leading the participant towards a predetermined answer. A total of ten interview questions were developed for this study based on the scholarly literature and theoretical framework. To support the nature of the hermeneutic interview, questions focused on the participant’s experience (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011) and aimed to generate discussion, encourage reflection and to solicit specific stories that inform the research question.

The first five questions were designed to learn more about the student’s racial identity and the level of salience race has in their life. This series of questions also explores incidents of racism, perceived stereotypes and the operation of race as empowerment. The five questions asked during the first interview are outlined below:
Question #1  How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Question #2  How important is your race to you?

Question #3  How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Question #4  Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Question #5  Can you tell me about anything you’ve read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Specific intent for each question is outlined below:

Question 1 asks the participant to disclose their racial identity. Even though all participants were selected based on their affirmation that they identify as African American or Black, it is evident that many individuals have multiple races in their backgrounds. This question allows us to determine whether or not other racial identities might be influencing the participant. Additionally, participants might associate their race with other cultural factors such as geography, class, gender, etc. The participant’s discussion of racial identity can provide insight into their meaning-frames (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) and instruct the researcher on appropriate categorical references to be used throughout the course of the interview. The race of the student’s mentor was also collected at this time. This study is not designed to fully compare differences between same-race and cross-race mentoring relationships, but emerging themes based on these race pairings were sought and documented during analysis.

Questions 2 and 3 are meant to elicit an understanding of where the participant is developmentally in regards to their race. Racial Identity Development theory offers
suggestions regarding an individual’s priorities based on where they are developmentally. While the purpose of this study is not to formally assess participant identity development, these models can assist the researcher in understanding observed differences amongst participants in terms of their perceptions of their race. Similarly, the participant’s degree of racial salience helped in understanding the degree to which race matters for them socially. Questions 4 and 5 utilize Critical Race Theory’s assumption that race is embedded within our society and structurally impacts the lives of people of color and encourages reflection on a particular experience. Benner (1994) described the ‘critical incident’ approach to questioning where participants are asked about a time when something stands out to them to generate a story about the phenomenon and its meaning to the participant. When questions are framed in this way, a participant will often remember an experience that was profound in some way and one related to deeply influential experiences (Dinkins, 2005). These two questions help elicit the participant’s experience of racism and racist stereotypes. Insight into the participant’s experience with race as a divisive force and/or construct for personal empowerment allowed for the determination of how the student perceives race operating within their own life.

The second interview was scheduled one to two weeks after the first to allow time for transcription and participant review of notes. This break was scheduled intentionally to give the participant time to reflect on the first interview but not so long that insights were forgotten. It also provided space for the researcher to consider additional probing on evidence collected during the first interview. Finally, this second interview inquired more specifically about the mentoring relationship. Participants were emailed transcriptions
from the first interview and given an opportunity to make changes before responding to the following questions during the second interview. Clarifying questions were also sent during this time if necessary. The five questions asked during the second interview are outlined below:

Question # 1  Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Question # 2  Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Question #3  What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Question #4  Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

Question #5  Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?

Question 1 encouraged the participant to add to or clarify anything that was said during the first interview. Question 2 is the point of focus for this study. It explores, from the student perspective, whether or not race is present within their mentoring relationship and how the student feels if race is absent. Responses to this question were cross referenced with responses to the first set of interview questions to help interrogate unique differences, patterns, and themes based on participants expressed racial salience. Question 3 asks the participants to assess their mentor’s comfort with race and Question 4 helps to uncover the student’s motivation regarding the mentoring relationship. The question helped determine if the student has an expectation that race be present within the relationship. Question 5 probes into the role the mentoring relationship has played in
nurturing the student’s racial identity. Interview questions were piloted with a current student who met all of the criteria for the study and questions were modified based on the student input during the pilot.

The researcher maintained an observation log where descriptive notes and personal reflections were captured immediately following each interview (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). These notes, which were handwritten, outlined specific observations of the interview including participant behavior, communication style, attire, concerns and interests. Also included were personal reactions, feelings, mood, likes and dislikes of the interviewer. These notes were included during analysis to assist with interpretation and were key components of the narratives created during reporting of the findings. Textual analysis of the interview process is considered a useful activity because observations of the interviewer can help with interpretation (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011).

All interviews were transcribed by the primary researcher. Bird (2005) asserts that the transcriber becomes the channel for the participant voice which contains more than words but also social context and embedded and intended meaning. Transcription then becomes an interpretive act and researchers must wrestle with how their work truly represents the experience of participants (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). With this in mind, the researcher for this study reviewed all transcription while re-listening to tape recorded interviews to ensure the participant experience was authenticated as much as possible. It has also been stated that analysis begins during transcription (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999) and that transcription is an integral part of the process of qualitative analysis (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Although transcriptions can never truly replicate all of the details of the
recorded interview and are “always and necessarily selective” (Bird, 2005, p. 230), an effort was made to transcribe verbatim, with annotations to maintain the original oral style used by the research participant (Kvale, 2007) although most of the “ummms”, “likes” and incomplete thoughts were eliminated except for those that added flavor or meaning to the participant’s responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). All identifying information such as employer name, organizational affiliations, hometown and mentor names that was shared by participants was removed during this part of the process in an effort to protect the identities of participants. Transcription data is located in Appendix F. All participants were invited to choose their own pseudonym, although the primary researcher selected pseudonyms for any participant who did not provide their own.

Participants received transcription of 1st interview before second interview took place and the second interview transcription was sent after both interviews had been completed. Participants were instructed to review the transcription to ensure it was accurate according to their recall of the conversation. Participants were also invited to submit any changes or clarifications to the interviewer. Changes and clarifications were made without question by the interviewer. Two participants submitted changes or clarifications. One corrected the name of an institution mentioned in the interview and the second cleaned up terminology and completed sentence fragments.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed through a series of steps that helped organize, categorize and prepare the data to be examined for meaning. The original research question led the researcher to apply Critical Race Theory as the primary lens used to examine the presence
of race in the mentoring relationships and the application of Racial Identity Development theory provided a deeper level of understanding to help shape the analysis. Furthermore the research design of hermeneutic phenomenology set the tone for how interpretation occurred keeping the participant responses and interviewer observations at the forefront of analysis (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). Holloway and Jefferson (2000) assert that theories must not only address the status of meaning made by participants, but must also consider the uniqueness of the individuals. Therefore, attributions regarding race and racism were intentionally sought out within the participant responses, but emergent themes were also considered. Participants’ expressed view of themselves, their racial identity and perceptions of racialized experiences helped shape the analysis and allow insight into how these critical variables uniquely ground the participant’s stories. Themes such as racial discrimination, colorblindness, microaggressions, stereotype threat, racialized academic differences, unwelcome campus climate provided structure in uncovering evidence of the systemic, institutionalized presence of race as asserted by CRT.

**Coding**

Coding is a creative process which involves the categorization of text through constant reflection on the original research questions, observation material and conceptual frame (Peters & Wester, 2007). Coding is a form of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which guides how the researcher differentiates, combines and reflects upon the data. The process organizes and labels data so that meaning can be made. Two cycles of coding were conducted to uncover themes and patterns associated with the research question in
this study. First Cycle Coding is a simple and direct process by which data is initially segmented. Second Cycle methods typically advance coding to higher level analysis such as classifying, prioritizing, synthesizing, or conceptualizing (Saldana, 2009).

First Cycle Coding/Organizing Raw Data

In the First Cycle coding process a Structural Coding method was applied. Structural Coding is recommended when the goal of analysis is to directly answer research questions based on existing theory (Saldana, 2009). This coding technique indexes and labels data by applying a conceptual phrase to a specific set of data derived from the participant responses to the interview question (MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Bartholow, & Milstein, 2008). The conceptual phrase represents the topic of inquiry. The segments are then collected together within each conceptual phrase for more detailed analysis (Saldana, 2009). Since this study centers on the presence of race within the mentoring relationship, five conceptual phrases were predetermined based on key elements discussed within the literature review. Experiences of college students of color, race salience and racial identity development and mentoring college students of color were the primary focus of the literature review to help set the foundation for examining the research question. The five conceptual phrases created to organize the data during this process of analysis are listed below:

1. Introduction – Introduces the participant and provides background information about the participant

2. My Racial Identity and its Importance – Points to how each participant identifies racially and informs on how salient racial identity is for each participant.
3. Experiences of Race & Racism – Tells stories of how race has been lived and provides insight to how the participant has been influenced in terms of race and uncovers racial stereotypes that are either consciously or unconsciously exist for the participant.

4. What does it mean to be African American? – Additional information on racial stereotypes, external and cultural influences on perceptions.

5. Me and My Mentor – Describes the mentoring relationship from the student point of view.

6. Other – For all data that does not fit into predetermined conceptual categories.

The additional category termed “other” was created for all data that did not fall within the five pre-determined conceptual phrases. The use of Structural Coding organizes the data into a format that allows for easier analysis because the interview text for each participant is grouped similarly and common themes can be easily located for further coding and analysis. The transcribed interview remained intact during this process. None of the transcription was changed, but segments were moved into the appropriate conceptual phrases. At times the data could easily fit into more than one of the conceptual areas. When this occurred the researcher made the determination as to where the data would be placed based on the most salient points of the participant comments. Additionally, all interviewer questions and commentary were removed except for the places where the interviewer question provides explanation to the participant response. In these cases the interviewer question is reframed as an introduction to the participant response. See example below:
Interview Question:

How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Participant Response:

(Long pause). Hmm. . .I don’t know. I never. . .really. . . been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really.

Coding Result after Structural Coding Process:

I don’t know how my racial identity is supported or nurtured in my life. (Long pause). Hmm. . .I don’t know. I never. . .really. . . been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really.

The full results of this process of analysis are documented in Appendix H. Appendix G reflects the entire coding process utilized during the First Cycle Coding Process. No actual interpretations were made during this phase of analysis.

Second Cycle Coding/Applying the Literature

Once the data was coded through the First Cycle Coding process, the Second Cycle Coding process was implemented. This cycle is more advanced and allows for the reorganizing and reanalyzing of the data that has been coded through First Cycle processes (Saldana, 2009). The primary goal of this cycle is to reorganize the conceptual phrases into smaller categories, themes or concepts (Saldana, 2009). Now that each interview has been initially coded and grouped into conceptual categories, the next step in analysis was to look for salient patterns within the data that help answer the research question. Focused Coding was applied as a way to search for meaning within the data. Within each conceptual
category provisional codes were developed based on the literature review and theoretical framework. These codes point to the presence of race as discussed in the literature through experiences of college students of color, evidence of race salience and race identity and the student’s expressed need for race to be nurtured in their lives all which were represented in the interview questions asked of each participant. The participant’s description of their relationship with their mentor was included in multiple areas during this process and acted to support student stories of racialized experiences, need for racial support and nurturance and racial identity. Below is the coding guide developed for data analysis during Second Cycle coding with corresponding interview questions:

Table 5
Coding Guide for Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories of Race in College Experience</th>
<th>Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity</th>
<th>Expressed Need for Race Nurturance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(SL) Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence</td>
<td>(RP) Racial Identity is primary</td>
<td>(NI) Information Gathering; Desire to learn more about race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SC) Unwelcome Campus Climates &amp; Cultural Stress</td>
<td>(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity</td>
<td>(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SR) Overt &amp; Covert Racism &amp; Racial Misperceptions</td>
<td>(RA) Racial identity does not play a major role in identity, absent</td>
<td>(NM) Race Activist; Desires involvement in race equity and social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SA) Academic Inequities</td>
<td>(RO) Open</td>
<td>(NA) Race Avoidant; discomfort when topic of race comes up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NN) No expressed interest in race nurturance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SO) Open</td>
<td>(NO) Open</td>
<td>(NO) Open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data coded during the First Cycle coding process was examined multiple times to uncover evidence of race and extract meaning from the participant responses. Detailed results of Second Cycle coding can be found in Appendix J. Below is one example of how data from First Cycle coding was coded in the Second Cycle:

**Structural Coding Results for Angie: My Racial Identity and its Importance**

How important is my race to me? Ummm… oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more
about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not.

Below is the same text coded during Second Cycle Coding:

**Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity**

(RP) Racial Identity is primary

How important is my race to me? Ummm… oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not.

During this stage of analysis data was also analyzed to determine an assumed stage of racial identity for each participant based on Cross’s Nigrescence theory (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995). The focus of this study was not to quantitatively measure racial identity, but to rely on the reports from participants as they described the importance of race in their lives (Narváez, Meyer, Kertzner, Ouellette & Gordon, 2009; Hill & Thomas, 2000). Cross originally developed a Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) in 1971 to measure racial identity and revised the scale in 2001 (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The new scale is called the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) and reflects more contemporary research on Nigrescence theory (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). As a newer scale there is still work to be done on validation, but preliminary evidence suggests the CRIS is a strong
measure of Cross’s theory (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Although a scale was not applied in this study it is still helpful to consider racial identity development of participants. Keeping in mind that racial identity is considered to operate over the course of a person’s life, an assessment was made of each participant’s racial identity stage based only on their responses to the interview questions and is not intended to quantify racial identity through measurement or over the course of the lifespan. Table 5 outlines assumed racial identity stages for each participant.

Table 6:
Assumed Race Identity Stages of Participants According to Cross’s Expanded Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Encounter</th>
<th>Encounter</th>
<th>Immersion-Emersion</th>
<th>Internalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>Intense Black Involvement</td>
<td>Black Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Participants</td>
<td>Ty</td>
<td>No Participants</td>
<td>No Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miseducation</td>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>Anti-White</td>
<td>Biculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy Ryan-Alexander Robert Cree</td>
<td>No Participants</td>
<td>No Participants</td>
<td>No Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Hatred</td>
<td>Brooke</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>Angie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once Second Cycle Coding was completed, data was read and reviewed multiple times to determine emergent themes. As the data was reviewed, notes were made highlighting patterns based on student experiences and perceptions. The patterns that emerged were compared across participants to see which showed up across all or most cases. Patterns appearing amongst all or most of the participant responses were highlighted as important and compared to the literature on race and student of color.
experiences to help in analysis. Patterns not reflected in any or most of the participant responses were considered, but not included in the analysis. Comparisons were then made to the stages of identity development described by Cross (Vandiver & Cross, 2001) to help provide more insight into the expressed perceptions and needs for race nurturance by students. Once these comparisons were made, three themes emerged and the process for creating narratives began.

Analysis & Interpretation/Creating the Counter-Narrative

CRT methodology is applied in this study through the creation of counter narratives. In narrative methodology there is a re-storying that takes place where the researcher shapes the data into a chronology (Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007). The re-story usually contains elements similar to a novel where there is an order of sequence, a conflict/struggle or predicament and a point where the conflict is resolved (Carter, 1993). Dibley (2011) reminds us that the process of analyzing narrative data is not straightforward given the approach to data collection, highly emotive or personal issues and the disjointed nature of storytelling. This complexity requires the researcher to clearly demonstrate the research trail (Chan, 2005) and apply methodology that fit the design of the study (Maggs-Rapport, 2001; Koch, 2006).

Methods for conducting narrative analysis are still developing. Researchers have presented several initial models for analysis that range from explicit description to classification schemas (Cortazzi, 1993; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). Holistic-content is a narrative approach that emerged out of the classification schema
designed to organize narrative analysis (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Holistic-content analysis’s central feature includes a process of “restorying”. This process requires a review of the interview transcript, analyzing the story and then retelling the story (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Several stages exist in the development of narratives in research. Data is initially collected and then carefully shaped before actual analysis (Pepper & Wildy, 2009). To create the narrative field text is first “shaped” which is a process to organize and describe factual information (Pepper & Wildy, 2009). Since narrative methodology is a research form of storytelling, the broader conceptual groupings resulting from First and Second Cycle coding, begin to tell a story. The coded data from each participant interview was transformed through a re-storying process to provide insight and understanding through a chronological view that helps the researcher consider the order of sequence. When comparing the actual transcription to the retold story, the reader can extract the actual words of the participant, but the narrative reads more like a story than an interview.

Narratives are socially performative practices, told in connection to a specific context and written to achieve a particular purpose (Stanley & Temple, 2008). This purpose allows the reader to follow a story, understand a particular experience and consider the uniqueness of a phenomenon. At this point notes from interviewer observation logs are integrated and become key component of interpretation. The counter-narrative emerges as a story that reflects the dynamic and unique interaction between the interviewer and the participant as the meaning of race, racial identity and mentoring are discussed. This dynamic dialogue that undergirds meaning making is the essence of hermeneutic
phenomenology (Garza, 2007). We begin to see the character, location, tensions and resolutions that would be told through narrative. The Three-Dimensional Space Approach was applied as a coding guide during analysis. This approach was influenced by Dewey’s philosophy of experience which asserts that in order to understand people researchers must examine personal as well as social experiences (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), continuity which uncovers what is learned about these experiences and what leads to new experiences and context which is the place where these interactions occur. Out of Dewey’s philosophy Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed the Three-Dimensional Space approach which can be applied to field text analysis in narrative research. There are three aspects of this approach as discussed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000):

1. Interaction

Involves both personal and social aspects of the participant story. Transcript is analyzed for personal experiences of the storyteller as well as stories of their interactions with others. Personal aspects include a look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. Social aspects represent conditions in the environment intentions, purposes and points of view of others.

2. Continuity

Considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences.

3. Situation or Place

Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.
This approach helps prepare the data for narrative inquiry since narrative research is a telling an individual’s story through a chronological reconstruction that contains elements similar to a novel (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Narratives have a beginning, middle and an end and involve a conflict or tension, character and conflict resolution. This approach plots the data in a manner that supports the necessary format for storytelling.

Application of the Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure for each participant is available in the Appendix J. Observation notes made immediately following each interview provided description and personal reactions of the interviewer provide background and insight into interpretation. An example one participant’s data applied to the Three Dimensional Space Narrative has been provided in Table 6 below:

**Table 7**

Application of Ty’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
<th>Involves both personal and social aspects of the participant story. Transcript is analyzed for personal experiences of the storyteller as well as stories of their interactions with others. Personal aspects include a look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. Social aspects represent conditions in the environment intentions, purposes and points of view of others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Personal/Social | *I think for me, I never really experience (racism) directly because I have the privilege of having light skin so people don’t really necessarily know what I identify as and I’ve really been able to pass off for White when I wanted to.*  
*My African American heritage has not really been a part of my life in the past. My father is African American and he wasn’t in my life so there was no one to really foster that history or to teach me other than what I got in school. So (my mentor) has taught me a lot. I just learn a lot like just from her talking to me. . . I think my race is really important sometimes. Especially like on campus. I don’t feel like I fit in on campus so I feel like it’s more important to me at school but like when I’m with my family and stuff, race isn’t an issue. I don’t have to think about it because that’s my family and I don’t really identify with them on that level. So I guess it’s more of an issue when I’m around people who identify heavily as something else other than I do. I think I’m more aware of it at school because I know that I’m not White. I think it’s just being different and having a different viewpoint and having different experiences is what makes it more important here. When it comes to my family I’ve noticed that race has become more important since I’ve been in college. When I went home to help my grandmother move a couple of weeks ago...* |
she started complaining to the effect of like, “oh, ok well I’ll just nigger-rig it”. And I was like. . .I guess before college I never would have thought about it or it never would have been a big deal. But when she said it, I was like “What?!” Are you kidding me? I told her that she shouldn’t say that and I even like offered an alternative. Like you can say “Jerry-rig”. Why do you have to say that? You know why does it have to be that? And I tried to like explain it to her and I can just see little things like that. . .that they’ve always done but like now I’m more aware. Since I’ve come here I’ve learned about things like that and the aggressions against people. I think she just kind of like brushed it off like, she didn’t really. . .cause my grandmother’s like the type, she’s very traditional so like you’re disrespectful, you shouldn’t say to her like. . .I’m like, I still say what I have to say but that’s how I felt, but I think she kind of like just brushed it off, but we’ll see if she does is again around me. Maybe it’ll least get her to think about it.(RM)

I work at an office on my campus where multiculturalism is the focus and working there really nurtures both sides of my racial identity. Just being there with the staff and getting to participate in the events and things like that. It’s really wholesome for me to be there.(NC)

My current mentor identifies as African American and I’ve been working with her for three years. Race is an important part of our relationship, but in a more positive way just because of who she is. I think race is very important in her life just because that’s the kind of work that she’s in and dealing with those issues and things like that. I think it’s very important to her just because she takes pride in being African American and so that’s why I think race is very salient and she takes pride in being successful and a positive influence and being an African American person. Because sometimes I think that people think we don’t exist and so I think she takes pride and it is very important to her.

I told my mentor about the confrontation with my grandmother. I always tell her that I can just see the dynamic changing in my family. Somebody told me a story about how their family felt a certain way about them and I asked her (mentor), “I wonder if my family feels oh like that I think I’m better than them. I wonder if my family feels that that way cause I’m in college. She’s like, “maybe. Maybe they do because they don’t understand the significance of it. (SP)

I would say this relationship out of a lot of the ones that I have with a lot of administrators here has been probably the most positive and what’s kept me at this school because I struggled with that whole. . .do I fit in here? So I really thought about leaving, transferring. She’s the one who was able to talk me out of it. And now that I’m here and in my senior year I’m really glad that I stayed because I might have regretted. . .I don’t know. . .if I’d known what I have gained since then I would have regretted it but I don’t know what would have happened if I would have left either. I really think it’s important for everybody to find somebody. . .if they don’t have it at home. . .or just find somebody who can help them cause I don’t know if I would have made it if I didn’t have the support of her them here, this office. I look up to her and I respect her. . .she’s really positive.(SC)

I know I can always go to her if I have a question or if I think that I’m doing. . .I always like, go to her if I think I’m doing something that might be offensive to other people or to other students of color. One thing that I really struggled with especially in my freshman year was just kind of fitting in because I never really. . .especially racially I never really chose. . .like be White. . .and I feel like with the White people they feel like I’m not White enough and then with Black people I’m not really Black enough and so that was something that I was really struggling with. I stopped going to Black student club
meetings because my friends. . . I guess sometimes, we’re loud, like I know that, that’s just how we are you know, and so I think that was just playing into a stereotype of like, when you’re with your friends, you’re just like amped up and you’re excited and so a lot of the times I found myself being. . .around the Black people being called “ghetto” and stuff and so that was really different for me and being like you know, now I’m too Black. My mentor just really helped me work through that, like my biracial identity and understanding when I need to like…when I’m in different environments, how it’s going to come in to play and stuff like that. Just really helped me work through that. That was something that I struggled with my freshman year and my sophomore year. Just really trying to figure that out.(NC)

**Observation Notes**

*Descriptive Notes: Pleasant, round freckled face, light complexion, short, fine, curly hair. Dressed kind of preppy. Series of events? Described several situations that have caused him to think about race in new ways.*

*Personal Reactions: Very comfortable with him. Feels like I’ve known him a long time. I think he’s gay. He’s so colorful, feminine, and a bit flamboyant. I like him and enjoyed talking with him. I sense that thinking about race is new to him.*

**CONTINUITY**

This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

**Past**

*One time here at school my friend who is visibly African American. . .she has dark skin, got called a nigger and it really impacted me personally because I identify as Black too, just because they weren’t saying it to me. . .it really hurt her too, but I think it hurt me just as much even though it wasn’t directed towards me. It was an argument between her and a friend, or somebody I don’t even know who it was. And it got really heated and then they started exchanging words and then that happened and it was just like. . .I think it caught everybody off guard really. You could tell that people notice when somebody says something like that. You know, it was kind of like in a movie you know when everybody stops, it’s like, you know. Yeah, it was crazy, it was just crazy. This kind of thing never happens to me so I was really shocked to even hear somebody say it, you know, I never experience it and never deal with it. . .just to hear somebody be so cruel. Because it is cruel for somebody to say something like that. My friend and I processed it after, but like what do you do? I think I was shocked about it and she was more verbally mad about it and was just kind of like venting like she couldn’t believe it and stuff like that.* (SC)

**Present**

*I can’t really think of other places in my life where my racial identity is nurtured. Maybe at home with my roommate because we’re really good friends. Me and her talk about racial issues and stuff that we experience. And even sometimes with my younger sister, but not really with my mom or anybody. I guess they worked so hard to assimilate that so it’s not important to them to be cultural I guess. So we’re not really cultural in my family. We just celebrate the American holidays and there’s no culture really, so I don’t get it at home. But I think just with my sister and people closer to my age especially outside of them is where I think I get that cultural piece that I can foster.* (RM)

**Observation Notes**

*Descriptive Notes: Race is important to him, but just learning about it. Bi-racial, Black and Spanish. Not learned from family. Described racist comments from Spanish family member about Blacks. Some problems being accepted by other Blacks. Some might be class related. Second Interview: Loves his mentor. Seems like she has been extremely helpful in his race consciousness. Also very supportive. Almost left the university. Mentor helped him decide to stay. Active on campus. Very chatty and social, energized by what he is learning.*
Future

It is important to me that my mentor is someone who I can share my racial experiences with. For me I think it’s really important especially for students of color to get that. Just because it’s hard to be a person of color in a “white-collar” community. This college is very much that. It’s really a white-collar community and so, it’s a factor and having that person to talk about it with has been really important and really influential for me and just helping me have a positive experiences and talk about it and just understand the differences that happen in the professional world and how much harder people feel that have to work just in general. So just really being able to identify that and talk about that is a really important piece for me in my mentorship. And so that’s a reason why I enjoy working with her so much because I get that and I learn so much about it every day from her. (NC)

Observation Notes:
Personal Reactions: I feel like he is going to do well because of the support he has and his attitude.

SITUATION/PLACE
Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.

For African Americans, I kind of feel like it seems like you can’t be successful unless you’re popular or like you’re in entertainment or something. I think that’s like a really big perception. I guess it doesn’t really get glorified like the other things that people are doing. . .well I guess now with like Obama…but he’s popular, like he’s famous. He’s still kind of like an entertainment figure I guess. (General)

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes: Met him at the cultural office where he works. He was talking to a staff member. Talked for a while before coming in for interview.

Trustworthiness of Study

This qualitative research study serves to provide insight into the experiences and personal perceptions of African American college students attending predominantly White colleges and universities. It is intended to help us understand more about race and its impact and meaning on the lives of a particular group of students. While pure objective reality cannot not be captured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), there are methods that may be applied in qualitative research to help ensure rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Trustworthiness is a term used in qualitative research that measures the credibility of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and considers three primary standards (Rossman & Rallis, 2012):
1) Competency of the study

2) Ethical research practices

3) Political sensitivity

Ethical practice and political sensitivity matters have been addressed through the earlier disclosure of methods which describe treatment of participants and choice of methodology, therefore competency is the focus for this section.

*Competency*

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are all criteria that help demonstrate competency and establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative study and have been offered as terms that align well with the naturalistic nature of qualitative research. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 from Creswell). Credibility, in qualitative research is centered on whether the description provided fits the explanation (Janesick, 2001). This criterion challenges the researcher to utilize methods to ensure that portrayals of constructed realities are accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 2006). Multiple interviews with each participant supports this study’s credibility because it provides participants an opportunity to get-to-know the researcher more fully than with a one-shot interview and provide opportunity for reflection (Seidman, 2006). Additionally, multiple participants allow for the opportunity to more broadly consider and connect participant experiences (Seidman, 2006). Member checking was employed to confirm transcription accuracy, giving each participant an opportunity to review the raw data before analysis (O’Neil Green, 2007). After each interview, participants were emailed a copy of the transcript and asked to review and make changes. All changes requested by participants were accepted and replaced in the
original transcription. There was no formal participant review of the interpretation, however, participants were invited to review the final analysis of this research study and asked to contribute their observations and reflections to the analysis.

“One strength of qualitative research is its ability to illuminate the particulars of human experience in the context of a common phenomenon.” (Ayres, Kavanaugh & Knafl, 2003, p. 871). In qualitative research generalizability is replaced by the provision of a “compelling evocation of an individual’s experience” (Seidman, 2006, p.51). Instead of attempting to generalize findings of a sample to an entire population, qualitative researchers are concerned with transferability or helping to find connections (Seidman, 2006). These connections link people who are both similar and different to the study participants to a common social force that supports the identification of patterns that help in our overall understanding of our society and ourselves. Secondly, qualitative studies provide the possibility for readers to make personal connections that assist in better understanding complexities of social and structural forces (Seidman, 2006). Each interview was subjected to close scrutiny and compared to all others in an effort to determine similarities and differences and thematic categorization (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). For transferability to be present, thick description is encouraged so that readers can assess the appropriateness of comparing the study to their own settings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Observation notes documented unique characteristics, behaviors and mannerisms of each participant along with researcher reactions and permit appropriate comparisons
Observation notes are used to record the results of the researcher’s reflection process and can contain a variety of information including definitions or description of codes, concepts and relevant terms used; descriptions of the units in the analysis, research notes and descriptions of the development of the theoretical frame (Peters & Wester, 2007). The creation of the counter narrative provides a context for thick description. And finally, the theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory, which guides the study, enhances transferability in that tenets are outlined that guide analysis and be applied to other settings.

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the stability of the researcher’s skills in data collection which for this particular study entails observing, interviewing and recording (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some markers that support the dependability of researcher-as-instrument include:

- Some familiarity with the phenomena and setting
- Strong conceptual interests
- Multidisciplinary approach
- Good investigative skills

The researcher conducting the interviews is an African American scholar who attended a predominantly White institution as a traditional aged college student and had several mentors during her undergraduate years. This experience helped in supporting the researcher’s familiarity with the setting and phenomena studied in this research. At the same time, because I am an African American researcher I was aware during the interviews that some participants might not want to say things that they perceive I would consider
negative. As a researcher I cannot fully control for this, but was careful during interviewing to remind students that there were no right or wrong responses. Many of the interview questions were designed to have participants provide specific examples of experiences. This can help limit imagined or created descriptions of behavior (Dinkins, 2005). I also probed when participant responses didn’t seem to be supported with examples and used positive body language to show support of whatever the participant said. is African American. Additionally, all interviews tape recorded during each session to ensure participant stories were accurately captured. Interview questions were standardized and interviews were transcribed verbatim with all identifying information removed. The application of Critical Race Theory, a sociological lens that considers societal structure paired with race salience, racial identity theory and literature on the college experiences of African American students allowed for the multidisciplinary marker that supports increased dependability and created the necessary platform to balance the participant’s personal perceptions with larger, structural operative forces.

Confirmability challenges the researcher to recognize personal biases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both dependability and confirmability can be confirmed through audit of the research process (Creswell, 2007). Many of the methods used to ensure dependability can also be applied in strengthening confirmability. Peer debriefing was employed through presentation of findings at the 2012 Association of College Personnel Administrators (ACPA) national conference where doctoral students and faculty who were not directly involved in the data collection or analysis reviewed the research and consulted with the researcher (Orcher, 2005).
While qualitative researchers are more tolerant of subjectivity that those who conduct quantitative studies, there is still a need to manage subjectivity so that results reflect participant experiences as authentically as possible (Orcher, 2005). All researchers approach their work with some orienting ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and self-disclosure should be included within our work. The process of coding and analysis is influenced by the researcher’s lens and filters (Saldana, 2009). Regardless of the method of analysis applied, the researcher’s level of involvement in data collection, types of questions selected, personal experiences and demographic characteristics of both the researcher and the participants reflects the values and judgments of the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Kvale, 1995; Merriam, 1998). In hermeneutics phenomenology the interaction between the interviewer and the participant becomes a dynamic force that helps with interpretation (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011).

Role of Researcher

As the researcher and primary interviewer in this study, my presence as an African American positions me as an in-group racial member of the people I am studying. Additionally, my own personal experience is reflected within the topic chosen for study. As a researcher, the mentoring of students of color at predominantly White institutions is near and dear to my heart. I attended a predominantly White university and acquired several mentors along the way. My mentoring experience was highly valuable and was grounded within an advocacy office which provided services and support to African American students. It is important that I outline my personal experience here so that my
judgments and biases are transparent to the reader. This researcher is of the opinion that race is a critical element in high quality mentoring of students of color and is represented by experiences of discrimination as well as those of empowerment and identity development. This opinion was formed by the personal demographics and experiences of the researcher and is exhibited in the following personal narrative:

**Personal Narrative**

As a high school student, I had never considered college; it had never crossed my mind. Neither of my parents have a college degree and my oldest brother, who had graduated one year before me, never talked of going to college. As the only Black member of a primarily White pom pom squad I remember listening to the other girls describe how they were visiting college campuses with their parents and making decisions about where to go. There was so much attention on this topic, it became clear to me I needed to look into this. I went to my counselor, who was a kind man, but never very helpful. I told him I wanted to go to college and without any conversation; he gave me an application to Colorado State University and the University of Southern Colorado in Pueblo. I filled out both applications and was accepted to both schools. I chose Colorado State because we had attended a cheerleading camp there over the summer and it felt familiar. I did not consider what it would feel like to attend a predominantly White institution and received no information regarding other, more diverse options.

During my first week of classes, I was contacted by another Black student who introduced himself as my peer mentor. I had not signed up for a mentor, but I learned that the Office of Black Student Services had assigned an upperclassman to every first year
Black student. My mentor helped me navigate the campus and encouraged me to become active in student organizations. I was off to a terrific start. Unfortunately, I had registered for my classes without any advising and enrolled in a junior level 20th Century Fiction class. Needless to say, I failed the class, lost my Sachs scholarship and had to leave school. Before leaving the campus I met with the Director of Black Student Services. She was stern but caring and outlined a plan that would support my return to school. The director was committed to each of us and worked diligently to develop programs and resources to support and guide our college success. I followed her plan and was able to return to school the following fall, this time having received academic advising and financial aid.

The Office of Black Student Services became my home away from home. In a sea of 20,000 plus students, less than 300 of us were African American, but we were sheltered from the storm per se, as the director created a space where we felt safe and confirmed. We were mentored and developed as leaders and expected to do the same for those who came after us. Race was very much a part of our relationships. We were educated about America’s racial history. The Office of Black Student Services had an extensive library. We participated in panels and workshops focusing on issues of racism, interracial dating and policy matters. We were a proud community, a force.

I know that the Office of Black Student Services and that very committed director made it possible for me to complete my bachelor and later my master degree. In the midst of the racist climate of our university, race, for us, became empowerment. It is through this lens that I, as a researcher approach this study. The higher education literature that positions the student of color experience as troubled is also complemented by the work of
scholars who offer insight and suggestions to the types of interventions and programs that have proven successful in supporting college students of color (Anagnostopoulos, 2006; Madrid, 2004; Tatum, 1997). This work can also be applied to the mentoring relationship if the interaction acknowledges race. My personal experience taught me that trustworthy relationships could help offset the isolation of living in a predominantly White college space, provide me with needed advocacy as well as support the positive development of my racial identity. This was a critical time for me and it is a critical time for other traditional aged college students of color. This study is positioned to open up the dialogue surrounding race, by first exploring its presence within one of the most intimate and critical relationships for the college student of color and uncovering the nature of race within the relationship with the intent of demonstrating how race currently impacts the mentoring relationship for the student of color.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Race is the central focal point of this study specifically in examining how African American college students perceive it’s presence within their mentoring relationships.

The research question under examination is:

*How, if at all, is race present in the mentor/mentee relationship for African American college students attending Predominantly White Colleges and Universities?*

The application of CRT as methodology allowed for the students’ story to be told through counter-narratives and gave voice to stories that are often not considered. The participants in this research study exhibited various degrees of racial salience, and as traditional aged college students presented evidence that their racial identities are still developing and supported within theories of racial identity development (Anglin & Wade, 2007; Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Want, Parham, Baker & Sherman, 2004).

Life events may force an individual to explore their racial identity and become more racially conscious through a journey of stages that challenge existing beliefs and perceptions.

College can serve as the life event that supports racial identity development, especially for traditional aged college students. But, as CRT would assert, dominant
discourse around race silences the development of race awareness (Crenshaw, 1988; Gotanda, 2000; Tate, 1997) stifling the student color’s ability to truly explore race, consider its complexities, recognize the operation of racism and develop a more informed racial identity. College can be a place where race education is taught and racial identity is shaped and a high quality mentoring experience can facilitate this process. Eight students participated in this study, each with his or her own very unique view on identity, the significance of race and the role of mentoring in his or her life. All traditional aged, African American college students, their personalities, mannerisms and responses to the interview questions provide only a glimpse into their lives but shine a light on those whose lived experiences might usually be ignored, stereotyped or co-opted to fit the dominant discourse.

In the next section, each participant is introduced through counter-narrative that points to how race is operating in their lives. Analysis involved a consideration of how the participant’s stories aligned with Cross’ model for Black identity development. These counter-narratives not only give voice to each participant, but also begin to help us see the impact these lived experiences are having on their mentoring relationships. Two primary themes emerged during analysis that highlight the participants’ perceptions and experiences regarding race and to some degree, also reflect the salience of race and racial identity of the participants. The first theme entitled Race Still Matters, opposes the dominate discourse that supports race neutrality and instead demonstrates how race has played a significant role in the lives of all eight participants who share personal stories of race and racism challenging any notion that race is no longer a factor in the lives of
students of color. The second theme, *Another 4-Letter Word*, which also emerged during data analysis, informs us that not only does race still matter but it is associated with something that is negative or undesired. This theme highlights the negative connotations associated with race as described by the participants in this study and is reflected in the voices of participants who described race as important or a source of pride, but who also did not want to be defined by their race, aligned with negative perceptions or were not willing to call colorblind notions or microaggressions racist. Four-letter words in American society are often viewed as undesirable. These expletives are still used, but those who use them regularly are viewed as possessing negative attributes. Similarly, as CRT would assert, a person who focuses on race is viewed as problematic and often avoided.

Making race another four-letter word for Americans could be interpreted as a strategy to support the inherent property value of Whiteness within a capitalistic society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Harris, 1993; McIntosh, 1990, 1993). The discomfort Whites have when forced to acknowledge and engage the concept of race trumps our society’s need to recognize and deconstruct race in order to move towards a more equitable society. This form of master scripting shows that the interests of Whites have become so powerful that people of color must adopt the same stance (Swartz, 1992). The participants in this study supported this phenomenon. Several participants did not want to indicate that race was a primary component of their identity, even when the stories they shared proved otherwise. Several were hesitant to say the word “white”. Most were very careful in their responses to questions about race and often minimized its significance. Both themes demonstrate the complexity surrounding issues of race for these eight participants who
recognize that race is actively operating in their lives while at the same time acknowledge
that a colorblind ideology is preferred.

The Narratives

Angie

I met Angie on a blustery winter day. The roads were terrible as I drove up to her
residence hall and visibility so limited, that I passed the entry to the parking structure twice
before I realized where to turn in. As I trudged through the snow towards the front door, I
wondered more about Angie. It had been difficult to schedule this interview. She is an
active student leader on her campus, works multiple jobs and indicated that she had some
family obligations that make it difficult for her to find time for any extra commitments. I
was very glad that we had finally found a date that worked, and now this terrible snow
storm made me just want to go back home and get into bed. But I am very glad I did not.
Angie turned out to be an amazing young woman who was able to articulate, not only her
personal reflections regarding race, but also her emotional vulnerabilities that have
ultimately opened her up to transformative growth experiences as well as rewarding
leadership and mentoring opportunities.

Angie greeted me with a warm smile and appeared genuinely excited to meet me.
As we began our interview, I noticed her upright posture, shoulder length relaxed hair,
flawless dark skin and kind eyes. She inquired about my research and appeared impressed
with my pursuit of my doctorate degree. I ask Angie what her race means to her and she
informs me that her race very important to her. It affects every aspect of her life,
particularly here at this university where there are very few African American students. She explains that it is difficult to find connection with other students. During her first semester, she was preoccupied with getting oriented with this new college environment and experience. She describes how one day she looked around and realized she didn’t see anyone who looked like her. She felt out of place and a bit like a pariah on campus. She knew that it was necessary for her to engage with people she felt comfortable with, and with who shared some similarities with in order for her to have a positive college experience.

It was at the beginning of her second year that Angie made the conscious decision to reach out. I am reminded of my own experience at a predominantly White university and recall how critical it was to be involved with the Black student services office as Angie describes how it feels to be one of a small number of African American students on her campus. Angie states,

“In most of my classes, I’m the only African American student. The way that I’m treated, the way that people speak to me. It’s a constant reminder, in a way. And some of the students on campus have lived very sheltered lives in White suburban communities; and so when they meet me, they don’t know how to respond, what to say. They see modern media and learn stereotypes from that. They might say something to me that I feel is offensive and I realize that, because of that ignorance, they just don’t know any better. It reminds me of the differences that exist there, and the fact that a lot of people on campus do view me as “different” because of my skin color. I feel that everywhere I go on this campus.”

As a researcher, I reflect upon the literature that describes “racial battle fatigue” as condition that often arises for students of color on predominantly White campuses (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). I inquire about her support systems. Angie discloses that being involved with race specific student clubs and cultural departments on campus help her to
connect with those of similar backgrounds and provide much needed support. Her mentor
has been a vital support person for her and was very helpful in assisting Angie emotionally
through a hurtful and racist interaction with another student. I asked Angie to share a story
about a time when race play a significant role in her life. Here is the story she shared,

“My first year here, I was really struggling. My mother lost her job. Her company laid her
off because of the bad economy. And I was supporting myself, my three younger siblings
and my mother and working all the time and doing the best that I could to stay in school. I
started reaching out to friends, trying to find somebody who could maybe understand what
I was going through. And I met a girl who lived on the same floor that I did and she and I
began a friendship. And at one point she turned to me and said, ‘I can’t be friends with you
anymore. And I said, Why not? And she said, Well, it doesn’t look good for me to be
friends with the poor Black girl on campus. And that broke my heart.’

It saddened me to hear her story. Here was this very intelligent, giving young
woman who only wanted to find support in friendship being shunned because of her race.
I was later to learn more about how her relationship with her mentor helped her to work
through this painful situation and even inspire her to become more involved in expanding
her own awareness regarding racial differences. Angie describes her race as very important
to her. She is very active in organizations and departments that focus on African
Americans and multiculturalism and she integrates her racial identity into her work on
campus. Angie is very confident about her identity and has begun to explore diversity in a
much broader sense.

Cross describes three identities which comprise the Internalization stage. Angie’s
story shows evidence that she might be at the Internalization Stage of Cross’s model where
there is more acceptance of one’s Black identity and an ability to embrace identities
emerges (Cross 1991, 1995). Angie shares several stories that have a personal impact on
her racially including her feelings of being Black on a predominantly White campus,
how she attended a diversity retreat and was very interested in hearing about the experiences of other students of color on her campus. Angie is also one of the few participants who was able to articulate the existence of negative Black stereotypes perpetuated by the media as different from her experiences of people in the Black community and did not express concern or fear that others will view her negatively because of her race. She is aware that her race matters, but has done some work that has raised her understanding regarding the history of Blacks and her own her racial identity. She describes her surprise in learning how similar the stories of her Latino peers were to her own and how today’s immigration debate reflects the same ostracizing tone applied to discrimination against African Americans. Angie’s openness and insight are so pronounced and her story provides a unique example of how race still matters.

Robert

Robert arrives wearing a cream colored crewneck sweater, white collar shirt and nicely pressed, khaki pants. His hair is cut close and he is clean shaven with leather book bag in hand. He is conservative in his disposition and had he been born in an earlier era, may have donned a trench coat, umbrella and matching fedora as his daily attire. He shakes my hand, offering a brief smile before sitting down. I immediately feel the seriousness of his nature and find myself, sitting up straight and approaching the interview more formally than I had with previous participants. I felt it important to share my
credentials with him during my introduction and observed him nodding his head as if to acknowledge his support of my work.

Robert states that his African American race is 100% important to him. His father is from Nigeria and race is considered a source of pride within his family. I sense Robert’s pride in his demeanor and am interested in learning more about his experiences. During our conversation it becomes evident very early in the interview that Robert has a vested interest in disproving negative stereotypes that exist about Blacks. I wonder if this is actually more important to him than the nurturance of his identity. I ask him how his racial identity is nurtured in his life. He pauses and then tells me that his race is regarded as very prestigious and his focus is on trying to decrease the negative statistics that are reported about Blacks. He says, “I just try to do my best within my power to try to represent my race as well as possible. I want to be a positive representative of the African American race”.

It is interesting to me that Robert’s racial identity is so prominently shaped by the negative stereotypes that exist. As a very serious person who identifies strongly with his academic identity, Robert could be a prime candidate for stereotype threat as discussed in the literature (Steele, 1997). This study does not examine the presence of stereotype threat, but Robert’s strong concern about negative stereotypes gives us a clue to the social-psychological stress and possible academic performance challenges he might be experiencing. I probe more to find out if there are people or places or activities that nurture his racial identity. Robert begins to open up and describe his relationship with his roommates who are also African American. I learn that these relationships are the place
where Robert is finding racial connection. He and his roommates always talk about race, what it used to look like, how it looks today and how they believe it will look in the future.

Robert’s strong racial identity centers race in his life, but in a very unique way. He is hyper-aware of what has gone wrong with the Black image in the U.S. and has dedicated his energy to symbolically reversing this direction. He explains how his role as a student is very important to him. He works hard, participates in classes, completes his homework and tries to get good grades. In his effort to represent a positive Black image, he also takes on the role of educator. He describes how during one of his classes, the students had a discussion about politics and demographics. They ended up in an informal debate about racial groups and socio economic status. There was only one other African American student in the class. Robert describes how the two of them just “held their ground”, as they countered misperceptions shared by White students. He describes this as a good experience, but also comments on how it would have been helpful to have more students of color in the class. Robert’s mentor is an African American woman who is also his supervisor. The relationship is fairly new and they are just getting to know each other. He likes her and seems to respect her a great deal. The topic of race has not come up and he does not express an interest in having this relationship be the place where his racial identity is nurtured. His relationships with family and friends seem to suffice.

During our conversation I learn that Robert cares about success and is inspired by images of African Americans who defy the status quo and become regarded as leaders. I see him light up as he describes a recent experience at the National Black MBA conference he attended with his sister. He shares,
“We talked to a lot of people from different companies who were all graduated and well educated. I never... through my experience, I had never ever seen that before. I’ve met people obviously, African American people that are very educated, but to see just a whole group of just hundreds and hundreds of them... it was just definitely an experience that I have never ever been through before. It was the first time in my life I saw rooms full of successful Black African American people and it was like the best experience I’ve had in my life and I came back just saying I want to get to that point.”

While I felt the formality of Robert throughout both interviews, I also noticed signs of stress. He often appeared nervous and uncertain while trying to demonstrate confidence and conviction. It showed in his eyes which would ever so slightly flinch during some of his responses and in his backtracking during several responses to questions. I noticed that during the interview if he responded as not having an answer to a question, he would come back to the same question later, explain why he had no answer and assure me that he would probably have that particular experience at another time. I observed it again when I probed about how his racial identity shows up in his life and his community. He seemed to have a difficult time responding to that question and it appeared that he was bothered by that. During my probe, I asked if he is actively involved in things to help minimize negative stereotypes of Blacks. As he responded he seemed to recognize that there is more that he could be doing to support his community. He told me that as a student his time is limited and he most focused on his academics, but he assured me that once he graduates, he plans on getting more involved in helping in the Black community.

It appeared to me that Robert’s own expectations of himself along with the climate of a predominantly White college was creating a level of personal and cultural stress that encouraged and expected him to be the race expert for his White peers while also posing as the model of Black success for all. This is a common experience for many students of color
at predominantly White colleges and can be detrimental for them socially, emotionally, academically (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007) and often lead to Racial Battle Fatigue (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). I wonder about the degree of stress Robert endures and question his ability to see himself clearly. Robert is a prideful man and I recognize the way he is attempting to “manage” the interview, not only through his formality but also in how he presents himself. He carries an aura of certainty. Not that I believe he is certain about everything he shares, but that he desires to be viewed as a man of certainty. I play along, accepting his performed certainty as truth. Robert knows that racism is still alive and well and has decided how he wants to respond. He sums it up well in his following statement, “I understand that it is hard to understand racism today, but it still exists. People do things, step out of the boundaries. Who is going to teach them?”

Cross describes the Pre-Encounter stage of Black identity development as a time when anxiety regarding one’s race can arise (Cross, 1991). While Blacks in this stage do not always believe the negative stereotypes, they know that Whites do and this can lead to a degree of hypersensitivity to racial issues (Cross, 1991). Robert seems to show signs that this might be true for him. His concern with image, his interest in associating himself with success Blacks and his preoccupation with demonstrating to the world that his is not a representation of the negative stereotypes about Blacks lead to an assumption that he may not have developed a level of awareness about his racial identity that permits him to fully embrace his Blackness.

Ryan Alexander
Ryan Alexander is a charming young man with hazel eyes and beautiful smile. He was raised in primarily White environments and acknowledged that while he is proud to be Black, but his race does not define him. He is most comfortable with diverse groups of people. During our interview Ryan exhibits a love of life that is contagious. He wants to change the world and sitting across from him during these interviews, I too feel energized as I find myself fondly remembering the lyrics to “We Are the World”. Ryan exudes a strong sense of pride and resilience as he describes a college experience wrought with racial microaggressions and overt racism. As a popular leader on a predominantly White campus, Ryan has garnered many White friends, many of who have informed him that his college success is due to his race during the era of a Black president. While Ryan rejects this notion, his tone is forgiving. I’m reminded of a statement attributed to Jesus Christ where he is said in response to the sins of man, “forgive them Lord, for they know not what they do. . .”, maybe Ryan has a Jesus complex, this is not something than can be measured in this study, but his character appears authentic and as an interviewer I believe that he genuinely values his relationships with his White friends while also knowing something is awry.

Ryan’s girlfriend (who is White) was bothered by the comments other students were making regarding her relationship with Ryan. She came to him expressing her frustration saying, “Everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys. . . I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. The colorblind practice of Ryan’s girlfriend does not seem to faze him as he
describes this experience. He appears more frustrated that comments made were upsetting to someone he cares about than the obvious dismissal of the significance of his race and racialized experiences by his intimate partner. Ryan seems unaware of what racism looks like today and has an interest in believing in the good of people, so while he is somewhat bothered by these constant offenses, he does not express desire in considering them more than just harmless indiscretions.

Ryan’s mentor is an African American man who he met when he visited the campus for the first time. Ryan describes him as an energetic, athletic man who shares many of his interests. This relationship has been nurturing and supportive for Ryan and permits him a safe space to reflect on many of the racialized experiences and interactions that have affected him since he arrived to college. His first meeting with his mentor set the tone for the racial misperceptions Ryan would experience at his new college. During Ryan’s visit, his mentor gave him a tour of the campus. Many of the faculty, staff and students he met thought that Ryan’s mentor was his father and commented on this. They two men look nothing alike. Ryan is short in stature with hazel colored eyes. His mentor, who is not that much older than Ryan has worked on the campus for several years and is a very tall man who bears no resemblance to his mentee other than the fact that they are both Black men. Ryan laughs as he tells this story and states, “This is just what they saw.”

I categorize Ryan’s race salience as moderate. He is very well aware of his race and seems to acknowledge it as a place of pride for his identity. At the same time Ryan minimizes the significance of his race and the operation of racism within his lived experience. When asked how his racial identity is nurtured in his life he responds by
saying, “Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home.” It is clear that Ryan just has not developed a race consciousness that could help him understand race and racism more accurately and even give him the terminology to help explain some of the racialized experiences that are affecting his life.

Within the colorblind racial discourse there exists a demonizing attitude towards people who are interested in discussing race. Talking about race is bad and colorblind notions operate as a form of master scripting where the behaviors and preferences of the White majority (ignore race) override and silence diverse experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In Ryan’s case, master scripting has been internalized and he seems to have an interest in accepting colorblind ideology even while his lived experience is clearly and overtly racialized. It might be that Ryan just does not want to admit to the ugliness that exists within humanity and his denial allows him to stay in a place where he can focus on the positives and direct his energy towards uplifting the status of people of color. Ryan admits that he does not hang out with many Black people and that is something that he wants to do more. He has the spirit of an activist and has observed the marginalization of the cultural spaces on campus. He describes the cultural center at his college as secluded and recognizes the inconsistencies of a university which espouses inclusivity locating its cultural center in a secluded part of the campus. Ryan has no interest in being pushed off to the margins and instead has chosen to involve himself in the spaces and activities of the White majority.
Ryan is proud to share that he works for the admissions office at his university and has been designated to recruit diverse students by sharing his achievements and experiences. He found it particularly rewarding when he mentored 50 high performing Black high school students for the summer. He stated, “if (others) perceive Black people as lazy and poor and they have kids and screw up their lives. . . instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, ok well if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my race with me.”

Ryan hopes to continue to mentor and reach out to Black students in college and inspire them to defeat the negative stereotypes and strive for whatever they desire.

During my second interview with Ryan Alexander he revealed that my interview questions had caused him to think about things differently. He began to wonder if he was being stigmatized because of his race and I could see some emotional tension in his face as he told me how he called his mentor after our interview. He told me they talked about racism and that he was just feeling a little different about things now. It’s possible that his participation in this study could have triggered some new awareness that challenges his current notions regarding race in his lived experiences.

Very much like Robert, Ryan Alexander is concerned with the negative stereotypes that exist about Blacks. It is clear that he does not ascribe to them, but again we have another African American student who takes on the responsibility of disproving these stereotypes. Ryan Alexander’s burden is heavy as he negotiates predominantly White spaces and avoids association with the places and people that center on people of color. Issues of race are fairly new to Ryan and he admits that while his home community was racially diverse, race itself, was never discussed. Ryan’s views support a Eurocentric
perspective that assumes assimilation and overcoming the negative stereotypes is a worthwhile endeavor and attention to race is through non-threatening ways, such as Ryan’s example of his mother’s cooking and the change in how his parents talk when they interact with family members. Ryan’s degree of race salience appears to be neutral. He expressed no intense interest, either positive or negative with regard to race and he gives race very little attention. It does appear that his college experience is presenting some interesting challenges as he receives more and more feedback about how his Blackness impacts his access to success. Race may become more pronounced for Ryan as he responds to the assumptions and comments of others.

Ty

A pleasant, round freckled face peeks in around the door to my interview room and here enters Ty. Light complexion and short, fine, curly hair, Ty presents as very extroverted, friendly and informal. He makes you feel like you are his best friend, and it is from this place of familiarity that our conversation begins. Ty identifies as biracial, giving equal consideration to both his African American and Spanish ancestry although he was never parented by his African American father and is just starting to examine his African American culture. Ty is a first generation college student and shares that being the first person in his family to go to college had created some tension in his family. He explains that even though no one has said anything specifically or acted differently towards him, he feels nervous sometimes because he fears that his “dropping knowledge” will intimidate
them. At the same time, he appreciates his new found knowledge and does not want to limit himself in his conversation. He provides me with a story.

Earlier in the year Ty went home to help his grandmother move. During the process he says she began to complain about a broken dolly and said aloud that they could just “nigger-rig” it. Ty explains how offended he was and how his internal voice shouted, “What? Are you kidding me?” To his grandmother he said, “Jerry-rig. Why do you have to say that?” Then he attempted to explain the problems with her comment and offered her an alternative such as “Jerry-rig”. He says he never would have confronted her on something like this before college. She is a very proud and traditional woman who does not respond well to push back. Ty admits that this type of behavior is not new. His family has often made similar comments throughout his life. But he is now more aware because his college experience has afforded him the type of environment that teaches inclusivity and encourages racial awareness and this has led him to feel compelled to respond differently to these types of offenses. He’s not convinced that his reaction will change her behavior but hopes that maybe now she will about it and at least avoid making these types of comments around him in the future.

As I listen to Ty I consider him to be in a state of transition. He seems to be exploring new ideas and challenging himself in new ways. I have categorized him as having moderate race salience because he considers his race important but is just learning about how it manifests in his life, especially in regard to his African American heritage. He is beginning to explore race and college has facilitated the transformation of his identity.
Talking with Ty is like talking with an old friend. It is obvious that he is a very social person and is energized by sharing his story. Even as he discusses emotionally difficult situations, Ty exhibits a type of energy that shows a passion for his learning. He is invested in the journey to new awareness and appreciates how his participation in diversity programs has provided him with tools to reflect on his own experiences and extrapolate that to larger societal concerns.

I ask Ty to share an example of how race played a significant role in his life. He tells me that his light skin and non-descriptive features have protected him from the direct experience of racism. For most of his life Ty has been able to pass off for White. He tells me a story about a time in college when one of his friends who is a dark skinned African American female was a nigger by another student. Ty was present and said it really impacted him personally because although the comment was not directed at him he is well aware that he is a member of the group of people who have been targeted and demoralized by that word. He describes how the argument had gotten really heated and all of a sudden things changed. The use of that word changed the entire tone of the argument. Ty says it caught everyone off guard and just like in the movies, everybody stopped. Ty was hurt, his friend was hurt and no one knew exactly what to do. For Ty, this was unfamiliar territory. This kind of thing had never happened to him and he was really shocked to hear someone be so cruel.

Ty processed this event along with many other marginalizing situations with his mentor, an African American woman who is also a diversity educator. He tells me how she really helped him become more racially aware and begin unpacking his biracial identity.
Ty could be considered to be living in the Encounter stage of Cross’s model where an event or series of events launches one into developing a new perspective regarding race (Cross 1991, 1995). He seems to be on the cusp of movement towards making race a more salient part of his identity. Ty is clearly frustrated with what he sees in regards to race and is beginning to challenge those who behave in racist ways. His awareness has been raised but he is still trying to work through how to deal with what he now knows. Ty is struggling with difficult issues, but at the same time, this colorful young man described healthy friendships and a supportive mentoring relationship that seem to be helping him in navigating this particular time in his life.

Stacy

Stacy seems hesitant. It is 2:05. Our interview is scheduled for 2:00, but she is talking with several coworkers and does not appear to be in a hurry to begin our conversation. I wait a few minutes before I beckon her that it is time to begin. She follows me to the interview room, takes a seat and waits quietly for my instructions. No smile, no questions, she seems content to let me take the lead. There is nothing particularly outstanding about Stacy. In fact, she seems to be one of those people who easily blend into the environment. Her attire is common, her hair pulled back into a short ponytail, a bit shorter than average in stature, plump and brown skinned. My first thought is that it might be difficult to engage this participant and I feel concern that this interview may not be very
productive. But I am pleasantly surprised to find that Stacy, once she warms up to you, is quite talkative and very observant.

Stacy identifies racially as Black and states that she tries not to let her race dictate her life. She has a lot to say about race, and like several other participants has an interest in disproving negative stereotypes. I notice inconsistencies in Stacy’s responses and I realize that Stacy is caught in a conundrum as she downplays the significance of race while at the same time expresses her personal need to be connected to other African Americans. Stacy announces how she downplays race and in the next breathe describes the isolation she felt when she checked in to her new residence hall and learned that there was only one other Black person on her floor. I note that I again I am witnessing the conflict created by the colorblind ideology that instructs us to not be attentive to race even while it is fully operative in our lives.

Stacy shows an interest in downplaying the significance of race in her life. She describes a familial type of relationship when she talks about her mentor, who is also Black and her job in the cultural center on campus. I am aware that race is much more important to Stacy than she would like me to believe or is willing to admit to herself. Stacy hints at feelings of stress due to being one of few Black students on her campus and the comfort and support she feels when she spends time in the cultural center. It is no wonder Stacey feels stress, racial microaggressions permeate the stories she tells me about her life as a college student. From the example of professors who look directly at her when race topics arise in the classroom, to the White room mate who suggested Stacy dress up as a black light when Stacy considered being a light bulb for Halloween, Stacy is burdened by slights
and put-downs when she enters White spaces on campus. The cultural center she
describes as “home” is her refuge. She refers to the directors as like a mom and big
brother.

My interviews with Stacy remind me of the earlier conversations I had with Ryan
Alexander and Robert. All three of these participants have an interest in countering the
negative stereotypes that exist about Blacks and are willing to spend time educating their
not-so-racially-aware White friends. Stacy tells me about her first college roommate, a
White student who paid a lot of attention to everything Stacy did and asked a lot of
questions about Blacks. Stacy describes how she chose to respond to the questions and help
educate her roommate even though many of the questions and comments were offensive.
She explains that her tolerance was due to her awareness that this student had no idea she
was offending others and needed to be educated before she said these things to the wrong person. Others may not be as tolerant and might react in a hurtful manner.

Cross’s model describes the Pre-Encounter stage as a reflection of Blacks being educated within a westernized educational system where little attention is given to accurate lessons on the history of Blacks in America (Cross, 1991, 1995). This miseducation can distort and inhibit knowledge about the realities regarding Black people. Stacy’s salience regarding race seems neutral although her presence on a predominantly White campus seems to have pushed her towards engaging a Black community. She does not seem conscious about this, but describes the people in the multicultural office as family and describes a level of comfort she feels in their presence. Stacy also minimizes race and seems to want to avoid any indication that race plays a significant role in her life while at the same time sharing stories of very racialized experiences. This tension is reflected in most of the participants who recognize the negative connotations associated with race, but are still feeling the weight of being a person of color in a racialized society.

Alan

Alan is a fast talker. He arrives to the interview with a lot of energy filling every moment he can with words. Dark complexion, acne and short nappy hair, Alan is not a trendsetter. He is wearing blue jeans, dark t-shirt and vest and appears moderately unkempt. He sits across the conference table from me, paying close attention to everything I do and I feel that he is very interested in telling his story. He tells me that for the first eight years of his life he lived in a predominantly Black community. His family
and most people he knew were low income and very underprivileged. A series of fortunate circumstances supported the upward mobility of his parents and eventually his family became middle class. They moved to a predominantly White neighborhood and lived a very different life. Alan says, “We were the only African American family in my neighborhood, very typical, you know TV, you know 2-car garage, swimming pool, four-bedroom house, you know, typical four kids, young family, a dog, fish (laughs).”

Alan is such a likeable young man. What I appreciate most about Alan is his openness and ability to reflect with a great amount of detail, his recollections of his life. I don’t have to ask much for Alan to share a wealth of stories. He goes on to explain how his new school was racially diverse but, unlike many students of color, was academically tracked because of his advanced placement and honors courses. While this experience set him up to be academically prepared, it also hindered his social development in a way that limited his knowledge of himself racially even within a predominantly Black school setting. Alan’s description of race in his life demonstrates some of the criticism surrounding theories of racial identity development. He explains that he is still trying to figure out race and its meaning in his life but he also discusses his awareness of other differences and expresses an interest in acknowledging multiple identities.

Alan explains how he arrived to his college campus expecting no surprises since he had been placed in predominantly White classrooms throughout his high school years. He quickly realized that the diverse high school he attended had provided him the opportunity to see and interact with other students of color even if they were not in his classes. This new environment was really different because the diversity was severely limited. Alan says, “I
wasn’t seeing other people who looked like me. I was like, oh this is really, really different. This is really White.” As Alan tells me his story about his journey for racial consciousness building I recognize how important his racially conscious mentor has been in facilitating this journey. It is also clear that opportunities to engage in programs and awareness raising dialogue has helped Alan begin to reflect on his lived experiences and articulate them in meaningful ways.

Alan expresses appreciation for the mentors in his life who have been able to nurture his racial awareness and is reflective and honest about what he doesn’t know and is very clear that he still has much to learn. When I ask Alan about the importance of his racial identity, he says,

“I think I’m still very much figuring out my racial identity. And so, for me being African American is really, for me a process. What that means, what that looks like, you know. I think throughout the last few years, what I’ve been able to do is realize that its missing, I think I have come to a place where my identity is now supported by diversity. I think that’s how I feel supported. And those diverse people who are able to sort of understand the race thing. And I don’t mean to call it a race thing, but that’s kind of what it is, you know. It’s this jumble of you know, sometimes you’re here and sometimes you’re there, and sometimes you’re in-between and you’re here and there and I think it’s important that I have those relationships with people where race is the defining thing in their life and that I have people who are virtually colorblind whom I’ve become friends with and who I interact with.”

As I listen to Alan I hear the conflict many families of color face when attempting to balance racial identity with quality education. As an educator and a parent, I understand the desire to get our youth prepared for college. Not only is higher education the primary route for better employment opportunities, it opens up the mind and develops the knowledge necessary to transform society. It is a place of hope and historically discriminatory practices has created a racial gap so wide that many of us will sacrifice
everything to get more students of color into institutions of higher education. But Alan’s story reminds us that there may be a cost to our youth if we don’t also consider the nurturance of their identities as social beings and not sacrifice their mental health as we try to remedy this inequity.

Alan, like Ty, seems to be redefining his views about race. Arriving to a predominantly White campus proved to be very different than being placed into college level classes in high school that were mostly White. For Alan, his college experience has challenged him to consider race as an important part of his identity and he could be assumed to be living in the Encounter stage of racial identity development. Alan is very aware that he was tracked in high school and has come to learn that this does not occur for many Black students. He is also aware that he has not engaged his racial identity and has developed own misperceptions about Blacks. He is in transition and while he describes this as an emotionally challenging time, he seems excited to continue on this path of learning more about himself.

Brooke

Brooke arrives to the interview wearing all black. She is petite and quiet as she sits down to begin the interview. Her small, light brown face is very freckled and she appears to be emotionally removed and we begin our conversation. She tells me that she identifies as African American but that she really does not know what it means to be African American.

Race is not an important part of Brooke’s identity and she does not hesitate to
make this known. I feel as if she is somewhat practiced in asserting her stance on this topic. I am certain this is not the first time she has explained her view on race. There is an edge and a discomfort to Brooke. I can’t tell where it’s coming from, but I am aware that there is tension between us at the early onset of the interview. I restate to her that the purpose of the interview is to hear about her experiences with race and that there are no right or wrong answers. I ask her to share with me what she knows about race. She responds, “I really don’t know. I don’t really pay attention because it’s not that big in my life to pay attention to it or want to figure it out” (Long silence).

She goes on to tell me that she is more comfortable with Whites because that is the type of community in which she was raised. She appears cold and disinterested as she responds to my questions. The earlier shyness becomes replaced with a sort of defiance. The more we talk about race the more sarcastic and flippant she becomes. I am reminded of Holloway and Jefferson’s (2000) description of the complexity of participants and can ascribe this knowledge to my interaction with Brooke. I remind myself that participants are often invested in viewpoints to protect vulnerable parts of themselves and that participants often may not know why they feel the way they do. This helps me respond to her more openly to Brooke and exhibit behavior that indicates my interest in her comments and my non-judgment of whatever she shares with me. I nod in support as she tells me how she has been ostracized by the Black community. I lean forward as she shares her strategy of playing the race card to get selected for dance auditions and college scholarships. I don’t flinch as she giggles when she explains how her light skin gives her an advantage over
other Blacks because she “fits the mold” for organizations that say they want to integrate. I probe more inquire how race shows up in her life. Silence and then,

“I’ve gotten a lot of backlash from my dad for not joining multicultural offices and being involved with Blacks. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really. I don’t feel that I want to have my racial identity more supported in my life. I’m cool with how it is now. . .definitely developed into it. . .identified myself, so this is who I am and you kind of go with what works.”

Brooke tells me how she has never been accepted in the Black community and that the most hatred she has received has come from Black females. There it is! I knew there was something sour underlying our interaction. Here I am, an African American female interviewer talking to Brooke about race! This experience must somehow epitomize her worst nightmare. But Brooke has warmed up to me. Her initial coldness has slowly faded and at times I see in her a desire for connection. She never states this desire, but it is in her eyes which seem to be longing for something. It is in her timid glances at my locked hair and the friendlier tone she uses later in our conversations. Brooke is racially wounded which might explain her low race salience and disinterest in issues of race. With this said, I also believe that her cold demeanor is more an armor of protection than her true self.

There is opportunity for Brooke to grow and embrace her race given the right conditions. I see signs of this in our limited interactions. Even as she moves cautiously in our conversations, she has an interest in learning more about me. She inquires about my work and shares with me her interest in traveling abroad. During our last interview we chat about career goals and race. I share a few resources and contacts I have that might get her connected to internship opportunities in Washington DC and she seems very grateful. I receive several emails from Brooke after the interviews are complete. One is inviting me
to come to an event she has helped coordinate on her campus. I think maybe, even just for a little while, Brooke’s apprehension of Black women might have been lessened or at least challenged through this experience.

Brooke is the only participant in this study who could be assumed to have low self-esteem. Cross’s model describes Anti-Black attitudes as part of the Pre-Encounter stage and considers this negative valence as a marker of poor mental health. While that cannot be certain for Brooke, she does exhibit signs that she feels alienated from other Blacks and does not view them as a source of support (Cross, 1991). With that said, Brooke’s decision to participate in a study of race and her eventual comfort with me demonstrates some willingness to challenge, albeit cautiously, her current notions about race.

Cree

Cree is the only participant in this study who does not have an African American mentor. Her mentor is a White male who is a leader in her spiritual community. I initially planned to remove her interviews from the study because of this, but after multiple levels of coding were completed, it became clear that her story was no different than the other participants. The same themes emerged and Cree, like most of the other African American students shared stories of wanting to connect with other students of color, wanting to counter negative stereotypes about Blacks and expressing an interest in finding support from a mentor who shares her race. Since the research question examines the presence of race from the perspective of the mentee, I was still able to see the role race plays in her life.
and in her mentoring relationship even though her mentoring was White and not a member of her campus community.

Cree arrives to the interview looking like a typical college student; blue jeans, college sweatshirt, tennis shoes and ponytail. She is bright-eyed and friendly and seems to be ready to begin our interview. Although Cree’s physical appearance could be perceived as African American, she identifies as multiracial and provides an order for how she considers herself racially. She tells me she identifies as Black, White Native American and then White. She tells me her dad is Black and White and her mom is Native American and Black. Cree explains that her race becomes more or less important depending on her environment. She says she doesn’t think about her race when she’s alone or with other people of color, but is very aware of it in the presence of Whites.

My first thought as I listen to Cree is that her awareness becomes more vigilant when she does not see those who share her race or similar experiences, but I realize my assumption is incorrect as Cree continues to share her perspective. It seems that race becomes problematic for Cree in the presence of Whites because of her fear that she will be perceived as a stereotypical Black woman. Cree is afraid to be judged by her African American race, and even while she appreciates and values her diverse heritage, race becomes a four-letter word in the presence of Whites. When I ask her how she believes Blacks are viewed, she discloses that there are certain behaviors exhibited by Blacks that she finds distasteful. She tells me about a few Black students on her campus who she perceives as using their race to behave in rude ways. She refers to it as entitlement. We also talk about images of Blacks and Cree outlines two categories in which African Americans
are often placed. The first is a popular image donned by rap artists and engenders disdain from Cree when she says,

“They always refer to Black people with the dreads and the big teeth and with the big shades. Uh, so horrible. Not every Black person is Li’l Wayne, not every Black person wants to have dreads. Not everyone wants to go to jail you know, not everyone has tattoos all over their face but I mean that’s just the image that they portray...”

During both interview I am struck by the strength of Cree’s character. She holds many of her traditional Native American beliefs close to her heart and seems to find it conflicting at times with her African American identity. There are certain things in this world that must be honored and she seems dismayed with some of her observations of other Black students who do not embrace and practice this belief. There is a strong influence of religion in Cree’s responses and she discloses that she attends synagogue regularly. All this said, Cree appears to be popular among other African American students who greet her and stop to chat with her before and after our interview sessions.

As she responds to my questions I notice a mild level of contempt for certain behaviors and images of African Americans that she regards as inappropriate. There is a particular type of Black image that she regards as good and Cree delights in comparisons of herself to successful African American women and has a deep seated fear of being perceived as one of the “others”. For Cree, race is only a four letter word when it is aligned with a certain type of Black. I listen as Cree tells me a story about a time she and her boyfriend went shopping at Wal-Mart and were approached by an elderly White man. She says he approached them in the fruit and vegetables aisle and complimented them on being such a handsome couple. As they began to talk with him he inquired about their future career plans. They shared that Cree’s boyfriend planned on becoming an architect engineer
and Cree had aspirations to go into politics and become an ambassador. The man said that Cree was very articulate and reminded him of Condoleezza Rice. Cree is beaming as she tells this story and tells me how good his compliment felt. She tells me how she wishes people who admire Blacks would choose the Michelle Obamas, Jada Pinkett’s or Condoleezza Rices’ instead of the ever popular rap artists. These are classy Black ladies according to Cress and are better representations of the Black race.

Cree presents an interesting view of the Black experience which has been debated by race scholars for many years. It is the Claude Steele versus Shelby Steele debate. Bill Cosby versus Cornel West. House slave versus field slave. The popular, and many might say negative, images of Blacks portrayed in the media and in entertainment have taken on a life of their own. These images are very pronounced and can be found in so many public spaces that they begin to depict how non-Blacks believe the Black experience to be. Cree has definitely taken a side that has positioned her to reject what she perceives as negative images of Blacks and instead aspire to become regarded as a Black with “class”. Again, Cross’s Pre-Encounter stage seems to be reflected in Cree’s interest in being viewed as a successful Black as opposed to the Black image she disdains. Very much like other participants in this study, Cree aligns herself with the Blacks who are working to “destroy the social stigma associated with Blackness” (Cross, 1995, p. 99). Race, for many of these participants is a 4-letter word and an association that they work hard to manage. Cross’s work asserts that miseducation results in very little knowledge of Black history and culture which results in a very surface level understanding of what it mean to be Black (Cross, 1995). The popular discourse surrounding race would have us believe that race is a thing of
the past, but this analysis supports the primary premise of CRT in demonstrating that race is a part of the air that we breathe. For some of the participants, race is obvious and important in their view of themselves and their lives and for others it seems to be operating at a more subconscious level, but regardless of the individual’s ability to name it, race obviously still matters.

The Universal Essence

Phenomenological research seeks to explore phenomena and reduce findings down to a universal essence (Creswell, 2007). As we read the counter narratives above we see a pattern emerging that helps in our understanding of how race is present in the mentoring relationships of African American college students. The findings in this study support the experiences of students of color described in the literature. The participants in this study share stories of cultural stress, racial misperceptions and racism but they also tell us more that reflects the complicated nature of race. As an African American researcher, it was also evident that my race had some impact on the participants. Several of them commented on their delight in meeting a Black doctoral student and several inquired about my program. Robert an Angie shared that they want to pursue graduate degrees someday. Brooke was impacted differently given her negative history with Black females. With that said, as a Black researcher, I was aware that my presence mattered and I applied research methods intended to support honest disclosure from participants while also being sure to be open and responsive to the questions the participants had of me. Not only does race matter in the lives of these students in ways that support the literature, but the dominant discourse that
purports race neutrality may actively stifle the Black student’s ability to develop a more complex understanding of race and form their own racial identity. This is the universal essence found in the study of race in the mentoring relationships of African American college students.

Most of the participants in this study might be said to be living in the Pre-Encounter stage of racial identity formation. Cross’s work on Black identity development reminds us that the journey towards Black self-acceptance is wrought with emotion (Cross, 1991, 1995) and this is reflected in many of the stories shared by the participants in this study. Developing self-awareness with regard to race can raise issues of fear, anger, embarrassment, excitement and pride that may position the student of color in opposition to the dominant discourse regarding race is the U.S. The ideological assertion of race neutrality and the more recent emergence of notions of post racialism may actively suppress the natural progression of healthy racial identity development. Post racialism is a notion that purports an era exists where racial discrimination is no longer a societal concern and is supported through the practice of colorblindness (Reed & Louis, 2009). The participants in this study seemed well aware of this concept, several of them mentioned the election of the nation’s first Black president in reference to their own views on race, and were very careful to bracket their statements about race with race neutral commentary. For example, Ryan Alexander states that he takes pride in the fact that he is Black, but also says that it’s not a “huge thing” and is not what defines him. Similarly, when Alan discusses race, he initially corrects his use of the term “race thing” even though he admits it is the best term to describe his experience and Angie considers race an important part of her
identity but also says that she does not apply race when it comes to other people and later says race is important and also not important. This application of the dominant discourse regarding race is particularly important when we also consider the racial identity development journey that the participants in this study are undergoing. Most of the participants described encounters or episodes that contributed to a new perspective on race and their own identity. Cross’s model would suggest that these encounters trigger the Immersion-Emersion stage of Black racial identity development where emotions may run high and pro-Black sentiment and/or anti-White but colorblind ideology contradicts this very natural progression of race awareness and instead requires a repression of the emotions and reactions that increased awareness raises (Gotanda, 2000).

The two emergent themes that were used to introduce the participants in this study also begin to set the stage for the third and final theme that also answers the research question. Before we can examine if and how race shows up in the mentoring relationships of African American students, it was important to first understand who these students are and what their perceptions and experiences are regarding race. It is evident that students arrive to the college campus exhibiting all levels of racial salience and with differing views about the significance of race. Therefore; when we look at the mentoring relationship, especially from the perspective of the student of color, we must recognize that the presence of race cannot be examined as just one factor, but that it will permeate, just as CRT would assert, the entire relationship.

The mentoring relationship exists within the context of not only larger societal constructs, but also the unique lived experience of all participants. This poses a bit of a
challenge for mentors and program coordinators whose primary concern is supporting the student in their personal, social and academic success. How then, must educators tend to this relationship? What do we consider when developing mentoring programs, training mentors and supporting our students of color? The third theme begins to uncover answers to these questions, as we realize that mentoring must complement the larger student experience because it is evident that mentoring is not an island.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Theme III: Mentoring is Not an Island

The third theme that emerged during analysis points to the critical role that mentoring plays in the lives of students of color. The stories told by the participants in this study remind us that every student is diverse and arrives to the college campus with unique experiences. Even within one racial group, there exists far ranging differences that require malleability in programming, style and response in order to be effective. Complicating things even further are the varying developmental paths each student travels while in college to further develop a sense of self and the world. The mentoring relationship is just one part of their lives and it too will be affected by their other experiences and perceptions. Factors such as community of origin, relationship with parents, relationships with faculty and staff, and campus involvement all affect the student’s relationship with their mentor.

The ability of the mentoring relationship to support the student’s larger experience is the key to longevity, enhancing student persistence and success. Students lead robust lives outside of the mentoring relationship and an effective mentor can serve as a community facilitator who helps bring all the pieces together. The following analysis uses fictional narrative to demonstrate the complexity of student lives and its effect on the mentoring relationship. Fictional narrative has been used in research and has been regarded as legitimate mode for the writing of research (Rhodes & Brown, 2005) and a powerful tool
for increasing reader engagement (Watson, 2011). The setting and the participant interaction with each other within the setting is contrived. The stories are real and taken from the actual data collected from interviews. The value of the fictional narrative is that it allows the researcher to create a larger story from the individual stories and bring the key findings into a powerful space for consideration.

During analysis, three types of mentoring relationships emerged that describe how race is showing up and how the relationship is responding to support or not support the student mentee. The fictional narratives that follow depict these three types of relationships and demonstrate the variations in the quality of the mentoring interaction. The narratives portray the lived experiences, internal perceptions and dynamic interaction that occurs between the student and the mentor and facilitate our understanding of how to enhance mentoring for African American college students.

Type of Relationship 1 - The Right Fit

This first category describes the mentoring relationships where a solid match has been made and the mentor is effectively supporting the mentee in a manner that aligns well with the unique needs of the student. Ty, Angie, Stacy, Robert, Ryan Alexander and Alan all describe mentoring relationships that are the “right fit”. The five components for effective mentoring as discussed by Jacobi (1991) can be aligned with race and we can consider how a mentor effectively supports the student mentee when it comes to racial matters. The following fictional narratives demonstrate how race is affecting the lives of the participants and reflects how the “right fit” mentor supports the acquisition of
knowledge regarding race, consists of support and role modeling, and is very personal in
nature, all elements that are described by Jacobi as necessary for effective mentoring
(Jacobi, 1991).

A Respite for Angie

“Oh dear God. I need help.” Angie is curled up in her bed with her blanket over her
head. She has no energy to get dressed. No energy to answer the annoying phone that keeps
ringing. Just no energy. Ever since her mom was laid off, Angie has been burdened with
working two jobs, going to school and leading a student organization. She is overwhelmed
and exhausted. . . and sad. Her one friend has abandoned her because, as she told Angie, “I
can’t be seen with the poor, Black girl” and Angie is left feeling alone. Last week she was
promoted into a new position in her office and received a new supervisor and mentor.
During their first meeting, she opened up a little bit to this woman, who seemed truly
interested in hearing her story. The mentor, who is African American, was able to really
listen and when Angie finished said, “Whether or not this person chooses to stand by you, I
will stand by you at all times, because I care about you.” That was huge to Angie because it
showed her that her racial identity and socioeconomic status were supported and reassured
her that she was not alone. There goes the phone again. Why does it keep ringing? Angie
reaches over to put the phone on silent and glances at the caller ID. It is her mentor who has
been calling. Immediately Angie feels relief.

The weight of racism is heavy for Angie. Like many students of color Angie is
experiencing “cultural stress” as an African American student on a predominantly White
Angie is feeling excluded and alienated during a critically emotional time and needs support and friendship from someone who authentically values her. She is able to find that in her mentor who is not only caring, but truly interested in Angie’s experience and supporting her success. For Angie, this mentoring relationship is just right because it embraces all of who she is.

A Meaningful Role Model for Robert

Robert has a new mentor. She is a Black woman and she is his boss. He really likes her. She is a great listener and gives good advice, but she is also strictly business and he likes that. Last week they had a meeting, she had an agenda prepared and went over of list of expectations and goals. It was great. He likes working in an environment where folks care about getting things done. He is also very impressed to see a Black woman in a leadership position on his campus. He found out during last week’s meeting that she is from the south and her mom’s from the same town that his mom is from. What a small world. If she is anything like my mom, Robert is sure she will be open and easy to talk to. He is looking forward to work tomorrow.

Robert’s race salience is neutral. While he considers race important, he does not know a great deal about Black history and has not yet begun to develop a more complex identity. Robert is not one who wants his race to be a focal point of his mentoring relationship, but because he has a desire to be in the presence of successful Blacks, his mentor is the right fit for him. He immediately regards her highly because of her
accomplishments and status which makes him more open to a deeper relationship over time. At this point, the mentoring relationship is fairly new, so rapport and trust still need to be established, but already things seem off to a great start because Robert is motivated and looks forward to his time with her.

*Challenging and Supporting Ty*

The phone is ringing, but Ty won’t answer. He knows it’s just his friend trying to get him to go to the meeting tonight. There is no way he is going back there. The last time he went, the other Black students called him ghetto and accused him of playing into a Black stereotype. What the heck? He was just having fun. Maybe he and his friends did get a little loud, but they meant no harm. But the scowls and eye rolls they received from the others were unbearable. Ty feels like he just doesn’t fit in anywhere. At home his Spanish family uses racist slurs against Blacks, at school most White students don’t know what his race is, but he is very aware that his is not White, and now the Black students won’t accept him because he acts too ghetto. Why is he even here? Ty really wants to leave this school and go somewhere else. He thinks about his mentor. Maybe he should call her. She has always been positive and she knows a lot about race, especially Black folks. She never makes him feel different. She just accepts him. The last time he was having some problems he went to talk with her and she was really helpful. She told him that sometimes you have to be aware of your environment and the expectations of that
environment and learn how to adapt. Her words had been caring but also challenged him to try something new. He really felt she cared. Ty’s cell phone rings again. He ignores the call, gets a dial tone and calls his mentor.

There have been a series of events that have begun to challenge Ty’s perception of himself since he came to college. Coming from a Spanish home with little to no nurturance of his Black identity, Ty wants desperately to be part of a Black community. Unfortunately, the other Black students at his college are not embracing his style of interaction and he finds himself feeling ostracized and alone. This could be symbolic of entrance to the Encounter stage of racial identity development where a transformation begins to occur (Cross, 1995). This can be a very important time for Ty and the influence of his mentor might help shape the experience he has. The reason this relationship depicts a right fit, is that Ty’s mentor has accepted him as he is and has not tried to change him or move him to a new level of awareness. Instead, she has embraced him and took time to get to know him. She engages race appropriately, but responding to Ty’s concerns and troubled interactions regarding race, but she waits for Ty to bring this information to her. When he does, she is willing and able to respond in caring, informed and supportive ways.

A Familial Connection for Stacy

There is no place like home. This phrase enters Stacy’s consciousness as she enters the multicultural office. She is always happy to come here. Her mentor works here and she always looks forward to spending even just a few minutes in her presence. Today the office is buzzing. It’s February, Black History Month and everyone is here. Tonight Cornel
West will be on campus and everyone is excited to hear him speak about the status of race in the U.S. Stacy plans to go to this event, but not so much because race is important to her. She is more interested in spending quality time with her mentor. Race is very important to her mentor, who is in a Black sorority and very involved in developing resources to support Black students. Stacy is not so interested in these issues, but respects the values of her mentor. Over the last year Stacy has come to depend on her mentor for all types of support. When she had a conflict with White her roommate, her mentor was there to talk. When she broke up with her boyfriend (his loss), her mentor reminded her of the many other blessings in her life. Overall, this relationship has just helped her feel more comfortable being here at school. Stacy smiles to greet her mentor as she enters the office. A wave of comfort surrounds her and she is again reminded of her blessings.

Stacy is not particularly interested in race. Her valence seems neutral and she appears to know very little about Black history. With this said she feels at home with other Blacks and is drawn to a Black community. Stacy might be said to be in the early stage of racial identity development where assimilation and miseducation are more pronounced. Cross states that Pre-Encounter Blacks accept their race category but do not see race playing a significant role in their life (Cross, 1995). They often have not given much thought to issues of race and this seems to be the case with Stacy. Her mentor is race conscious and this might create an opportunity for Stacy to explore her racial identity further. Right now, the relationship is perfectly suited for Stacy because it feels like family. Stacy is influenced by her mentor and is willing to try new activities and learn new things because of her mentor’s interest. Her mentor has not actively tried to engage
Stacy in race topics, but has been very transparent in sharing her own interests with her mentee. She has invited Stacy to share in her interests, but has not mandated her participation. Again, this is another example of a race conscious mentor who is able to engage race appropriately and provide the type of support their mentee is seeking.

Blazing the Trail for Ryan Alexander

I am not Barack Obama. I am Ryan Alexander. I have accomplished a lot. I work hard and I want to be successful. Yeah, I know that groups want to diversify and that sometimes their interest in me has a little bit to do with my race, but that is not all that I offer. I am African American, but not all African Americans have done what I’ve done. Thank God for my mentor. I chose him to be my mentor when I arrived at this campus and he took me on. He has had very similar experiences in college and I really look up to him. Plus, I can really talk to him about things. Most of the students at this school have parents who are doctors and lawyers so they already know how college works. Not me. Neither of my parents have a four-year degree, so I just don’t have the same understanding and I need help with improving my writing skills, scheduling the right classes and figuring out what to do in the future. My mentor has helped me so much with all of these things and I am so much more improved thanks to his help. How can anyone believe that I don’t work hard or that my accomplishments are based on my race?

This is a difficult time for Ryan who has worked hard to overcome his Blackness. Ryan desperately wants credit for his accomplishments without regard for his race and is frustrated by the constant commentary by his White friends that his success is due to his
race. Many who are in the early stages of racial identity development seek to overcome their race (Cross, 1991, 1995). The seek to be regarded as “human” or “American” as opposed to African American and actively avoid association with their racial group. This is true for Ryan who centers his college experience in White spaces. His African American mentor has been able to establish trust with Ryan and created a space where Ryan feels comfortable. Race is not a topic that his mentor brings ups, but several situations have occurred that have led Ryan to seek advice from his mentor. At those times his mentor has shared his personal experiences of being African American on a predominantly White campus. Ryan has appreciated hearing these stories and has more frequently brought issues of race to his mentor. If Ryan begins to have more racially transformative experiences, this relationship will be a healthy and supportive place for him to receive insight and support. Another example of a “Right Fit” mentoring relationship.

Supporting the Development of Racial Identity for Alan

Alan looks in the mirror. The cap and gown make him look so different. In 30 minutes he will have completed college and earned his bachelor degree. What a ride this has been! He had not expected that college would have been so emotionally challenging. He had been placed in advanced level classes all through high school that were primarily White, so when he chose to attend a predominantly White college, he expected it to be very similar. Unfortunately, what he got was ostracism, alienation and confusion. That first year was extremely difficult. He had not yet found his mentor and life felt very haphazard. During his second year he was introduced to her as a possible resource for career planning.
She turned out to be the most amazing person he has ever met. Many afternoons were spent discussing what it means to be African American and what it means to be an African American male. They learned a lot from each other. They lifted each other up. She will be out there today supporting his achievements as he walks across that stage. He will be sure to find her face in the crowd so that she will know just how important she has been to him in this journey.

Alan’s mentor started out offering career advice because that was Alan’s initial interest. The relationship grew and has become a space where Alan has received information and support for his developing racial identity. The relationship has been mutually beneficial (Jacobi, 1991) and Alan feels that he has helped his mentor become more aware in ways that reflect his uniqueness. Alan’s journey towards identity formation is beginning as he is reconsidering his previous views regarding race and exploring new information and his mentor has been with him along the way. This stage can be volatile as the transition can result in regression, fixation or stagnation (Cross, 1995). This very emotional time of transformation has been intense, but not volatile because of the support he received from his mentor. This “Right Fit” relationship supported healthy and productive racial transformation preparing Alan for the next stage.

These “right fit” fictional narratives demonstrate how mentors can be successful in truly supporting the student mentee of color. Each describe relationships where the mentor has been successful at finding cultural commonality and/or demonstrating cultural competence with the student mentee within a culturally different environment (Freeman, 1999; Madrid, 2004; Tatum, 1997) which has been shown to be a critical element in
supporting students of color (Villalpando, 1996). These mentors were responsive to student interests and concerns, were able to share common racial experiences or provide a space that easily validated the student, another critical element in successfully mentoring students of color (Rendon, 1994). Finally, the mentors in these cases were accessible, empathetic, respectful and honest, qualities that have the most impact on students (Bernier, Larose & Soucy, 2005). In most of these narratives, the mentor has developed race awareness that helps them respond appropriately to their mentees concerns regarding race and in all cases the mentor is not concerned with changing the student, but most concerned with getting to know their mentee and providing the type of assistance and support the student requests. The mentors are genuine in showing their mentee their true selves and letting the student take the lead in determining the direction of the relationship.

All of these relationships present a “Right Fit” type of mentoring relationship that allows the student to exist as they are, receive compassionate support, timely and appropriate challenge, and critical race information to help them navigate their experiences on the predominantly White campus. Race is present and in these particular stories, the mentoring relationship has proven to be a valuable part of the student’s ability to recover from racist experiences, feel supported and included as part of a critical community and bring all of who they are to a space where another individual can honor, receive and help the student integrate these experiences to support their academic success.
A Prickly Relationship

The next fictional narrative describes a mentoring relationship that is not working. Although the mentor has the best of intentions, her interests don’t align with those of her mentee and her actions are pushing her mentee away. This narrative demonstrates how we can never assume that our racial commonality guarantees a positive mentoring experience.

A Growing Resentment in Brooke

Brooke really hates her mentor. This woman, who is also her supervisor, seems to believe that she can make Brooke care about race. Brooke identifies as African American but really has no interest in talking about her race and spends most of her time with White people. Her mentor, an African American woman, has made it clear to Brooke that race is very important to her and uses every chance she can to try and engage Brooke in a personal conversation that eventually ends up being about race. Brooke is frustrated. This is a working relationship. Why can’t this woman just keep the relationship focused on work? During the staff training early in the semester there was an activity where all the student employees were asked to discuss how they each identify based on class, race, sexual orientation, etc. Everyone was split up into small groups. Brooke remembers how irritated she was when her mentor sat in on her group and she felt forced to have a very scary conversation with other students and her pushy mentor. Brooke felt intimidated and overwhelmed during that training and decided to set some boundaries with this lady. This woman is just so emotional! She always shares her personal stories and keeps wanting
Brooke to open up. Not long after being hired, Brooke had made the mistake of telling her mentor that she gets intimidated by African American and now her mentor has made it her personal life mission to make Brooke racially aware. Whenever her mentor starts sharing in that “touchy, feely” way, it just sounds like whining. This is not the type of mentoring relationship Brooke expected or desired. She really only wanted a relationship that focused on work and career development, but this woman seems to have other plans. Talking about race and racism is not something Brooke cares about and all attempts by her mentor to make her care are failing. Brooke has become resentful and frustrated.

This prickly relationship is the result of a well-intending mentor pushing her own agendas. One conversation with Brooke will uncover her disinterest and discomfort with anything racial and Brooke exhibits signs of early racial identity development with a high and negative valence (Cross, 1995). This could mean that her self-esteem is low and building trust with an African American mentor may be difficult. Unfortunately, Brooke’s mentor has not been able to appropriately respond to Brooke by accepting her fully. The literature on mentoring instructs us that mentors should not attempt to transform their mentees by pushing agendas (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Baldwin Grossman, 1988; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008), but instead let the mentee lead the way in determining the direction of the relationship (Morrow & Styles, 1995). Brooke’s mentor is African American and sees a deficit in Brooke because she is not comfortable with her race. She is mistakenly trying to racially “fill Brooke up” by making race the primary topic of their discussions (Sipe, 1988). This deficit approach has proven to be ineffective when working with populations of color and does not foster mentee agency. Lack of trust has been shown
to be a common obstacle within mentoring relationships (Dunn & Moody, 1995) and it would have been worthwhile for Brooke’s mentor to focus more on establishing rapport with Brooke and earning her trust over time.

Missing the Mark

Finally, the last fictional narrative was created to describe Cree’s mentoring relationship which is very different from the other participants, but still provides an opportunity for us to examine the presence of race. Cree is the only participant with a White mentor and her interaction with him is centered on their shared religious beliefs. It may seem unlikely that race would even be a factor within this relationship, but as the following fictional narrative demonstrates, and as CRT asserts, race is manifested in all areas of our society.

No one to turn to for Cree

Cree is leaving the synagogue. She just finished a meeting with her mentor. It was a very good meeting. Her mentor is a youth pastor at the synagogue and a White man. Over the years she has really come to trust and value him as a mentor and spiritual guide and has always appreciated him as a part of her life. However; today was odd and Cree is wondering why she is feeling so bothered. Lately at school there have been some conflicts with other Black students on campus. Cree has really stayed on the sidelines, but has still been feeling frustrated by some of the rude behavior exhibited by others in the name of race. Don’t they realize that they are playing into a stereotype? Ugh, why can’t we just
behave professionally and prove those stereotypes wrong. This is not something she is comfortable discussing with her mentor, and so even after leaving a very productive mentoring session, Cree is still feeling unsettled. “Why am I feeling this way?” She wonders aloud. “I don’t need my mentor to be Black. Our relationship is just fine the way it is. Plus, if I told him what was on my mind, he may not be able to help, but he would help me find someone else I could talk with about this.” But Cree realizes even as she speaks those words, that this is a need that this mentorship cannot address. It would be nice to have a mentor who is a person of color just so that they understand what she’s been going through. Just like how she feels when she spends time with people of color in her community, or her grandparents. She just relates easier to them.

Cree also appears to be in the early stages of racial identity development and like several other participants has an interest in overcoming her Blackness. Cree knows that negative stereotypes exist about Black people and like many in this stage, wants to disprove those stereotypes (Cross, 1995). At the same time, Cree seeks a Black community and has become active in cultural departments and Black organizations. Cree trusts her mentor and has learned a great deal from him. As a White man and her religious teacher, their relationship has centered on spirituality; however Cree’s racial identity plays a role in how she engages her religious beliefs. Her mentoring relationship could embrace her race and acknowledge its influence on Cree’s self-image. Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey (2005) remind us that no single individual will be the perfect mentor who can provide students with everything they need. Mentoring matches are very dependent on the context and environment in which they exist and the reality for students of color in predominantly
White environments may be that the available mentors are not people of color (Jacobi, 1991). This is where the larger community of support becomes important. The connections and shared stories of others can be particularly empowering for the mentee and the mentor (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005) and can become an important community that supports the mentoring relationship. It may not be obvious to Cree’s mentor that race would be an important consideration for the relationship. A developed race consciousness could make this reality more evident and support the mentor’s ability to engage race appropriately to support his mentee. Colorblind ideology has been shown to present an obstacle in therapeutic relationships with clients of color (APA, 2003) and this could also play out similarly within the mentoring relationship.

These eight fictional narratives begin to uncover how effective mentoring college students of color might looks different than mentoring White college students. What becomes most important for us to consider as how we allow our programs, services and policies to become a space of nurturance. More specifically is how we allow our mentoring relationships to become a space where the student can find solace with another individual who is willing and able to honor, support and appropriately challenge the student’s growth and academic success. As indicated in the data analysis, this often requires the ability of the mentor to often set aside his or her own interests, preconceptions and attachments that can be alienating for the student. It also requires the mentor to be vulnerable, honest and transparent.

Mentors do not have to know everything, they can build upon what the student already knows, but they do need to be compassionate, authentic, interested in developing
their own racial consciousness and willing to meet the student where they are. From this place, trust can be earned and transformative work for all can begin. To be a facilitator we must be ready to do our own work. This begins by welcoming and engaging race dialogue in order to build racial consciousness. The earlier counter-narratives and resulting fictional narratives describe the realities our students are facing whether we practice colorblindness or not. Real efforts to dismantle racism will be thwarted by the current racial climate that requires an avoidance of any focus on race. These efforts must center on uncovering the racism embedded within societal structures and institutions as well as promote race consciousness. In order for the mentoring relationship to be effective, there must be some unique attention to race as a factor in the lives of all participants. How might mentoring relationships address the embedded nature of racism in the U.S.? Are mentors able and prepared to facilitate discussions on colorblind notions and their effect on students of color? Does the mentor actively work to educate the mentee of color about the systematic nature of race and racism and advocate on the student’s behalf when necessary? Does the mentor encourage dialogue that supports counter narratives that may describe the student’s reality? This knowledge can guide us towards creating more inclusive spaces where race is not a four-letter word, but a part of our acknowledged history that requires diligent attention to ensure its presence does not marginalize people of color but instead honors their unique experiences supporting true societal transformation.
Model for Race-Centered Mentoring

When we consider the literature one high quality mentoring and mentoring students of color we recognize there are best practices embedded in the overall approach to mentoring that can assist students in achieving academic, career and personal support and success. The challenge as we review the literature is that there is little guidance for the mentor in how to consider their approach to the relationship, recognize student needs and be attentive to their own personality characteristics and range of racial awareness. All of this can present challenges in terms of how the mentoring relationship evolves. Of course, our goal is to provide all mentors with resources and assistance to support their ability to provide high quality mentoring to students of color. It is with this in mind, that the following model has been designed to help outline key factors in race-centered mentoring. The model incorporates the literature on high quality mentoring and best mentoring practices for students of color with the findings of this study.

As noted earlier in this paper, the role of a mentor can vary. Fifteen functions were described in the literature ranging from helping with campus navigation to offering advice, guidance and support (Blackwell, 1989; Burke, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1984). Regardless of the mentor’s role, the findings of this study indicate the significance of how a mentor engages the relationship and demonstrate the need for mentors to not only pay attention to student needs and interests but to also recognize the complexity of the attitudes and beliefs both bring to the relationship. The mentor might be matched with a student whose interests and attitude naturally align with that of the mentor, but very often this is
not the case. The literature tells us the personal characteristics of both members are the key to understanding the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship (Bernier, Larose, & Soucy, 2005; Knox & McGovern, 1988; Redmond, 1990), and there are strategies mentors can apply to help in overcoming barriers and making authentic connections with students of color.

The findings of this study confirm the assertion of CRT by demonstrating that race is active and operating in the lives of African American college students and that their racial identity development can be enhanced through a mentoring relationship that is the “Right Fit”. These are the types of relationships that embrace the student mentee and acknowledge the value they bring to the relationship while at the same time creating a trusting and supportive space where the student feels connected. Mentors who dedicate time to get to know their student mentee and establish good rapport and trust have an opportunity to support their mentee’s racial development in healthy ways. While Cross would assert that the journey of race identity development may occur over the course of a person’s life span (Cross, 1991; 1995), student development theory also informs us that college can be a critical time for identity development and the traditional aged college student might be more often facing situations that are shaping his or her identity (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Complicating matters further, we know that the experience for students of color is different than that of their White counterparts. While mentoring is helpful for White students, the effects of race and racial identity do not impact the White students in ways that may present difficulties in their ability to succeed in college (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995;
Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). White students retain the property of Whiteness where their cultural practices and behaviors are accepted and valued (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Harris, 1993; McIntosh, 1990, 1993). For students of color at a predominantly White campus, their race is not likely to be regarded as valuable and may often be a factor contributing to cultural stress, racist experiences, and misperceptions (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998). How can mentoring ignore these realities? Why not consider the mentoring relationship as an instrument in the shaping of identity and support mentor education to help create more “Right Fit” mentoring relationships?

The following model points to the key elements recommended to help the mentor make stronger connections of support with students of color. The model embraces mentors of all races who exhibit different degrees of race consciousness. The foundation of the model rests on the five components for effective mentoring as described by Jacobi (1991) but aligns these components with race. CRT challenges us to consider that race has contributed to all manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage and it is from this viewpoint that race is centered in the model. Cross’s theory of Nigrescence, the foundation for many racial identity models, describes a journey taken by African Americans as they embrace their Blackness (Cross, 1991; 1995). This journey is taken by the adult who has a pre-existing identity and is experiencing a resocialization creates a transformation (Cross 1991; 1995). The experience is often very emotional, confusing and could benefit from a supportive relationship that allows the student to present themselves as they are, feel accepted and even learn more about their racial identity. The mentor is
encouraged to start from a place of race consciousness when engaging the mentoring of students of color. This might come in the form on developing their own race awareness, participating in race education or actively working to eliminate race disparities. This does not mean that race should be the topic of all conversation when meeting with their mentee. The mentor should be very conscious of the student’s needs and interests and let the mentee take the lead. If the topic of race presents itself, the mentor should be prepared to respond from a place of knowledge and support. While race becomes the focal point of this model it is not intended to overshadow or minimize the actual relationship. It is expected to play in the background of the relationship preparing the mentor to engage race dialogue as appropriate but to also be aware of the many ways that race may be operating in the life of the student of color. If applied, it should enhance the relationship and help the mentor better support their mentee. The model is outlined below:
The blue center of the model reflects the internal work that the mentor must do. During the mentoring relationship the mentor should be conscious of the barriers and obstacles that exist which may prevent them from making a valuable connection with their mentee. The literature lists lack of trust as a common barrier within the mentoring relationship (Dunn & Moody, 1995). We saw how lack of trust impacted Brooke’s mentoring relationship. Her low race salience along with her negative experiences with African American women indicated her lack of trust talking about race or being involved in any situation where race is the center of the discussion. Yet her mentor actively facilitated discussions and activities that required Brooke to disclose personal experiences and perceptions about race. If her mentor had considered this potential barrier early in the relationship, she might have avoided the estrangement that occurred with Brooke and instead minimize the impact of the obvious barrier which is Brooke’s discomfort with African American women. CRT encourages recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color (Lynn & Parker, 2006). The identity formed by a person of color is important and reflective of their experience. Black Identity theory clearly describes the earliest stage of racial identity development as the identity that was formed first (Cross, 1991). It is the identity that was formed as a result of a person’s early development covering years of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood (Cross, 1991). This identity has become familiar and helps the individual feel centered and in control and is not an identity that can be taken lightly. A mentor’s non-acceptance of this Pre-Encounter identity could create barrier to developing a productive relationship. A high quality
mentoring relationship must be able to embrace pre-encounter Blacks in nonjudgmental ways if trust is to be established.
Ask is the second component of the blue center of the model and directs the mentor to asking their mentee questions to better understand their needs. These questions should be asked with the sole purpose of learning more about the student. Initial questions should be safe and low risk until the relationship evolves, at which point questions might become more intimate. Mentors should not judge the mentee’s responses to their questions, but only take note of how the answers help the mentor better understand the lived experience and perceptions of their mentee. Asking supports the mentor in focusing on the needs of the mentee and avoid pushing their own agendas (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Baldwin Grossman, 1988; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Robert’s mentor matches his need for structure and the new relationship is focused on very safe topics related to getting to know each other. While Robert does know exhibit a high degree of more complex race awareness, he does expresses an interest in race which indicates that he might be open to discussing race more with his mentor or engaging in activities that support the minimization of racial disparities, but that may come in time. It is clear that the timing is not now and as the relationship evolves, asking Robert more about his interests may lead to these types of interactions. A mentor can ask questions that help them learn more about their mentee’s community of origin, previous educational experiences, concerns about college and general interests. Question that invite students to disclose interactions they are having with other students, faculty or staff, can also provide insight to the experiences of racial misperceptions, microaggressions or cultural stress that have been described by many students of color at White campuses (Allen, 1992; Attinasi, 1989; Chavous, 2002; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez & Willis, 1978; Smart & Smart, 1995; Smedley, Myers, &
Harrell, 1993; Turner, 1994). These types of question can help a mentor understand the views of their mentee and learn about what matters most. The answers might also give insight to how to best support the student mentee.

The third component of the blue center is Cues and Hints. There is a lot that is unspoken in the mentoring relationship. Within the course of this research study, observations were made that assist in understanding the student participants. A mentor’s role is not to make judgment or to assess what stage of racial identity development their mentee is in, but some basic understanding of racial identity development can assist in helping mentors know what cues and hints to look for. For instance, some Blacks in early stages of racial identity avoid involvement with Black organizations and value Eurocentric ideal (Cross, 1991). A Black student who is only involved in White organizations might be giving their mentor a hint at their values. This is not to say that the mentor should avoid introducing any race-centered activities, but should do so with an understanding that their student mentee may have low or neutral salience towards race and may not engage the activity in a way that values race (Cross, 1991).

Many participants alluded to topics or situations that posed concern even if they were not interested in sharing details. Mentors should pay attention to the multiple cues and hints provided through observation and interaction with their mentee. For example, in this study contradictions between what students say and what they practice regarding race were easily observed. Stacy described race as not a central way of identification, but described the multicultural office as home and her relationships with the staff as familial. These are cues for a mentor that would suggest that race is more important to Stacy than she might
suggest. She might be very open to her mentor engaging race in a way that helps her better articulate her experiences and reflect on her choices in how she responds to microaggressions. This could open up a critical space for dialogue and support Stacy’s ability to better navigate her racialized college experiences. Finally, keeping in mind that racial identity is considered a lifelong process (Cross, 1995) continuous self-reflection is recommended for the mentor. This study does not center on the perceptions and views of the mentor, but acknowledges that the mentor’s identity development and race consciousness is a key element influencing the direction the relationship takes. As the relationship evolves there will be times where a mentor might be triggered by their own values and judgments and attempt to push these beliefs onto their mentee. Keeping in mind that Jacobi (1991) asserts that the mentoring relationship is reciprocal; these can be key opportunities to support the mentor’s own growth. Conscious self-reflection can bring to the surface biases, discomforts, critical moments and successes that can assist the mentor in better understanding themselves and how they are engaging with their mentee.

The second area of the model points to the actual mentoring relationship. It provides information on four key strategies that a mentor can use to support high quality mentoring of students of color. These four key strategies are Learn, Engage, Participate and Teach. Each strategy is discussed below:

Learn

Jacobi (1991) states that mentors should have greater experience, influence, and achievement. This is often considered in terms of career achievements or the mentor’s
knowledge of the college environment. However, in race centered mentoring we apply these criteria in a different way. Learn becomes a strategy that supports the mentor in becoming more knowledgeable and accomplished in the area of race and racism. Even if the mentor is not a person of color, learning about the operation of race allows them to become a more valuable asset to their mentee. This comes in the form of active involvement in race education and training. This study demonstrated how students of color can be confused by race and not have the language or the understanding to articulate their own racial identity or the way race operates in their lives.

Race is difficult to understand. It is structural and ingrained (Delgado, 1995) and is most often viewed as problematic when racist behavior is extreme, but CRT informs us that race operates in ways that are not easily identifiable (Delgado, 1995). This means that we must be intentional in educating ourselves and others about race. The more we understand this complicated construct, the more we are able to recognize and remedy its negative impacts (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). In mentoring, this work can begin with the mentor who has volunteered to be an advocate and support person for a student of color and not miss an opportunity to assist the mentee in navigating their educational space as well as their development of a racial identity.

Cree’s story is an example of a missed opportunity. Maybe it would be ideal for Cree to find a mentor of color to add to her mentor community and this may very well happen. But even with that, a White mentor can still create a space where race talk is welcome. It should not be the student’s responsibility to bring the topic up or to even question where her mentor stands on these issues. Instead, during the course of the
relationship it might have been helpful for her mentor to demonstrate his interest in race. This could have been accomplished in a number of ways some which may have been direct and others that were more passive, but the message would have been clear that this relationship can be a space to support all of who you are. High quality mentoring would require mentors to be more knowledgeable in areas of race to better support their students of color. Additionally, the reciprocal nature of high quality mentoring suggests that learning occurs both ways. Mentors also learn from their mentees. Mentors who are open to getting to know about their mentee’s racialized experiences engage in raising their own level of awareness while also providing support to the student.

Engage Race Appropriately

An in-depth consideration of race must take into account that race is a complicated construct that operates as a systemic force external to an individual but is also integrated into the development of an individual’s identity in many different ways. This complexity should be considered in the mentoring relationship to avoid the possibility of operating off the assumption that students of color are deficient or stereotypically the same because of their race. Racial identity theory informs us that the journey towards developing racial identity can be a very emotional time and there may be a lot of hurt and confusion surrounding a student’s experiences and perception of race (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1995; Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). We can observe this in Angie’s story where she describes the hurt she felt after being rejected by a White friend during a very critically, emotional time. Angie’s mentor was able to engage race appropriately by first providing comfort and
support to Angie, but by also engaging in dialogue that helped Angie learn more about race. Appropriateness is key and can only be determined through interactions with the student. Brooke’s mentor assumed that her lack of interest and comfort with race needed to change. This assumption led to her mentor imposing views onto Brooke that eventually had a negative impact on the relationship. This assumption that the mentee has a deficit or lack something does not sit well for many students of color and does not foster mentee agency (Sipe, 1988).

High quality mentoring is relational in nature. It should provide support, direct assistance, and role modeling (Jacobi, 1991). The development of trust is a key element in supporting this objective and mentors who get to know their mentees, meet students where they are without pushing their own agendas (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Baldwin Grossman, 1988; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008) stand a better chance of having a positive mentoring relationship. Race is affecting their mentee, but the variance in their lived experiences means there is no one way to engage race. Mentors should let the student take the lead on bringing up questions or expressing concerns but should not take on a colorblind ideology (APA, 2003). Instead, the mentor should honor the reality that racism is part of the foundation of U.S. culture manifesting in different forms (Lopez, 2003) and that the student of color has a valid and unique racialized experience.

*Participate*

As noted earlier, no single person can be the sole supporter for a student mentee (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). It takes a network of people and resources to create
a community of support that can assist the student of color in achieving success (Freeman, 1999; Madrid, 2004; Tatum, 1997). This part of the model encourages mentors to seek out those communities and become active participants in programs, events and activities that connect the mentor and the mentee to cultural and support networks. The mentor plays a key role in facilitating social interaction and growth nurturing activities to enhance the mentee’s experience (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). Consider Robert’s excitement when attending the National Black MBA conference and observing all the successful African American professionals or the awareness raising that occurred for Angie when she attended the diversity retreat and recognized similarities in the experiences of her Latino peers. Peer groups and cultural networks have proven to be empowering and academically nurturing in developing cultural consciousness, community and support (Villalpando, 2003). The mentor plays a key role in the relationship and retains the primary responsibility for crafting structured activities, social interaction and other strategies so facilitate the growth and support the progress of the mentee (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005).

Teach

The best way to learn something is to teach it. Issues of race are so often ignored (Lopez, 2003), that it can be assumed that more race education is necessary within U.S. society. Mentors do not need to become race experts but they can actively apply what they learn about race to their work, home and community environments in an effort to help others become more race conscious. This could be exemplified a faculty member beginning to infuse curriculum to be more racially inclusive, an administrator integrating
race awareness in their approach to supervision or a department head leading a review of organizational policies that might be excluding students of color. Several participants in this study shared their appreciation of their mentor’s active involvement in teaching race. Angie, Stacy, Ty, Alan and Ryan Alexander all have mentors who have been active in race education and expressed respect for their mentor’s knowledge and contributions to ending racial disparities. Higher education is the place for critical thinking and societal application of new ideas. If teaching about race does not occur here, where do we expect it to occur? The mentor can share their experiences with their mentee and engage discussion about best practices and challenges. This would support the focus on achievement or acquiring knowledge that is required for high quality mentoring.

This model can prove beneficial to supporting high quality mentoring. Its primary tenets could be incorporated into a formal mentoring program and applied through training tools for mentors or through the types of activities sponsored for mentoring participants. Informal mentoring relationships could also benefit as mentors can take the lead on seeking out resources that support their own race education, paying attention to their own and their mentee’s behavior and getting actively involved in race programming. The mentoring relationship brings together two independent and unique individuals primarily to support the success of the younger, less experienced person or mentee. A mentor who has limited awareness of her own racial identity can unintentionally limit her accessibility to the mentee. We must acknowledge that race is actively affecting the lives of college students of color and must be considered as part of the mentor/mentee relationship. It is not assumed that the mentors all have a high level of racial awareness in order to support the
student, but it is asserted that the mentor’s willingness to engage in race dialogue and education encourages the type of self-reflection that will enable them to participate more fully in the relationship with their mentee and lead to better outcomes than the mentor who is unwilling to explore issues of race.
Summary

In this era where the notion of postracialism has become the popular discourse, it is critical that we explore how race is operating within our society. Have we truly come to a place where all Americans are regarded equitably and race is no longer a divisive factor or is this a notion that exists to soothe the minds of a guilty nation? Multiple reports from diverse industries and institutions provide evidence that race is still an active force that is currently operating to ensure inequity along color lines. Environmental policy has been criticized for disproportionate amounts of pollution, health hazards, unequal enforcement of environmental laws, discriminatory zoning practices and faulty risk assessments burdening non-white communities (Bullard, 1999; Holifield, 2001). Health care scholars cite racial inequities that permeate the health care industry (Engelman, 2001). Why would higher education be any different?

We know that mentoring has been selected as one strategy that has been shown to foster and facilitate the academic success and career advancement of participants and that there is widespread agreement that more high quality mentoring is needed (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). The assertion of this paper challenges us to recognize the importance of race in the lives of us all and particularly in lives of the students of color we seek out for mentoring. If issues of access to higher education are to be overcome, widening
achievement gaps closed, troubling completion rates reduced (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005), disproportionate enrollments in resource lacking two-year institutions balanced (Perna & Titus, 2004) and unwelcoming campus climates transformed, race has to come back to the center of the discourse. So mentoring has become a multicultural programming “savior” of sorts to remedy this massive and troubling concern. The problem posed is that not all mentoring relationships can be considered high quality and the unique experiences of college students of color at predominantly White institutions necessitate that the relationship be effective. The reality is that most college students of color are attending predominantly White institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1993) and are experiencing layers upon layers of barriers ranging from unwelcome campus climates to academic underachievement. Higher education has positioned itself as an institution that values diversity and multiculturalism and well-meaning faculty and staff often volunteer to mentor a student of color. Unfortunately, without the attention to race and racism that is embedded within U.S. society, good intentions can result in regretful harm, student withdrawal and academic disidentification.

One critique of Critical Race Theory is that while there is a specific “call to action” embedded in CRT that challenges researchers to do more than just conduct a study it does not move beyond analysis to action (Lynn & Parker, 2006). The recommended Model for Race Centered Mentoring begins to address this critique. With any social justice framework there is concern if we only study the lives of disenfranchised people but fail to use our newly acquired knowledge to support changes for the betterment of people’s lives. While the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, it’s strength is in its
ability to help us better understand complexities of phenomena, make connections and identify patterns that inspire application of more effective practices (Seidman, 2006).

This paper is written for those who support and engage in mentoring, whether through formal programs or informal personal connections and outlines strategies that mentors can use to enhance the quality of their mentoring relationships. The quality of the mentoring relationship is critical, and when providing support to students of color at predominantly White universities, extra attention must be paid to the operation of race in the lives of all participants. This relationship becomes an opportunity for growth for all involved and if successful, its power cannot be underestimated.

Limitations

Considerations of race and racism are complex constructs that are embedded in the foundation of programs, relationships and individuals. This study centers on the voice of the student mentee who is just one component of any mentoring relationship. It is recognized that voice of the student mentee should be part of a broader framework that includes mentor experiences, mentoring program design and implementation and the interplay of all of the above in order to truly begin to deconstruct the presence of race and racism in the mentoring of college students of color. While this paper focuses on the mentoring of students of color, it does not address the distinct experience of biracial or multicultural students. Students who were chosen to participate in this study had to answer yes to the question of if they identify as African American or Black. With that said, several participants who stated they identity as African American or Black, later disclosed
a biracial or multiracial background. Since this study is based on an assumption of the social construction of race, where racial categorization is not necessarily reflective of true ethnic or racial ancestry, but instead a complicated construct developed on physical traits the student’s self-identification was accepted without question. Although limited, literature suggests that mixed race students choose to express their racial heritage in differing ways (Renn, 2004). Some biracial and multiracial students adopt one primary racial identity, others might embrace all of their racial ancestry and still others might have adopted one primary identity but broaden their views after learning more about their racial background (Renn, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Wallace, 2001). This study considered only if the student identifies as African American or Black and did not consider the various complexities that might also inform biracial and multiracial student identity which could be the focus for future research. Additionally, there are particular contextual factors that might affect the findings in this study including participant socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic location, campus climate, university size and race of interviewer. As with all qualitative research, the intent is to explore the meaning individuals make of a social condition with the assumption that reality is subjective and determined from multiple realities (Creswell, 2007). The thick description of participants, their university and the researcher provided in this report allow readers to gain a clear understanding of the elements affecting this particular study and consider the unique context when determining the transferability of these findings to a different campus population. Participants in this study were not asked to disclose socioeconomic information. Finally, the participants in this study are all traditional aged college students and are members of the millennial
generation. Current research on millennials has generally reported on the generation as a whole and has not studied millennials by racial group (Bonner, Marbley, & Howard-Hamilton, 2011), however there are several studies that show that some similarities across millennials by race and some characteristics that may not apply to particular racial groups (Bonner, Marbley, & Howard-Hamilton, 2011). As more studies are conducted that consider unique differences within the millennial generation a consideration of race and racial identity could be a valuable contribution.

Implications & Conclusion

Race has to come back to the center of the discourse. As mentors this applies to all of us regardless of our race, ethnic background and experiences. We have not been raised in a race conscious society where we are taught the true history of racial discrimination and how it has evolved and practiced today. Even people of color, who are directly impacted by race and racism throughout our lives, have not been educated on the status of race today and have often not done our own healing in order to help others. We all have work to do for ourselves, our students and our society at large. This particular study gives us insight to how important it is for us to do our own work.

As educators, we strive to provide our students with experiences that help them grow, learn and eventually transform into a citizen who has the capacity to actively participate in society in a productive way. We want our students to be adequately prepared to take on the roles of future leadership, community change agents, healthy parents and engaged citizens. One area of focus for all of us has been in the successful development of
inclusive campuses where the gap is closed on the racial disparities that persist between our White students and our students of color. Issues of access to higher education must be overcome, widening achievement gaps must be closed, troubling completion rates need to be reduced (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005), and unwelcoming campus climates must be transformed. While mentoring has proven to be a valuable and highly regarded response to our struggle to achieve this goal, we may be missing an opportunity if we do not consider how we approach the mentoring relationship. The findings of this research may have implications for mentors as well as those who design and coordinate mentoring programs. For the mentor this work can support enhanced relationship building with their mentee as a result of the mentor becoming more racially aware, self-reflective and engaged in issues of race. Specific examples include:

- Enhanced ability of mentor to appropriately respond when a mentee expresses concern or share stories of how race is impacting their life.
- Increased awareness of differences in views and perspectives of students along the continuum of racial identity, increased comfort in engaging students and building trust with diverse students.
- Active engagement in diverse community that expands network of resources for student mentees

For program designers and coordinators, these finding can enhance mentor training, relationship interventions strategies, and community building activities. Specific examples include:
• Honoring of mentee interests when matching them to a mentor.

• Infusion of race awareness building training that centers on the current context of race and how it operates in society.

• Provide programs and services to support students of color along the continuum of racial identity development.

• Prepared program coordinators who understand how to consider issues of race when problems arise between a mentor and their mentee.

Mentors come in all forms. Some of us mentor as supervisors, others just meet an interesting student who we want to support and then there are those of us who sign up with a formal mentoring program. Regardless of how we enter, the message is clear. Race matters. This study invites us to consider the experiences and perceptions of our mentees of color and think about how their lives impact their college experience. As mentors we can either hinder development or help facilitate student transformation.

While there is no clear agreement on what exactly makes mentoring successful (Zachary, 2000), as an intervention, it has become an accepted best practice in an effort to support the success of marginalized populations (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). The general assumption that mentoring is good without a clear understanding of its purpose can be problematic. The theoretical framework applied within this paper centers race in the mentoring relationship by assuming the primary tenets posited by CRT. Race can no longer be considered a historical backdrop to current events, but instead should be regarded as a potent and powerful force that has managed to disguise itself in ways that make it appear non-threatening and inconsequential. Unfortunately, the historical view of race has
allowed for the continuing damage racism causes in the form of concerning statistics regarding the ability for college students of color to achieve academically and earn a baccalaureate degree.

The context within which the mentoring relationship exists matters and this study focused on those that exist at predominantly White colleges and universities. It is not clear if mentoring students of color in more diverse settings would present a different outcome, but we can say with certainty that the literature has described unwelcome campus climates and a cultural incongruence that exists at the predominantly White college campus. Mentoring, as an intervention to address failing college outcomes and to support college students of color, must consider that race is systemic and embedded within American society and that college students of color are forming their own racial identity within this context.
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Appendix A

Eligibility Requirements for Participants

You have been referred as a possible candidate to participate in a research study on Mentoring Relationships & Race. In order to participate in the study, candidates must meet the following criteria:

☐ Involved in a mentoring relationship with an administrator, faculty or staff member within the last 5 years.

☐ Identify as African American or Black

☐ Traditional aged college student (between the ages of 18 – 24) at the time of the mentoring relationship.

If you meet the above mentioned criteria and are still interested in participating in the study, please respond to this email. More information about the study and consent form will be sent.

If at any time you have any questions, you may contact the researcher via email at bridgette.coble@du.edu

Thank you for taking the time to consider participation in this study!
Appendix B

Participant Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research study on Mentoring Relationships & Race. Participants will be selected based on specific criteria. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to your identifying information. You will be notified via email if you are selected for the study.

Name

Year in School

Email Address

Phone Number

Have you been involved in a mentoring relationship with an administrator, faculty or staff member within the last 5 years?

Have you had more than one mentoring relationship?

How meaningful was your primary mentoring relationship to you?

Have you had a mentoring relationship that was not meaningful to you?

Do you consider your primary mentoring relationship positive or negative?

Do you identify as African American or Black?

What is your gender?

Were you between the ages of 18 – 24 at the time of the mentoring relationship?

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or this study, you may contact the researcher via email at bridgette.coble@du.edu

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Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the Mentoring Relationships & Race study being conducted as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The goal of the study is to understand how your racial identity and racialized experiences have impacted your relationship with your mentor. Your participation is completely voluntary, but it is very important. Your feedback will allow us to understand how mentors can better work with their mentees.

Researchers from the University of Denver will be conducting two series of interviews with each participant. They will be taking notes and taping each interview. You may choose not to participate in the study and are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation involves no penalty.

The researchers will, however, treat all information gathered for this study as confidential. This means that only the research team will have access to the information you provide. In addition, when the researcher reports information, a pseudonym will be used in place of your name. Participants will come from multiple universities in Colorado to ensure confidentiality.

There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information you reveal concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

The benefits of being involved in this study include being able to share your unique story and contribute to the future preparation of college student mentors. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, the researchers will be happy to provide one for you. Potential risks of being involved include the possibility that discussing certain issues about your experience may be upsetting. If this occurs, the researcher will arrange for supportive care from an appropriate professional at your university.

If you have any questions at all about our study of the impact of Mentoring Relationships & Race study, please feel free to contact Bridgette Coble (bridgette.coble@du.edu). If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the research sessions please contact. Dr. Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects, University of Denver, 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto, Office of Sponsored Programs at (303) 871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver CO 80208-2121. Thank you again.
“I have read and understand the above description of the Mentoring Relationships & Race study. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation for any language I did not fully understand. I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about my participation. I agree to participate in the study, and I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.” (Please sign below.)

Signature   Date

________________________________________
Print Name

You may keep this page for your records.

Please sign below if you understand and agree to participate.

“I have read and understand the above description of the Mentoring Relationships & Race study. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation for any language I did not fully understand. I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about my participation. I agree to participate in the study, and I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.” (Please sign below.)

_________________________________________________________________________   ___________
Signature   Date

________________________________________
Print Name
Appendix D

The R Factor – Pilot Interview
Transcription

1st Set of Questions

Interviewer: Tell me about your mentoring experience

Respondent: I would say at this time in my life I’ve had three mentors. Two throughout the course of high school and one in college. Interesting enough, all of my mentors have always been women, never had a guy mentor. Of the three, two have been women of color and one has been an identified White woman. My first experience was when I was in high school. My first mentor I got was when I was around a freshman in high school. It was interesting enough, it came about through another relationship I had had and then this woman, who was also White, was like, I think you two should, you know, get together and meet, I think you’d have a lot in common. Turns out we did. She ran a program at Planned Parenthood and I was interested in sort of getting more involved in volunteering in issues. She was like I run an experiential education program, do outreach on sex education with youth that are considered at-risk, you know, I think you’d be a good candidate, and so it kind of started off as that working kind of relationship and sort of expanded into a mentoring relationship. We are actually still friends to this day, still talk a lot but her capacity to mentor me has kind of shifted a bit as its relevance in my life has changed.

My second mentor actually came around in that same job actually. My original mentor did end up leaving two years into the job around the end of my sophomore year of high school and another woman came up. She was a self-identified Latina. She took the job and she just kind of filled in. So it was kind of easy to just make that same leap, sort of get into that same connection.

And then with college, I didn’t’ have a mentor in my first year of college. I was kind of haphazardly going about things. It really came about in my second year, in kind of a more structured format. So my first two mentors just kind of happened. My second mentor relationship was developed around a structured relationship. It came about because I was interested in student affairs and she had a student affairs job and she told me about this program and you know one of the components of it was a mentorship program. So it started out as being kind of intentional about what we wanted to do, what I was looking for so we kind of had that basis of that mentor/mentee relationship and it just kind of grew into something bigger.

Interviewer: Were you officially matched or did you all meet first and decide this is going to work out for us?
Respondent: The basis of the program is that you kind of just approach someone who you want to be your mentor and so you both apply at the same time for the program so the mentor fills out an application, you fill out an application, you apply kind of jointly and then you get accepted. You getting accepted means in a way your mentor gets accepted because they want to make sure your mentor will be qualified and meets the requirements and such so.

Interviewer: Can you please tell me how you identify racially?

Respondent: I identify as African American

Interviewer: What does your racial identity mean to you?

Respondent: I think I’m still very much figuring that out. I grew up in an environment where I had the luxury of being around African Americans without actually having to associate. I know that sounds weird, but I’m gonna explain a little bit more about that. I was born into a very low income, very underprivileged, underrepresented neighborhood which is typical represented by people of color, not all the time, but in fact, that’s the trend. Lived there for about the first eight years of my life and then through a series of fortunate circumstances my parents got better jobs and through some promotions and we were able to move and things just got progressive there. We kind of moved up to say middle class. And so, I make the distinction to where I was born and where I was raised. I remember living in that environment and being around that environment, but where my values came from and where I grew and came into my own is very much around White middle class America.

We were the only African American family in my neighborhood, very typical, you know TV, you know 2-car garage, swimming pool (I grew up in Florida, so we had a pool), four-bedroom house, you know, typical four kids, young family, a dog, fish (laughs). I went to a school that was very racially diverse. It was split almost equally among Whites, African Americans/Blacks and Latinos with kind of, others thrown in there. And the reason why I say that is because in school I had the interaction with being with African Americans, but I was tracked differently than they were. There were maybe one or two African Americans I was in the advanced placement honors track which is a little bit different than a lot of African Americans/students of color were typically tracked in either you know, “you’re graduating” or “you need remedial help”. Those were the other two. So it was a very separate world and so because of that I think my racial identity was very much stunted because I feel that gap because I was around African Americans but I wasn’t learning anything because I wasn’t really associating with African Americans outside of my own family. So that kind of changed a little bit.

That kind of influenced how I went to school, what schools I chose. You know I was like, I wouldn’t mind going to DU even thought it was predominantly White. You know, that’s how I spent my life, that’s what I’m used to you know. I’d interacted with White people my
entire life, what’s four more years? I think the difference was that I didn’t have that to fall back on. I wasn’t seeing other people who looked like me and so I was confident in that enough, even though I wasn’t interacting. So when I came here I didn’t realize that at first. And so around sophomore year I kind of realized, I was like, oh like this is really, really different. This is really White. This is a lot different than what I was growing up to and what I was used to. I was expecting it to be the same. Even though I had diversity, part of me was tracked. But you know, I could choose who I wanted to interact with and here that choice is kind of taken away from me because it just wasn’t here.

And so, for me being African American is really, for me a process. What that means, what that looks like, you know. When you add in my other identities you know, being male, being a college student, 1st generation college student, you know it just kind of compounds things.

Interviewer: How would you say that your racial identity is currently supported or nurtured in your life?

Respondent: I think throughout the last few years, what I’ve been able to do is realize that its missing, umm, interact with it, play around with it, kind of see the different options and then sort of make a decision about how important it is to me. Cause I think race is a very personal thing that I think for each individual it has a very prominent role or it has a very, you know, uh, subservient role in how they live life and how they choose to act upon it. And I think it’s very much a process and I think I’ve had the opportunity to sort of go through it in this kind of whirlwind capacity, but I don’t mean whirlwind in that I wasn’t able to sort of do what I need to do. I think I was able to do what I needed to do for me at the point in time, so I was able to come to the conclusion that race is important to me, but it’s not important that I interact with it all the time. And so, I think that’s kind of where I am now, is that it’s okay if I have a couple of African American friends, but you I really like my Latino friends, I really like my Asian friends, I really like my White friends. So, for me I need to be surrounded by multiple races as opposed to I need specifically African Americans/Blacks to be around, you know. I need diversity in the sense that there’s a lot of different people who look different, more so than I need to see someone who looks like me walking down the street or interact with them on a daily basis if that makes sense.

Interviewer (probe): Do you think that you’ve come to a place where your identity is now supported by diversity?

Respondent: I think so. I think that’s how I feel supported. And those diverse people who are able to sort of understand the race thing. And I don’t mean to call it a race thing, but that’s kind of what it is, you know. It’s this jumble of you know, sometimes you’re here and sometimes you’re there, and sometimes you’re in-between and you’re here and there, and I think people who sort of understand that race is important but it’s not necessarily the defining factor. And I think it’s important that I have those relationships where to people race is the defining thing in their life and I have people who are virtually
colorblind whom I’ve become friends with and who I interact with. And I think for me it’s
important to have that diversity of perspective cause it helps me understand race much
more than just what being Black or being African American is. It allows me to understand
at a much deeper level and broader level because I have such diverse perspectives and
friends that I feel supported in that way.

I think (my view on race) is very generational. I feel like my generation and maybe
subsequent generations have really been able to come to that place that we can kind of view
race this way because other people helped. There are not secular or singular ways of
viewing race. And we are still very much scripting out different ways, but I feel that
because we’ve had so many other different ways that we’ve reached a time now where
we’re allowed to sort of pull elements of this and pull elements from this side and come up
with a more holistic view about race as opposed to it just being about you know, diversity
of skin color or culture. It’s a lot more than that. It’s much more than that. There’s so
many different layers and the more you peel back, the more you kind of discover about it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in
a negative way? (Does this need to be directional? Maybe change question to: Does race
play any type of role in your life?)

Respondent: That’s a really good question. I don’t know. I’m going to be honest with
you. I can’t think of something specific where I can point to that and be like this is how it
negatively affected me. I think what I can say on this sense of negativity is that in
discovering race, I feel like I discover more about myself and through that I’m kind of able
to see my own personal views on race and how I view it and negative aspects I didn’t even
know I had towards people of other races, or people who look like me, especially with
people who look like me. So I think, I was, in a sense colorblind and since I wasn’t force
to interact with it, I wasn’t forced to sort of confront my own stereotypes and misgivings
about race and I feel like as I learn more about my own race, I also discover that I really do
feel this way cause there’s certain stereotypes that I also feel like I hold and these are some
of the prejudices that I have and in that way it’s not negative per se, but it’s a effect of being
racially aware, you know.

Interviewer: Can you tell me anything specific that you have read, seen or heard about
people of your race? (add personal observation to this question)

Respondent: There’s so many things around African Americans, positive and negative. I
don’t even know where to begin. Let’s see... umm... I think one of the biggest, I think
most prevailing thing, not that I’ve necessarily read, this is my own personal observation in
talking to other people, is that people sort of view (African Americans view it this way too)
African American culture as just one thing. There is one way of being African American,
like that is what it is, regardless of what that way is, but there’s that one way, you
know...this is what African American culture is and I think internally and externally we’ve
latched on to this perception that African American culture is just one thing. Anything else out of that is not African American. And then you run into those issues of, oh you’re not Black enough or you’re a sellout or you’re whitewashed or you’re being an Oreo because you like different things. And I think that’s kind of like one of the biggest repelling stereotypes you know in this way that all Black people are the same and that we subscribe to this one kind of cultural phenomenon. Not that all Black people are the same individually on that individual level, but that we all are the same because we all ascribe to the same cultural phenomenon that it’s only one thing. That is what it boils down to is that this is what it means to be Black. And I think it discredits some of the other things, some of the other interests and the diversity that is within the African American/Black community. We’re all so different. There’s so many different styles and in way we stuck ourselves because we try to say there’s this one thing that African American culture is, this one thing you can do. Which I think is different from maybe our White counterparts who don’t necessarily have that kind of constriction because A-you know, Whiteness is still being defined and people still have issues with it. And then B-the luxury of being White is that you can kind of pull things out of different cultures and incorporate it into Whiteness without necessarily selling out. You know what I mean? You’re always gonna be White, whether you’re rich or whether you’re poor, whether you’re dark, whether your light, whether you’re the president of the United States or homeless. You know what I mean? Whereas opposed to being Black doesn’t necessarily. . . the more you attain or the more you kind of move away from this one culture, you change, you become different. You know, you’re not necessarily Black anymore. Yeah, you may be Black from the outside, but something’s different.

2nd Set of Questions (same day for the pilot)

Follow up – anything to add since last interview?

Interviewer: Do you see race showing up in your mentoring relationship?

Respondent: Oh yes, most definitely. More specifically because the program that I applied for is specifically for students who identify as people of color, or students with disabilities, or LGBTQ students. So, it’s something that we talk about, a lot. It’s part of the program. It’s something that we talk about. It’s part of our conversations. You know, what does it mean to be African American , what does it mean to be African American male. How people are going to view you, how are people going to look at you. And race just kind of shows up. Race shows up all the time. Specifically, when there’s so few. Like we wouldn’t need this program if there were an abundant source of people of color and LGBTQ students going into to higher education. So, what does that look like you know. You might be places where you might be the only African American student. Might be places where people are not going to understand how to interact with you. So talking about that is super important. More particularly because it’s not a field that people grow up in and think they want to be in student affairs. People just kind of fall into it.
Which is really kind of interesting because it’s been around forever. Still, you just fall into it. That’s just the way it works. So talking about race is very important, you might be headlining in some places. You might be representing. Even though you don’t mean to, you’re going to be just because of where you’re going to be and the areas that you’re going to be in. You know, so what does that look like, you know, how is that gonna be?

Interviewer (probe):  What if you were in a mentoring program that didn’t have these topics embedded, would you expect that the same types of questions might occur?

Respondent:  Yes and no. No, I wouldn’t expect it but the qualities I would look for in the mentor/friendship relationship, I think it would just happen. I want to clarify, in my mentor relationship it’s really good because it takes it to the other issues of race, the other issues of access, the other issues of all these things. It takes out of the realm of this is what’s happening and puts it in a private, personal sphere. How do you deal with this, how do you interact with this? Which I think is different than us being in a mentoring relationship and we’re talking about these issues that we know already exist that affect everyone. I like to think that my mentors are very diverse, maybe not gender diverse, but diverse for the purposes of this, in terms of race.

Interviewer:  Where does trust come up for you in a mentoring relationship? (consider proactive approach of student in seeking a mentor).

Respondent:  I’m one of those people who is very good at reading people. I’m very good at being able to figure out how much I can trust the person to an extent through just talking, through personal interactions, through sharing tidbits of information that aren’t necessarily private, but aren’t public either and kind of see what they do with it. And through that process I start learning to trust them more. I think that’s my way of also getting them to trust me. Through those conversations it becomes more and more personal. I think that’s how it was in my first mentoring relationship. We learned from each other. There’s always something to learn. I really feel like in a mentor/mentee relationship it should be give and take. It shouldn’t be this, “I have something to teach you, I’m gonna take you under my wing because you look like your dogged out, let me help you, lift you up, you know.” You should be lifting each other up.

Interviewer:  What about race coming up in your previous relationships?

Respondent: Yeah, I think more so with my second mentor. Because my first mentor, we talked about race a little bit, in the very public race. Because we were dealing with at-risk youth who just happened to be youth of color just because of the areas that we were servicing, the trends. So we talked about race in that aspect, but I think that with my second mentor, we could talk it on a personal level. I was able to ask her about her experiences about being a woman of color, what that was like, how that affected her teaching, being an outreach educator, you know, did she feel that people related to her a
little bit better. So that’s how it came up, in the work that we did that’s how race came up.

My relationship with my current mentor is really unique because it went from student-student affairs professional to mentor-mentee to employee-employer. You know there’s all these different layers that sort of compound everything. Sometimes I miss the days when it was just, you know, mentor/mentee because I love working with her and doing the work that we do, but being a mentor on that level is a little bit different. I don’t get a chance as much to sit and talk with her like I used to.
Appendix E

Interview Protocol

First Interview

Question # 1  How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Question # 2  How important is your race to you?

Question #3  How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Question #4  Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Question #5  Can you tell me about anything you read, seen, heard or observed about people of your race?

There is a one to two-week break between the first and the second interview. During this time transcription will take place and notes will be reviewed by participants.

Second Interview

Question # 1  Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Question # 2  Is race present in your relationship with your mentor?
If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Question #3  What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Question #4  Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

Question #5  Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?
Appendix F

Observation Protocol

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<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Personal Reactions</th>
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<td>What aspects of myself am I bringing to the analysis?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What did I notice when they arrive?</td>
<td>How do I feel?</td>
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<td>How do they look?</td>
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<td>How do they sound?</td>
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<td>Body mannerisms &amp; facial expressions</td>
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<td>When did they show discomfort?</td>
<td>What don’t I like?</td>
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</tbody>
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Participant Name

Date of Interview
Appendix G

Participant Interview Transcription

Interview 1A-Ty

First Interview

Question: How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer: I identify as biracial and then my current mentor identifies as African American.

Question: And you identify biracial as what two races?

Answer: African American and Spanish

Question: How important is your race to you?

Answer: I think it’s really important sometimes. Especially like on campus. I don’t feel a part of the group so I feel like it’s more important to me then but like when I’m with my family and stuff, race isn’t an issue. I don’t have to think about it because that’s my family and that’s how I identify with them and I don’t really identify with them on that level. So I guess it’s more of an issue when I’m around people who identify heavily as something else other than I do.

Question: So on campus, you mean at your current college?

Answer: Yes, at my current college.

Question: So, to follow up, in terms of your experience at college, How do you see it as important when you are here?

Answer: I think I’m more aware of it because I know that I’m not White. I think that’s just part of the reason and I don’t really fit in with the White, college White rich stereotype and so maybe even that plays into it that I’m not rich and don’t feel that way also. I think it’s just being different and having a different viewpoint and having different experiences because that’s the reason why it’s important. Because I can see those all the time when I’m around other people and they’re asking questions, stuff like that.

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Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: I think especially working in the multicultural office I definitely, really nurture it and I get to learn about my African American heritage too because that hasn’t really been a part of my life in the past. Because my father was African American and he wasn’t in my life so there was no one to really foster that history or to teach me other than what I got in school. So (my mentor) has taught me a lot and I just learn a lot like just from her talking to me and just being here and getting to participate in the events and things like that. And the rest of the staff too cause the more Spanish side, I even get that cultural piece from other people here too so it’s really wholesome for me to be here.

Question: Are there any other places in your life where you would say your racial identity is supported or nurtured?

Answer: I don’t think so. Like maybe at home with my roommate because we’re really good friends. Me and her talk about racial issues and stuff that we experience. And even sometimes with my sister, but not really with my mom or anybody. I guess they worked so hard to assimilate that so it’s not important to them to be cultural I guess. So we’re not really cultural in my family. We just celebrate the American holidays and there’s no culture really, so I don’t get it at home. But I think just with my sister and people closer to my age especially outside of them is where I think I get that cultural piece that I can foster.

Question: Is your sister older?

Answer: She’s younger

Question #4 Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer: I think for me, I never really experience (racism) directly because I have the privilege of having light skin so people don’t really necessarily know what I identify as and I can really pass off for White when I wanted to. So mostly my contact with racism would be like, one time when my friend got called a nigger like it really impacted me personally because I identify as Black too, just because they weren’t saying it to me. . . it really hurt her too, but I think it hurt me just as much even though it wasn’t towards me because I never experience it and never deal with it, just to hear somebody be so cruel. Because it’s cruel for somebody to say something like that.

Question: What were the circumstances?
It was an argument between her and a friend, or somebody I don’t even know who it was. And it got really heated and then they started exchanging ??? and then that happened and it was just like. . .it caught, I think it caught everybody off guard really. It was just crazy. Cause it never happens to me so I was really shocked to even hear somebody like do it, even that far out, you know it was not even towards me.

Was there a group of people? Did other people hear it?

There was people around. Not that I knew. You could tell that people notice when somebody says something like that. You know, it was kind of like in a movie you know when everybody stops, it’s like, you know.

No

And your friend is African American?

Yes, she’s visibly African American. She has dark skin. Yeah, it was crazy

So, did you all talk about it afterwards?

Yeah, we processed it but like what do you do? I think I was shocked about it and she was more verbally mad about it and just kind of like venting like she couldn’t believe it and stuff like that. Which is like how we are anyways usually she’s the one talking and I’m the one listening.

Can you tell me about anything your read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

I kind of feel like it seems like you can’t be successful unless you’re popular or like you’re in entertainment or something as far as like African Americans. I think that’s like a really big perception. I guess it doesn’t really get glorified like the other things that people are doing. . .well I guess now with like Obama…but he’s popular, like he’s famous. He’s still kind of like an entertainment figure I guess. So I think maybe something like that?

I just thought of something. I can see that it’s (race) really become important when I went home to help my grandmother move a couple of weeks ago and she starts complaining to the effect of like, “oh, ok well I’ll just nigger-rig it”. And I was like. . .I guess before college I never would have thought about it or it never would have been a big deal. But when she
said it, I was like “What?!” Are you kidding me? I told her that she shouldn’t say that and I even like offered an alternative. Like you can say “Jerry-rig”. Why do you have to say that? You know why does it have to be that? And I tried to like explain it to her and I can just see little things like that. . . that they’ve always done but like now I’m more aware. Since I’ve come here I’ve learned about things like that and the aggressions against people.

Question How did she respond to you?

Answer I think she just kind of like brushed it off like, she didn’t really. . .cause my grandmother’s like the type, she’s very traditional so like you’re disrespectful, you shouldn’t say to her like. . .I’m like, I still say what I have to say but that’s how I felt, but I think she kind of like just brushed it off, but we’ll see if she does it again around me. Maybe it’ll least get her to think about it.

Question So did you talk to anybody at your college about that situation?

Answer Not really cause I didn’t really think about it until just now. But I do talk to (my mentor) about things like that all the time. I always tell her that I can just see the dynamic changing. Somebody told me a story about how their family felt a certain way about them and I asked her (mentor) , “I wonder if my family feels oh like that I think I’m better than them. I wonder if my family feels that that way cause I’m in college. She’s like, “maybe. Maybe they do because they don’t understand the significance of it.

Question Are you the first to go to college?

Answer Yeah. It’s interesting. I mean, they never acted like different, but sometimes it sometimes feels. . .it feels kind of like a power dynamic you know like, they feel intimidated or they feel like, I feel kind of nervous sometimes, like I’m going to make them feel kind of stupid. But like, I guess dropping knowledge or like sharing lives with them, sometimes I feel like I limit myself. Like sharing things too, I don’t want to make them feel that way about me.

Interview 1B - Ty

Second Interview

Question Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Answer Nothing really that I can think of.
Question: Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Answer: I would say yes, I think it is but in a more positive way just because of that person. I feel we talk, like, I guess I get that cultural piece from them and I just learn and talk and bounce ideas and stuff about race and so yeah, I think I am aware of it.

Question: What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Answer: I think race is very important in her life just because that’s the kind of work that she’s in and dealing with those issues and things like that. I think it’s very important to her just because she takes pride in being African American and so that’s why I think race is very salient and she takes pride in being successful and a positive influence and being and being an African American person. Because sometimes I think that people think we don’t exist and so I think she takes pride and it is very important to her.

Question: And how long has she been your mentor?

Answer: I’ve been working with her for three years.

Question: Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

Answer: Absolutely, for me I think it’s really important especially for students of color to get that. Just because it’s hard to be a person of color in a “white-collar” community. This college is very much that. It’s really a white-collar community and so, it’s a factor and so having that person to talk about it with has been really important and really influential for me and just helping me have a positive experiences and talk about it and just understand the differences that happen in the professional world and how much harder people feel that have to work just in general. So just really being able to identify that and talk about that is a really important piece for me in my mentorship. And so that’s a reason why I enjoy working with her so much because I get that and I learn so much about it every day from her.

Question: Is there ever a time where you and your mentor have clashed around perceptions, beliefs about race?

Answer: I can’t think of any situation where we’ve clashed over something like that.
because I think me and her are really on one accord and we understand and
I don’t know if talk about it like that where we’re clashing. . .it’s just
educating and learning from each other and stuff like that. So we never had
any conflicts surrounding race. I can’t really think of any conflicts we’ve
ever had to be quite honest. It’s very positive give and take. I guess my
relationship isn’t technically defined as a mentorship because she’s my
supervisor but she’s just so. . .she gives me the ability to work and be free
and learn from her and so I think that’s really what’s so positive about it
because she’s giving me experience but also kind of forcing me to do
things on my own.

So being there and like helping me. . . I know I can always go to her if I
have a question or if I think that I’m doing. . .I always like, go to her if I
think I’m doing something that might be offensive to other people or other
students of color. I look up to her and I respect. . .she’s really positive.

Question
Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?

Answer
Absolutely. One thing that I really struggled with especially in my
freshman year was just kind of fitting in because I never really. . .especially
racially I never really chosen like am I gonna hang. . .like be White. . .and I
feel like with the White people they feel like I’m not White enough and then
with Black people I’m not really Black enough and so that was something
that I was really struggling with and (my mentor) would say. . .I stopped
going to Black student club meetings because. . .my friends. . .I guess
sometimes, we’re loud, like I know that, that’s just how we are you know
and so I think that was just playing into a stereotype of like, when you’re
with your friends, you’re just like amped up and you’re excited and so a lot
of the times I found myself being. . .around the Black people being called
“ghetto” and stuff and so that was really different for me and being like you
know, now I’m too Black. Now I’ve gone to college and so she just really
helped me work through that, like my biracial identity and understanding
when I need to like. . .when I’m in different environments, how it’s going to
come in to play and stuff like that. Just really helped me work through
that. That was something that I struggled with my freshman year and my
sophomore year. Just really trying to figure that out.

I think I was just feeling kind of alienated and my friends would speak to
this too. People didn’t want to hang out with us because we were, I guess
they’re coming from like, richer schools and more preppy. . .so they were
expecting us, since we’re coming to this college to be like them. And so I
think it was hard especially because we are coming from low backgrounds
and we’re coming from high schools where everybody kind of acts like this
you know, and so it was really interesting.
I would say this relationship out of a lot of the ones that I have with a lot of administrators here has been probably the most positive and what’s kept me at this college because I struggled with that whole. . .do I fit in here? So I really thought about leaving, transferring. She’s the one who was able to talk me out of it. And now that I’m here and in my senior year I’m really glad that I stayed because I might have regretted. . .I don’t know. . .if I’d known what I have gained since then I would have regretted it but I don’t know what would have happened if I would have left either.

I really think it’s important for everybody to find somebody. . if they don’t have it at home. . .or just find somebody who can help them cause I don’t know if I would have made it if I didn’t have the support of her them here, this office.

Interview 2A-Robert

First Interview

Question: How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer: I identify as African American and my mentor is Caucasian

Question: How important is your race to you?

Answer: My race is 100% important. My dad’s from Nigeria so our family does consider race seriously and with pride.

Question: What does that look like for you?

Answer: There’s obviously different views of how everybody views different races and I just try to do my best within my power to try to represent my race as well as possible.

Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: That is a very good question. . . (long silence). I’m just having a hard time just thinking about the question. Could you repeat the question?

Question: So it’s like if you said you value the environment. So I might say the environment is very important to me. And someone might say, well how is that nurtured in your life? How do you support that value? I might say, well
I surround myself with friends who also value the environment and we are involved in activities in the community that are about recycling. You nurture something by how you give it attention.

Answer: I think I would have to go with the previous answer that I gave in just represent my race as being very prestigious and trying to decrease a lot of the negative statistics that we have towards our race.

Question: So do you feel that you actively do things to help minimize the negative?

Answer: Ummm…I have intentions to do that after I graduate, but with my limited time I think the thing that I do right now is just do as well as possible in school. That’s it for the time being, but as soon as I graduate I already have plans of helping out my community.

Question: So would you say that there are people in your life who nurture your racial identity?

Answer: Yes, that’s the one thing, my roommates are also African American and you now the subject always comes up. We talk with each other just about our race and what it looks like in today’s times versus the past times and maybe what it will look like in the future. So that’s kind of how I nurture towards my friends. And with my family. They’re already in the workforce I’m the only one that’s in college, everybody else in my family is in the workforce right now and they’re always telling me about their experiences in work and how/where their position stands.

Question: Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer: I’d have to say in class when talking about politics and kind of the demographics and how people get placed in society in terms of income. We had kind of a debate and being that there’s only two African Americans in the class, we had a low representation so through that experience, we kind of just held our ground. We didn’t have a bias opinion. Just because when you’re biased you don’t get input from being biased so we gave our case and it just kind of seemed like two against the whole class. But everything was fair. No arguments came out. Nobody felt like they were cornered or anything like that. It was a good experience but it would have been nice to have had more representation.

Question: Do you feel like the representation was because there were no other people of color in the class?
Answer: Yes. There were only two.

Question: And they were both African American? And were you doing a presentation?

Answer: It was kind of just open discussion.

Question: And what was the topic that you were discussing?

Answer: Politics in general, demographics and how different demographics go into certain income brackets and why that is.

Question: And so you and the other person of color saw things from the same perspective?

Answer: Yeah. The other people in the class were just learning about it. They had a misunderstanding because you look at it through a book and they have their definition but, um as me and the other person in the class, we have seen it through our own eyes and we have other friends and family that are in situations and all that, so we kind of basically explained to them and told them the real things instead of what’s in the books.

Question: Ok, so you gave them more of an education.

Answer: (Laughs). Yeah, exactly more of an education, there you go.

Question: Can you tell me about anything you’ve read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Answer: I don’t know if this is gonna work, but about two months ago I went to the National Black MBA Association and I went to the career fair out in LA with my sister cause she’s also doing her MBA at Bradley University in Illinois. And we went out to Los Angeles and it was the first time in my life I saw rooms full of successful Black African American people and it was like the best experience I’ve had in my life and I came back to Colorado just saying I want to get to that point.

Question: So it was a conference?

Answer: It was a conference, but after the career fair there was a lot of like social networking. We talked to a lot of people from different companies and they were all graduated and well educated. I never, through my experience I had never ever seen that before. I’ve met people obviously, African American people that are very educated, but to see just a whole group of just 100’s and
100’s of them it was just definitely an experience that I never ever been through before.

Participant had more to say after the tape recorder was turned off. Below is a summary of The remarks:

Expressed a strong interest in being a positive representative of the African American race. Choosing college, showing up to class, getting involved, speaking up in class and getting Good grades are all ways the participant is a positive representative.

Talked about how it is hard to understand racism today, but that it still exists. People do things, step out of the boundaries. Who is going to teach them?

Has not experienced racist problems at college but sisters at another school have talked About racist activity on their campuses.

Interview 2B-Robert

Second Interview

Question Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Answer No, I said everything I wanted to say at the first one.

Question Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Answer With my mentor most of it is just straight business. When I go in there we have an agenda. We talk about what we’re gonna get done, so race doesn’t really come up. But I’m sure. . .we have a relationship, I have an open relationship with her where I can say hey something is happening that I’m not comfortable with race wise she would talk about it with me and give me ideas on how to handle it.

Question Can you describe the kind of mentoring relationship you have?

Answer Well, um, my current mentor—we meet every Thursday at 10:00. I met with her this morning and the meeting is specifically for what are you doing or what are you planning on doing in the near future or from this time right now to the next time we meet, what goals do we want to finish and what’s on the agenda basically.
Question  So is this around school?  Around career?

Answer  Yeah, career.  The position that I currently hold with the department  I’m working for.  We have weekly goals and that’s what we talk about.

Question  Was your mentor assigned to you?  How did you find this person?

Answer  She was assigned to me.

Question  Is she your supervisor?

Answer  Yes, she’s my supervisor.

Question  So when you all meet you talk about your job?

Answer  Yes

Question  So how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship?

Answer  Like I said before race isn’t really present when we talk to each other and I don’t really mind that it’s not there. Definitely if there’s a problem, if I was uncomfortable like I said before, I would definitely talk to her about it but nothing has come up and there hasn’t really been a reason to talk about it.

Question  Based on what you know about your mentor, what is your perception of how he views race?

Answer  Well, my mentor is also African American and I really couldn’t tell.  Like I really can’t tell how she views her race because I never talked about it.  I don’t think there would be any telltale signs of how she uses it, how she deals with it or anything like that.

Question  Where do you meet, in her office?

Answer  In her office there’s a lot of artistic stuff. Now maybe those artists can be African American, I don’t know who the artists were but she a lot of art in her room. I guess I can assume that. . .I don’t have the right to assume, but I’m thinking is she’s not as strong, in African American culture, as like my parents are. That can definitely be misconstrued.

Question  How long have you had this person as your mentor?

Answer  Since August of last year.
Question: Have you two ever learned anything personal about each other?

Answer: Well, it was August of last year but I was an intern so we really didn’t meet often. It was not until this semester where I got promoted to a higher position where I’m meeting with her weekly so this is the first time where I’ve really had one-on-one’s with her. I found out this morning she is from the south and her mom’s from the same town my mom is from so we learned that and I know that she’s very open to anything that you want to talk about she’s open to talk about. She’s a very great listener and she gives you very good advice. She gives you her true feelings about what she feels about a situation.

Question: Would you say that you want race to be considered at any point in a mentoring relationship?

Answer: Yeah, um. as far as like a racial relationship I feel like it’s ongoing, when we it’s going to come up here and there. I feel like a lot of this comes up even in a business realm, it’s like when you have an HR department you talk to the HR and tell them about what you see can change in the company about diversity and what are the problems with diversity. I feel that that’s where racial matters really should be dealt with.

Question: Does your department ever do any programming?

Answer: Yeah, that’s basically what it’s all about. Our programming is for all students, like all student activities so we don’t really put (diversity) into effect. We try to reach everybody. They have Black student clubs and GLBT groups where they do their events and they focus on a specific demographic on the campus.

Question: How does your mentoring relationship nurture your racial identity? Do you feel that this mentoring relationship nurtures your racial identity?

Answer: As of right now, no, not at all, but I feel if we have more meetings, we have one-on-one meetings so nobody else is in the room, it’s completely quiet, it’s just me and her I feel as if it may, like down the line. Cause she’s been to different universities and done mentoring for herself and I’m sure we’ll talk about it and what it was like for herself and what it was like. I’m pretty sure from the south to here there was a difference so talk to her about how she dealt with. . . .
Interview 3A - Brooke

First Interview

Question: How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer: I identify as African American and my current mentor identifies as Black.

Question: How important is your race to you?

Answer: Probably not that important. I’ve never been in a situation yet where...well, I can’t say that either. It’s not that important but I guess in a way, I know when to play the card if I need to.

Question: Tell me more about that. So, typically day to day it’s not important. There’s certain situations where it becomes more important?

Answer: Yeah

Question: Ok, so tell me more about those situations.

Answer: (Giggles). Applying for college was a big one because I come from a single mom, one job, African American. Clearly I had more opportunities to get funding to go I also dance and as light skinned as I am, I have advantage over other Blacks that are there because I fit the mold that the team wants but at the same time, if there were to ask they could still say they’re integrated.

Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: (Long pause). Hmm...I don’t know. I never...really...been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really.

I can say that I do feel more comfortable with Whites just because I grew up around that and I do feel more comfortable with people older than me. I’ve gotten a lot of backlash from my dad for not joining multicultural offices and being involved with Blacks per se. Just because female Blacks is the most hatred I get from any other race.
Question: So is your dad Black?

Answer: Yes

Question: So he pushes for you to connect with multicultural offices?

Answer: Yes

Question: Do you feel that you want to have your racial identity more supported in your life or do you feel that the way it is now is okay with you?

Answer: I’m cool with how it is now. Definitely developed into it. Identified myself, so this is who I am and you kind of go with what works.

Question: Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer: Does it need to be college?

Question: It should be while you were college age. Ideally, something while you were in the college age range. If you just can’t think of anything, then any example will be fine.

Answer: I can’t say any times in college. It was mostly when I was growing up. The biggest one is until about I was 13 everyone thought I was adopted because I look nothing like my mother. And then my first real relationship, I got a lot of backlash from it because it was an interracial couple and growing up people didn’t understand exactly what that meant or if it was okay

Question: So you were in an interracial relationship in high school and you dealt with other people’s reactions to your relationship?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Which was negative?

Answer: Mmm. Hmmm

Question: And so what did that mean to you? How did you interpret that?

Answer: I flat out didn’t understand it. My mom always dated interracially so I was used to it growing up but he took it harder than I did. So it caused a lot of problems down the road.
Question: Can you tell me anything that you’ve read or seen or heard about people who identify as African American?

Answer: I really don’t know. That’s kind of a hard one cause I don’t really pay attention. Cause it’s not that big in my life to be able to pay attention to it or want to figure it out. I really don’t know how to answer that.

Question: That’s ok. You don’t have to have an answer. Do you feel that there are any general opinions from any people that you know regarding Black folks?

Answer: (Long silence). I’ve never heard someone directly say anything about race but I mean it’s just little social cues where you can tell they’re not comfortable or you can pick up on what they’re really thinking even though they’re not saying it. Just situations like that. I can see it and it’s mostly the stories that I hear but it usually tends to be with other races than Black.

Question: So you’re seeing it with people of color not necessarily African Americans?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Do you have an example?

Answer: Like when someone walks into a room, I’ve seen people move away or I heard one story about two of her friends. They went to go into a hot tub and once that happened, all the White people left for whatever reason. But when the male got in it was okay.

Question: Ok, so it was a male and female?

Answer: It was two females and a male, both Black and they went over to some hot tub pool thing at one of the apartment complexes and majority Whites live there. And so I guess a couple of girls were in the hot tub and when all of them got in. . well actually when the two girls got in all of the other girls got out. But when the guys came over to get in they came back.
Question Is race present in your relationship with your mentor?

Answer Like as an issue?

Question Anything. It could be in a positive way, a negative way or in a neutral way. Race can show up in any way shape or form. Would you say that race is present in any way?

Answer Yes.

Question How would you say it has shown up?

Answer During our staff training we did an identity skill thing... We went camping and then we were asked to do an activity that defines how we identify in the world based on how the world classifies races, sexual orientation, class...all that stuff. That’s where it came up and my advisor, she identifies as an African woman and she sat in on one of our little groups because she knew from the get go that I’m intimidated by African women so she wanted to learn more about it and she also expressed how she was excited that she is my advisor so I could gain that experience.

Question She identifies as African or African American?

Answer African

Question Ok, African, from Africa. Or is she Black?

Answer (Hesitates). Where is she from? I don’t know. She was not born in Africa...

Question Ok, so she identifies as American. So either African American or Black.

Answer Maybe it’s Black. I know it’s not African American. I know that for a fact. It has to be Black.

Question So she sat in on a small group discussion?

Answer Yeah, we got split in groups of four to five and then we just had to share our story with those group members. She chose our group to sit in on.

Question Was she the only advisor in your group?

Answer Yes
And she just happened to be your mentor. And how did that feel to you?

It didn’t bug me but at the same time, doing an activity like that right from the get go when you really don’t even know these people is intimidating and overwhelming so I understand where she’s coming from on wanting to get on a deeper level because she is a very emotional thinker but at the same time we finally figured out the fine line of “I don’t talk about my personal life, so please don’t ask me”. So it took a while to develop that.

Have there been any other situations where race has shown up with you and your mentor?

No.

So, just that one time?

Yeah.

How often do you and your mentor meet?

I see her every day when I’m there and we are supposed to have one-on-ones once a month and then myself and the other coordinator meet with her monthly as well, but once we kind of got it out on the table that I’m the emotional person and I’m very business forward, business mind set, our meetings kind of stopped after September because I was always in the office anyway. If we ever had a question it was answered then and there, we didn’t wait until our meeting time.

But in terms of your mentoring relationship, is it a supervision relationship more so than a mentoring relationship?

More so since that’s kind of how I catered it.

Ok, but that’s okay with you. That’s how you want it to be?

Yes

So she’s responding to what you said you wanted.

Yes

What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?
She’s very open about it because she does a lot of diversity workshops. But I know she also expresses the hard time she has living here and finding people to connect with because of her race and because of the age differences since we’re either all college or family. there’s not a lot of singles in the area so she’s struggling with that.

So for her race is a very important part of her identity and she talks about it a lot?

Mmm hmmm. All the time. She always shares her personal stories with everyone.

How does the way that she talks about race affect you?

It doesn’t really at all. I mean half the time that she does talk about her personal life I kind of just shut her out because to me it’s whining. She always talks about this one guy in Boston, like. . .wake up, he doesn’t like you like that (laughs). That’s just my take on her personal stories. I don’t know if she does it because she likes the social aspect that much and she wants all the attention on her or if it’s more of, I really want guidance on what to do in this situation cause she never really follows through on any of the suggestions made.

Is she older

Uh hmmm. She’s 33

Would you say that it is important to you that your racial experience is considered in your relationship with your mentor?

No.

How come?

I understand the importance of your background and this is who I am and this is where I come from but I don’t think that should be a judgmental thing up front with the people that you’re working with. Because yes, your background defines who you are but it shouldn’t be stereotyped.

So it’s not something that you seek out in your relationship with a mentor?

Yes.

Did you choose her as your mentor?
Answer: No

Question: It just so happened that you ended up with a Black woman as a mentor.

Answer: Yes.

Answer: Like, has she helped me with issues?

Question: That is one way of nurturing. Nurturing is like when you hold a baby and you tend to all of that baby’s needs. Do you feel that this relationship nurtures your racial identity in any way.

Answer: Yes. I know that if an issue were to arise, she would listen but other than that we don’t ever mention it or talk about it. If I need help, she’s there if I want to use it.

Question: What do you feel you learn from your mentor?

Answer: That’s hard (laughs). Cause we’re such opposite ends. I mean I admire her because she always has a positivity to the situation where I’m more negative mind set, kind of realistic. I give kudos to her for wanting to reach out and wanting to be a part of every aspect that we do. I like that she makes it a point to show up to our events, be involved in it. She’s also expressed that she wanted to be a part of our committee meetings because she wanted to get to know them as well. But that’s about it. Just businesswise we think completely differently. Especially with figuring out who we want to target market to. She, in a way, finds that targeting your market is discriminating against others. Where I see it as, no I know I want to target to these people because I know they’re gonna take it and it’s gonna make it more successful as a whole. So we’re opposite on that.

Question: So give me an example.

Answer: We did a breast cancer awareness event just on the plaza and we were talking about the information that we wanted to put up on the board and she wanted to challenge us on not making it only about women, she wanted us to look at men and the struggle that they go through as well as transgender and things like that, but, . .so we tried, and we did find information that men can get breast cancer on rare occasion. That’s about all we could do, cause the facts just aren’t there or the knowledge isn’t known because it’s not something that is accepted in society, yet.
Question: So what happens when you have a difference of opinion?

Answer: I kind of just take her feedback and see what I can do with it and if I can’t do anything, just tell her that. But we’ve never had a talk on... in business, this is how you execute a marketing plan more efficiently. I highly doubt that she’s taken any advertising, business classes in her life, so

Question: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Answer: No

Interview 4A-Angie

First Interview

Question: How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer: African American.

Question: How important is your race to you?

Answer: To me? Ummm... oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not.

Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: Well, I am a part of a Black student club. By being involved with that, I’m able to connect with other people with similar backgrounds. That provides some support. Also my job is to support African American students in a multicultural office for the school that keeps me grounded and makes me feel supported. I used to live in an environment where I was surrounded by other people my color with similar backgrounds and so being here, it’s difficult to feel that way. So my racial identity is supported by the
interactions and experiences I have through my work as the and my participation in the club. Also, in most of my classes, I’m the only African American student and I guess in a backwards way, my racial identity is reinforced there as well. Just because of the differences I see. The way that I’m treated, the way that people speak to me. It’s a constant reminder, in a way. And some of the students on campus have lived very sheltered lives in White suburban communities; and so when they meet me, they don’t know how to respond, what to say. They see modern media and learn stereotypes from that. They might say something to me that I feel is offensive and I realize that, because of that ignorance, they just don’t know any better. It reminds me of the differences that exist there, and the fact that a lot of people on campus do view me as “different” because of my skin color. I feel that everywhere I go on this campus.

Question
So you consciously chose to get involved in spaces where you would encounter Blacks? Is that how you approached college?

Answer
Ummm. . .when I approached the college experience initially, during my first year, I wasn’t really involved with the Black club. I guess I was just trying to get a feel for college in general, and I looked around one day and realized I didn’t see anybody like me, and I felt out of place. I felt a bit pariah on campus. And I knew that it was necessary for me to engage with other people that I feel very comfortable with, that I feel are very similar to me in order for me to have a positive college experience. So at that point, around the beginning of my second year, I made the conscious decision to reach out.

Question
Outside of your campus involvement would you say your racial identity is supported or nurtured?

Answer
Well, I feel supported around family in general but it’s difficult to say that my racial identity is supported specifically. I’m supported as an individual around family, and not just exclusively regarding my racial identity. When it comes to conversations that surround race, especially when I’m speaking to my grandmother who’s lived through so much and has so many stories to tell… and when she tells me stories about her past, which is our past, I do feel racially supported and nurtured because I can connect to that and know that she really understands me and that she can feel for the things that I go through because she’s gone through those things herself.

Question
Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer
A lot of the friendships that I have made, especially through the Black
student club, have really impacted my life. We did a fall retreat this year and we had maybe 15 students total in attendance, and about 8 of those students were African American. In addition, there were Latino students and White students, as well. So it was all of us coming together, and we were able to develop really strong, lasting, sincere relationships based off of our experiences in general. For example, we were talking about how other people see us. And although the Latino students didn’t identify the same way, we were able to connect and to empathize with one another, simply because we are all minority students and able to see things from that perspective. It was amazing. I cherish each one of the friendships made there for that reason. Because I know that we truly understand each other’s point of view.

Question Would you say that there were things that were unique to populations of students based on race? Were the White students sharing different experiences? Were the Latino students sharing different experiences? Were the African American students sharing different experiences? Or would you say that for the most part, the experiences shared were pretty much the same regardless of race?

Answer One thing that I found to be really interesting was that the African American and the Latino students have very, very similar points of view and experiences. And I was really surprised by that. One point of connection was that at one point in history, and arguably this still exists today, African Americans were pushed out. We were… ostracized for our color, for our background. And a lot of that exists today when it comes to Latino students. With the issues regarding immigration, a lot of the Hispanic and Latino students on campus feel that they’re not welcome. So being able to connect on that was amazing because I never expected it, and I never really considered it before. But we also had some similar experiences when it came to our families. Since we are on a predominantly White campus, we are surrounded by a different culture from our own. Some of the Latino students mentioned that when they go home, they sometimes run into the word “whitewash”, and that makes them feel put down and outcast…. I’ve run into the same problem. A lot of the African American students have run into that problem. So we began a discussion around it- what does “whitewash” mean and why is it a derogatory term? Why is it that when a person is educated, or when a person is goal-oriented, or when they speak with proper grammar, it is attributed to the White community instead of just saying, “This is a really intelligent Black woman, or this is a really hardworking Latino male”? It’s like saying that, because this person a minority, they can’t have any of those positive characteristics on their own, and if they have them, it must be because of Caucasian influence. It’s basically saying that we, as minorities, are not
self-sufficient, and are not capable of achieving success without outside assistance. By using terms like these, we put ourselves down and we undervalue and underestimate ourselves. So that point of connection was something that I ran into that was really interesting to me. However, I did find that the White students didn’t connect in the same way. Just being able to hear some of these things helped them understand it better, because they’d never heard some of this at home. And I think that’s just due to privilege. They’re born with a certain amount of privilege, just by being Caucasian. So they don’t even consider these other things because it’s not a part of their daily lives. So they understood it, but they didn’t really connect to it the way that the rest of us did.

**Question**

Can you tell me about anything you’ve read, seen, heard, or observed about people of your race?

**Answer**

That’s a huge question. Well, there are two very different ways to respond. If we’re talking about things that I’ve heard, then that would trigger me to think about mass media today. A lot of the things in the media regarding African Americans are not positive. I mean, even in movies, a lot of the time, the main African American character is going to be the dumb or funny character, or just the goofy sidekick to the strong, smart, White lead character, which I think is something that is not right because it’s not equal. But if we’re talking about things that I’ve observed and seen myself, I’ve been around a lot of very influential, very intelligent, very hardworking, caring and just wonderful African American people including my mother for instance, and the director at the multicultural center. Those are two completely different sides to one greater story. Overall, though, most things I have observed about African Americans have been very positive, and I’ve enjoyed meeting other African Americans who have similar ideals and who want to make a difference in the world. Of course there are bad and good people of every race, but I think a lot of people tend to focus on the bad- they see on the news a burglar who’s African American and it becomes a negative stereotype. And people forget that you have to acknowledge and accept the bad along with the good, instead of simply ignoring the good and using the bad to form damaging ideas about an entire race of people.

**Interview 4B-Angie**

**Second Interview**

**Question**

Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?
Answer No

Question Is race present in your relationship with your mentor?

Answer Yes.

Question How would you describe how it shows up?

Answer It shows up in our everyday interactions. Mainly because we met through work positions that are surrounded around our race. She works in the multicultural center and I’m a coordinator in the same office. So everything we work on together is based on bringing African American students together, providing them with any emotional or academic assistance that they need. We end up talking about how African American students are feeling on campus, and because I am a student, she comes to me to see how things are going with them, how I feel they’re progressing, what more she could do, so we kind of approach everything from a racial standpoint.

Question Did race show up in your previous mentoring relationships?

Answer No. It looked different.

Question Do you think that has to do with this particular relationship being based on your position and your mentor’s position being race-conscious jobs?

Answer Yeah, I think it’s definitely different because of the jobs that we do on campus. That guides our relationship. We do have conversations outside of race often, but the most frequent conversations that we have are focused around race.

Question What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Answer Well, because she’s an African American woman who went through a lot during her college years, and she knows that perspective, she definitely does a lot to reach out to African American students on campus. Because she wants to provide that support that maybe she didn’t have that she wishes she did. So that’s a pretty big thing for her and for all the students that she comes in contact with. But besides that, she also helps out other minorities as well. So I think in general, I think race shows up in that she reaches out to the minority students, because they’re minority students and they wouldn’t have as many resources without her there.

Question How do you imagine it would be different if you had a mentor whose work
was not aligned with being as aware racially? Do you think it’s important that your mentor is racially conscious and happens to be doing the work that she does?

Answer
Oh yes, I think it’s definitely significant to our relationship. If I were to have a mentor who wasn’t as racially conscious I would still get a lot of benefits from that. But being in this relationship with her has opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wouldn’t have seen before because she’s able to talk about her history, her personal history, with me and learning about her past experiences, especially when it comes to things that I haven’t encountered, really makes me think about myself and my personal identity more. So I think just being in this relationship with her has made me more secure within myself. Because I feel that I know myself better through some of the conversations that I have with her. I have had mentors before outside of school who weren’t racially conscious and that’s great, that’s awesome, just being able to have somebody to talk to. But I don’t get the same personal benefits from it.

Question
What is your view on whether or not a mentor should be of color if they are mentoring a student of color?

Answer
No. I don’t think it has to be a person of color. I think it just depends on the mentor’s personality type. For example, if I were to have a mentor who was Asian, who really couldn’t understand my point of view as an African American, then there would be a huge point of disjunct between us and we wouldn’t be able to connect the same way. But if I were to have an Asian mentor who understood privilege and who understood a little bit about my history as well as their history and was able to kind of bridge that gap so that we could feel bonded, then that’s just as significant. Really it’s about being able to reach out and understand one another. So as long as the mentor is open to other ideals and other views and can really connect to that student’s background, I think it’s fine either way.

Question
Was race important to you when you chose this mentor?

Answer
It wasn’t important to me. I kind of fell into the mentoring relationship after meeting her. It just happened that we really got along and she became, on her own, a support system for me. If I am looking for someone to guide me, in general, race is not usually something that I consider beforehand. In this case it is convenient; it is nice because I can have conversations with her that I might not feel comfortable having with someone else, but it wasn’t something that I sought out. I think for me the reason that I was so glad to have met her in the first place was that she’s so successful and she’s so generous and she’s well known for the work that she’s done and that, on
its own, shows that she has a great character and I can learn a lot from her no matter what race she is.

Question
Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity?

Answer
My first year here, I was really struggling. My mother lost her job. Her company laid her off because of the bad economy. And I was supporting myself, and my three younger siblings and my mother and working all the time and doing the best that I could to stay in school. I started reaching out to friends, trying to find somebody who could maybe understand what I was going through. And I met a girl who lived on the same floor that I did and she and I began a friendship. And at one point she turned to me and said, “I can’t be friends with you anymore.” And I said, “Why not?” And she said, “Well, it doesn’t look good for me to be friends with the poor Black girl on campus.” And that broke my heart. But that was something that I could talk to (my mentor) about. Because she completely understood the way that I’d been feeling. Not just coming from the standpoint of growing up in a family that didn’t have a lot of money, and struggling, but also from the standpoint that my racial identity was called out there. It wasn’t just that I was poor, it was that I was Black. And so just in that sense, being able to converse with her about things like that and have her say, “Whether or not this person chooses to stand by you, I will stand by you at all times, because I care about you.” That was huge to me. When we had that conversation, I felt my racial identity and my socioeconomic status were supported because she was able to remind me of some of the obstacles I’ve overcome in getting where I am and reassure me that she was invested in helping me succeed.

Interview 5A – Ryan Alexander

First Interview

Question
How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer
Black. White

Question
How important is your race to you?

Answer
I take pride in the fact that I am Black. But it’s not something that I...most people would say...it’s because you’re Black or you’re successful and you’re a Black man but I don’t take it to be like that at all and I think that’s from my parents bringing me up in a very White setting and then also just
being around mixed races all my life. I mean, yeah, I see it, but it’s not something that to me is like, a huge thing. I would say it’s not what defines me, that I am Black. If somebody asks me, “who are you?”, I wouldn’t say that I am a Black man.

Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answered: I’d say mostly my family and then getting involved with the Black student club here. That was something that I did in order to nurture it definitely because coming here I didn’t really hang out with a lot of Black people so it’s something . . . and then I took the initiative and went and did. Like you know with my family our family is all out of state and we’re just over there by ourselves and I don’t really hang out with that many Black people so definitely getting involved with the student club and making that connection here and then the multicultural center I’m trying to get involved with that so . . .

Question: So your immediate family lives away from your extended family? Can you give me some examples of what it looks like in your family in terms of race?

Answer: Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black and then, we really don’t talk about it a lot but we get there sometimes and my dad picks up his accent. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home. It’s not something that we concentrate on but definitely it’s there and I appreciate it.

Question: How long have you been active with the Black student club?

Answer: This is my first year. I went a couple of times last year.

Question: Would you say there’s anywhere else in your life where your racial identity is supported or nurtured?

Answer: Um, here at college the admissions office works with me. Last year when I got here they were sending me to high schools and like, didn’t get it until a little bit into the quarter but I noticed that there are not a lot of Black people but I guess they’re, in essence, celebrating . . . me, as a Black person at this college and being successful.

Question: So you helped with recruiting high schoolers?
Answer: Yes, and then they had me do a camp over the summer. They brought in like 50 excelling Black students around the country and mostly in the state and I was a mentor.

Question: And that felt supportive?

Answer: Yes

Question: Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer: I’d say it’s more ongoing than just a significant event. It’s more like my success here and the way I stand out is, most people would say, because I’m Black. Black, you have a White girlfriend because you’re Black all that kind of stuff so it’s definitely something that is a lot more noticeable here than back home. To me it’s not a problem because it’s like, yeah I am but at the same time it’s like..what about all the other Black people that don’t have all these different things. It’s a prevalent thing that I see and then also for me I attended a diversity conference. They’re talking about how there’s White privilege and stuff like that and then there’s privilege for being Black and all different races and different things that you can have as far as privilege and so to me I think that what I’ve learned so far here at college and being an African American male is that. . .I’ve always taken things differently because to me, if that’s a nuisance or if that’s a problem to you, then you fix it. You do something to make it so that. . .okay, well. . .”I perceive Black people as lazy and poor and just like, they have kids and screw up their lives”. . .so to me instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, ok well so then. . .I hear my friends saying well, “maybe all Black people are like that. Maybe they’re not always negative. So that, to me is a huge thing that I’ve learned at college. Yeah, if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my race with me rather than look like I’m above.

Question: You say it’s ongoing in terms of race being significant in your life? What exactly is the commentary? Do people say that the reason you are successful is only because of your race?

Answer: That’s what it is a lot of times. For instance, I’ve been involved in student government and I’ve heard a lot of people say, well “yeah, you’re going to be student body president because you’re Black and because that makes you stand out where as all these other people are like”.. .to me that’s like. . .so any Black person can run for student body president and win. And so, I hear that and then as far as even when I was rushing for my fraternity. . for actually all the fraternities. I got into all of them except for like one. And
so, people were like, well that’s cause you’re Black, but at the same time I was also named the first year senator. I was like yeah, I’m Black and they want a Black person in their fraternity but there’s also the success of the leadership. I’ve never been the type of person who holds onto that kind of stuff. But it absolutely does play out and my girlfriend even has been like, “everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys.” She’s like, “I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. So that’s probably the most prevalent thing that I see at college. That’s what I’d like to continue to mentor and hopefully reach out to Black students at college and hopefully in my future that I can stand up and be like you guys can defeat that stereotype and go for what you want to do and it doesn’t have to be that you’re a Black, successful person, it’s just. . he’s a person.

Question Can you tell me about anything your read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Answer Well, again, going back to my family my parents are, to me, very successful African American people and that is what I base myself off of. My parents both did not receive 4-year degrees but they are successful and they work hard and they got houses and cars and all this kind of stuff so that is basically what I set myself off of but as far as media, they would absolutely be stereotypical Black people as silly, loud, obnoxious, ignorant, all that kind of stuff. People that cuss a lot, drink a lot, smoke and do a lot of different crimes and all that kind of stuff. . .but as far as the Black people I’ve surrounded myself with. . are successful. As far as even people in the multicultural center, admissions and I have a mentor back home who is Black as well and they’re all successful.

A lot is based on upbringing as well. I didn’t have a TV growing up. All the Black people I knew were successful. So that is what I hoped to be.

Interview 5B – Ryan Alexander

Question Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Answer No

Question Is race present in your relationship with your mentor?
If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Answer Yeah I’d say it’s present with my mentor here at college because he is also a Black male and attended the same college and dealt with a lot of the same
things that I guess I’d say I deal with and as far as... we don’t talk about it so much but it’s definitely there. I mean that’s one of the reasons I did pick him because he’s someone that I can live up to but also he can talk to me about other issues besides just basketball (laughs) or other stereotypical things.

Question What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Answer I would say he probably sees it a little more than I do. He deals with it here at the college and so that’s something that’s his focus... and that’s the diversity of the college so he deals with all that. I mean as far as race goes he definitely looks for it more and he grew up in a different situation than I did as well so it’s more prevalent in his life than it is to mine.

Question So race is a part of his job?

Answer Yes.

Question You know his job description, but how do you know about the other ways that race is important to him? Does he talk about it?

Answer As around me now a number of times, it’s been easier to see more about him. When I came during summer to do the camp I stayed with him for a night and I remember he said to me, “this isn’t what a typical Black person’s house should look like, hum?” And I remember being like, I don’t know what a typical Black person’s house should look like (laughs). It’s just a house to me. And then, he played basketball here and he makes little remarks that are funny but are... that’s how I’ve gotten to know him more.

Question And how long has he been your mentor, since you arrived?

Answer Correct, yeah. Actually I had chosen through my parents not to come visit so they had me walk around with him and everyone thought he was my dad. (laughs), he’s the only other Black guy on campus.

Question Do you two have any resemblance?

Answer Uh uh. He’s like, really tall. Everyone’s like, “wow where do you get those color eyes?” He’s like, this isn’t my son. That’s what they saw.

Question Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

Answer I think it’s important. I mean I chose him to be my mentor and he took me
on but I think it would be different if it were a...I mean I chose him for a reason, because I could have chosen plenty of other people on the campus. But I think I that is something that I guess I was looking for. I didn’t even think about it until this came up but...yeah taking him into consideration and knowing a little bit than other people, other professors or other faculty and staff on our campus would know about me and being Black or any cultural lens at all is important.

Question
So you knew you were making that choice when you selected him?

Answer
You mean as far as a Black man?

Question
Yes

Answer
Umm...I mean I didn’t think about it so much but at the same time, yeah. I identify more with him over...I mean I got to know him more quickly than others, so that was one of the reasons but also there’s...him being called my dad and being called my brother and being called...(laughs), I mean that could be what made us bond. It wasn’t just him being Black but also that was part of the picture, so...

Question
Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?

Answer
I’d say in talking to him as far as my future and stuff and what I’m gonna do in the future, he’s always like, “well meet with advisors”, he talks to me about scheduling and stuff because most people at this school especially their parents are doctors and lawyers and all that good stuff, so they know, they have those guidelines and that background and I don’t have that and so I’ve been sharing with him sometimes my frustration being like...I don’t think the college has a very good program and so if I can talk to him and say well this is what I’m thinking because I don’t have the same background, I don’t have that same understanding as far as classes that I need to take or what I need to do in the future, I mean I can definitely sit down with him and he had that same situation. His parents didn’t go to a four year college and so I’d say, in him bringing me up it helps me, I mean I can go and he’ll help me make appointments and do what I need to do.

Question
In the last interview you mentioned how some people have commented on your accomplishments being based on your race, have you had that conversation with him?

Answer
Yeah. I mean we’ve definitely talked about that and he’s like well...I mean I’ve talked to a lot of people about that since we’ve had this study, but as far as he said that’s the same thing back. It’s still even with his
coworkers he. . .that it’s because you’re Black. . .because he can be very friendly and very outgoing and he can draw a lot of diverse populations into the college and so a lot of his coworkers will say well, “It’s because you’re Black. . and they feel comfortable”. . . and all that kind of stuff. And I talked about, you being Black had nothing to do with my comfort with you. Like that had nothing to do with why I came here, because I was surrounded by the little amount of Black people that were here. It was just that, yeah you are a comfortable person. . .if you were White, if you were Latino, it would be the exact same thing and so I think. . .and he said that going here, he had that same experience but then still working here it hasn’t really changed. I mean, you put yourself in the situation so.

I think a lot of times the multicultural center, from what I see is kind of secluded as well on campus and so it’s like although the college is working towards the diversity and the inclusiveness, inclusivity, they can say it, but it’s only the multicultural center that mostly pushes it and those people. . .you know what I see from being in student government, fraternities and all that kind of stuff, it’s all these people, and I get pulled into that section sometimes over inclusivity and all that awareness and that kind of stuff and so to me what I’d rather fight for, and I talked to my mentor about this, I’d rather instead of excluding myself and being pushed in this direction, I’d rather just go and be me and that’s what I see as inclusivity. It doesn’t have to be a section of campus and they have a student body president representing the multicultural center versus the Greek life. That’s one of my reasons that I chose to run as soon as I got here because I think that would bring kids together. Yeah, I can hang out with the people that represent inclusivity and I can tell about how I got a scholarship at the multicultural center.

I know that I am not gonna make a difference at the college within a year but what I’ve seen from being a freshman to being a sophomore it’s what I heard from one of my big brothers in my fraternity he was student body president last year and him saying that, “oh the college is gonna always have a White president, they’ve had a White president since the beginning”, and it wasn’t him discouraging me it’s was just like letting me know it’s gonna be hard, it’s all these kids. And so then at the end of the year him coming back and being like, “wow, if people don’t see you that way so much it’s not like. . . it won’t. . . but at the same time we talked about there’s our current student body president picked--a kid who does work with the multicultural center, he works with all the student clubs, with the United Student club, Asian Student club, Black Student club, so he chose to pick that one so that he could kind of bring the campus together, however, it’s still kind of keeping him under because I think, for his student body vice president, he knew that’s what he was chosen for. He was
chosen to bring. . .he was supposed to bring all these people so, and then we were talking about, well if I were supposed to run against Felipe, then it would be a Black guy versus a Mexican that’s how the college would see you. It would be like, here went the Black guy with the Mexican (laughs). So we were talking about that. So, I think that, I mean hopefully, what I’m seeing and what I see especially for student government and hopefully for the campus, is that as we work to . . . the inclusivity, like, although I think it’s mostly the multicultural center and mostly like the residence hall, they are the ones who push it so hard, and then. . .but I want to hopefully combine those and hopefully work to make it so much not. . .because right now I would say that it is the multicultural center and it is residence halls versus Greek life and the rest of the campus because that’s just, what they know. So I’d say, what I’d like to see is more of the campus being more united and that does take someone that does not concentrate so much on the race issue and so much on the inclusive issue but just go out there and show it. And so I do try to stay away from all the inclusivity and stuff so that I’m not connected with that but then I can bring it in the end so it’s not supposed to be my main focus but it is something that is definitely important.

Interviewer Comment regarding the complexity of inclusivity.

I see it more here. In high school I didn’t even see it as a problem. Yeah, I mean, yeah there’s those jokes and like. . .but it’s so much like, but there’s still community and family and it’s like if we went and said this is a multicultural center event, the whole school still attends. There wouldn’t be a big deal and so I’d say my problem with. . .and the reason why I haven’t gotten involved so much with the inclusivity movement here at the college is that I see it as, “poor me, poor us”, that mentality and I don’t want it to be that way and that’s why I, when I was brought in here and when I went to the high schools and stuff, I’d say, if you’re gonna go to the college, don’t have that mentality. Just go and do whatever you want. You can be whatever you want and that’s what I’m gonna do. It’s not something that you worry about. It’s like ok. . .and I’ve gotten over that where yeah, one of my big brothers told me that, “yeah, you might not make it because you’re Black but then he turns around and says, well you can, you can do it and so that is what I hope to push to the rest of the people, the rest of everyone coming to the college. It doesn’t have to be just Black people or just Latino people, White people. . .anyone. You can go to college and do whatever you want. I definitely shared that with my mentor and he. . I mean, that’s something he believes in and I think that’s something that he probably struggles with a lot on the staff. Just because it’s always going to be there, and it’s just this whole campus environment, but instead of being poor me he goes about his business and moves on and
so you’re not always seen as just the Black guy.

And the local community as well is a lot different. My home town is like. . .there’s a lot of stuff that you see done in the state, being in this city. And where I’m from is just not like that, it’s not that environment, and so I do see the victim mentality coming from. . .yeah, I lived in this poor neighborhood and then I got to come to this college but the students treat me like I’m invisible. . .so I understand when people say that but I don’t think that’s gonna help, to be honest. I think that the only way that inclusivity will be pushed on this campus and this country is just by people being them and not being. . I mean the same thing that Obama being, well he’s a Black president but now people are not judging his decisions so much on him being Black, it’s just he’s the President now. And that’s what I hope to push on this campus by the end of my four years just hopefully seeing some more. . .hopefully not so much victim mentality but people can do whatever they want. Even if they mess up, not being like, oh well you messed up because you’re Black or you did this because you’re Black. It’ll come over time and I hope to see it

Interview 6A-Cree

First Interview

Question How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer So, my dad is Black and White, his grandma was half White so that makes him half Black and half White too so he’s the Black and White side and my mom is Native American too so both her parents are both Native American and Black mixed so my mom’s the Indian and Black and my dad’s Black and White so African American, Native American and then White.

Question So lots of races in your family. So how does your mentor or most current mentor identify racially?

Answer I have to say he identifies as White.

Question Have you ever asked or has he ever disclosed or is it your guess?

Answer I think it’s my guess just because I know his parents and his parents are White too. I think the closest. . .I don’t know like nationality wise where their history comes from I just know that he’s White, so I don’t know outside of that.
Question: How important is your race to you?

Answer: Ummmm. . .I think that’s a tough question because it’s important to me if I’m around certain people, but it’s not as important to me if I’m just by myself. Like I don’t think about it when I’m by myself, but when I’m around other people I am consciously aware of who I am and what I do because I don’t want to be perceived as a negative image for people so ummm. . .I guess it’s really important. Because also being Native American too like that’s really different than being Black because you have more standards to uphold, I feel like. And you have more responsibility on your shoulders so yeah, I think it’s pretty important to me.

Question: You mentioned that it’s more so important in the presence of others, would you say it’s more important in the presence of anybody or in certain types of environments?

Answer: I think it’s in certain types of situations so. . .I mean my family’s really unique in that, like the way we were raised so if I’m around other Black people, I’m aware of it a lot because they may say things or do things that I’m like, “wow, I would never do that”. You know and then if I’m around other people who aren’t minorities then I’m really aware of it because I don’t want them to group me in the same category as, “Oh, well she’s just loud and then all Black people are loud”. So I think it’s a situational thing. And then there are some people I hang around and I don’t even think about it just cause I’m that comfortable around them and I know they know me well enough and they’re not going to judge whatever I do or whatever I say if I’m just joking or something. But I think it’s more of a situational thing.

Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: Oh wow, ummm. . .I don’t know, I think probably by the people that I hang around a lot. I don’t come in the multicultural office that often, but when I do it makes me feel better because I know there are other people on this campus who are like me and some of them are raised from races just like me so that makes me feel good. But then also I think the way my family is like really strong so we are always around each other so I don’t feel out of place with whatever race that I am, so that kind of supports me. And other people around me in my family really support me.

Question: Would you say that there are any other places where it’s nurtured in other ways?

Answer: Well, I work for the Admissions office and in Orientation but you know...
with all of those, they really appreciate diversity so I think besides just being around people that look like me, being around people who don’t look like me, they appreciate the fact that I am different and you know my culture and everything like that. So I think that’s nurturing. You can sit down with someone and like they’ll talk to you about diversity and what they think it means and how cool it is that you’re Black and, oh my God, that’s so awesome, you know what I mean? I’m like, oh that’s really cool, because they love diversity and talking about it, especially like some White guy that’s like, yeah, I want to do race/ethnic studies. I’m like, Ok, cool and they just want to talk about it. So that’s really cool to see someone that’s like really interested in the races that I am compared to someone that doesn’t really care. So that’s another way of it being nurtured.

Question Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer It didn’t happen at school, but it was really cool because my boyfriend and I are out at Wal-Mart going shopping for something and there’s this cute little old man walking in the store and I was like, “Awww, he’s such a cute little old man you know, he just looks so sweet. And so we’re over by the fruits and vegetables aisle and he just came up to us and he was like, “You guys are such a handsome couple”, and I was like, ‘Awww, thank you.” And so we started talking and he was like, “Well, what do you want to do” and all this stuff. And he had to be like, pretty old, at least like 70 or 80, probably older than that. But he was really sweet and so my boyfriend was like, “yeah, I’m gonna be an architect engineer”, and I was like yeah, I want to go into politics, become an ambassador and he was like, “Well, I think you are very articulate, you’re gonna do great. You really remind me of Condoleezza Rice and she made it really big”. And I was like, “Oh, that’s really nice”. So I guess, I don’t know if he would have said that to us if we were any other race but I think the way that we work really well together and cause maybe because we were Black, maybe it’s not I don’t know, but I don’t know if he would have said that had we not been Black. Especially like the comment about Condoleezza Rice, so I thought that was really cool.

Question And what was his race?

Answer I think he was White.

Question Any other stories you want to share?

Answer I don’t know. Not stories, but I feel like because of my race and what I want to do in International Relations, I feel like people are more accepting
or encouraging of me doing that and going abroad. And I can’t say it’s just because of my race but I think it might be the people that I’ve encountered. And maybe it’s just the staff here is really good, like they really do appreciate diversity, they really encourage that.

Question  Can you tell me about anything your read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Answer  I think people wise there are a few Black people on campus that I feel like they do a lot of things and they feel that they think they can get away with it like just like, “oh I’m Black so, I can be brutally honest with you”. . .or something and I’m just like, no that was just rude. I think I’ve noticed kind of an entitlement in that way with certain people and it’s not everybody, it’s just like two people but that’s just their personality I guess, but it’s definitely like a negative representation of who we are.

Question  Is the sense of entitlement with other Black people, or all people?

Answer  When I’m around them, they’re just talking to everybody. So sometimes it’s around African Americans but it’s not as brutally honest or it doesn’t come off as rude, but then they can be talking to some White person and then it’s just like, that was really rude. They can say the same thing but their tone changes. And I feel like that’s because I can say whatever I want to you because I’m Black. You know, like you’re not going to say anything to me. There’s like this sense of entitlement when they say it and it’s not necessary at all but that’s what I’ve noticed just with certain people and then images. . .outside of like, the normal stereotypical images like on posters and stuff. Especially, like there’s a concert coming up for Wale and the poster. . .it’s a really bad poster. And a lot of the posters like for parties and stuff, they always refer to Black people as like with the dreadlocks and like the big teeth and all this stuff with the big shades. And I’m like uh, so horrible. Not every Black person is Li’l Wayne, not every Black person wants to have dreads. Not everyone wants to go to jail you know, not everyone has tattoos all over their face but I mean that’s just the image that they portray and a lot of time like for party banners and stuff going out to the clubs they’ll have images like that and people are like, “Oh God it’s going to be so much fun” and it probably won’t be, but it just looks that way and so, yeah, I think they’re trying to attract more Black people to the parties so they put people like that up there and it doesn’t work for me.

Question  Any other things that stand out to you? What about women, images of Black women?

Answer  I think it’s kind of hit and miss. I know a lot of people will have seen, like
the posters for Precious and all they saw was the girl on the front so they’re like, “oh wow, all Black women are obese” but they didn’t see the movie, they didn’t understand how she really is this way. So that’s one image you can have of the overweight girl that just eats all the time or it’s either overweight and eats all the time or its really classy. So I know like a lot of times people will be like, “Oh my God, Black people are so awesome and this kind of stuff, but they don’t really equate that with Condoleezza Rice or Michelle Obama or Jada Pinkett Smith or like the classy Black ladies. I know a lot of people who are looking on campus for the classy Black ladies will only find certain ones. So you’ll see them all over campus but you’ll point out the ones that you know hold themselves up high because they know they can accomplish more.

Interview 6B-Cree

Second Interview

Question
Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Answer
Not that I can think of from the last time. Like, when I read over it, nothing that I can think of.

Question
Is race present in your relationship with your mentor?

Answer
I would say no. Um, I don’t notice it when I talking with him. When we’re having day to day conversations, like race usually never comes up and then I don’t think about like he’s White and I’m Black. So it never comes up.

Question
Since it doesn’t come up, how do you feel about race not being present in your mentoring relationship?

Answer
I feel pretty okay with it. I’m happy that not every relationship has to be like race defined or like I’m more comfortable with a black mentor than a white mentor. So feel fine, I mean our relationship has not changed or anything. So, I think it’s good.

Question
How would you describe the kind of mentoring relationship you have?

Answer
I would describe it as a mentoring as a mentoring where... he’s my pastor at my synagogue so we would sit down and talk like once a week, maybe more. And just catch up and see how each other is doing and he would definitely try—if I’m going through anything, help me through that and
then just talk to me about anything that’s going on and then also guide me in that direction. So he’s like, well I definitely encourage you to stay in your bible this week, maybe read these passages, do like a devotional program with like psalms and proverbs and stuff like that so help me out that way. So it’s not really more academic based, rather like faith and religious based.

**Question**

Did you choose him as a mentor, did he choose you or did it just evolve?

**Answer**

Ummm. . .I think it kind of just evolved. Because I started going to that youth ministry once we moved back down from Seattle and then ever since, like, he and I got pretty close and then we just start hanging out and talking and then talking more often and then one-on-one time and stuff.

**Question**

What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages races?

**Answer**

Umm. . .I think that he appreciates race and he appreciates diversity, but we’ve really never talked about race or ethnicity or anything like that. But as far as I can guess, I think he appreciates it. Cause I know like at our synagogue everyone’s really diverse, so there’s so many races represented there so he has to appreciate that. And in the youth ministry alone there are many races and a lot of like mixed races as well, so he has to balance that out. And he works really closely with a lot of our pastors who are. . .a lot of them are Black and there are a couple of Hispanic ones and an Italian one too, so I think he has to appreciate it.

**Question**

So just by the place he has chosen to work, the people he surrounds himself with, even though he doesn’t say anything, you are getting a sense that it’s important to him? Do you feel that it’s important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

**Answer**

Not in my mentoring, well. . .not in our relationship, no. But if I did get another mentor, later in life, race isn’t very important but I would appreciate them to be like a person of color just so that they understand what I’ve been going through, you know. . .if that makes sense, but in our relationship no, it’s not important at all, but in the future, it doesn’t have to be a requirement but I would, like, appreciate it.

**Question**

Would you say that for you, that the person who is your mentor would be a person of color or the person is White and racially conscious? What would it look like for you in your future mentor?

**Answer**

I think I would want them to be a person of color just because the older people I have been around, the people in my community, they are people of color and they kind of remind me of like my grandparents or my parents or
something, so I can relate easier to them and like know when they’re like saying wisdom or when they’re just like teaching me things I’m more willing to just sit and listen to them because one, just because they’re older and because they’re people of color. They’re not just saying it as, well. . . “well if I was a person of color I would say this”, but because I’ve been through this. So like him (mentor) being white, it has nothing, like . . . I still sit down and listen to his mentoring but I do . . . I listen to it on certain things, but I also go to like, my mom or someone just to check and make sure. . . and she’s like “yeah, this is right”. So, you know, just checking it that way, I guess. . . if that makes sense. Not undermining his authority, but just confirming.

Question
It doesn’t sound like you’re undermining, just processing.

Answer
Yeah, I’m a really good processor. I like to talk about it a lot and then think about it and then talk about it with other people and then I’ll think about making a decision, so. It takes a while, but . . .

Question
Are you extraverted?

Answer
I took a Myers Briggs test and it said I was an extravert but it also said like, so I’m an extravert who knows how to make decisions. So when it comes to decision making I just make a decision with like, no emotion involved. I’m a thinker rather than a feeler, so I think things through rather than, oh well my gut tells me to do this, so yes, I’m an extravert.

Question
When you said you process a lot out loud, I thought you might be an extravert.

Answer
(Laughs). So people get really annoyed because I talk a lot and they’re like why are you talking so much, and I’m like, I’m thinking! So my boyfriend gets so mad because we’ll get in a fight, and I’ll keep talking about it and he’s like, “it’s over, it’s done with, just stop it.” And I’m like, no because I want to let you know exactly how I’m feeling and I’m still thinking about it.

Question
I think you may have already answered this last question, but I want to ask it anyway just to make sure I formally asked it. Has your mentoring relationship in any way, nurtured your racial identity?

Answer
I don’t. . . it sounds bad to say no, but I don’t think so. Because I think, his any my mentoring relationship is not. . . like I said it’s more religiously and faith based so in that area, he’s like nurturing me in that way and like helping me to grow in that way, but in like race and the very certain things that we’ll talk about, like he knows like, “I can’t help you”, so he’ll send me
to a woman in our community who is a woman of color and she’s older than me and so, he’ll send me to her and like, we can relate better. And that would nurture my racial identity, but not with him and I. So, him and I, it’s more how I can grow and develop my relationship with God, whereas he’ll send me to someone else for something else that may be going on.

Question So, in a sense, the relationship does, because he is finding resources that help you in that area. That is important, although we may not give credit to that.

Interview 7A - Stacy

Question How do you identify racially?
Answer Black

Question What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?
Answer Ummm. . . I’m not sure. I think it was just as Black. I never heard them express or call them African American.

Question Is your mentor female or male?
Answer Female

Question How important is your race to you?
Answer As far as.

Question Just in your life.
Answer I try not to dictate my life by my race. I know that my race is a part of what I do because like I’m culturally different from other people. But I try not to let my race. . .what I am, hold me back from things that I want to do or just because I’m Black, I shouldn’t be able to do this or something like that. So I just do things because I want to do it, not because my race says I should.

Question So on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being race is most important, how would you rank race?
Answer Ummm. . .maybe 7
Question: How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

Answer: It kind of supports because I know what’s expected of me, what’s stereotypically expected of me and I try not to do what the stereotype says I should be doing. I go beyond. So a lot of people look at me and they say, “oh she’s Black and she’s a female, so wow she’s in college. .. you don’t have any kids?” I’m like, no I don’t have kids. So it kind of like help keeps me motivated. To know that I’m on the right track for something that I consider good for myself.

Question: Is there any other place in your life where you would say your race is nurtured or supported?

Answer: Probably more in my relationships. Because I know like in a lot of “Black” relationships things are like supposed to be a certain way and me, I focus on what is a relationship supposed to be like. So my main thing with my boyfriend is we focus on communication and talking and not necessarily on the outside factors. Because we don’t really do what typical people would do in relationships so it.

Question: Do you and your boyfriend ever talk about race?

Answer: Kind of. We have before. But he’s from Trinidad. He’s Trinidad-American. So for him, it’s different for him because he has Caribbean roots and I really don’t. Like it’s in my blood line but I was born here and my parents are from here. So we talk about things that his family does and things that my family does and we laugh about it, but that’s about it.

Question: So you two talk about nationality more than race?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: What about your job at the Multicultural Center?

Answer: I’ve worked here since the beginning of fall semester.

Question: And do you feel that by working here, being Black is supported?

Answer: It’s more supportive for me because I consider this home. So it’s like when outside factors start to influence me and I feel like I just need to get away because I’m mostly the only Black person in all my classes, it gets to me sometimes. Especially like when your professor talks about something
Black and they look directly at you when they make that statement like you’re supposed to speak for your whole race. So like when I need to get away, this is where I come and in working here, I have to be here anyway. This is my home and I’m really comfortable here.

Question Why do you call it home?

Answer I call it home because it’s where I find most of my Black identity. This is where I first started. When I did orientation my freshman year, they brought me here to make sure I didn’t feel left out. There were two Black people in my orientation class. It was me and another boy. I was looking around at everybody else like, “oh... I’m very different.” And everybody was like looking at me and I came here and I just got a home vibe from it. And I talk to (directors) all the time. They’re just like mom and big brother.

Question Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer Okay, so I had this class in Natural Resources in this really, really, really big room, probably 300 kids in the class. And I remember I sent my professor an email. I sent it a little too late because he never responded and he never asked me my name, we never had a verbal one-on-one conversation before and normally I would sit in the back with this one girl. And um. I’d fall asleep on and off because he always had the lights dim and he just walks up to me. He’s just like, “hey, I got your email”. And I’m looking at him like, there’s over 300 kids in this class how did you know it was me? And I just kind of looked at him and he gave me the answer to my email and it kind of threw me off. It was like, wow, they really do pay attention. And I felt like because I was one of like five Black kids in that class, I don’t know if he looked it up or if he just assumed that it was me. . . I’m pretty sure he looked it up. But it just threw me off that he just walked straight to me and knew exactly who I was. It was a straight shot. He knew exactly where I was sitting. It kind of like made me become more aware in my classes. Like, being the only Black person or one of the few in the class, they do pay attention to you. And they pay attention to everything that you do and you don’t just blend in to everyone else. It wasn’t bad, it was kind of a good thing to realize that they actually do notice.

Question Any other examples of race impacting your life?

Answer Of course like my freshman roommate was White. And she would watch everything I did all the time and she had all these questions. She never
really had that Black friend. So she would have all these questions and I felt that I was able to help her better understand. Because if I didn’t do it then she would just sit around with all these ignorant questions. I did get mad a couple of times, but that was just because they don’t really know what to say or how to approach someone so I felt like I was able to educate her. You don’t just walk up to a Black person and ask a question like this. And you just can’t make these types of jokes. One time, I didn’t know what I was gonna be for Halloween. And she was like why don’t you be a light bulb. . .wait, you could dress up as a light bulb and you could be a black light. And I looked at her like, what did you just say to me? And she’s like, “what, did I say something wrong?” We had a conversation and she was like, “I didn’t even know that would offend you, I’m so sorry.” So I felt like I was able to help her better learn. I feel like my race can sometimes be an educational tool for some people because if you don’t do it, they could do it to the wrong person and then they get either positive or negative reactions.

Question Can you tell me about anything your read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Answer A lot of the guys . . .basketball, basketball, basketball or rapper, rapper, rapper. The females are like pregnant before they get out of high school and then they have a kid and they just accept it. I come from Brooklyn, New York so like I see a lot of people I went to high school with versus the people I know in the springs, it’s very different. Like the Black people in New York, the girls I went to high school with, it’s Gucci this, Gucci that. You can’t pay your rent, you can’t have a solid phone number, but your baby is walking around in Gucci loafers. They’re not even going to be able to wear that in a month, but why are you spending the money on this? I never really understood it and they just become okay with that lifestyle. It’s weird to me. When my dad talks to people and says, “my daughter is a junior at CSU, they’re like, “Oh aren’t you from New York”?” He’s like, “yeah, “. They’re like, “She’s in college??” Like that’s a surprise. They’re like, “she doesn’t have kids??” He’s like, “no”. Because my parents raised me a certain way and it’s just very weird. I try to stay out of that stereotype because that’s not who I am, that’s not the way I was raised. And a lot of the teen moms that I know, I’ve known them for a while, and that’s not how they were raised either, it’s just that peers and the media make it seem like that’s okay and they’re trying to keep up with everything else. And they put themselves in all this debt and they’re only 18 years old and that’s not what I’m trying to do with my life. And they see me as I’m doing something wrong because I’m not wearing the same stuff that they’re wearing or I just don’t have what they have. But I have a lot more in my mind. Because, I’m a junior now. At the end of my senior year I’ll

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have a college degree plus I’m going to law school. And all you have is a child who I hope you raise to be the best person they can be. I think to different people, success is different. My parents didn’t finish college. My mom started college my freshman year of high school, so we graduated at the same time. It was kind of cool, but it was kind of weird. My brother went to the Air Force, he never finished and then he passed away in 04. So he was never able to go back and finish, so I’m the first one of all my siblings to actually go to college and finish. It’s a lot. It’s a lot for me.

Interview 7B - Stacy

Question Is there anything you want to add from your last interview.

Answer No, not really. The only thing that’s changed since the last interview is that I’m not with my boyfriend anymore. That’s the only thing that’s changed.

Answer Oh. That sucks.

Answer Yeah. . .whatever. His loss.

Question Do you feel that race is present in the relationship with your mentor?

Answer I think it’s a part of why we connect, but it’s never really talked about. It’s just like. . . I guess it’s just that floating thing. . . that attraction to a person. And then their personality on top of that.

Question Did you choose your mentor, or did they choose you? How did you find each other?

Answer Ummm. . . it was more like she chose me because my original mentor, like she was my mentor because that’s. . . I was given to her. But who actually ended up being my mentor we tended to like gravitate to each other a lot, so it was kind of like a personal choosing of each other. She just became my mentor whether she liked it or not (laughs). But she loves it.

Question And so the other mentor you had. . . do you just not have a relationship with that person?

Answer I still talk to her, but when it came, to like talking to somebody on the regular, I wouldn’t choose that person.
Question: Ok, and so you say that race is present mostly because you’re both people of color and you feel there is some unspoken connection that you have with each other?

Answer: Yes

Question: But you haven’t talked about race or racial issues or race in the world?

Answer: Not really. No

Question: How do you think your mentor views race?

Answer: I think it’s important in a sense because of some of the things she does. I know that she’s in a Black sorority and I know a lot of times like when something happens, it becomes a big issue like, “oh my goodness, I can’t believe this happened”. Those are the only times we tend to talk about it is when things come up during class that makes her mad or she’s heard something that makes her mad or sometimes like, I had a roommate experience that made me mad and that’s the only real time we ever talk about race, but I can tell that race is important because she chose like a Black sorority over like a White sorority. She chooses to be a part of the Black/African American culture center which she has a choice to be a part of any other organization or office. She just chooses to be around Black people.

Question: So you can see just in the things she participates in? So she’s taking a class on race and ethnicity?

Answer: I know she’s taking an African studies class where someone was making a comment or a teacher made a comment and then the next time I saw her she was just so mad about it and we talked about it a little bit.

Question: Do you think her view of race matter to you?

Answer: I don’t think it’s something significant, because I look more at her as a person than the things she’s involved in, but you choose certain things for a reason. So I know her reasoning behind the things she does is sincere, it’s not just because “fight the power, Black power. I just need tell people to know I’m Black”. She does it because she truly has an interest in it. So I don’t really see anything into it. I don’t really see it as being significant.

Question: Do you feel that it is important that your racial experience is considered in
your mentoring relationship?

Answer
Yeah, because in a sense I feel like I can’t. . .like if it happens in class, there’s only so much I can say in class before somebody looks at me like, “why is she responding that way? Or why do Black people always feel like they’re the victims of something when nobody is even trying to victimize them?” So it feels good that you have somebody that you can go to talk to about situations that happen because sometimes other people just don’t understand. And no matter what you say, they never will understand.

Question Do you feel like this mentoring relationship has nurtured your racial identity at all?

Answer Um, in a sense, yeah because it made me more comfortable being here at the school. Having somebody that I could go to. When I didn’t live in the residence hall with all the Black people, because I didn’t know it was the place to be. So, it was just like it helped me grow as a person to know that there is a place that I can call home and that’s why this office became home. Because she would be in here a lot and I would see her in here a lot. Most of the time we talked in here and I saw here all the time so it was like being around her and being in this office was home.

In my residence hall there was one other Black person on my floor, not in my hall, but just on the 3rd floor in general and then I know couple that was on the second floor, but there wasn’t a lot of us.

Interview 8A-Alan

First Interview

Question How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?

Answer Both African American

Question How important is your race to you?

Answer I think I’m still very much figuring that out. I grew up in an environment where I had the luxury of being around African Americans without actually having to associate. I know that sounds weird, but I’m gonna explain a little bit more about that. I was born into a very low income, very
underprivileged, underrepresented neighborhood which is typical represented by people of color, not all the time, but in fact, that’s the trend. Lived there for about the first eight years of my life and then through a series of fortunate circumstances my parents got better jobs and through some promotions and we were able to move and things just got progressive there. We kind of moved up to say middle class. And so, I make the distinction to where I was born and where I was raised. I remember living in that environment and being around that environment, but where my values came from and where I grew and came into my own is very much around White middle class America.

We were the only African American family in my neighborhood, very typical, you know TV, you know 2-car garage, swimming pool (I grew up in Florida, so we had a pool), four-bedroom house, you know, typical four kids, young family, a dog, fish (laughs). I went to a school that was very racially diverse. It was split almost equally among Whites, African Americans/Blacks and Latinos with kind of, others thrown in there. And the reason why I say that is because in school I had the interaction with being with African Americans, but I was tracked differently than they were. There were maybe one or two African Americans I was in the advanced placement honors track which is a little bit different than a lot of African Americans/students of color were typically tracked in either you know, “you’re graduating” or “you need remedial help”. Those were the other two. So it was a very separate world and so because of that I think my racial identity was very much stunted because I feel that gap because I was around African Americans but I wasn’t learning anything because I wasn’t really associating with African Americans outside of my own family. So that kind of changed a little bit.

That kind of influenced how I went to school, what schools I chose. You know I was like, I wouldn’t mind going to this college even thought it was predominantly White. You know, that’s how I spent my life, that’s what I’m used to you know. I’d interacted with White people my entire life, what’s four more years? I think the difference was that I didn’t have that to fall back on. I wasn’t seeing other people who looked like me and so I was confident in that enough, even though I wasn’t interacting. So when I came here I didn’t realize that at first. And so around sophomore year I kind of realized, I was like, oh like this is really, really different. This is really White. This is a lot different than what I was growing up to and what I was used to. I was expecting it to be the same. Even though I had diversity, part of me was tracked. But you know, I could choose who I wanted to interact with and here that choice is kind of taken away from me because it just wasn’t here.
And so, for me being African American is really, for me a process. What that means, what that looks like, you know. When you add in my other identities you know, being male, being a college student, 1st generation college student, you know it just kind of compounds things.

**Question**

How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?

**Answer**

I think throughout the last few years, what I’ve been able to do is realize that its missing, umm, interact with it, play around with it, kind of see the different options and then sort of make a decision about how important it is to me. Cause I think race is a very personal thing that I think for each individual it has a very prominent role or it has a very, you know, uh, subservient role in how they live life and how they choose to act upon it. And I think it’s very much a process and I think I’ve had the opportunity to sort of go through it in this kind of whirlwind capacity, but I don’t mean whirlwind in that I wasn’t able to sort of do what I need to do. I think I was able to do what I needed to do for me at the point in time, so I was able to come to the conclusion that race is important to me, but it’s not important that I interact with it all the time. And so, I think that’s kind of where I am now, is that it’s okay if I have a couple of African American friends, but you I really like my Latino friends, I really like my Asian friends, I really like my White friends. So, for me I need to be surrounded by multiple races as opposed to I need specifically African Americans/Blacks to be around, you know. I need diversity in the sense that there’s a lot of different people who look different, more so than I need to see someone who looks like me walking down the street or interact with them on a daily basis if that makes sense.

I think now that diversity is a part of my life, that’s how I feel supported. And those diverse people who are able to sort of understand the race thing. And I don’t mean to call it a race thing, but that’s kind of what it is, you know. It’s this jumble of you know, sometimes you’re here and sometimes you’re there, and sometimes you’re in-between and you’re here and there, and I think people who sort of understand that race is important but it’s not necessarily the defining factor. And I think it’s important that I have those relationships where to people race is the defining thing in their life and I have people who are virtually colorblind whom I’ve become friends with and who I interact with. And I think for me it’s important to have that diversity of perspective cause it helps me understand race much more than just what being Black or being African American is. It allows me to understand at a much deeper level and broader level because I have such diverse perspectives and friends that I feel supported in that way.
I think (my view on race) is very generational. I feel like my generation and maybe subsequent generations have really been able to come to that place that we can kind of view race this way because other people helped. There are not secular or singular ways of viewing race. And we are still very much scripting out different ways, but I feel that because we’ve had so many other different ways that we’ve reached a time now where we’re allowed to sort of pull elements of this and pull elements from this side and come up with a more holistic view about race as opposed to it just being about you know, diversity of skin color or culture. It’s a lot more than that. It’s much more than that. There’s so many different layers and the more you peel back, the more you kind of discover about it.

Question: Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?

Answer: That’s a really good question. I don’t know. I’m going to be honest with you. I can’t think of something specific where I can point to that and be like this is how it negatively affected me. I think what I can say on this sense of negativity is that in discovering race, I feel like I discover more about myself and through that I’m kind of able to see my own personal views on race and how I view it and negative aspects I didn’t even know I had towards people of other races, or people who look like me, especially with people who look like me. So I think, I was, in a sense colorblind and since I wasn’t force to interact with it, I wasn’t forced to sort of confront my own stereotypes and misgivings about race and I feel like as I learn more about my own race, I also discover that I really do feel this way cause there’s certain stereotypes that I also feel like I hold and these are some of the prejudices that I have and in that way it’s not negative per se, but it’s an effect of being racially aware, you know.

Question: Can you tell me about anything you read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?

Answer: There’s so many things around African Americans, positive and negative. I don’t even know where to begin. Let’s see... umm. . .I think one of the biggest, I think most prevailing thing, not that I’ve necessarily read, this is my own personal observation in talking to other people, is that people sort of view (African Americans view it this way too) African American culture as just one thing. There is one way of being African American, like that is what it is, regardless of what that way is, but there’s that one way, you know...this is what African American culture is and I think internally and externally we’ve latched on to this perception that African American culture is just one thing. Anything else out of that is not African American. And then you run into those issues of, oh you’re not Black enough or you’re a sellout or you’re whitewashed or you’re being an Oreo because you like
different things. And I think that’s kind of like one of the biggest repelling stereotypes you know in this way that all Black people are the same and that we subscribe to this one kind of cultural phenomenon. Not that all Black people are the same individually on that individual level, but that we all are the same because we all ascribe to the same cultural phenomenon that its only one thing. That is what is boils down to is that this is what it means to be Black. And I think it discredits some of the other things, some of the other interests and the diversity that is within the African American/Black community. We’re all so different. There’s so many different styles and in way we stuck ourselves because we try to say there’s this one thing that African American culture is, this one thing you can do. Which I think is different from maybe our White counterparts who don’t necessarily have that kind of constriction because A-you know, Whiteness is still being defined and people still have issues with it. And then B-the luxury of being White is that you can kind of pull things out of different cultures and incorporate it into Whiteness without necessarily selling out. You know what I mean? You’re always gonna be White, whether you’re rich or whether you’re poor, whether you’re dark, whether your light, whether you’re the president of the United States or homeless. You know what I mean? Whereas opposed to being Black doesn’t necessarily. . . the more you attain or the more you kind of move away from this one culture, you change, you become different. You know, you’re not necessarily Black anymore. Yeah, you may be Black from the outside, but something’s different.

Interview 8B-Alan

Question Is there anything you’d like to add to your comments based on our first interview?

Answer No

Question Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Answer Oh yes, most definitely. More specifically because the program that I applied for is specifically for students who identify as people of color, or students with disabilities, or LGBTQ students. So, it’s something that we talk about, a lot. It’s part of the program. It’s something that we talk about. It’s part of our conversations. You know, what does it mean to be African American, what does it mean to be African American male. How people are going to view you, how are people going to look at you. And race just kind of shows up. Race shows up all the time. Specifically, when
there’s so few. Like we wouldn’t need this program if there were an abundant source of people of color and LGBTQ students going into higher education. So, what does that look like you know. You might be places where you might be the only African American student. Might be places where people are not going to understand how to interact with you. So talking about that is super important. More particularly because it’s not a field that people grow up in and think they want to be in student affairs. People just kind of fall into it. Which is really kind of interesting because it’s been around forever. Still, you just fall into it. That’s just the way it works. So talking about race is very important, you might be headlining in some places. You might be representing. Even though you don’t mean to, you’re going to be just because of where you’re going to be and the areas that you’re going to be in. You know, so what does that look like, you know, how is that gonna be?

Question
What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?

Answer
Race came up more so with my second mentor. Because my first mentor, we talked about race a little bit, in the very public race. Because we were dealing with at-risk youth who just happened to be youth of color just because of the areas that we were servicing, the trends. So we talked about race in that aspect, but I think that with my second mentor, we could talk it on a personal level. I was able to ask her about her experiences about being a woman of color, what that was like, how that affected her teaching, being an outreach educator, you know, did she feel that people related to her a little bit better. So that’s how it came up, in the work that we did that’s how race came up.

My relationship with my current mentor is really unique because it went from student-student affairs professional to mentor-mentee to employee-employer. You know there’s all these different layers that sort of compound everything. Sometimes I miss the days when it was just, you know, mentor/mentee because I love working with her and doing the work that we do, but being a mentor on that level is a little bit different. I don’t get a chance as much to sit and talk with her like I used to. The basis of the program is that you kind of just approach someone who you want to be your mentor and so you both apply at the same time for the program so the mentor fills out an application, you fill out an application, you apply kind of jointly and then you get accepted. You getting accepted means in a way your mentor gets accepted because they want to make sure your mentor will be qualified and meets the requirements and such so.

Question
Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your
mentoring relationship?

Yes and no. No, I wouldn’t expect it but the qualities I would look for in the mentor/friendship relationship, I think it would just happen. I want to clarify, in my mentor relationship its really good because it takes it to the other issues of race, the other issues of access, the other issues of all these things. It takes out of the realm of this is what’s happening and puts it in a private, personal sphere. How do you deal with this, how do you interact with this? Which I think is different than us being in a mentoring relationship and we’re talking about these issues that we know already exist that affect everyone. I like to think that my mentors are very diverse, maybe not gender diverse, but diverse for the purposes of this, in terms of race.

I’m one of those people who is very good at reading people. I’m very good at being able to figure out how much I can trust the person to an extent through just talking, through personal interactions, through sharing tidbits of information that aren’t necessarily private, but aren’t public either and kind of see what they do with it. And through that process I start learning to trust them more. I think that’s my way of also getting them to trust me. Through those conversations it becomes more and more personal. I think that’s how it was in my first mentoring relationship. We learned from each other. There’s always something to learn. I really feel like in a mentor/mentee relationship it should be give and take. It shouldn’t be this, “I have something to teach you, I’m gonna take you under my wing because you look like your dogged out, let me help you, lift you up, you know. You should be lifting each other up.”

Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?

I would say at this time in my life I’ve had three mentors. Two throughout the course of high school and one in college. Interesting enough, all of my mentors have always been women, never had a guy mentor. Of the three, two have been women of color and one has been an identified White woman. My first experience was when I was in high school. My first mentor I got was when I was around a freshman in high school. It was interesting enough, it came about through another relationship I had had and then this woman, who was also White, was like, I think you two should, you know, get together and meet, I think you’d have a lot in common. Turns out we did. She ran a program at Planned Parenthood and I was interested in sort of getting more involved in volunteering in issues. She was like I run an experiential education program, do outreach on sex education with youth that are considered at-risk, you know, I think you’d be a good candidate, and so it kind of started off as that working kind of
relationship and sort of expanded into a mentoring relationship. We are actually still friends to this day, still talk a lot but her capacity to mentor me has kind of shifted a bit as its relevance in my life has changed.

My second mentor actually came around in that same job actually. My original mentor did end up leaving two years into the job around the end of my sophomore year of high school and another woman came up. She was a self-identified Latina. She took the job and she just kind of filled in. So it was kind of easy to just make that same leap, sort of get into that same connection.

And then with college, I didn’t’ have a mentor in my first year of college. I was kind of haphazardly going about things. It really came about in my second year, in kind of a more structured format. So my first two mentors just kind of happened. My second mentor relationship was developed around a structured relationship. It came about because I was interested in student affairs and she had a student affairs job and she told me about this program and you know one of the components of it was a mentorship program. So it started out as being kind of intentional about what we wanted to do, what I was looking for so we kind of had that basis of that mentor/mentee relationship and it just kind of grew into something bigger.
Appendix H

Results of Structural Process Coding – First Cycle Coding

Ty

Introduction
My name is Ty and I identify as biracial (African American and Spanish). I’m the first one in my family to go to college and it’s interesting. I mean, they never acted like different, but sometimes it sometimes feels. . .it feels kind of like a power dynamic you know like, they feel intimidated or they feel like, I feel kind of nervous sometimes, like I’m going to make them feel kind of stupid. But like, I guess dropping knowledge or like sharing lives with them, sometimes I feel like I limit myself. Like sharing things too, I don’t want to make them feel that way about me.

My Racial Identity and its Importance
My African American heritage has not really been a part of my life in the past. My Father is African American and he wasn’t in my life so there was no one to really foster that history or to teach me other than what I got in school. So (my mentor) has taught me a lot. I just learn a lot like just from her talking to me. . . I think my race is really important sometimes. Especially like on campus. I don’t feel like I fit in on campus so I feel like it’s more important to me at school but like when I’m with my family and stuff, race isn’t an issue. I don’t have to think about it because that’s my family and I don’t really identify with them on that level. So I guess it’s more of an issue when I’m around people who identify heavily as something else other than I do. I think I’m more aware of it at school because I know that I’m not White. I think it’s just being different and having a different viewpoint and having different experiences is what makes it more important here.

I work at an office on my campus where multiculturalism is the focus and working there really nurtures both sides of my racial identity. Just being there with the staff and getting to participate in the events and things like that. It’s really wholesome for me to be there.

I think especially working in the multicultural office I definitely, really nurture it and I get to learn about my African American heritage too because that hasn’t really been a part of my life in the past. and just being here and getting to participate in the events and things like that. And the rest of the staff too cause the more Spanish side, I even get that cultural piece from other people here too so it’s really wholesome for me to be here. I can’t really think of other places in my life where my racial identity is nurtured. Maybe at home with my roommate because we’re really good friends. Me and her talk about racial issues and stuff that we experience. And even sometimes with my younger sister, but not really with my mom or anybody. I guess they worked so hard to assimilate that so it’s not important to them to be cultural I guess. So we’re not really cultural in my family. We just celebrate the American holidays and there’s no culture really, so I don’t get
it at home. But I think just with my sister and people closer to my age especially outside of them is where I think I get that cultural piece that I can foster.

When it comes to my family I’ve noticed that race has become more important since I’ve been in college. When I went home to help my grandmother move a couple of weeks ago she started complaining to the effect of like, “oh, ok well I’ll just nigger-rig it”. And I was like. . .I guess before college I never would have thought about it or it never would have been a big deal. But when she said it, I was like “What?!?” Are you kidding me? I told her that she shouldn’t say that and I even like offered an alternative. Like you can say “Jerry-rig”. Why do you have to say that? You know why does it have to be that? And I tried to like explain it to her and I can just see little things like that. . .that they’ve always done but like now I’m more aware. Since I’ve come here I’ve learned about things like that and the aggressions against people. I think she just kind of like brushed it off like, she didn’t really. . .cause my grandmother’s like the type, she’s very traditional so like you’re disrespectful, you shouldn’t say to her like. . .I’m like, I still say what I have to say but that’s how I felt, but I think she kind of like just brushed it off, but we’ll see if she does it again around me. Maybe it’ll least get her to think about it.

Experiences of Race & Racism
I think for me, I never really experience (racism) directly because I have the privilege of having light skin so people don’t really necessarily know what I identify as and I’ve really been able to pass off for White when I wanted to. One time here at school my friend who is visibly African American. . .she has dark skin, got called a nigger and it really impacted me personally because I identify as Black too, just because they weren’t saying it to me. . .it really hurt her too, but I think it hurt me just as much even though it wasn’t directed towards me. It was an argument between her and a friend, or somebody I don’t even know who it was. And it got really heated and then they started exchanging words and then that happened and it was just like. . .I think it caught everybody off guard really. You could tell that people notice when somebody says something like that. You know, it was kind of like in a movie you know when everybody stops, it’s like, you know. Yeah, it was crazy, it was just crazy. This kind of thing never happens to me so I was really shocked to even hear somebody say it, you know, I never experience it and never deal with it. . .just to hear somebody be so cruel. Because it is cruel for somebody to say something like that.

My friend and I processed it after, but like what do you do? I think I was shocked about it and she was more verbally mad about it and was just kind of like venting like she couldn’t believe it and stuff like that.

What does it mean to be African American?
For African Americans, I kind of feel like it seems like you can’t be successful unless you’re popular or like you’re in entertainment or something. I think that’s like a really big perception. I guess it doesn’t really get glorified like the other things that people are doing. . well I guess now with like Obama. .but he’s popular, like he’s famous. He’s still kind of like an entertainment figure I guess.
Me and My Mentor
My current mentor identifies as African American and I’ve been working with her for three years. Race is an important part of our relationship, but in a more positive way just because of who she is. I think race is very important in her life just because that’s the kind of work that she’s in and dealing with those issues and things like that. I think it’s very important to her just because she takes pride in being African American and so that’s why I think race is very salient and she takes pride in being successful and a positive influence and being an African American person. Because sometimes I think that people think we don’t exist and so I think she takes pride and it is very important to her.

I told my mentor about the confrontation with my grandmother. I always tell her that I can just see the dynamic changing in my family. Somebody told me a story about how their family felt a certain way about them and I asked her (mentor) , I wonder if my family feels oh like that I think I’m better than them. I wonder if my family feels that that way cause I’m in college. She’s like, “maybe”. Maybe they do because they don’t understand the significance of it.

It is important to me that my mentor is someone who I can share my racial experiences with. For me I think it’s really important especially for students of color to get that. Just because it’s hard to be a person of color in a “white-collar” community. This college is very much that. It’s really a white-collar community and so, it’s a factor and having that person to talk about it with has been really important and really influential for me and just helping me have a positive experiences and talk about it and just understand the differences that happen in the professional world and how much harder people feel that have to work just in general. So just really being able to identify that and talk about that is a really important piece for me in my mentorship. And so that’s a reason why I enjoy working with her so much because I get that and I learn so much about it every day from her.

I know I can always go to her if I have a question or if I think that I’m doing. . .I always like, go to her if I think I’m doing something that might be offensive to other people or to other students of color. One thing that I really struggled with especially in my freshman year was just kind of fitting in because I never really. . .especially racially I never really chose. . .like be White. . .and I feel like with the White people they feel like I’m not White enough and then with Black people I’m not really Black enough and so that was something that I was really struggling with. I stopped going to Black student club meetings because my friends. . .I guess sometimes, we’re loud, like I know that, that’s just how we are you know, and so I think that was just playing into a stereotype of like, when you’re with your friends, you’re just like amped up and you’re excited and so a lot of the times I found myself being. . .around the Black people being called “ghetto” and stuff and so that was really different for me and being like you know, now I’m too Black. My mentor just really helped me work through that, like my biracial identity and understanding when I need to like. . .when I’m in different environments, how it’s going to come in to play and stuff like that. Just really helped me work through that. That was something that I struggled with my freshman year and my sophomore year. Just really trying to figure that
I would say this relationship out of a lot of the ones that I have with a lot of administrators here has been probably the most positive and what’s kept me at this school because I struggled with that whole...do I fit in here? So I really thought about leaving, transferring. She’s the one who was able to talk me out of it. And now that I’m here and in my senior year I’m really glad that I stayed because I might have regretted...I don’t know. if I’d known what I have gained since then I would have regretted it but I don’t know what would have happened if I would have left either. I really think it’s important for everybody to find somebody. . .if they don’t have it at home. . .or just find somebody who can help them cause I don’t know if I would have made it if I didn’t have the support of her them here, this office.  I look up to her and I respect her. . .she’s really positive.

Robert

Introduction
My name is Robert and I identify racially as African American.

My Racial Identity and its Importance
My race is 100% important. My dad’s from Nigeria so our family does consider race seriously and with pride. There’s obviously different views of how everybody views different races and I just try to do my best within my power to try to represent my race as well as possible. I view my race as being very prestigious and I work hard to try to decrease a lot of the negative statistics that we have towards our race. I want to be a positive representative of the African American race. I have intentions to do more after I graduate, but with my limited time I think the thing that I do right now is just do as well as possible in school. Choosing college, showing up to class, getting involved, speaking up in class and getting good grades are all ways I strive to be a positive representative. That’s it for the time being, but as soon as I graduate I already have plans of helping out my community.

My roommates are also African American and you know the subject of race always comes up. We talk with each other just about our race and what it looks like in today’s times versus the past times and maybe what it will look like in the future. With my family, everyone is already in the workforce, I’m the only one that’s in college, everybody else in my family is in the workforce right now and they’re always telling me about their experiences in work and how/where their position stands.

Experiences of Race & Racism
I understand that it is hard to understand racism today, but it still exists. People do things, step out of the boundaries. Who is going to teach them? I have not experienced racist problems at college but my sister was at another school and has talked about racist activity on her campus.
Once during class we were talking about politics and kind of the demographics and how people get placed in society in terms of income. We had kind of a debate and being that there’s only two African Americans in the class, we had a low representation so through that experience, we kind of just held our ground. We didn’t have a bias opinion. Just because when you’re biased you don’t get input from being biased so we gave our case and it just kind of seemed like two against the whole class. But everything was fair. No arguments came out. Nobody felt like they were cornered or anything like that. It was a good experience but it would have been nice to have had more representation.

The other people in the class were just learning about it. They had a misunderstanding. Because you look at it through a book and they have their definition but, um as me and the other person in the class, we have seen it through our own eyes and we have other friends and family that are in situations and all that, so we kind of basically explained to them and told them the real things instead of what’s in the books.

**What does it mean to be African American?**
About two months ago my sister and I went to a career fair sponsored by the National Black MBA Association with my sister. It was a conference, but after the career fair there was a lot of like social networking. We talked to a lot of people from different companies and they were all graduated and well educated. I never through my experience, I had never ever seen that before. I’ve met people obviously, African American people that are very educated, but to see just a whole group of just hundreds and hundreds of them. . . it was just definitely an experience that I have never ever been through before. It was the first time in my life I saw rooms full of successful Black African American people and it was like the best experience I’ve had in my life and I came back just saying I want to get to that point.

**Me and My Mentor**
My mentor is African American and she is my supervisor. We’ve been working together for almost a year. Our relationship is just straight business. Our office handles programming for the campus. Our programming is for all students, like all student activities so we don’t really put (diversity) into effect. We try to reach everybody. They have Black student clubs and GLBT groups where they do their events and they focus on a specific demographic on the campus. We meet once a week and specifically discuss what I am doing or what I am planning on doing in the near future or from this time right now to the next time we meet, what goals do we want to finish and what’s on the agenda basically. When I go in there we have an agenda. We talk about what we’re gonna get done, so race doesn’t really come up. But I’m sure. . .we have a relationship. . .I have an open relationship with her where I can say hey something is happening that I’m not comfortable with race wise and she would talk about it with me and give me ideas on how to handle it.

Race isn’t really present when we talk to each other and I don’t really mind that it’s not there. Definitely if there’s a problem, if I was uncomfortable like I said before, I would
definitely talk to her about it but nothing has come up and there hasn’t really been a reason to talk about it.

I really can’t tell how my mentor views race. Like I really can’t tell how she views her race because I never talked about it. I don’t think there would be any telltale signs of how she uses it, how she deals with it or anything like that.

In her office there’s a lot of artistic stuff. Now maybe those artists can be African American, I don’t know who the artists were but she a lot of art in her room. I guess I can assume that . . . I don’t have the right to assume, but I’m thinking is she’s not as strong, in African American culture, as like my parents are. That can definitely be misconstrued. I Found out this morning she is from the south and her mom’s from the same town my mom is from so we learned that and I know that she’s very open to anything that you want to talk about she’s open to talk about. She’s a very great listener and she gives you very good advice. She gives you her true feelings about what she feels about a situation.

I feel like our relationship is ongoing and race is going to come up here and there. Cause she’s been to different universities and done mentoring for herself and I’m sure we’ll talk about it and what it was like for her. I’m pretty sure from the south to here there was a difference so I think we will talk about how she dealt with. . . I feel like a lot of this comes up even in a business realm, it’s like when you have an HR department you talk to the HR and tell them about what you see can change in the company about diversity and what are the problems with diversity. I feel that that’s where racial matters really should be dealt with.

Brooke

Introduction
My name is Brooke and I identify as African American. My father is Black.

My Racial Identity and its Importance
(My race is) probably not that important. I’ve never been in a situation yet where. . . well, I can’t say that either. It’s not that important but I guess in a way, I know when to play the card if I need to. There’s certain situations where it becomes more important. . . (Giggles). Applying for college was a big one because I come from a single mom, one job, African American. Clearly I had more opportunities to get funding to go I also dance and as light skinned as I am, I have advantage over other Blacks that are there because I fit the mold that the team wants but at the same time, if there were to ask they could still say they’re integrated.

When it comes to race I understand the importance of your background and this is who I am and this is where I come from but I don’t think that should be a judgmental thing up front with the people that you’re working with. Because yes, your background defines who
you are but it shouldn’t be stereotyped.

I don’t know how my racial identity is supported or nurtured in my life. (Long pause). Hmm. . . I don’t know. I never. . .really. . . been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really.

I can say that I do feel more comfortable with Whites just because I grew up around that and I do feel more comfortable with people older than me. I’ve gotten a lot of backlash from my dad for not joining multicultural offices and being involved with Blacks per se. Just because female Blacks is the most hatred I get from any other race. I don’t feel that I want to have my racial identity more supported in my life. I’m cool with how it is now. . . .definitely developed into it. . . identified myself, so this is who I am and you kind of go with what works.

Experiences of Race & Racism

I can’t think of a time in college when my race impacted my life in a significant way. I can’t Say any times in college. It was mostly when I was growing up. The biggest one is until about I was 13 everyone thought I was adopted because I look nothing like my mother. And then my first real relationship, I got a lot of backlash from it because it was an interracial couple and growing up people didn’t understand exactly what that meant or if it was okay. I flat out didn’t understand it. My mom always dated interracially so I was used to it growing up but he took it harder than I did. So it caused a lot of problems down the road.

I’ve never heard someone directly say anything about race but I mean it’s just little social cues where you can tell they’re not comfortable or you can pick up on what they’re really thinking even though they’re not saying it. Just situations like that. I can see it and its mostly the stories that I hear but it usually tends to be with other races than Black. Like when someone walks into a room, I’ve seen people move away or I heard one story about two of her friends. They went to go into a hot tub and once that happened, all the White people left for whatever reason. But when the male got in it was okay. It was two females and a male, both Black and they went over to some hot tub pool thing at one of the apartment complexes and majority Whites live there. And so I guess a couple of girls were in the hot tub and when all of them got in. . well actually when the two girls got in all of the other girls got out. But when the guys came over to get in they came back.

What does it mean to be African American?
I don’t know what it means to be African American. I really don’t know. I don’t really pay attention. Cause it’s not that big in my life to be able to pay attention to it or want to figure it out. I really don’t know how to answer that. (Long silence).

Me and My Mentor
I did not choose my mentor. It just so happened that I ended up with a Black woman as a mentor. My current mentor identifies as Black or African. . . (Hesitates). . .where is she from? I don’t know. She was not born in Africa. . .Maybe it’s Black. I know it’s not African American. I know that for a fact. It has to be Black. She’s older, she’s 33.

Race has been present in my relationship with my mentor. During our staff training we did an identity skill thing. . .quest. We went camping and then we were asked to do an activity that defines how we identify in the world based on how the world classifies races, sexual orientation, class. . .all that stuff. That’s where it came up and my advisor, she identifies as an African woman and she sat in on one of our little groups because she knew from the get go that I’m intimidated by African women so she wanted to learn more about it and she also expressed how she was excited that she is my advisor so I could gain that experience.

We got split in groups of four to five and then we just had to share our story with those group members. My mentor chose our group to sit in on. It didn’t bug me but at the same time, doing an activity like that right from the get go when you really don’t even know these people is intimidating and overwhelming so I understand where she’s coming from on wanting to get on a deeper level because she is a very emotional thinker but at the same time we finally figured out the fine line of “I don’t talk about my personal life, so please don’t ask me”. So it took a while to develop that. That was the only time where race showed up with me and my mentor.

I see my mentor every day when I’m at work and we are supposed to have one-on-ones once a month and then myself and the other coordinator meet with her monthly as well, but once we kind of got it out on the table that I’m not the emotional person and I’m very business forward, business mind set, our meetings kind of stopped after September because I was always in the office anyway. If we ever had a question it was answered then and there, we didn’t wait until our meeting time. Our relationship is more of a work relationship than a mentoring relationship because that is how I catered it. That is how I want it to be.

My mentor is very open about race because she does a lot of diversity workshops. But I Know she also expresses the hard time she has living here and finding people to connect with because of her race and because of the age differences since we’re either all college or family. . .there’s not a lot of singles in the area so she’s struggling with that. So for her race is a very important part of her identity and she talks about it a lot. Mmm hmm. All the time. She always shares her personal stories with everyone. I kind of just shut her Out because to me it’s whining. She always talks about this one guy in Boston, like. . .wake up, he doesn’t like you like that (laughs). That’s just my take on her personal stories. I don’t know if she does it because she likes the social aspect that much and she wants all the attention on her or if it’s more of, I really want guidance on what to do in this situation cause she never really follows through on any of the suggestions made.

When she talks about race it doesn’t really affect me at all. It’s not important to me. It’s Not something that I seek out in my relationship with my mentor. I know that if an issue were to arise, she would listen but other than that we don’t ever mention it or talk about it.
If I need help, she’s there if I want to use it.

I didn’t choose her as my mentor and it’s hard to think about what I might be learning from her. Cause we’re such opposite ends. I mean I admire her because she always has a positivity to the situation where I’m more negative mind set, kind of realistic. I give kudos to her for wanting to reach out and wanting to be a part of every aspect that we do. I like that she makes it a point to show up to our events, be involved in it. She’s also expressed that she wanted to be a part of our committee meetings because she wanted to get to know them as well. But that’s about it. Just businesswise we think completely differently. Especially with figuring out who we want to target market to. She, in a way, finds that targeting your market is discriminating against others. Where I see it as, no I know I want to target to these people because I know they’re gonna take it and it’s gonna make it more successful as a whole. So we’re opposite on that.

We did a breast cancer awareness event just on the plaza and we were talking about the information that we wanted to put up on the board and she wanted to challenge us on not making it only about women, she wanted us to look at men and the struggle that they go through as well as transgender and things like that, but. . .so we tried, and we did find information that men can get breast cancer on rare occasion. That’s about all we could do, cause the facts just aren’t there or the knowledge isn’t known because it’s not something that is accepted in society, yet.

When we have a difference of opinion I kind of just take her feedback and see what I can do With it and if I can’t do anything, just tell her that. But we’ve never had a talk on. . .in business, this is how you execute a marketing plan more efficiently. I highly doubt that she’s taken any advertising, business classes in her life.

Angie

Introduction
My name is Angie and I identify as African American.

My Racial Identity and its Importance
How important is my race to me?   Ummm… oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not.

Ummm. . .when I approached the college experience initially, during my first year, I wasn’t
really involved with the Black club. I guess I was just trying to get a feel for college in general, and I looked around one day and realized I didn’t see anybody like me, and I felt out of place. I felt a bit pariah on campus. And I knew that it was necessary for me to engage with other people that I feel very comfortable with, that I feel are very similar to me in order for me to have a positive college experience. So at that point, around the beginning of my second year, I made the conscious decision to reach out.

Well, I am a part of a Black student club. By being involved with that, I’m able to connect with other people with similar backgrounds. That provides some support. Also my job is to Support African American students in a multicultural office for the school that keeps me grounded and makes me feel supported. I used to live in an environment where I was surrounded by other people my color with similar backgrounds and so being here, it’s difficult to feel that way. So my racial identity is supported by the interactions and experiences I have through my work as the and my participation in the club.

Well, I feel supported around family in general but it’s difficult to say that my racial identity is supported specifically. I’m supported as an individual around family, and not just exclusively regarding my racial identity. When it comes to conversations that surround race, especially when I’m speaking to my grandmother who’s lived through so much and has so many stories to tell… and when she tells me stories about her past, which is our past, I do feel racially supported and nurtured because I can connect to that and know that she really understands me and that she can feel for the things that I go through because she’s gone through those things herself.

Experiences of Race & Racism

Also, in most of my classes, I’m the only African American student and I guess in a Backwards way, my racial identity is reinforced there as well. Just because of the differences I see. The way that I’m treated, the way that people speak to me. It’s a constant reminder, in a way. And some of the students on campus have lived very sheltered lives in White suburban communities; and so when they meet me, they don’t know how to respond, what to say. They see modern media and learn stereotypes from that. They might say something to me that I feel is offensive and I realize that, because of that ignorance, they just don’t know any better. It reminds me of the differences that exist there, and the fact that a lot of people on campus do view me as “different” because of my skin color. I feel that everywhere I go on this campus.

A lot of the friendships that I have made, especially through the Black student club, have Really impacted my life. We did a fall retreat this year and we had maybe 15 students total in attendance, and about 8 of those students were African American. In addition, there were Latino students and White students, as well. So it was all of us coming together, and we were able to develop really strong, lasting, sincere relationships based off of our experiences in general. For example, we were talking about how other people see us. And although the Latino students didn’t identify the same way, we were able to connect and to empathize with one another, simply because we are all minority students and able to see
things from that perspective. It was amazing. I cherish each one of the friendships made there for that reason. Because I know that we truly understand each other’s point of view.

One thing that I found to be really interesting was that the African American and the Latino students have very, very similar points of view and experiences. And I was really surprised by that. One point of connection was that at one point in history, and arguably this still exists today, African Americans were pushed out. We were… ostracized for our color, for our background. And a lot of that exists today when it comes to Latino students. With the issues regarding immigration, a lot of the Hispanic and Latino students on campus feel that they’re not welcome. So being able to connect on that was amazing because I never expected it, and I never really considered it before. But we also had some similar experiences when it came to our families. Since we are on a predominantly White campus, we are surrounded by a different culture from our own. Some of the Latino students mentioned that when they go home, they sometimes run into the word “whitewash”, and that makes them feel put down and outcast…. I’ve run into the same problem. A lot of the African American students have run into that problem. So we began a discussion around it—what does “whitewash” mean and why is it a derogatory term? Why is it that when a person is educated, or when a person is goal-oriented, or when they speak with proper grammar, it is attributed to the White community instead of just saying, “This is a really intelligent Black woman, or this is a really hardworking Latino male”? It’s like saying that, because this person a minority, they can’t have any of those positive characteristics on their own, and if they have them, it must be because of Caucasian influence. It’s basically saying that we, as minorities, are not self-sufficient, and are not capable of achieving success without outside assistance. By using terms like these, we put ourselves down and we undervalue and underestimate ourselves. So that point of connection was something that I ran into that was really interesting to me. However, I did find that the White students didn’t connect in the same way. Just being able to hear some of these things helped them understand it better, because they’d never heard some of this at home. And I think that’s just due to privilege. They’re born with a certain amount of privilege, just by being Caucasian. So they don’t even consider these other things because it’s not a part of their daily lives. So they understood it, but they didn’t really connect to it the way that the rest of us did.

My first year here, I was really struggling. My mother lost her job. Her company laid her Off because of the bad economy. And I was supporting myself, and my three younger siblings and my mother and working all the time and doing the best that I could to stay in school. I started reaching out to friends, trying to find somebody who could maybe understand what I was going through. And I met a girl who lived on the same floor that I did and she and I began a friendship. And at one point she turned to me and said, “I can’t be friends with you anymore.” And I said, “Why not?” And she said, “Well, it doesn’t look good for me to be friends with the poor Black girl on campus.” And that broke my heart. But that was something that I could talk to (my mentor) about. Because she completely understood the way that I’d been feeling. Not just coming from the standpoint of growing up in a family that didn’t have a lot of money, and struggling, but also from the standpoint that my racial identity was called out there. It wasn’t just that I was poor, it was that I was
Black. And so just in that sense, being able to converse with her about things like that and have her say, “Whether or not this person chooses to stand by you, I will stand by you at all times, because I care about you.” That was huge to me. When we had that conversation, I felt my racial identity and my socioeconomic status were supported because she was able to remind me of some of the obstacles I’ve overcome in getting where I am and reassure me that she was invested in helping me succeed.

What does it mean to be African American?

When I consider how African American people are regarded, I think there are two very different ways to respond. If we’re talking about things that I’ve heard, then that would trigger me to think about mass media today. A lot of the things in the media regarding African Americans are not positive. I mean, even in movies, a lot of the time, the main African American character is going to be the dumb or funny character, or just the goofy sidekick to the strong, smart, White lead character, which I think is something that is not right because it’s not equal. But if we’re talking about things that I’ve observed and seen myself, I’ve been around a lot of very influential, very intelligent, very hardworking, caring and just wonderful African American people including my mother for instance, and the director at the multicultural center. Those are two completely different sides to one greater story. Overall, though, most things I have observed about African Americans have been very positive, and I’ve enjoyed meeting other African Americans who have similar ideals and who want to make a difference in the world. Of course there are bad and good people of every race, but I think a lot of people tend to focus on the bad- they see on the news a burglar who’s African American and it becomes a negative stereotype. And people forget that you have to acknowledge and accept the bad along with the good, instead of simply ignoring the good and using the bad to form damaging ideas about an entire race of people.

Me and My Mentor

My mentor identifies as African American. Race shows up in our everyday interactions. Mainly because we met through work positions that are surrounded around our race. She works in the multicultural center and I’m a coordinator in the same office. So everything we work on together is based on bringing African American students together, providing them with any emotional or academic assistance that they need. We end up talking about how African American students are feeling on campus, and because I am a student, she comes to me to see how things are going with them, how I feel they’re progressing, what more she could do, so we kind of approach everything from a racial standpoint.

This is different than in previous mentoring relationships I’ve had because of the jobs that we do on campus. That guides our relationship. We do have conversations outside of race often, but the most frequent conversations that we have are focused around race.

Because my mentor is an African American woman who went through a lot during her College years, and she knows that perspective, she definitely does a lot to reach out to African American students on campus. Because she wants to provide that support that
maybe she didn’t have that she wishes she did. So that’s a pretty big thing for her and for all the students that she comes in contact with. But besides that, she also helps out other minorities as well. So I think in general, I think race shows up in that she reaches out to the minority students, because they’re minority students and they wouldn’t have as many resources without her there.

If I were to have a mentor who wasn’t as racially conscious I would still get a lot of benefits from that. But being in this relationship with her has opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wouldn’t have seen before because she’s able to talk about her history, her personal history, with me and learning about her past experiences, especially when it comes to things that I haven’t encountered, really makes me think about myself and my personal identity more. So I think just being in this relationship with her has made me more secure within myself. Because I feel that I know myself better through some of the conversations that I have with her. I have had mentors before outside of school who weren’t racially conscious and that’s great, that’s awesome, just being able to have somebody to talk to. But I don’t get the same personal benefits from it.

For me, I don’t think a good mentor has to be a person of color. I think it just depends on The mentor’s personality type. For example, if I were to have a mentor who was Asian, who really couldn’t understand my point of view as an African American, then there would be a huge point of disjunct between us and we wouldn’t be able to connect the same way. But if I were to have an Asian mentor who understood privilege and who understood a little bit about my history as well as their history and was able to kind of bridge that gap so that we could feel bonded, then that’s just as significant. Really it’s about being able to reach out and understand one another. So as long as the mentor is open to other ideals and other views and can really connect to that student’s background, I think it’s fine either way.

Race was not important to me when I entered into this relationship. I kind of fell into the mentoring relationship after meeting her. It just happened that we really got along and she became, on her own, a support system for me. If I am looking for someone to guide me, in general, race is not usually something that I consider beforehand. In this case it is convenient; it is nice because I can have conversations with her that I might not feel comfortable having with someone else, but it wasn’t something that I sought out. I think for me the reason that I was so glad to have met her in the first place was that she’s so successful and she’s so generous and she’s well known for the work that she’s done and that, on its own, shows that she has a great character and I can learn a lot from her no matter what race she is.

Ryan Alexander

Introduction
My name is Ryan Alexander and I identify racially as Black.
My Racial Identity and its Importance

I take pride in the fact that I am Black. But it’s not something that I... most people would say... it’s because you’re Black or you’re successful and you’re a Black man but I don’t take it to be like that at all and I think that’s from my parents bringing me up in a very White setting and then also just being around mixed races all my life. I mean, yeah, I see it, but it’s not something that to me is like, a huge thing. I would say it’s not what defines me, that I am Black. If somebody asks me, “who are you?”, I wouldn’t say that I am a Black man.

As far as nurturing my racial identity, I’d say mostly my family and then getting involved with the Black student club here. That was something that I did in order to nurture it. Definitely because coming here I didn’t really hang out with a lot of Black people so it’s something... and then I took the initiative and went and did. Like you know with my family our family is all out of state and we’re just over there by ourselves and I don’t really hang out with that many Black people so definitely getting involved with the student club and making that connection here and then the multicultural center I’m trying to get involved with that so...

Experiences of Race & Racism

Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black and then, we really don’t talk about it a lot but we get there sometimes and my dad picks up his accent. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home. It’s not something that we concentrate on but definitely it’s there and I appreciate it.

I also work with the admissions office here at school. Last year when I got here they were sending me to high schools and like, didn’t get it until a little bit into the quarter but I noticed that there are not a lot of Black people but I guess they’re, in essence, celebrating... me, as a Black person at this college and being successful. I helped with recruiting high schoolers who were here for a camp over the summer. They brought in like 50 excelling Black students around the country and mostly in the state and I was a mentor. That experience felt supportive to me.

When it comes to race, it’s more like my success here and the way I stand out is, most people would say, because I’m Black... Black, you have a White girlfriend because you’re Black all that kind of stuff so it’s definitely something that is a lot more noticeable here than back home.

That’s what it is a lot of times. For instance, I’ve been involved in student government and I’ve heard a lot of people say, well “yeah, you’re going to be student body president because you’re Black and because that makes you stand out where as all these other people are like... to me that’s like... so any Black person can run for student body president and win. And so, I hear that and then as far as even when I was rushing for my fraternity... for actually all the fraternities. I got into all of them except for like one. And so, people were
like, well that’s cause you’re Black, but at the same time I was also named the first year senator. I was like yeah, I’m Black and they want a Black person in their fraternity but there’s also the success of the leadership. I’ve never been the type of person who holds onto that kind of stuff. But it absolutely does play out and my girlfriend even has been like, “everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys.” She’s like, “I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. So that’s probably the most prevalent thing that I see at college. That’s what I’d like to continue to mentor and hopefully reach out to Black students at college and hopefully in my future that I can stand up and be like you guys can defeat that stereotype and go for what you want to do and it doesn’t have to be that you’re a Black, successful person, it’s just he’s a person.

To me it’s not a problem because it’s like, yeah I am but at the same time it’s like. . .what about all the other Black people that don’t have all these different things. It’s a prevalent thing that I see and then also for me I attended a diversity conference. They’re talking about how there’s White privilege and stuff like that and then there’s privilege for being Black and all different races and different things that you can have as far as privilege and so to me I think that what I’ve learned so far here at college and being an African American male is that. . . I’ve always taken things differently because to me, if that’s a nuisance or if that’s a problem to you, then you fix it. You do something to make it so that. . . okay, well. . .”I perceive Black people as lazy and poor and just like, they have kids and screw up their lives” . . .so to me instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, ok well so then. . . I hear my friends saying well, “maybe all Black people are like that. Maybe they’re not always negative. So that, to me is a huge thing that I’ve learned at college. Yeah, if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my race with me rather than look like I’m above.

When it comes to race, I see it more here. In high school I didn’t even see it as a problem. Yeah, I mean, yeah there’s those jokes and like. . .but it’s so much like, but there’s still community and family and it’s like if we went and said this is a multicultural center event, the whole school still attends. There wouldn’t be a big deal and so I’d say my problem with. . .and the reason why I haven’t gotten involved so much with the inclusivity movement here at the college is that I see it as, “poor me, poor us”, that mentality and I don’t want it to be that way and that’s why I, when I was brought in here and when I went to the high schools and stuff, I’d say, if you’re gonna go to the college, don’t have that mentality. Just go and do whatever you want. You can be whatever you want and that’s what I’m gonna do. It’s not something that you worry about. It’s like ok. . .and I’ve gotten over that where yeah, one of my big brothers told me that, “yeah, you might not make it because you’re Black but then he turns around and says, well you can, you can do it and so that is what I hope to push to the rest of the people, the rest of everyone coming to the college. It doesn’t have to be just Black people or just Latino people, White people. . . anyone. You can go to college and do whatever you want. I definitely shared that with my mentor and he. . . I mean, that’s something he believes in and I think that’s something that he probably struggles with a lot on the staff, just because it’s always going to be
there, and it’s just this whole campus environment, but instead of being poor me he goes about his business and moves on and so you’re not always seen as just the Black guy.

And the local community as well is a lot different. My home town is like. . .there’s a lot of Stuff that you see done in the state, being in this city. And where I’m from is just not like that, it’s not that environment, and so I do see the victim mentality coming from. . .yeah, I lived in this poor neighborhood and then I got to come to this college but the students treat me like I’m invisible. . .so I understand when people say that but I don’t think that’s gonna help, to be honest. I think that the only way that inclusivity will be pushed on this campus and this country is just by people being them and not being. . I mean the same thing that Obama being, well he’s a Black president but now people are not judging his decisions so much on him being Black, it’s just he’s the President now. And that’s what I hope to push on this campus by the end of my four years just hopefully seeing some more. . hopefully not so much victim mentality but people can do whatever they want. Even if they mess up, not being like, oh well you messed up because you’re Black or you did this because you’re Black. It’ll come over time and I hope to see it

What does it mean to be African American?
What are my perceptions about African American people? Well, again, going back to my Family my parents are, to me, very successful African American people and that is what I base myself off of. My parents both did not receive 4-year degrees but they are successful and they work hard and they got houses and cars and all this kind of stuff so that is basically what I set myself off of but as far as media, they would absolutely be stereotypical Black people as silly, loud, obnoxious, ignorant, all that kind of stuff. People that cuss a lot, drink a lot, smoke and do a lot of different crimes and all that kind of stuff. . .but as far as the Black people I’ve surrounded myself with. . are successful. As far as even people in the multicultural center, admissions and I have a mentor back home who is Black as well and they’re all successful.

A lot is based on upbringing as well. I didn’t have a TV growing up. All the Black I knew were successful. So that is what I hoped to be.

I think a lot of times the multicultural center, from what I see is kind of secluded as well on campus and so it’s like although the college is working towards the diversity and the inclusiveness, inclusivity, they can say it, but it’s only the multicultural center that mostly pushes it and those people. . you know what I see from being in student government, fraternities and all that kind of stuff, it’s all these people, and I get pulled into that section sometimes over inclusivity and all that awareness and that kind of stuff and so to me what I’d rather fight for, and I talked to my mentor about this, I’d rather instead of excluding myself and being pushed in this direction, I’d rather just go and be me and that’s what I see as inclusivity. It doesn’t have to be a section of campus and they have say a student body president representing the multicultural center versus the Greek life. That’s one of my reasons that I chose to run as soon as I got here because I think that would bring kids together. Yeah, I can hang out with the people that represent inclusivity and I can tell

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about how I got a scholarship at the multicultural center.

I know that I am not gonna make a difference at the college within a year but what I’ve seen from being a freshman to being a sophomore it’s what I heard from one of my big brothers in my fraternity he was student body president last year and him saying that, “oh the college is gonna always have a White president, they’ve had a White president since the beginning and it wasn’t him discouraging me it’s just like letting me know it’s gonna be hard, it’s all these kids. And so then at the end of the year him coming back and being like, “wow, if people see you that way so much it’s not like... it won’t... but at the same time we talked about there’s our current student body president picked--a kid who does work with the multicultural center, he works with all the student clubs, with the United Student club, Asian Student club, Black Student club, so he chose to pick that one so that he could kind of bring the campus together, however, it’s still kind of keeping him under because I think, for his student body vice president, he knew that’s what he was chosen for. He was chosen to bring... he was supposed to bring all these people so, and then we were talking about, well if I were supposed to run against Felipe, then it would be a Black guy versus a Mexican that’s how the college would see you. It would be like, here went the Black guy with the Mexican (laughs). So we were talking about that. So, I think that, I mean hopefully, what I’m seeing and what I see especially for student government and hopefully for the campus, is that as we work to... the inclusivity, like, although I think it’s mostly the multicultural center and mostly like the residence hall, they are the ones who push it so hard, and then... but I want to hopefully combine those and hopefully work to make it so much not... because right now I would say that it is the multicultural center and it is residence halls versus Greek life and the rest of the campus because that’s just, what they know. So I’d say, what I’d like to see is more of the campus being more united and that does take someone that does not concentrate so much on the race issue and so much on the inclusive issue but just go out there and show it. And so I do try to stay away from all the inclusivity and stuff so that I’m not connected with that but then I can bring it in the end so it’s not supposed to be my main focus but it is something that is definitely important.

Me and My Mentor
Yeah I’d say race is present with my mentor here at college because he is also a Black male and attended the same college and dealt with a lot of the same things that I guess I’d say I deal with and as far as... we don’t talk about it so much but it’s definitely there. I mean that’s one of the reasons I did pick him because he’s someone that I can live up to but also he can talk to me about other issues besides just basketball (laughs) or other stereotypical things.

I would say he probably sees it a little more than I do. He deals with it here at the college and so that’s something that’s his focus... and that’s the diversity of the college so he deals with all that. I mean as far as race goes he definitely looks for it more and he grew up in a different situation than I did as well so it’s more prevalent in his life than it is to mine. Race is a part of his job.
But even though it is part of his job, I think just being around him, it’s been easier to see more about him. When I came during summer to do the camp I stayed with him for a night and I remember he said to me, “this isn’t what a typical Black person’s house should look like, hum?” And I remember being like, I don’t know what a typical Black person’s house should look like (laughs). It’s just a house to me. And then, he played basketball here and he makes little remarks that are funny but are . . that’s how I’ve gotten to know him more.

Originally, I had chosen through my parents not to come visit so they had me walk around with him and everyone thought he was my dad. (laughs), he’s the only other Black guy on campus. We don’t look alike at all. He’s like, really tall. Everyone’s like, “wow where do you get those color eyes?” He’s like, this isn’t my son. That’s what they saw.

I think it’s important for race to be considered in my relationship with my mentor. I mean I chose him to be my mentor and he took me on but I think it would be different if it were a. . .I mean I chose him for a reason, because I could have chosen plenty of other people on the campus. But I think that is something that I guess I was looking for. I didn’t even think about it until this came up but. . .yeah taking him into consideration and knowing a little bit more than other people, other professors or other faculty and staff on our campus would know about me and being Black or any cultural lens at all is important.

I think I knew I was choosing him somewhat because he was Black. Umm. . .I mean I didn’t think about it so much but at the same time, yeah. I identify more with him over. . .I mean I got to know him more quickly than others, so that was one of the reasons but also there’s. . .him being called my dad and being called my brother and being called. . .(laughs), I mean that could be what made us bond. It wasn’t just him being Black but also that was part of the picture, so . . .

The relationship has been nurturing I’d say in talking to him as far as my future and stuff. And what I’m gonna do in the future, he’s always like, “well meet with advisors”, he talks to me about scheduling and stuff because most people at this school especially their parents are doctors and lawyers and all that good stuff, so they know, they have those guidelines and that background and I don’t have that and so I’ve been sharing with him sometimes my frustration being like. . .I don’t think the college has a very good writing program and so if I can talk to him and say well this is what I’m thinking because I don’t have the same background, I don’t have that same understanding as far as classes that I need to take or what I need to do in the future, I mean I can definitely sit down with him and he had that same situation. His parents didn’t go to a four year college and so I’d say, in him bringing me up it helps me, I mean I can go and he’ll help me make appointments and do what I need to do.

I mean we’ve definitely talked about that and he’s like well. . .I mean I’ve talked to a lot of people about that since we’ve had this study, but as far as he said that’s the same thing back. It’s still even with his coworkers he. . .that it’s because you’re Black. . .because he
can be very friendly and very outgoing and he can draw a lot of diverse populations into the college and so a lot of his coworkers will say well, “It’s because you’re Black... and they feel comfortable”... and all that kind of stuff. And I talked about, you being Black had nothing to do with my comfort with you. Like that had nothing to do with why I came here, because I was surrounded by the little amount of Black people that were here. It was just that, yeah you are a comfortable person... if you were White, if you were Latino, it would be the exact same thing and so I think... and he said that going here, he had that same experience but then still working here it hasn’t really changed. I mean, you put yourself in the situation so

Cree

Introduction

My name is Cree. So, my dad is Black and White, his grandma was half White so that makes him half Black and half White too so he’s the Black and White side and my mom is Native American too so both her parents are both Native American and Black mixed so my mom’s the Indian and Black and my dad’s Black and White so African American, Native American and then White.

I’m a really good processor. I like to talk about it a lot and then think about it and then talk about it with other people and then I’ll think about making a decision, so. It takes a while, but... I took a Myers Briggs test and it said I was an extravert but it also said like, so I’m an extravert who knows how to make decisions. So when it comes to decision making I just make a decision with like, no emotion involved. I’m a thinker rather than a feeler, so I think things through rather than, oh well my gut tells me to do this, so yes, I’m an extravert. (Laughs). So people get really annoyed because I talk a lot and they’re like why are you talking so much, and I’m like, I’m thinking! So my boyfriend gets so mad because we’ll get in a fight, and I’ll keep talking about it and he’s like, “it’s over, it’s done with, just stop it.” And I’m like, no because I want to let you know exactly how I’m feeling and I’m still thinking about it.

My Racial Identity and its Importance

Ummmm... I think that it’s tough to say how important my race is to me because it’s important to me if I’m around certain people, but it’s not as important to me if I’m just by myself. Like I don’t think about it when I’m by myself, but when I’m around other people I am consciously aware of who I am and what I do because I don’t want to be perceived as a negative image for people so ummm... I guess it’s really important. I think it’s in certain types of situations so... I mean my family’s really unique in that, like the way we were raised so if I’m around other Black people, I’m aware of it a lot because they may say things or do things that I’m like, “wow, I would never do that”. You know and then if I’m around other people who aren’t minorities then I’m really aware of it because I don’t want them to group me in the same category as, “Oh, well she’s just loud and then all Black people are loud”. So I think it’s a situational thing. And then there are some people I hang around and I don’t even think about it just cause I’m that comfortable around them and I
know they know me well enough and they’re not going to judge whatever I do or whatever I say if I’m just joking or something. But I think it’s more of a situational thing.

Because also being Native American too like that’s really different than being Black because you have more standards to uphold, I feel like. And you have more responsibility on your shoulders so yeah, I think it’s pretty important to me.

When I think about how my race is supported in my life. . . Oh wow, ummm. . .I don’t know, I think probably by the people that I hang around a lot. I don’t come in the multicultural office that often, but when I do it makes me feel better because I know there are other people on this campus who are like me and some of them are raised from races just like me so that makes me feel good. But then also I think the way my family is like really strong so we are always around each other so I don’t feel out of place with whatever race that I am, so that kind of supports me. And other people around me in my family really supports me.

Well, I work for the Admissions office and in Orientation but you know with all of those, they really appreciate diversity so I think besides just being around people that look like me, being around people who don’t look like me, they appreciate the fact that I am different and you know my culture and everything like that. So I think that’s nurturing. You can sit down with someone and like they’ll talk to you about diversity and what they think it means and how cool it is that you’re Black and, oh my God, that’s so awesome, you know what I mean? I’m like, oh that’s really cool, because they love diversity and talking about it, especially like some White guy that’s like, yeah, I want to do race/ethnic studies. I’m like, Ok, cool and they just want to talk about it. So that’s really cool to see someone that’s like really interested in the races that I am compared to someone that doesn’t really care. So that’s another way of it being nurtured.

Do I feel it’s important that my racial experience is considered in my mentoring relationship? Not in my mentoring, well. . .not in our relationship, no. But if I did get another mentor, later in life, race isn’t very important but I would appreciate them to be like a person of color just so that they understand what I’ve been going through, you know. . .if that makes sense, but in our relationship no, it’s not important at all, but in the future, it doesn’t have to be a requirement but I would, like, appreciate it. I think I would want them to be a person of color just because the older people I have been around, the people in my community, they are people of color and they kind of remind me of like my grandparents or my parents or something, so I can relate easier to them and like know when they’re like saying wisdom or when they’re just like teaching me things I’m more willing to just sit and listen to them because one, just because they’re older and because they’re people of color. They’re not just saying it as, well. . . “well if I was a person of color I would say this”, but because I’ve been through this. So like him (mentor) being white, it has nothing, like. . . I still sit down and listen to his mentoring but I do. . .I listen to it on certain things, but I also go to like, my mom or someone just to check and make sure. . .and she’s like “yeah, this is right”. So, you know, just checking it that way, I guess. . .if that makes sense. Not
undermining his authority, but just confirming.

Experiences of Race & Racism
There was an incident regarding race. It didn’t happen at school, but it was really cool because my boyfriend and I are out at Wal-Mart going shopping for something and there’s this cute little old (white) man walking in the store and I was like, “Awww, he’s such a cute little old man you know, he just looks so sweet. And so we’re over by the fruits and vegetables aisle and he just came up to us and he was like, “You guys are such a handsome couple”, and I was like, ’Awww, thank you.” And so we started talking and he was like, “Well, what do you want to do” and all this stuff. And he had to be like, pretty old, at least like 70 or 80, probably older than that. But he was really sweet and so my boyfriend was like, “yeah, I’m gonna be an architect engineer”, and I was like yeah, I want to go into politics, become an ambassador and he was like, “Well, I think you are very articulate, you’re gonna do great. You really remind me of Condoleezza Rice and she made it really big”. And I was like, “Oh, that’s really nice”. So I guess, I don’t know if he would have said that to us if we were any other race but I think the way that we work really well together and cause maybe because we were Black, maybe it’s not I don’t know, but I don’t know if he would have said that had we not been Black. Especially like the comment about Condoleezza Rice, so I thought that was really cool.

What does it mean to be African American?
I feel like because of my race and what I want to do in International Relations, I feel like people are more accepting or encouraging of me doing that and going abroad. And I can’t say it’s just because of my race but I think it might be the people that I’ve encountered. And maybe it’s just the staff here is really good, like they really do appreciate diversity, they really encourage that. I think people wise there are a few Black people on campus that I feel like they do a lot of things and they feel that they think they can get away with it like just like, “oh I’m Black so, I can be brutally honest with you”. . .or something and I’m just like, no that was just rude. I think I’ve noticed kind of an entitlement in that way with certain people and it’s not everybody, it’s just like two people but that’s just their personality I guess, but it’s definitely like a negative representation of who we are. When I’m around them, they’re just talking to everybody. So sometimes it’s around African Americans but it’s not as brutally honest or it doesn’t come off as rude, but then they can be talking to some White person and then it’s just like, that was really rude. They can say the same thing but their tone changes. And I feel like that’s because I can say whatever I want to you because I’m Black. You know, like you’re not going to say anything to me. There’s like this sense of entitlement when they say it and it’s not necessary at all but that’s what I’ve noticed just with certain people and then images. . .outside of like, the normal stereotypical images like on posters and stuff. Especially, like there’s a concert coming up for Wale and the poster. . it’s a really bad poster. And a lot of the posters like for parties and stuff, they always refer to Black people as like with the dreads and like the big teeth and all this stuff with the big shades. And I’m like uh, so horrible. Not every Black person is Li’l Wayne, not every Black person wants to have dreads. Not everyone wants to go to jail you know, not everyone has tattoos all over their face but I mean that’s just the
image that they portray and a lot of time like for party banners and stuff going out to the clubs they’ll have images like that and people are like, “Oh God it’s going to be so much fun” and it probably won’t be, but it just looks that way and so, yeah, I think they’re trying to attract more Black people to the parties so they put people like that up there and it doesn’t work for me.

Other things that stand out for me with Blacks I think it’s kind of hit and miss. I know a lot Of people will have seen, like the posters for Precious and all they saw was the girl on the front so they’re like, “oh wow, all Black women are obese” but they didn’t see the movie, they didn’t understand how she really is this way. So that’s one image you can have of the overweight girl that just eats all the time or it’s either overweight and eats all the time or its really classy. So I know like a lot of times people will be like, “Oh my God, Black people are so awesome and this kind of stuff, but they don’t really equate that with Condoleezza Rice or Michelle Obama or Jada Pinkett Smith or like the classy Black ladies. I know a lot of people who are looking on campus for the classy Black ladies will only find certain ones. So you’ll see them all over campus but you’ll point out the ones that you know hold themselves up high because they know they can accomplish more.

Me and My Mentor
I have to say my mentor identifies as White. It’s my guess just because I know his parents and his parents are White too. I think the closest. . .I don’t know like nationality wise where their history comes from I just know that he’s White, so I don’t know outside of that.

Is race present in my mentoring relationship? I would say no. Um, I don’t notice it when I talking with him. When we’re having day to day conversations, like race usually never comes up and then I don’t think about like he’s White and I’m Black. So it never comes up. I feel pretty okay with it not being there. I’m happy that not every relationship has to be like race defined or like I’m more comfortable with a black mentor than a white mentor. So feel fine, I mean our relationship has not changed or anything. So, I think it’s good.

I would describe it as a mentoring as a mentoring where. . .he’s my pastor at my synagogue so we would sit down and talk like once a week, maybe more. And just catch up and see how each other is doing and he would definitely try—if I’m going through anything, help me through that and then just talk to me about anything that’s going on and then also guide me in that direction. So he’s like, well I definitely encourage you to stay in your bible this week, maybe read these passages, do like a devotional program with like psalms and proverbs and stuff like that so help me out that way. So it’s not really more academic based, rather like faith and religious based.

We didn’t really choose each other, ummm. . .I think it kind of just evolved. Because I Started going to that youth ministry once we moved back down from Seattle and then ever since, like, he and I got pretty close and then we just start hanging out and talking and then talking more often and then one-on-one time and stuff.
I think that he appreciates race and he appreciates diversity, but we’ve really never talked about race or ethnicity or anything like that. But as far as I can guess, I think he appreciates it. Cause I know like at our synagogue everyone’s really diverse, so there’s so many races represented there so he has to appreciate that. And in the youth ministry alone there are many races and a lot of like mixed races as well, so he has to balance that out. And he works really closely with a lot of our pastors who are...a lot of them are Black and there are a couple of Hispanic ones and an Italian one too, so I think he has to appreciate it.

I don’t think my mentoring relationship has nurtured my racial identity. It sounds bad to say no, but I don’t think so. Because I think, his any my mentoring relationship is not...like I said it’s more religiously and faith based so in that area, he’s like nurturing me in that way and like helping me to grow in that way, but in like race and the very certain things that we’ll talk about, like he knows like, “I can’t help you”, so he’ll send me to a woman in our community who is a woman of color and she’s older than me and so, he’ll send me to her and like, we can relate better. And that would nurture my racial identity, but not with him and I. So, him and I, it’s more how I can grow and develop my relationship with God, whereas he’ll send me to someone else for something else that may be going on.

Stacy

Introduction
My name is Stacey and I identify racially as Black.

My Racial Identity and its Importance
As far as race and its importance in my life...I try not to dictate my life by my race. I know that my race is a part of what I do because like I’m culturally different from other people. But I try not to let my race...what I am, hold me back from things that I want to do or just because I’m Black, I shouldn’t be able to do this or something like that. So I just do things because I want to do it, not because my race says I should. So on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being race is most important, I would maybe rank it a 7. Race is probably more supported in my relationships. Because I know like in a lot of “Black” relationships things are like supposed to be a certain way and me, I focus on what is a relationship supposed to be like. So my main thing with my boyfriend is we focus on communication and talking and not necessarily on the outside factors. Because we don’t really do what typical people would do in relationships. We kind of talk about race. We have before. But he’s from Trinidad. He’s Trinidad-American. So for him, its different for him because he has Caribbean roots and I really don’t. Like it’s in my blood line but I was born here and my parents are from here. So we talk about things that his family does and things that my family does and we laugh about it, but that’s about it. We talk more about nationality.

I’ve worked at the multicultural office since the beginning of fall semester. It’s more supportive for me because I consider this home. So it’s like when outside factors start to influence me and I feel like I just need to get away because I’m mostly the only Black
person in all my classes, it gets to me sometimes. Especially like when your professors talks about something Black and they look directly at you when they make that statement like you’re supposed to speak for your whole race. So like when I need to get away, this is where I come and in working here, I have to be here anyway. This is my home and I’m really comfortable here. I call it home because its where I find most of my Black identity. This is where I first started. When I did orientation my freshman year, they brought me here to make sure I didn’t feel left out. There were two Black people in my orientation class. It was me and another boy. I was looking around at everybody else like, “oh... I’m very different.” And everybody was like looking at me and I came here and I just got a home vibe from it. And I talk to (directors) all the time. They’re just like mom and big brother.

Experiences of Race & Racism

Okay, so I had this class in the Natural Resources building in this really, really, really big room, probably 300 kids in the class. And I remember I sent my professor an email. I sent it a little too late because he never responded and he never asked me my name, we never had a verbal one-on one conversation before and normally I would sit in the back with this one girl. And um. I’d fall asleep on and off because he always had the lights dim and he just walks up to me. He’s just like, “hey, I got your email”. And I’m looking at him like, there’s over 300 kids in this class how did you know it was me? And I just kind of looked at him and he gave me the answer to my email and it kind of threw me off. It was like, wow, they really do pay attention. And I felt like because I was one of like five Black kids in that class, I don’t know if he looked it up or if he just assumed that it was me... I’m pretty sure he looked it up. But it just threw me off that he just walked straight to me and knew exactly who I was. It was a straight shot. He knew exactly where I was sitting. It kind of made me become more aware in my classes. Like, being the only Black person or one of the few in the class, they do pay attention to you. And they pay attention to everything that you do and you don’t just blend in to everyone else. It wasn’t bad, it was kind of a good thing to realize that they actually do notice.

Of course like my freshman roommate was White. And she would watch everything I did all the time and she had all these questions. She never really had that Black friend. So she would have all these questions and I felt that I was able to help her better understand. Because if I didn’t do it then she would just sit around with all these ignorant questions. I did get mad a couple of times, but that was just because they don’t really know what to say or how to approach someone so I felt like I was able to educate her. You don’t just walk up to a Black person and ask a question like this. And you just can’t make these types of jokes. One time, I didn’t know what I was gonna be for Halloween. And she was like why don’t you be a light bulb. . .wait, you could dress up as a light bulb and you could be a black light. And I looked at her like, what did you just say to me? And she’s like, “what, did I say something wrong?” We had a conversation and she was like, “I didn’t even know that would offend you, I’m so sorry.” So I felt like I was able to help her better learn. I feel like my race can sometimes be an educational tool for some people because if you don’t do it, they could do it to the wrong person and then they get either positive or
negative reactions.

*What does it mean to be African American?*

My racial identity kind of supports because I know what’s expected of me, what’s Stereotypically expected of me and I try not to do what the stereotype says I should be doing. I go beyond. So a lot of people look at me and they say, “oh she’s Black and she’s a female, so wow she’s in college. .. you don’t have any kids?” I’m like, no I don’t have kids. So it kind of like help keeps me motivated. To know that I’m on the right track for something that I consider good for myself. A lot of the guys. . .basketball, basketball, basketball or rapper, rapper, rapper. The females are like pregnant before they get out of high school and then they have a kid and they just accept it. I come from the east coast so like I see a lot of people I went to high school with versus the people I know in the springs, it’s very different. Like the Black people in New York, the girls I went to high school with, its Gucci this, Gucci that. You can’t pay your rent, you can’t have a solid phone number, but your baby is walking around in Gucci loafers. They’re not even going to be able to wear that in a month, but why are you spending the money on this? I never really understood it and they just become okay with that lifestyle. It’s weird to me. When my dad talks to people and says, “my daughter is a junior in college, they’re like, “Oh aren’t you from the east coast”? He’s like, “yeah, “. They’re like, “She’s in college??” Like that’s a surprise. They’re like, “she doesn’t have kids??” He’s like, “no”. Because my parents raised me a certain way and it’s just very weird. I try to stay out of that stereotype because that’s not who I am, that’s not the way I was raised. And a lot of the teen moms that I know, I’ve known them for a while, and that’s not how they were raised either, it’s just that peers and the media make it seem like that’s okay and they’re trying to keep up with everything else. And they put themselves in all this debt and they’re only 18 years old and that’s not what I’m trying to do with my life. And they see me as I’m doing something wrong because I’m not wearing the same stuff that they’re wearing or I just don’t have what they have. But I have a lot more in my mind. Because, I’m a junior now. At the end of my senior year I’ll have a college degree plus I’m going to law school. And all you have is a child who I hope you raise to be the best person they can be. I think to different people, success is different. My parents didn’t finish college. My mom started college my freshman year of high school, so we graduated at the same time. It was kind of cool, but it was kind of weird. My brother went to the Air Force, he never finished and then he passed away in 04. So he was never able to go back and finish, so I’m the first one of all my siblings to actually go to college and finish. It’s a lot. It’s a lot for me.

*Me and My Mentor*

I think my mentor identifies as just Black. I never heard her express or call herself African American. I think part of why we connect is because of race, but it’s never really talked about. It’s just like. . I guess it’s just that floating thing… that attraction to a person. And then their personality on top of that.

(When I first came to college) my original mentor, like she was my mentor because that’s.
I was given to her. But who actually ended up being my mentor we tended to like gravitate to each other a lot, so it was kind of like a personal choosing of each other. She just became my mentor whether she liked it or not (laughs). But she loves it.

I still talk to (my original mentor) her, but when it came, to like talking to somebody on the regular, I wouldn’t choose that person.

I think (race) is important (to my mentor) in a sense because of some of the things she does. I know that she’s in a Black sorority and I know a lot of times like when something happens, it becomes a big issue like, “oh my goodness, I can’t believe this happened”. Those are the only times we tend to talk about it is when things come up during class that makes her mad or she’s heard something that makes her mad or sometimes like, I had a roommate experience that made me mad and that’s the only real time we ever talk about race, but I can tell that race is important because she chose like a black sorority over like a White sorority. She chooses to be a part of the Black/African American culture center which she has a choice to be a part of any other organization or office. She just chooses to be around Black people.

I know she’s taking an African studies class where someone was making a comment or a teacher made a comment and then the next time I saw her she was just so mad about it and we talked about it a little bit.

For me, I don’t think it’s something significant, because I look more at her as a person than the things she’s involved in, but you choose certain things for a reason. So I know her reasoning behind the things she does is sincere, it’s not just because “fight the power, Black power. I just need tell people to know I’m Black”. She does it because she truly has an interest in it. So I don’t really see anything into it. I don’t really see it as being significant.

I do care about my experiences with race being something that is supported by my mentor because in a sense I feel like I can’t …like if it happens in class, there’s only so much I can say in class before somebody looks at me like, “why is she responding that way? Or why do Black people always feel like they’re the victims of something when nobody is even trying to victimize them?” So it feels good that you have somebody that you can go to talk to about situations that happens because sometimes other people just don’t understand. And no matter what you say, they never will understand.

This mentoring relationship has supported my racial identity, in a sense, yeah because it Made me more comfortable being here at the school Having somebody that I could go to. When I didn’t live in the residence hall with all the Black people, because I didn’t know it was the place to be. So, it was just like it helped me grow as a person to know that there is a place that I can call home and that’s why this office became home. Because she would be in here a lot and I would see her in here a lot. Most of the time we talked in here and I saw here all the time so it was like being around her and being in this office was home. In my
residence hall there was one other Black person on my floor, not in my hall, but just on the 3rd floor in general and then I know couple that was on the second floor, but there wasn’t a lot of us.

Alan

General Introduction
My name is Alan and I identify as African American

My Racial Identity and its Importance
I think I’m still very much figuring out my racial identity. And so, for me being African American is really, for me a process. What that means, what that looks like, you know. When you add in my other identities you know, being male, being a college student, 1st generation college student, you know it just kind of compounds things.

I think throughout the last few years, what I’ve been able to do is realize that its missing, umm, interact with it, play around with it, kind of see the different options and then sort of make a decision about how important it is to me. Cause I think race is a very personal thing that I think for each individual it has a very prominent role or it has a very, you know, uh, subservient role in how they live life and how they choose to act upon it. And I think it’s very much a process and I think I’ve had the opportunity to sort of go through it in this kind of whirlwind capacity, but I don’t mean whirlwind in that I wasn’t able to sort of do what I need to do. I think I was able to do what I needed to do for me at the point in time, so I was able to come to the conclusion that race is important to me, but it’s not important that I interact with it all the time. And so, I think that’s kind of where I am now, is that it’s okay if I have a couple of African American friends, but you I really like my Latino friends, I really like my Asian friends, I really like my White friends. So, for me I need to be surrounded by multiple races as opposed to I need specifically African Americans/Blacks to be around, you know. I need diversity in the sense that there’s a lot of different people who look different, more so than I need to see someone who looks like me walking down the street or interact with them on a daily basis if that makes sense.

I think I have come to a place where my identity is now supported by diversity. I think that’s how I feel supported. And those diverse people who are able to sort of understand the race thing. And I don’t mean to call it a race thing, but that’s kind of what it is, you know. It’s this jumble of you know, sometimes you’re here and sometimes you’re there, and sometimes you’re in-between and you’re here and there, and I think people who sort of understand that race is important but it’s not necessarily the defining factor. And I think it’s important that I have those relationships where to people race is the defining thing in their life and I have people who are virtually colorblind whom I’ve become friends with and who I interact with. And I think for me it’s important to have that diversity of perspective.
cause it helps me understand race much more than just what being Black or being African American is. It allows me to understand at a much deeper level and broader level because I have such diverse perspectives and friends that I feel supported in that way.

*Experiences of Race & Racism*

I grew up in an environment where I had the luxury of being around African Americans without actually having to associate. I know that sounds weird, but I’m gonna explain a little bit more about that. I was born into a very low income, very underprivileged, underrepresented neighborhood which is typical represented by people of color, not all the time, but in fact, that’s the trend. Lived there for about the first eight years of my life and then through a series of fortunate circumstances my parents got better jobs and through some promotions and we were able to move and things just got progressive there. We kind of moved up to say middle class. And so, I make the distinction to where I was born and where I was raised. I remember living in that environment and being around that environment, but where my values came from and where I grew and came into my own is very much around White middle class America.

We were the only African American family in my neighborhood, very typical, you know TV, you know 2-car garage, swimming pool (I grew up in Florida, so we had a pool), four-bedroom house, you know, typical four kids, young family, a dog, fish (laughs). I went to a school that was very racially diverse. It was split almost equally among Whites, African Americans/Blacks and Latinos with kind of, others thrown in there. And the reason why I say that is because in school I had the interaction with being with African Americans, but I was tracked differently than they were. There were maybe one or two African Americans I was in the advanced placement honors track which is a little bit different than a lot of African Americans/students of color were typically tracked in either you know, “you’re graduating” or “you need remedial help”. Those were the other two. So it was a very separate world and so because of that I think my racial identity was very much stunted because I feel that gap because I was around African Americans but I wasn’t learning anything because I wasn’t really associating with African Americans outside of my own family. So that kind of changed a little bit.

That kind of influenced how I went to school, what schools I chose. You know I was like, I wouldn’t mind going to this college even thought it was predominantly White. You know, that’s how I spent my life, that’s what I’m used to you know. I’d interacted with White people my entire life, what’s four more years? I think the difference was that I didn’t have that to fall back on. I wasn’t seeing other people who looked like me and so I was confident in that enough, even though I wasn’t interacting. So when I came here I didn’t realize that at first. And so around sophomore year I kind of realized, I was like, oh like this is really, really different. This is really White. This is a lot different than what I was growing up to and what I was used to. I was expecting it to be the same. Even though I had diversity, part of me was tracked. But you know, I could choose who I wanted to interact with and here that choice is kind of taken away from me because it just wasn’t here.
What does it mean to be African American

I think (my view on race) is very generational. I feel like my generation and maybe subsequent generations have really been able to come to that place that we can kind of view race this way because other people helped. There are not secular or singular ways of viewing race. And we are still very much scripting out different ways, but I feel that because we’ve had so many other different ways that we’ve reached a time now where we’re allowed to sort of pull elements of this and pull elements from this side and come up with a more holistic view about race as opposed to it just being about you know, diversity of skin color or culture. It’s a lot more than that. It’s much more than that. There’s so many different layers and the more you peel back, the more you kind of discover about it.

I can’t think of something specific where I can point to that and be like this is how it negatively affected me. I think what I can say on this sense of negativity is that in discovering race, I feel like I discover more about myself and through that I’m kind of able to see my own personal views on race and how I view it and negative aspects I didn’t even know I had towards people of other races, or people who look like me, especially with people who look like me. So I think, I was, in a sense colorblind and since I wasn’t forced to interact with it, I wasn’t forced to sort of confront my own stereotypes and misgivings about race and I feel like as I learn more about my own race, I also discover that I really do feel this way cause there’s certain stereotypes that I also feel like I hold and these are some of the prejudices that I have and in that way it’s not negative per se, but it’s an effect of being racially aware, you know.

There’s so many things around African Americans, positive and negative. I don’t even Know where to begin. Let’s see... umm... I think one of the biggest, I think most prevailing thing, not that I’ve necessarily read, this is my own personal observation in talking to other people, is that people sort of view (African Americans view it this way too) African American culture as just one thing. There is one way of being African American, like that is what it is, regardless of what that way is, but there’s that one way, you know...this is what African American culture is and I think internally and externally we’ve latched on to this perception that African American culture is just one thing. Anything else out of that is not African American. And then you run into those issues of, oh you’re not Black enough or you’re a sellout or you’re whitewashed or you’re being an Oreo because you like different things. And I think that’s kind of like one of the biggest repelling stereotypes you know in this way that all Black people are the same and that we subscribe to this one kind of cultural phenomenon. Not that all Black people are the same individually on that individual level, but that we all are the same because we all ascribe to the same cultural phenomenon that its only one thing. That is what is boils down to is that this is what it means to be Black. And I think it discredits some of the other things, some of the other interests and the diversity that is within the African American/Black community. We’re all so different. There’s so many different styles and in way we stuck ourselves because we try to say there’s this one thing that African American culture is, this one thing you can do. Which I think is different from maybe our White counterparts who don’t
necessarily have that kind of constriction because A—you know, Whiteness is still being defined and people still have issues with it. And then B—the luxury of being White is that you can kind of pull things out of different cultures and incorporate it into Whiteness without necessarily selling out. You know what I mean? You’re always gonna be White, whether you’re rich or whether you’re poor, whether you’re dark, whether your light, whether you’re the president of the United States or homeless. You know what I mean? Whereas opposed to being Black doesn’t necessarily. . . the more you attain or the more you kind of move away from this one culture, you change, you become different. You know, you’re not necessarily Black anymore. Yeah, you may be Black from the outside, but something’s different.

Me and My Mentor
I would say at this time in my life I’ve had three mentors. Two throughout the course of High school and one in college. Interesting enough, all of my mentors have always been women, never had a guy mentor. Of the three, two have been women of color and one has been an identified White woman. My first experience was when I was in high school. My first mentor I got was when I was around a freshman in high school It was interesting enough, it came about through another relationship I had had and then this woman, who was also White, was like, I think you two should, you know, get together and meet, I think you’d have a lot in common. Turns out we did. She ran a program at Planned Parenthood and I was interested in sort of getting more involved in volunteering in issues. She was like I run an experiential education program, do outreach on sex education with youth that are considered at-risk, you know, I think you’d be a good candidate, and so it kind of started off as that working kind of relationship and sort of expanded into a mentoring relationship. We are actually still friends to this day, still talk a lot but her capacity to mentor me has kind of shifted a bit as its relevance in my life has changed.

My second mentor actually came around in that same job actually. My original mentor did end up leaving two years into the job around the end of my sophomore year of high school and another woman came up. She was a self-identified Latina. She took the job and she just kind of filled in. So it was kind of easy to just make that same leap, sort of get into that same connection.

And then with college, I didn’t’ have a mentor in my first year of college. I was kind of haphazardly going about things. It really came about in my second year, in kind of a more structured format. So my first two mentors just kind of happened. My second mentor relationship was developed around a structured relationship. It came about because I was interested in student affairs and she had a student affairs job and she told me about this program and you know one of the components of it was a mentorship program. So it started out as being kind of intentional about what we wanted to do, what I was looking for so we kind of had that basis of that mentor/mentee relationship and it just kind of grew into something bigger.

The basis of the program is that you kind of just approach someone who you want to be
your mentor and so you both apply at the same time for the program so the mentor fills out an application, you fill out an application, you apply kind of jointly and then you get accepted. You getting accepted means in a way your mentor gets accepted because they want to make sure your mentor will be qualified and meets the requirements and such so.

Most definitely race is a part of my mentoring relationship. More specifically because the program that I applied for is specifically for students who identify as people of color, or students with disabilities, or LGBTQ students. So, it’s something that we talk about, a lot. It’s part of the program. It’s something that we talk about. It’s part of our conversations. You know, what does it mean to be African American, what does it mean to be African American male. How people are going to view you, how are people going to look at you. And race just kind of shows up. Race shows up all the time. Specifically, when there’s so few. Like we wouldn’t need this program if there were an abundant source of people of color and LGBTQ students going into higher education. So, what does that look like you know. You might be places where you might be the only African American student. Might be places where people are not going to understand how to interact with you. So talking about that is super important. More particularly because it’s not a field that people grow up in and think they want to be in student affairs. People just kind of fall into it. Which is really kind of interesting because it’s been around forever. Still, you just fall into it. That’s just the way it works. So talking about race is very important, you might be headlining in some places. You might be representing. Even though you don’t mean to, you’re going to be just because of where you’re going to be and the areas that you’re going to be in. You know, so what does that look like, you know, how is that gonna be?

If I were in a different relationship where race was not considered, these questions may not come up. No, I wouldn’t expect it but the qualities I would look for in the mentor/friendship relationship, I think it would just happen. I want to clarify, in my mentor relationship its really good because it takes it to the other issues of race, the other issues of access, the other issues of all these things. It takes out of the realm of this is what’s happening and puts it in a private, personal sphere. How do you deal with this, how do you interact with this? Which I think is different than us being in a mentoring relationship and we’re talking about these issues that we know already exist that affect everyone. I like to think that my mentors are very diverse, maybe not gender diverse, but diverse for the purposes of this, in terms of race.

I’m one of those people who is very good at reading people. I’m very good at being able to figure out how much I can trust the person to an extent through just talking, through personal interactions, through sharing tidbits of information that aren’t necessarily private, but aren’t public either and kind of see what they do with it. And through that process I start learning to trust them more. I think that’s my way of also getting them to trust me. Through those conversations it becomes more and more personal. I think that’s how it was in my first mentoring relationship. We learned from each other. There’s always something to learn. I really feel like in a mentor/mentee relationship it should be give and take. It shouldn’t be this, “I have something to teach you, I’m gonna take you under my wing
because you look like your dogged out, let me help you, lift you up, you know. You should be lifting each other up.

I think race came up more so with my second mentor. Because my first mentor, we talked about race a little bit, in the very public race. Because we were dealing with at-risk youth who just happened to be youth of color just because of the areas that we were servicing, the trends. So we talked about race in that aspect, but I think that with my second mentor, we could talk it on a personal level. I was able to ask her about her experiences about being a man of color, what that was like, how that affected her teaching, being an outreach educator, you know, did she feel that people related to her a little bit better. So that’s how it came up, in the work that we did that’s how race came up.

My relationship with my current mentor is really unique because it went from student-student affairs professional to mentor-mentee to employee-employer. You know there’s all these different layers that sort of compound everything. Sometimes I miss the days when it was just, you know, mentor/mentee because I love working with her and doing the work that we do, but being a mentor on that level is a little bit different. I don’t get a chance as much to sit and talk with her like I used to.
Appendix I

Coding Guide for Data Analysis

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience
(SL) Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence
(SC) Unwelcome Campus Climates & Cultural Stress
(SR) Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
(SA) Academic Inequities
(SP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment
(SO) Open

Corresponding Interview Questions:
- Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?
- How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?
- Can you tell me about anything you read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?
- Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
(RP) Racial Identity is primary
(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity
(RA) Racial identity does not play a major role in identity, absent
(RO) Open

Corresponding Interview Questions:
- How do you identify racially? What is the racial identity of your current or most recent mentor?
- How important is your race to you?
- How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?
- Can you tell me about anything you read, seen heard or observed about people of your race?
- Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance
(NI) Information Gathering; Desire to learn more about race
(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race
(NM) Race Activist; Desires involvement in race equity and social change
(NA) Race Avoidant; discomfort when topic of race comes up
(NN) No expressed interest in race nurturance
Corresponding Interview Questions:

- Can you tell me about a time in college when your race impacted your life in a significant way?
- How important is your race to you?
- How is your racial identity supported or nurtured in your life?
- Is race present in your relationship with your mentor? If yes, how does race show up? If no, how do you feel about race not being present in the relationship with your mentor?
- What is your perception of how your mentor views or engages race?
- Is it important to you that your racial experience is considered in your mentoring relationship?
- Has your mentoring relationship nurtured your racial identity? If so, how?
Appendix J

Results of Second Cycle (Focused) Coding

Second Cycle: Focused Coding - Ty

General Introduction
My name is Ty and I identify as biracial (African American and Spanish). I’m the first one in my family to go to college and it’s interesting. I mean, they never acted like different, but sometimes it sometimes feels...it feels kind of like a power dynamic you know like, they feel intimidated or they feel like, I feel kind of nervous sometimes, like I’m going to make them feel kind of stupid. But like, I guess dropping knowledge or like sharing lives with them, sometimes I feel like I limit myself. Like sharing things too, I don’t want to make them feel that way about me.

Stories of Race in College: Student of Color Experience
(SC) Unwelcome Campus Climates & Cultural Stress
I would say this relationship out of a lot of the ones that I have with a lot of administrators here has been probably the most positive and what’s kept me at this school because I struggled with that whole...do I fit in here? So I really thought about leaving, transferring. She’s the one who was able to talk me out of it. And now that I’m here and in my senior year I’m really glad that I stayed because I might have regretted...I don’t know...if I’d known what I have gained since then I would have regretted it but I don’t know what would have happened if I would have left either. I really think it’s important for everybody to find somebody...if they don’t have it at home...or just find somebody who can help them cause I don’t know if I would have made it if I didn’t have the support of her them here, this office. I look up to her and I respect her...she’s really positive.

(SR) Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
I think for me, I never really experience (racism) directly because I have the privilege of having light skin so people don’t really necessarily know what I identify as and I’ve really been able to pass off for White when I wanted to. One time here at school my friend who is visibly African American...she has dark skin, got called a nigger and it really impacted me personally because I identify as Black too, just because they weren’t saying it to me...it really hurt her too, but I think it hurt me just as much even though it wasn’t directed towards me. It was an argument between her and a friend, or somebody I don’t even know who it was. And it got really heated and then they started exchanging words and then that happened and it was just like...I think it caught everybody off guard really. You could tell that people notice when somebody says something like that. You know, it was kind of like in a movie you know when everybody stops, it’s like, you know. Yeah, it was crazy, it was just crazy. This kind of thing never happens to me so I was really shocked to even hear somebody say it, you know, I never experience it and never
deal with it. . . just to hear somebody be so cruel. Because it is cruel for somebody
to say something like that.

My friend and I processed it after, but like what do you do? I think I was shocked
About It and she was more verbally mad about it and was just kind of like venting
like she couldn’t believe it and stuff like that.

(RP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment

My current mentor identifies as African American and I’ve been working with her
for three years. Race is an important part of our relationship, but in a more positive
way just because of who she is. I think race is very important in her life just because
that’s the kind of work that she’s in and dealing with those issues and things like
that. I think it’s very important to her just because she takes pride in being African
American and so that’s why I think race is very salient and she takes pride in being
successful and a positive influence and being an African American person. Because
sometimes I think that people think we don’t exist and so I think she takes pride and
it is very important to her.

I told my mentor about the confrontation with my grandmother. I always tell her
that I Can just see the dynamic changing in my family. Somebody told me a story
about how Their family felt a certain way about them and I asked her (mentor), I
wonder if my family feels oh like that I think I’m better than them. I wonder if my
family feels that that way cause I’m in college. She’s like, “maybe”. Maybe they
do because they don’t understand the significance of it.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity

(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity

My African American heritage has not really been a part of my life in the past. My
Father is African American and he wasn’t in my life so there was no one to really
foster that history or to teach me other than what I got in school. So (my mentor)
has taught me a lot. I just learn a lot like just from her talking to me. . . I think my
race is really important sometimes. Especially like on campus. I don’t feel like I fit
in on campus so I feel like it’s more important to me at school but like when I’m
with my family and stuff, race isn’t an issue. I don’t have to think about it because
that’s my family and I don’t really identify with them on that level. So I guess it’s
more of an issue when I’m around people who identify heavily as something else
other than I do. I think I’m more aware of it at school because I know that I’m not
White. I think it’s just being different and having a different viewpoint and having
different experiences is what makes it more important here.

I can’t really think of other places in my life where my racial identity is nurtured.
Maybe At home with my roommate because we’re really good friends. Me and her
talk about Racial issues and stuff that we experience. And even sometimes with my younger sister, but not really with my mom or anybody. I guess they worked so hard to assimilate that so it’s not important to them to be cultural I guess. So we’re not really cultural in my family. We just celebrate the American holidays and there’s no culture really, so I don’t get it at home. But I think just with my sister and people closer to my age especially outside of them is where I think I get that cultural piece that I can foster.

When it comes to my family I’ve noticed that race has become more important since I’ve been in college. When I went home to help my grandmother move a couple of weeks ago she started complaining to the effect of like, “oh, ok well I’ll just nigger-rig it”. And I was like. . .I guess before college I never would have thought about it or it never would have been a big deal. But when she said it, I was like “What?! Are you kidding me? I told her that she shouldn’t say that and I even like offered an alternative. Like you can say “Jerry-rig”. Why do you have to say that? You know why does it have to be that? And I tried to like explain it to her and I can just see little things like that. . . that they’ve Always done but like now I’m more aware. Since I’ve come here I’ve learned about things like that and the aggressions against people. I think she just kind of like brushed it off like, she didn’t really. . .cause my grandmother’s like the type, she’s very traditional so like you’re disrespectful, you shouldn’t say to her like. . .I’m like, I still say what I have to say but that’s how I felt, but I think she kind of like just brushed it off, but we’ll see if she does is again around me. Maybe it’ll least get her to think about it.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance

Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race

I work at an office on my campus where multiculturalism is the focus and working there really nurtures both sides of my racial identity. Just being there with the staff and getting to participate in the events and things like that. It’s really wholesome for me to be there.

It is important to me that my mentor is someone who I can share my racial experiences with. For me I think it’s really important especially for students of color to get that. Just because it’s hard to be a person of color in a “white-collar” community. This college is very much that. It’s really a white-collar community and so, it’s a factor and having that person to talk about it with has been really important and really influential for me and just helping me have a positive experiences and talk about it and just understand the differences that happen in the professional world and how much harder people feel that have to work just in general. So just really being able to identify that and talk about that is a really important piece for me in my mentorship. And so that’s a reason why I enjoy working with her so much because I get that and I learn so much about it every day from her.
I know I can always go to her if I have a question or if I think that I’m doing... I always like, go to her if I think I’m doing something that might be offensive to other people or to other students of color. One thing that I really struggled with especially in my freshman year was just kind of fitting in because I never really... especially racially I never really chose... like be White... and I feel like with the White people they feel like I’m not White enough and then with Black people I’m not really Black enough and so that was something that I was really struggling with. I stopped going to Black student club meetings because my friends... I guess sometimes, we’re loud, like I know that, that’s just how we are you know, and so I think that was just playing into a stereotype of like, when you’re with your friends, you’re just like amped up and you’re excited and so a lot of the times I found myself being... around the Black people being called “ghetto” and stuff and so that was really different for me and being like you know, now I’m too Black. My mentor just really helped me work through that, like my biracial identity and understanding when I need to like... when I’m in different environments, how it’s going to come in to play and stuff like that. Just really helped me work through that. That was something that I struggled with my freshman year and my sophomore year. Just really trying to figure that out.

General Perceptions of Race
For African Americans, I kind of feel like it seems like you can’t be successful unless you’re popular or like you’re in entertainment or something. I think that’s like a really big perception. I guess it doesn’t really get glorified like the other things that people are doing. Well I guess now with like Obama... but he’s popular, like he’s famous. He’s still kind of like an entertainment figure I guess.

Second Cycle: Focused Coding – Robert

General Introduction
My name is Robert and I identify racially as African American.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience
(SL) Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence
Once during class we were talking about politics and kind of the demographics and How People get placed in society in terms of income. We had kind of a debate and being that there’s only two African Americans in the class, we had a low representation so through that experience, we kind of just held our ground. We didn’t have a bias opinion. Just because when you’re biased you don’t get input from being biased so we gave our case and it just kind of seemed like two against the whole class. But everything was fair. No arguments came out. Nobody felt like they were cornered or anything like that. It was a good experience but it would have been nice to have had more representation. The other people in the class were just learning about it. They had a misunderstanding because you look at it.
through a book and they have their definition but, um as me and the other person in the class, we have seen it through our own eyes and we have other friends and family that are in situations and all that, so we kind of basically explained to them and told them the real things instead of what’s in the books.

(SR) Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
I understand that it is hard to understand racism today, but it still exists. People do things, step out of the boundaries. Who is going to teach them? I have not experienced racist problems at college but my sister was at another school and has talked about racist activity on her campus.

(SP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment
About two months ago my sister and I went to a career fair sponsored by the National Black MBA Association with my sister. It was a conference, but after the career fair there was a lot of like social networking. We talked to a lot of people from different companies and they were all graduated and well educated. I never. . . through my experience, I had never ever seen that before. I’ve met people obviously, African American people that are very educated, but to see just a whole group of just hundreds and hundreds of them. . . it was just definitely an experience that I have never ever been through before. It was the first time in my life I saw rooms full of successful Black African American people and it was like the best experience I’ve had in my life and I came back just saying I want to get to that point.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
(RP) Racial Identity is primary
My race is 100% important. My dad’s from Nigeria so our family does consider race seriously and with pride. There’s obviously different views of how everybody views different races and I just try to do my best within my power to try to represent my race as well as possible. I view my race as being very prestigious and I work hard to try to decrease a lot of the negative statistics that we have towards our race. I want to be a positive representative of the African American race. I have intentions to do more after I graduate, but with my limited time I think the thing that I do right now is just as well as possible in school. Choosing college, showing up to class, getting involved, speaking up in class and getting good grades are all ways I strive to be a positive representative. That’s it for the time being, but as soon as I graduate I already have plans of helping out my community.

(RA) Racial identity does not play a major role in identity, absent
I really can’t tell how my mentor views race. Like I really can’t tell how she views her race because I never talked about it. I don’t think there would be any telltale signs of how she uses it, how she deals with it or anything like that.

In her office there’s a lot of artistic stuff. Now maybe those artists can be African
American, I don’t know who the artists were but she a lot of art in her room. I guess I can assume that. . .I don’t have the right to assume, but I’m thinking is she’s not as strong, in African American culture, as like my parents are. That can definitely be misconstrued. I found out this morning she is from the south and her mom’s from the same town my mom is from so we learned that and I know that she’s very open to anything that you want to talk about she’s open to talk about. She’s a very great listener and she gives you very good advice. She gives you her true feelings about what she feels about a situation.

I feel like our relationship is ongoing and race is going to come up here and there. Cause she’s been to different universities and done mentoring for herself and I’m sure we’ll talk about it and what it was like for her. I’m pretty sure from the south to here there was a difference so I think we will talk about how she dealt with. . .I feel like a lot of this comes up even in a business realm, it’s like when you have an HR department you talk to the HR and tell them about what you see can change in the company about diversity and what are the problems with diversity. I feel that that’s where racial matters really should be dealt with.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance

(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race
My roommates are also African American and you know the subject of race always comes up. We talk with each other just about our race and what it looks like in today’s times versus the past times and maybe what it will look like in the future. With my family, everyone is already in the workforce, I’m the only one that’s in college, everybody else in my family is in the workforce right now and they’re always telling me about their experiences in work and how/where their position stands.

(NN) No expressed interest in race nurturance
My mentor is African American and she is my supervisor. We’ve been working together for almost a year. Our relationship is just straight business. Our office handles programming for the campus. Our programming is for all students, like all student activities so we don’t really put (diversity) into effect. We try to reach everybody. They have Black student clubs and GLBT groups where they do their events and they focus on a specific demographic on the campus. We meet once a week and specifically discuss what I am doing or what I am planning on doing in the near future or from this time right now to the next time we meet, what goals do we want to finish and what’s on the agenda basically. When I go in there we have an agenda. We talk about what we’re gonna get done, so race doesn’t really come up. But I’m sure . . .we have a relationship. . .I have an open relationship with her where I can say hey something is happening that I’m not comfortable with race wise and she would talk about it with me and give me ideas on how to handle it. Race isn’t really present when we talk to each other and I don’t really mind that it’s not there. Definitely if there’s a problem, if I was uncomfortable like I said
before, I would definitely talk to her about it but nothing has come up and there hasn’t really been a reason to talk about it.

Second Cycle: Focused Coding – Brooke

General Introduction
My name is Brooke and I identify as African American. My father is Black.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience

(SR) Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
I can’t think of a time in college when my race impacted my life in a significant way. I can’t say any times in college. It was mostly when I was growing up. The biggest one is until about I was 13 everyone thought I was adopted because I look nothing like my mother. And then my first real relationship, I got a lot of backlash from it because it was an interracial couple and growing up people didn’t understand exactly what that meant or if it was okay. I flat out didn’t understand it. My mom always dated interracially so I was used to it growing up but he took it harder than I did. So it caused a lot of problems down the road.

I’ve never heard someone directly say anything about race but I mean it’s just little social cues where you can tell they’re not comfortable or you can pick up on what they’re really thinking even though they’re not saying it. Just situations like that. I can see it and its mostly the stories that I hear but it usually tends to be with other races than Black. Like when someone walks into a room, I’ve seen people move away or I heard one story about two of her friends. They went to go into a hot tub and once that happened, all the White people left for whatever reason. But when the male got in it was okay. It was two females and a male, both Black and they went over to some hot tub pool thing at one of the apartment complexes and majority Whites live there. And so I guess a couple of girls were in the hot tub and when all of them got in. well actually when the two girls got in all of the other girls got out. But when the guys came over to get in they came back.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
( RA) Racial identity does not play a major role in identity, absent
(My race is) probably not that important. I’ve never been in a situation yet where. . .well, I can’t say that either. It’s not that important but I guess in a way, I know when to play the card if I need to. There’s certain situations where it becomes more important. . .(Giggles). Applying for college was a big one because I come from a single mom, one job, African American. Clearly I had more opportunities to get funding to go I also dance and as light skinned as I am, I have advantage over other Blacks that are there because I fit the mold that the team wants but at the same time, if there were to ask they could still say they’re integrated. When it comes to race I
understand the importance of your background and this is who I am and this is where I come from but I don’t think that should be a judgmental thing up front with the people that you’re working with. Because yes, your background defines who you are but it shouldn’t be stereotyped.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance

No expressed interest in race nurturance
I don’t know how my racial identity is supported or nurtured in my life. (Long pause). Hmm...I don’t know. I never...really...been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really.

I can say that I do feel more comfortable with Whites just because I grew up around that and I do feel more comfortable with people older than me. I’ve gotten a lot of Backlash from my dad for not joining multicultural offices and being involved with Blacks per se. Just because female Blacks is the most hatred I get from any other race. I don’t feel that I want to have my racial identity more supported in my life. I’m cool with how it is now...definitely developed into it...identified myself, so this is who I am and you kind of go with what works.

I did not choose my mentor. It just so happened that I ended up with a Black woman as a mentor. My current mentor identifies as Black or African. . . (Hesitates). . .where is she from? I don’t know. She was not born in Africa. . .Maybe it’s Black. I know it’s not African American. I know that for a fact. It has to be Black. She’s older, she’s 33.

Race has been present in my relationship with my mentor. During our staff training we did an identity skill thing...quest. We went camping and then we were asked to do an activity that defines how we identify in the world based on how the world classifies races, sexual orientation, class...all that stuff. That’s where it came up and my advisor, she identifies as an African woman and she sat in on one of our little groups because she knew from the get go that I’m intimidated by African women so she wanted to learn more about it and she also expressed how she was excited that she is my advisor so I could gain that experience. We got split in groups of four to five and then we just had to share our story with those group members. My mentor chose our group to sit in on. It didn’t bug me but at the same time, doing an activity like that right from the get go when you really don’t even know these people is intimidating and overwhelming so I understand where she’s coming from on wanting to get on a deeper level because she is a very emotional thinker but at the same time we finally figured out the fine line of “I don’t talk about my personal life, so please don’t ask me”. So it took a while to develop that. That was the only time where race showed up with me and my mentor.
I see my mentor every day when I’m at work and we are supposed to have one-on-ones once a month and then myself and the other coordinator meet with her monthly as well, but once we kind of got it out on the table that I’m not the emotional person and I’m very business forward, business mind set, our meetings kind of stopped after September because I was always in the office anyway. If we ever had a question it was answered then and there, we didn’t wait until our meeting time. Our relationship is more of a work relationship than a mentoring relationship because that is how I catered it. That is how I want it to be.

My mentor is very open about race because she does a lot of diversity workshops. But I know she also expresses the hard time she has living here and finding people to connect with because of her race and because of the age differences since we’re either all college or family. there’s not a lot of singles in the area so she’s struggling with that. So for her race is a very important part of her identity and she talks about it a lot. Mmm hmmm. All the time. She always shares her personal stories with everyone. I kind of just shut her out because to me it’s whining. She always talks about this one guy in Boston, like. . .wake up, he doesn’t like you like that (laughs). That’s just my take on her personal stories. I don’t know if she does it because she likes the social aspect that much and she wants all the attention on her or if it’s more of, I really want guidance on what to do in this situation cause she never really follows through on any of the suggestions made. When she talks about race it doesn’t really affect me at all. It’s not important to me. It’s not something that I seek out in my relationship with my mentor. I know that if an issue were to arise, she would listen but other than that we don’t ever mention it or talk about it. If I need help, she’s there if I want to use it.

I didn’t choose her as my mentor and it’s hard to think about what I might be Learning from my mentor (laughs). Cause we’re such opposite ends. I mean I admire her because she always has a positivity to the situation where I’m more negative mind set, kind of realistic. I give kudos to her for wanting to reach out and wanting to be a part of every aspect that we do. I like that she makes it a point to show up to our events, be involved in it. She’s also expressed that she wanted to be a part of our committee meetings because she wanted to get to know them as well. But that’s about it. Just business wise we think completely differently. Especially with figuring out who we want to target market to. She, in a way, finds that targeting your market is discriminating against others. Where I see it as, no I know I want to target to these people because I know they’re gonna take it and it’s gonna make it more successful as a whole. So we’re opposite on that.

We did a breast cancer awareness event just on the plaza and we were talking about the information that we wanted to put up on the board and she wanted to challenge us on not making it only about women, she wanted us to look at men and the struggle that they go through as well as transgender and things like that, but. . .so we tried, and we did find information that men can get breast cancer on rare
occasion. That’s about all we could do, cause the facts just aren’t there or the knowledge isn’t known because it’s not something that is accepted in society, yet. When we have a difference of opinion I kind of just take her feedback and see what I can do with it and if I can’t do anything, just tell her that. But we’ve never had a talk on. . .in business, this is how you execute a marketing plan more efficiently. I highly doubt that she’s taken any advertising, business classes in her life.

General Perception of Race
I don’t know what it means to be African American. I really don’t know. I don’t really pay attention. Cause it’s not that big in my life to be able to pay attention to it or want to figure it out. I really don’t know how to answer that. (Long silence).

Second Cycle: Focused Coding – Angie

General Introduction
My name is Angie and I identify as African American.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience
( SC) Unwelcome Campus Climates & Cultural Stress
In most of my classes, I’m the only African American student and I guess in a Backwards way, my racial identity is reinforced there as well. Just because of the differences I see. The way that I’m treated, the way that people speak to me. It’s a constant reminder, in a way. And some of the students on campus have lived very sheltered lives in White suburban communities; and so when they meet me, they don’t know how to respond, what to say. They see modern media and learn stereotypes from that. They might say something to me that I feel is offensive and I realize that, because of that ignorance, the just don’t know any better. It reminds me of the differences that exist there, and the fact that a lot of people on campus do view me as “different” because of my skin color. I feel that everywhere I go on this campus.

(SR) Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
My first year here, I was really struggling. My mother lost her job. Her company laid her off because of the bad economy. And I was supporting myself, and my three younger siblings and my mother and working all the time and doing the best that I could to stay in school. I started reaching out to friends, trying to find somebody who could maybe understand what I was going through. And I met a girl who lived on the same floor that I did and she and I began a friendship. And at one point she turned to me and said, “I can’t be friends with you anymore.” And I said, “Why not?” And she said, “Well, it doesn’t look good for me to be friends with the poor Black girl on campus.” And that broke my heart. But that was something that I could talk to (my mentor) about. Because she completely understood the way that I’d been feeling. Not just coming from the standpoint of
growing up in a family that didn’t have a lot of money, and struggling, but also from the standpoint that my racial identity was called out there. It wasn’t just that I was poor, it was that I was Black. And so just in that sense, being able to converse with her about things like that and have her say, “Whether or not this person chooses to stand by you, I will stand by you at all times, because I care about you.” That was huge to me. When we had that conversation, I felt my racial identity and My socioeconomic status were supported because she was able to remind me of some of the obstacles I’ve overcome in getting where I am and reassure me that she was invested in helping me succeed.

(RP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment
A lot of the friendships that I have made, especially through the Black student club, Have Really impacted my life. We did a fall retreat this year and we had maybe 15 Students total in attendance, and about 8 of those students were African American. In addition, there were Latino students and White students, as well. So it was all of us coming together, and we were able to develop really strong, lasting, sincere relationships based off of our experiences in general. For example, we were talking about how other people see us. And although the Latino students didn’t identify the same way, we were able to connect and to empathize with one another, simply because we are all minority students and able to see things from that perspective. It was amazing. I cherish each one of the friendships made there for that reason. Because I know that we truly understand each other’s point of view.

One thing that I found to be really interesting was that the African American and The Latino students have very, very similar points of view and experiences. And I was really surprised by that. One point of connection was that at one point in history, and arguably this still exists today, African Americans were pushed out. We were... ostracized for our color, for our background. And a lot of that exists today when it comes to Latino students. With the issues regarding immigration, a lot of the Hispanic and Latino students on campus feel that they’re not welcome. So being able to connect on that was amazing because I never expected it, and I never really considered it before. But we also had some similar experiences when it came to our families. Since we are on a predominantly White campus, we are surrounded by a different culture from our own. Some of the Latino students mentioned that when they go home, they sometimes run into the word “whitewash”, and that makes them feel put down and outcast.... I’ve run into the same problem. A lot of the African American students have run into that problem. So we began a discussion around it- what does “whitewash” mean and why is it a derogatory term? Why is it that when a person is educated, or when a person is goal-oriented, or when they speak with proper grammar, it is attributed to the White community instead of just saying, “This is a really intelligent Black woman, or this is a really hardworking Latino male”? It’s like saying that, because this person a minority, they can’t have any of those positive characteristics on their own, and if they have them, it must be because of Caucasian influence. It’s basically saying that we, as minorities, are not
self-sufficient, and are not capable of achieving success without outside assistance. By using terms like these, we put ourselves down and we undervalue and underestimate ourselves. So that point of connection was something that I ran into that was really interesting to me.

However, I did find that the White students didn’t connect in the same way. Just being able to hear some of these things helped them understand it better, because they’d never heard some of this at home. And I think that’s just due to privilege. They’re born with a certain amount of privilege, just by being Caucasian. So they don’t even consider these other things because it’s not a part of their daily lives. So they understood it, but they didn’t really connect to it the way that the rest of us did.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
(RP) Racial Identity is primary
How important is my race to me?  Ummm... oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance
(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race
Ummm... when I approached the college experience initially, during my first year, I wasn’t really involved with the Black club. I guess I was just trying to get a feel for college in general, and I looked around one day and realized I didn’t see anybody like me, and I felt out of place. I felt a bit pariah on campus. And I knew that it was necessary for me to engage with other people that I feel very comfortable with, that I feel are very similar to me in order for me to have a positive college experience. So at that point, around the beginning of my second year, I made the conscious decision to reach out.

Well, I am a part of a Black student club. By being involved with that, I’m able to connect with other people with similar backgrounds. That provides some support. Also my job is to support African American students in a multicultural office for the School that keeps me grounded and makes me feel supported. I used to live in an Environment where I was surrounded by other people my color with similar backgrounds and so being here, it’s difficult to feel that way. So my racial identity is supported by the interactions and experiences I have through my work as the and my participation in the club.
I feel supported around family in general but it's difficult to say that my racial identity is supported specifically. I'm supported as an individual around family, and not just exclusively regarding my racial identity. When it comes to conversations that surround race, especially when I'm speaking to my grandmother who's lived through so much and has so many stories to tell... and when she tells me stories about her past, which is our past, I do feel racially supported and nurtured because I can connect to that and know that she really understands me and that she can feel for the things that I go through because she's gone through those things herself.

My mentor identifies as African American. Race shows up in our everyday interactions mainly because we met through work positions that are surrounded around our race. She works in the multicultural center and I'm a coordinator in the same office. So everything we work on together is based on bringing African American students together, providing them with any emotional or academic assistance that they need. We end up talking about how African American students are feeling on campus, and because I am a student, she comes to me to see how things are going with them, how I feel they're progressing, what more she could do, so we kind of approach everything from a racial standpoint.

This is different than in previous mentoring relationships I've had because of the Jobs That we do on campus. That guides our relationship. We do have conversations outside of race often, but the most frequent conversations that we have are focused around race.

Because my mentor is an African American woman who went through a lot during Her college years, and she knows that perspective, she definitely does a lot to reach out to African American students on campus. Because she wants to provide that support that maybe she didn’t have that she wishes she did. So that’s a pretty big thing for her and for all the students that she comes in contact with. But besides that, she also helps out other minorities as well. So I think in general, I think race shows up in that she reaches out to the minority students, because they’re minority students and they wouldn’t have as many resources without her there.

If I were to have a mentor who wasn’t as racially conscious I would still get a lot of benefits from that. But being in this relationship with her has opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wouldn’t have seen before because she’s able to talk about her history, her personal history, with me and learning about her past experiences, especially when it comes to things that I haven’t encountered, really makes me think about myself and my personal identity more. So I think just being in this relationship with her has made me more secure within myself. Because I feel that I know myself better through some of the conversations that I have with her. I have had mentors before outside of school who weren’t racially conscious and that’s great, that’s awesome, just being able to have somebody to talk to. But I
don’t get the same personal benefits from it.

For me, I don’t think a good mentor has to be a person of color. I think it just depends on the mentor’s personality type. For example, if I were to have a mentor who was Asian, who really couldn’t understand my point of view as an African American, then there would be a huge point of disjunct between us and we wouldn’t be able to connect the same way. But if I were to have an Asian mentor who understood privilege and who understood a little bit about my history as well as their history and was able to kind of bridge that gap so that we could feel bonded, then that’s just as significant. Really it’s about being able to reach out and understand one another. So as long as the mentor is open to other ideals and other views and can really connect to that student’s background, I think it’s fine either way.

Race was not important to me when I entered into this relationship. I kind of fell into the mentoring relationship after meeting her. It just happened that we really got along and she became, on her own, a support system for me. If I am looking for someone to guide me, in general, race is not usually something that I consider beforehand. In this case it is convenient; it is nice because I can have conversations with her that I might not feel comfortable having with someone else, but it wasn’t something that I sought out. I think for me the reason that I was so glad to have met her in the first place was that she’s so successful and she’s so generous and she’s well known for the work that she’s done and that, on its own, shows that she has a great character and I can learn a lot from her no matter what race she is.

General Perceptions of Race

When I consider how African American people are regarded, I think there are two Very Different ways to respond. If we’re talking about things that I’ve heard, then that would trigger me to think about mass media today. A lot of the things in the media regarding African Americans are not positive. I mean, even in movies, a lot of the time, the main African American character is going to be the dumb or funny character, or just the goofy sidekick to the strong, smart, White lead character, which I think is something that is not right because it’s not equal. But if we’re talking about things that I’ve observed and seen myself, I’ve been around a lot of very influential, very intelligent, very hardworking, caring and just wonderful African American people including my mother for instance, and the director at the multicultural center. Those are two completely different sides to one greater story. Overall, though, most things I have observed about African Americans have been very positive, and I’ve enjoyed meeting other African Americans who have similar ideals and who want to make a difference in the world. Of course there are bad and good people of every race, but I think a lot of people tend to focus on the bad- they see on the news a burglar who’s African American and it becomes a negative stereotype. And people forget that you have to acknowledge and accept

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the bad along with the good, instead of simply ignoring the good and using the bad to form damaging ideas about an entire race of people.

Second Cycle: Focused Coding - Ryan Alexander

General Introduction
My name is Ryan Alexander and I identify racially as Black.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience
(SL) Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence
Originally, I had chosen through my parents not to come visit so they had me walk around with him and everyone thought he was my dad. (laughs), he’s the only other Black guy on campus. We don’t look alike at all. He’s like, really tall. Everyone’s like, “wow where do you get those color eyes?” He’s like, this isn’t my son. That’s what they saw.

(SP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment
I also work with the admissions office here at school. Last year when I got here they were sending me to high schools and like, didn’t get it until a little bit into the quarter but I noticed that there are not a lot of Black people but I guess they’re, in essence, celebrating. . .me, as a Black person at this college and being successful. I helped with recruiting high schoolers who were here for a camp over the summer. They brought in like 50 excelling Black students around the country and mostly in the state and I was a mentor. That experience felt supportive to me.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity
I take pride in the fact that I am Black. But it’ not something that I . . . most people Would say. . . it’s because you’re Black or you’re successful and you’re a Black man but I don’t take it to be like that at all and I think that’s from my parents bringing me up in a very White setting and then also just being around mixed races all my life. I mean, yeah, I see it, but it’s not something that to me is like, a huge thing. I would say it’s not what defines me, that I am Black. If somebody asks me, “who are you?”, I wouldn’t say that I am a Black man.

When it comes to race, it’s more like my success here and the way I stand out is, Most people would say, because I’m Black. . .Black, you have a White girlfriend Because you’re Black all that kind of stuff so it’s definitely something that is a lot more noticeable here than back home. That’s what it is a lot of times. For instance, I’ve been involved in student government and I’ve heard a lot of people say, well “yeah, you’re going to be student body president because you’re Black and because that makes you stand out where as all these other people are like” . . .to me that’s like . . .so any Black person can run for student body president and win. And

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so, I hear that and then as far as even when I was rushing for my fraternity. I got into all of them except for like one. And so, people were like, well that’s cause you’re Black, but at the same time I was also named the first year senator. I was like yeah, I’m Black and they want a Black person in their fraternity but there’s also the success of the leadership. I’ve never been the type of person who holds onto that kind of stuff. But it absolutely does play out and my girlfriend even has been like, “everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys.” She’s like, “I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. So that’s probably the most prevalent thing that I see at college. That’s what I’d like to continue to mentor and hopefully reach out to Black students at college and hopefully in my future that I can stand up and be like you guys can defeat that stereotype and go for what you want to do and it doesn’t have to be that you’re a Black, successful person, it’s just. he’s a person. To me it’s not a problem because it’s like, yeah I am but at the same time it’s like. . .what about all the other Black people that don’t have all these different things. It’s a prevalent thing that I see and then also for me I attended a diversity conference. They’re talking about how there’s White privilege and stuff like that and then there’s privilege for being Black and all different races and different things that you can have as far as privilege and so to me I think that what I’ve learned so far here at college and being an African American male is that. . .I’ve always taken things differently because to me, if that’s a nuisance or if that’s a problem to you, then you fix it. You do something to make it so that. . . okay, well. . .”I perceive Black people as lazy and poor and just like, they have kids and screw up their lives”. . .so to me instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, ok well so then. . . I hear my friends saying well, “maybe all Black people are like that. Maybe they’re not always negative. So that, to me is a huge thing that I’ve learned at college. Yeah, if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my Race with me rather than look like I’m above.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance

(NI) Information Gathering; Desire to learn more about race

(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race

As far as nurturing my racial identity, I’d say mostly my family and then getting Involved With the Black student club here. That was something that I did in order to nurture it Definitely because coming here I didn’t really hang out with a lot of Black people so it’s something . . . and then I took the initiative and went and did. Like you know with my family our family is all out of state and we’re just over there by ourselves and I don’t really hang out with that many Black people so definitely getting involved with the student club and making that connection here and then the multicultural center I’m trying to get involved with that so. . .

Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black and then, we Really don’t talk about it a lot but we get there sometimes and my dad picks up his
accent. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home. It’s not something that we concentrate on but definitely it’s there and I appreciate it.

Yeah I’d say race is present with my mentor here at college because he is also a Black male and attended the same college and dealt with a lot of the same things that I guess I’d say I deal with and as far as . . . we don’t talk about it so much but it’s definitely there. I mean that’s one of the reasons I did pick him because he’s someone that I can live up to but also he can talk to me about other issues besides just basketball (laughs) or other stereotypical things. I would say he probably sees it a little more than I do. He deals with it here at the college and so that’s something that’s his focus. . . and that’s the diversity of the college so he deals with all that. I mean as far as race goes he definitely looks for it more and he grew up in a different situation than I did so it’s more prevalent in his life than it is to mine. Race is a part of his job. But even though it is part of his job, I think just being around him, it’s been easier to see more about him. When I came during summer to do the camp I stayed with him for a night and I remember he said to me, “this isn’t what a typical Black person’s house should look like, hum?” And I remember being like, I don’t know what a typical Black person’s house should look like (laughs). It’s just a house to me. And then, he played basketball here and he makes little remarks that are funny but are . . . that’s how I’ve gotten to know him more.

I think it’s important for race to be considered in my relationship with my mentor. I Mean I chose him to be my mentor and he took me on but I think it would be different if it were . . . I mean I chose him for a reason, because I could have chosen plenty of other people on the campus. But I think that is something that I guess I was looking for. I didn’t even think about it until this came up but . . . yeah taking him into consideration and knowing a little bit than other people, other professors or other faculty and staff on our campus would know about me and being Black or any cultural lens at all is important. I think I knew I was choosing him somewhat because he was Black. Umm. . . I mean I didn’t think about it so much but at the same time, yeah. I identify more with him over. . . I mean I got to know him more quickly than others, so that was one of the reasons but also there’s . . . him being called my dad and being called my brother and being called . . . (laughs), I mean that could be what made us bond. It wasn’t just him being Black but also that was part of the picture, so . . . I mean we’ve definitely talked about that and he’s like well. . . I mean I’ve talked to a lot of people about that since we’ve had this study, but as far as he said that’s the same thing back. It’s still even with his coworkers he. . . that it’s because you’re Black. . . because he can be very friendly and very outgoing and he can draw a lot of diverse populations into the college and so a lot of his coworkers will say well, “It’s because you’re Black. . . and they feel comfortable”. . . and all that kind of stuff. And I talked about, you being Black had nothing to do
with my comfort with you. Like that had nothing to do with why I came here, because I was surrounded by the little amount of Black people that were here. It was just that, yeah you are a comfortable person. . .if you were White, if you were Latino, it would be the exact same thing and so I think. . .and he said that going here, he had that same experience but then still working here it hasn’t really changed. I mean, you put yourself in the situation so

The relationship has been nurturing I’d say in talking to him as far as my future and Stuff And what I’m gonna do in the future, he’s always like, “well meet with advisors”, he talks to me about scheduling and stuff because most people at this school especially their parents are doctors and lawyers and all that good stuff, so they know, they have those guidelines and that background and I don’t have that and so I’ve been sharing with him sometimes my frustration being like. . .I don’t think the college has a very good writing program and so if I can talk to him and say well this is what I’m thinking because I don’t have the same background, N don’t have that same understanding as far as classes that I need to take or what I need to do in the future, I mean I can definitely sit down with him and he had that same situation. His parents didn’t go to a four year college and so I’d say, in him bringing me up it helps me, I mean I can go and he’ll help me make appointments and do what I need to do.

(NM) Race Activist; Desires involvement in race equity and social change

When it comes to race, I see it more here. In high school I didn’t even see it as a problem. Yeah, I mean, yeah there’s those jokes and like. . .but it’s so much like, but there’s still community and family and it’s like if we went and said this is a multicultural center event, the whole school still attends. There wouldn’t be a big deal and so I’d say my problem with. . .and the reason why I haven’t gotten involved so much with the inclusivity movement here at the college is that I see it as, “poor me, poor us”, that mentality and I don’t want it to be that way and that’s why I, when I was brought in here and when I went to the high schools and stuff, I’d say, if you’re gonna go to the college, don’t have that mentality. Just go and do whatever you want. You can be whatever you want and that’s what I’m gonna do. It’s not something that you worry about. It’s like ok. . .and I’ve gotten over that where yeah, one of my big brothers told me that, “yeah, you might not make it because you’re Black but then he turns around and says, well you can, you can do it and so that is what I hope to push to the rest of the people, the rest of everyone coming to the college. It doesn’t have to be just Black people or just Latino people, White people. . .anyone. You can go to college and do whatever you want. I definitely shared that with my mentor and he. . .I mean, that’s something he believes in and I think that’s something that he probably struggles with a lot on the staff, just because it’s always going to be there, and it’s just this whole campus environment, but instead of being poor me he goes about his business and moves on and so you’re not always seen as just the Black guy.
And the local community as well is a lot different. My home town is like...there’s a lot of stuff that you see done in the state, being in this city. And where I’m from is just not like that, it’s not that environment, and so I do see the victim mentality coming from...yeah, I lived in this poor neighborhood and then I got to come to this college but the students treat me like I’m invisible...so I understand when people say that but I don’t think that’s gonna help, to be honest. I think that the only way that inclusivity will be pushed on this campus and this country is just by people being them and not being. I mean the same thing that Obama being, well he’s a Black president but now people are not judging his decisions so much on him being Black, it’s just he’s the President now. And that’s what I hope to push on this campus by the end of my four years just hopefully seeing some more...hopefully not so much victim mentality but people can do whatever they want. Even if they mess up, not being like, oh well you messed up because you’re Black or you did this because you’re Black. It’ll come over time and I hope to see it.

I think a lot of times the multicultural center, from what I see is kind of secluded as well. On campus and so it’s like although the college is working towards the diversity and the inclusiveness, inclusivity, they can say it, but it’s only the multicultural center that mostly pushes it and those people...you know what I see from being in student government, fraternities and all that kind of stuff, it’s all these people, and I get pulled into that section sometimes over inclusivity and all that awareness and that kind of stuff and so to me what I’d rather fight for, and I talked to my mentor about this, I’d rather instead of excluding myself and being pushed in this direction, I’d rather just go and be me and that’s what I see as inclusivity. It doesn’t have to be a section of campus and they have say a student body president representing the multicultural center versus the Greek life. That’s one of my reasons that I chose to run as soon as I got here because I think that would bring kids together. Yeah, I can hang out with the people that represent inclusivity and I can tell about how I got a scholarship at the multicultural center.

I know that I am not gonna make a difference at the college within a year but what I’ve seen from being a freshman to being a sophomore it’s what I heard from one of my big brothers in my fraternity he was student body president last year and him saying that, “oh the college is gonna always have a White president, they’ve had a White president since the beginning and it wasn’t him discouraging me it’s was just like letting me know it’s gonna be hard, it’s all these kids. And so then at the end of the year him coming back and being like, “wow, if people don’t see you that way so much it’s not like...it won’t...but at the same time we talked about there’s our current student body president picked—kid who does work with the multicultural center, he works with all the student clubs, with the United Student club, Asian Student club, Black Student club, so he chose to pick that one so that he could kind of bring the campus together, however, it’s still kind of keeping him under because I think, for his student body vice president, he knew that’s what he was
chosen for. He was chosen to bring. . . he was supposed to bring all these people so, and then we were talking about, well if I were supposed to run against Felipe, then it would be a Black guy versus a Mexican that’s how the college would see you. It would be like, here went the Black guy with the Mexican (laughs). So we were talking about that. So, I think that, I mean hopefully, what I’m seeing and what I see especially for student government and hopefully for the campus, is that as we work to. . . the inclusivity, like, although I think it’s mostly the multicultural center and mostly like the residence hall, they are the ones who push it so hard, and then. . . but I want to hopefully combine those and hopefully work to make it so much not. . . because right now I would say that it is the multicultural center and it is residence halls versus Greek life and the rest of the campus because that’s just, what they know. So I’d say, what I’d like to see is more of the campus being more united and that does take someone that does not concentrate so much on the race issue and so much on the inclusive issue but just go out there and show it. And so I do try to stay away from all the inclusivity and stuff so that I’m not connected with that but then I can bring it in the end so it’s not supposed to be my main focus but it is something that is definitely important.

General Perceptions of Race
What are my perceptions about African American people? Well, again, going back to my Family my parents are, to me, very successful African American people and that is what I base myself off of. My parents both did not receive 4-year degrees but they are successful and they work hard and they got houses and cars and all this kind of stuff so that is basically what I set myself off of but as far as media, they would absolutely be stereotypical Black people as silly, loud, obnoxious, ignorant, all that kind of stuff. People that cuss a lot, drink a lot, smoke and do a lot of different crimes and all that kind of stuff. . . but as far as the Black people I’ve surrounded myself with. . are successful. As far as even people in the multicultural center, admissions and I have a mentor back home who is Black as well and they’re all successful. A lot is based on upbringing as well. I didn’t have a TV growing up. All the Black people I knew were successful. So that is what I hoped to be.

Second Cycle Coding: Focused Coding – Cree

General Introduction
My name is Cree. So, my dad is Black and White, his grandma was half White so that makes him half Black and half White too so he’s the Black and White side and my mom is Native American too so both her parents are both Native American and Black mixed so my mom’s the Indian and Black and my dad’s Black and White so African American, Native American and then White.

I’m a really good processor. I like to talk about it a lot and then think about it and then talk about it with other people and then I’ll think about making a decision, so. It takes a while, but. . . I took a Myers Briggs test and it said I was an extravert but it also said like, so I’m an
extravert who knows how to make decisions. So when it comes to decision making I just make a decision with like, no emotion involved. I’m a thinker rather than a feeler, so I think things through rather than, oh well my gut tells me to do this, so yes, I’m an extravert. (Laughs). So people get really annoyed because I talk a lot and they’re like why are you talking so much, and I’m like, I’m thinking! So my boyfriend gets so mad because we’ll get in a fight, and I’ll keep talking about it and he’s like, “it’s over, it’s done with, just stop it.” And I’m like, no because I want to let you know exactly how I’m feeling and I’m still thinking about it.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience

(SP) Racial Stories Supporting Pride, Self-Esteem, Connection and Empowerment

There was an incident regarding race. It didn’t happen at school, but it was really Cool. Because my boyfriend and I are out at Wal-Mart going shopping for something and there’s this cute little old (white) man walking in the store and I was like, “Awww, he’s such a cute little old man you know, he just looks so sweet. And so we’re over by the fruits and vegetables aisle and he just came up to us and he was like, “You guys are such a handsome couple”, and I was like, 'Awww, thank you.” And so we started talking and he was like, “Well, what do you want to do” and all this stuff. And he had to be like, pretty old, at least like 70 or 80, probably older than that. But he was really sweet and so my boyfriend was like, “yeah, I’m gonna be an architect engineer”, and I was like yeah, I want to go into politics, become an ambassador and he was like, “Well, I think you are very articulate, you’re gonna do great. You really remind me of Condoleezza Rice and she made it really big”. And I was like, “Oh, that’s really nice”. So I guess, I don’t know if he would have said that to us if we were any other race but I think the way that we work really well together and cause maybe because we were Black, maybe it’s not I don’t know, but I don’t know if he would have said that had we not been Black. Especially like the comment about Condoleezza Rice, so I thought that was really cool.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity

(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity

Ummmm. . .I think that it’s tough to say how important my race is to me because it’s important to me if I’m around certain people, but it’s not as important to me if I’m just by myself. Like I don’t think about it when I’m by myself, but when I’m around other people I am consciously aware of who I am and what I do because I don’t want to be perceived as a negative image for people so ummm. . .I guess it’s really important. I think it’s in certain types of situations so. . .I mean my family’s really unique in that, like the way we were raised so if I’m around other Black people, I’m aware of it a lot because they may say things or do things that I’m like, “wow, I would never do that”. You know and then if I’m around other people who aren’t minorities then I’m really aware of it because I don’t want them to group me in the same category as, “Oh, well she’s just loud and then all Black people are loud”. So I think it’s a situational thing. And then there are some people I hang around and I don’t even think about it just cause I’m that comfortable around them and I know they know me well enough and they’re not going to judge whatever I do.
or whatever I say if I’m just joking or something. But I think it’s more of a situational thing. Because also being Native American too like that’s really different than being Black because you have more standards to uphold, I feel like. And you have more responsibility on your shoulders so yeah, I think it’s pretty important to me.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance

(C) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race. When I think about how my race is supported in my life... Oh wow, ummm... I don’t know, think probably by the people that I hang around a lot. I don’t come in the multicultural office that often, but when I do it makes me feel better because I know there are other people on this campus who are like me and some of them are raised from races just like me so that makes me feel good. But then also I think the way my family is like really strong so we are always around each other so I don’t feel out of place with whatever race that I am, so that kind of supports me. And other people around me in my family really supports me.

Well, I work for the Admissions office and in Orientation but you know with all of those, they really appreciate diversity so I think besides just being around people that look like me, being around people who don’t look like me, they appreciate the fact that I am different and you know my culture and everything like that. So I think that’s nurturing. You can sit down with someone and like they’ll talk to you about diversity and what they think it means and how cool it is that you’re Black and, oh my God, that’s so awesome, you know what I mean? I’m like, oh that’s really cool, because they love diversity and talking about it, especially like some White guy that’s like, yeah, I want to do race/ethnic studies. I’m like, Ok, cool and they just want to talk about it. So that’s really cool to see someone that’s like really interested in the races that I am compared to someone that doesn’t really care. So that’s another way of it being nurtured.

Do I feel it’s important that my racial experience is considered in my mentoring relationship? Not in my mentoring, well... not in our relationship, no. But if I did get another mentor, later in life, race isn’t very important but I would appreciate them to be like a person of color just so that they understand what I’ve been going through, you know... if that makes sense, but in our relationship no, it’s not important at all, but in the future, it doesn’t have to be a requirement but I would, like, appreciate it. I think I would want them to be a person of color just because the older people I have been around, the people in my community, they are people of color and they kind of remind me of like my grandparents or my parents or something, so I can relate easier to them and like know when they’re like saying wisdom or when they’re just like teaching me things I’m more willing to just sit and listen to them because one, just because they’re older and because they’re people of color. They’re not just saying it as, well... “well if I was a person of color I would say this”, but because I’ve been through this. So like him (mentor) being white,
it has nothing, like. . . I still sit down and listen to his mentoring but I do. . . I listen to it on certain things, but I also go to like, my mom or someone just to check and make sure. . . and she’s like “yeah, this is right”. So, you know, just checking it that way, I guess. . . if that makes sense. Not undermining his authority, but just confirming.

I have to say my mentor identifies as White. It’s my guess just because I know his parents and his parents are White too. I think the closest. . . I don’t know like nationality wise where their history comes from I just know that he’s White, so I don’t know outside of that.

Is race present in my mentoring relationship? I would say no. Um, I don’t notice it when I talking with him. When we’re having day to day conversations, like race usually never comes up and then I don’t think about like he’s White and I’m Black. So it never comes up. I feel pretty okay with it not being there. I’m happy that not every relationship has to be like race defined or like I’m more comfortable with a black mentor than a white mentor. So feel fine, I mean our relationship has not changed or anything. So, I think it’s good.

I would describe it as a mentoring as a mentoring where. . . he’s my pastor at my synagogue so we would sit down and talk like once a week, maybe more. And just catch up and see how each other is doing and he would definitely try—if I’m going through anything, help me through that and then just talk to me about anything that’s going on and then also guide me in that direction. So he’s like, well I definitely encourage you to stay in your bible this week, maybe read these passages, do like a devotional program with like psalms and proverbs and stuff like that so help me out that way. So it’s not really more academic based, rather like faith and religious based.

We didn’t really choose each other, ummm. . . I think it kind of just evolved. Because I started going to that youth ministry once we moved back down from Seattle and then ever since, like, he and I got pretty close and then we just start hanging out and talking and then talking more often and then one-on-one time and stuff.

I think that he appreciates race and he appreciates diversity, but we’ve really never talked about race or ethnicity or anything like that. But as far as I can guess, I think he appreciates it. Cause I know like at our synagogue everyone’s really diverse, so there’s so many races represented there so he has to appreciate that. And in the youth ministry alone there are many races and a lot of like mixed races as well, so he has to balance that out. And he works really closely with a lot of our pastors who are. . . a lot of them are Black and there are a couple of Hispanic ones and an Italian one too, so I think he has to appreciate it.
I don’t think my mentoring relationship has nurtured my racial identity. It sounds bad to say no, but I don’t think so. Because I think, his any my mentoring relationship is not. . .like I said it’s more religiously and faith based so in that area, he’s like nurturing me in that way and like helping me to grow in that way, but in like race and the very certain things that we’ll talk about, like he knows like, “I can’t help you”, so he’ll send me to a woman in our community who is a woman of color and she’s older than me and so, he’ll send me to her and like, we can relate better. And that would nurture my racial identity, but not with him and I. So, him and I, it’s more how I can grow and develop my relationship with God, whereas he’ll send me to someone else for something else that may be going on.

General Perceptions of Race
I feel like because of my race and what I want to do in International Relations, I feel like People are more accepting or encouraging of me doing that and going abroad. And I can’t say it’s just because of my race but I think it might be the people that I’ve encountered. And maybe it’s just the staff here is really good, like they really do appreciate diversity, they really encourage that. I think people wise there are a few Black people on campus that I feel like they do a lot of things and they feel that they think they can get away with it like just like, “oh I’m Black so, I can be brutally honest with you”. . .or something and I’m just like, no that was just rude. I think I’ve noticed kind of an entitlement in that way with certain people and it’s not everybody, it’s just like two people but that’s just their personality I guess, but it’s definitely like a negative representation of who we are. When I’m around them, they’re just talking to everybody. So sometimes it’s around African Americans but it’s not as brutally honest or it doesn’t come off as rude, but then they can be talking to some White person and then it’s just like, that was really rude. They can say the same thing but their tone changes. And I feel like that’s because I can say whatever I want to you because I’m Black. You know, like you’re not going to say anything to me. There’s like this sense of entitlement when they say it and it’s not necessary at all but that’s what I’ve noticed just with certain people and then images. . .outside of like, the normal stereotypical images like on posters and stuff. Especially, like there’s a concert coming up for Wale and the poster. . .it’s a really bad poster. And a lot of the posters like for parties and stuff, they always refer to Black people as like with the dreads and like the big teeth and all this stuff with the big shades. And I’m like uh, so horrible. Not every Black person is Li’l Wayne, not every Black person wants to have dreads. Not everyone wants to go to jail you know, not everyone has tattoos all over their face but I mean that’s just the image that they portray and a lot of time like for party banners and stuff going out to the clubs they’ll have images like that and people are like, “Oh God it’s going to be so much fun” and it probably won’t be, but it just looks that way and so, yeah, I think they’re trying to attract more Black people to the parties so they put people like that up there and it doesn’t work for me.

Other things that stand out for me with Blacks I think it’s kind of hit and miss. I know a lot Of people will have seen, like the posters for Precious and all they saw was the girl on the
front so they’re like, “oh wow, all Black women are obese” but they didn’t see the movie, they didn’t understand how she really is this way. So that’s one image you can have of the overweight girl that just eats all the time or it’s either overweight and eats all the time or its really classy. So I know like a lot of times people will be like, “Oh my God, Black people are so awesome and this kind of stuff, but they don’t really equate that with Condoleezza Rice or Michelle Obama or Jada Pinkett Smith or like the classy Black ladies. I know a lot of people who are looking on campus for the classy Black ladies will only find certain ones. So you’ll see them all over campus but you’ll point out the ones that you know hold themselves up high because they know they can accomplish more.

Second Cycle Coding: Focused Coding – Stacy

General Introduction
My name is Stacey and I identify racially as Black.

Stories of Race in College Student of Color Experience

Limited College Access, Lack of Representation and Low Persistence
Okay, so I had this class in the Natural Resources building in this really, really, really big room, probably 300 kids in the class. And I remember I sent my professor an email. I sent it a little too late because he never responded and he never asked me my name, we never had a verbal one-on one conversation before and normally I would sit in the back with this one girl. And um. .I’d fall asleep on and off because he always had the lights dim and he just walks up to me. He’s just like, “hey, I got your email”. And I’m looking at him like, there’s over 300 kids in this class how did you know it was me? And I just kind of looked at him and he gave me the answer to my email and it kind of threw me off. It was like, wow, they really do pay attention. And I felt like because I was one of like five Black kids in that class, I don’t know if he looked it up or if he just assumed that it was me. . . I’m pretty sure he looked it up. But it just threw me off that he just walked straight to me and knew exactly who I was. It was a straight shot. He knew exactly where I was sitting. It kind of made me become more aware in my classes. Like, being the only Black person or one of the few in the class, they do pay attention to you. And they pay attention to everything that you do and you don’t just blend in to everyone else. It wasn’t bad, it was kind of a good thing to realize that they actually do notice.

Overt & Covert Racism & Racial Misperceptions
Of course like my freshman roommate was White. And she would watch everything I did all the time and she had all these questions. She never really had that Black friend. So she would have all these questions and I felt that I was able to help her better understand. Because if I didn’t do it then she would just sit around with all these ignorant questions. I did get mad a couple of times, but that was just because they don’t really know what to say or how to approach someone so I felt
like I was able to educate her. You don’t just walk up to a Black person and ask a question like this. And you just can’t make these types of jokes. One time, I didn’t know what I was gonna be for Halloween. And she was like why don’t you be a light bulb. . .wait, you could dress up as a light bulb and you could be a black light. And I looked at her like, what did you just say to me? And she’s like, “what, did I say something wrong?” We had a conversation and she was like, “I didn’t even know that would offend you, I’m so sorry.” So I felt like I was able to help her better learn. I feel like my race can sometimes be an educational tool for some people because if you don’t do it, they could do it to the wrong person and then they get either positive or negative reactions.

Evidence of Race Salience and Racial Identity
(RM) Moderate awareness of racial identity
As far as race and its importance in my life. . .I try not to dictate my life by my race. I know that my race is a part of what I do because like I’m culturally different from Other people. But I try not to let my race. . .what I am, hold me back from things that I want to do or just because I’m Black, I shouldn’t be able to do this or something like that. So I just do things because I want to do it, not because my race says I should. So on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being race is most important, I would maybe rank it a 7. Race is probably more supported in my relationships. Because I know like in a lot of “Black” relationships things are like supposed to be a certain way and me, I focus on what is a relationship supposed to be like. So my main thing with my boyfriend is we focus on communication and talking and not necessarily on the outside factors. Because we don’t really do what typical people would do in relationships. We kind of talk about race. We have before. But he’s from Trinidad. He’s Trinidad-American. So for him, its different for him because he has Caribbean roots and I really don’t. Like it’s in my blood line but I was born here and my parents are from here. So we talk about things that his family does and things that my family does and we laugh about it, but that’s about it. We talk more about nationality.

Expressed Need for Race Nurturance
(NC) Community Seeker; Desires experiences with others of the same race
I’ve worked at the multicultural office since the beginning of fall semester. It’s more supportive for me because I consider this home. So it’s like when outside factors start to influence me and I feel like I just need to get away because I’m mostly the only Black person in all my classes, it gets to me sometimes. Especially like when your professors talks about something Black and they look directly at you when they make that statement like you’re supposed to speak for your whole race. So like when I need to get away, this is where I come and in working here, I have to be here anyway. This is my home and I’m really comfortable here. I call it home because its where I find most of my Black identity. This is where I first started. When I did orientation my freshman year, they brought me here to make sure I didn’t feel left out. There were two Black people in my orientation class. It was me
and another boy. I was looking around at everybody else like, “oh... I’m very different.” And everybody was like looking at me and I came here and I just got a home vibe from it. And I talk to (directors) all the time. They’re just like mom and big brother.

I think my mentor identifies as just Black. I never heard her express or call herself African American. I think part of why we connect (is because of race), but it’s never really talked about. It’s just like... I guess it’s just that floating thing... that attraction to a person. And then their personality on top of that. (When I first came to college) my original mentor, like she was my mentor because that’s... I was given to her. But who actually ended up being my mentor we tended to like gravitate to each other a lot, so it was kind of like a personal choosing of each other. She just became my mentor whether she liked it or not (laughs). But she loves it. I still talk to (my original mentor) her, but when it came, to like talking to somebody on the regular, I wouldn’t choose that person.

I think (race) is important (to my mentor) in a sense because of some of the things she does. I know that she’s in a Black sorority and I know a lot of times like when something happens, it becomes a big issue like, “oh my goodness, I can’t believe this happened”. Those are the only times we tend to talk about it is when things come up during class that makes her mad or she’s heard something that makes her mad or sometimes like, I had a roommate experience that made me mad and that’s the only real time we ever talk about race, but I can tell that race is important because she chose like a black sorority over like a White sorority. She chooses to be a part of the Black/African American culture center which she has a choice to be a part of any other organization or office. She just chooses to be around Black people. I know she’s taking an African studies class where someone was making a comment or a teacher made a comment and then the next time I saw her she was just so mad about it and we talked about it a little bit.

For me, I don’t think it’s something significant, because I look more at her as a person than the things she’s involved in, but you choose certain things for a reason. So I know her reasoning behind the things she does is sincere, it’s not just because “fight the power, Black power. I just need tell people to know I’m Black”. She does it because she truly has an interest in it. So I don’t really see anything into it. I don’t really see it as being significant.

I do care about my experiences with race being something that is supported by my mentor because in a sense I feel like I can’t... like if it happens in class, there’s only so much I can say in class before somebody looks at me like, “why is she responding that way? Or why do Black people always feel like they’re the victims of something when nobody is even trying to victimize them?” So it feels good that you have somebody that you can go to talk to about situations that happens because sometimes other people just don’t understand. And no matter what you say, they
never will understand.

This mentoring relationship has supported my racial identity, in a sense, yeah because it made me more comfortable being here at the school. Having somebody that I could go to. When I didn’t live in the residence hall with all the Black people, because I didn’t know it was the place to be. So, it was just like it helped me grow as a person to know that there is a place that I can call home and that’s why this office became home. Because she would be in here a lot and I would see her in here a lot. Most of the time we talked in here and I saw here all the time so it was like being around her and being in this office was home. In my residence hall there was one other Black person on my floor, not in my hall, but just on the 3rd floor in general and then I know couple that was on the second floor, but there wasn’t a lot of us.

General Perceptions of Race
My racial identity kind of supports because I know what’s expected of me, what’s stereotypically expected of me and I try not to do what the stereotype says I should be doing. I go beyond. So a lot of people look at me and they say, “oh she’s Black and she’s a female, so wow she’s in college… you don’t have any kids?” I’m like, no I don’t have kids. So it kind of like help keeps me motivated. To know that I’m on the right track for something that I consider good for myself.

A lot of the guys... basketball, basketball, basketball or rapper, rapper, rapper. The females are like pregnant before they get out of high school and then they have a kid and they just accept it. I come from the east coast so like I see a lot of people I went to high school with versus the people I know in the springs, it’s very different. Like the Black people in New York, the girls I went to high school with, its Gucci this, Gucci that. You can’t pay your rent, you can’t have a solid phone number, but your baby is walking around in Gucci loafers. They’re not even going to be able to wear that in a month, but why are you spending the money on this? I never really understood it and they just become okay with that lifestyle. It’s weird to me. When my dad talks to people and says, “my daughter is a junior in college, they’re like, “Oh aren’t you from the east coast”? He’s like, “yeah, “. They’re like, “She’s in college??” Like that’s a surprise. They’re like, “she doesn’t have kids??” He’s like, “no”. Because my parents raised me a certain way and it’s just very weird. I try to stay out of that stereotype because that’s not who I am, that’s not the way I was raised. And a lot of the teen moms that I know, I’ve known them for a while, and that’s not how they were raised either, it’s just that peers and the media make it seem like that’s okay and they’re trying to keep up with everything else. And they put themselves in all this debt and they’re only 18 years old and that’s not what I’m trying to do with my life. And they see me as I’m doing something wrong because I’m not wearing the same stuff that they’re wearing or I just don’t have what they have. But I have a lot more in my mind. Because, I’m a junior now. At the end of my senior year I’ll have a college degree plus I’m going to law school. And all you have is a child who I hope you raise to be the best person they can be. I think to different people, success is different. My parents didn’t finish college. My mom started college my freshman year of high school, so we graduated
at the same time. It was kind of cool, but it was kind of weird. My brother went to the Air Force, he never finished and then he passed away in 04. So he was never able to go back and finish, so I’m the first one of all my siblings to actually go to college and finish. It’s a lot. It’s a lot for me.
Appendix K

Results of Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Approach

Application of Angie’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure Approach

| INTERACTION | Involves both personal and social aspects of the participant story. Transcript is analyzed for personal experiences of the storyteller as well as stories of their interactions with others. Personal aspects include a look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. Social aspects represent conditions in the environment intentions, purposes and points of view of others. |
| Personal/Social | How important is my race to me? Ummm... oh, that’s difficult. It’s very important because my race affects every aspect of my life. Especially being at a university where there are very few African American students, it’s kind of difficult just feeling connected to other students on campus. But also knowing myself and learning more about my history, I feel informs my future. So, it’s a pretty big part of my identity. That being said, while race is important to me personally, I don’t apply that when it comes to other people because I feel that all people are equal. I don’t look at another person and judge them based on their race, or let their race affect how I treat or view them. So it’s important but it’s also not. (RP) I feel supported around family in general but it’s difficult to say that my racial identity is supported specifically. I’m supported as an individual around family, and not just exclusively regarding my racial identity. When it comes to conversations that surround race, especially when I’m speaking to my grandmother who’s lived through so much and has so many stories to tell... and when she tells me stories about her past, which is our past, I do feel racially supported and nurtured because I can connect to that and know that she really understands me and that she can feel for the things that I go through because she’s gone through those things herself. (NC) |

When I consider how African American people are regarded, I think there are two very different ways to respond. If we’re talking about things that I’ve heard, then that would trigger me to think about mass media today. A lot of the things in the media regarding African Americans are not positive. I mean, even in movies, a lot of the time, the main African American character is going to be the dumb or funny character, or just the goofy sidekick to the strong, smart, White lead character, which I think is something that is not right because it’s not equal. But if we’re talking about things that I’ve observed and
seen myself, I’ve been around a lot of very influential, very intelligent, very hardworking, caring and just wonderful African American people including my mother for instance, and the director at the multicultural center. Those are two completely different sides to one greater story. Overall, though, most things I have observed about African Americans have been very positive, and I’ve enjoyed meeting other African Americans who have similar ideals and who want to make a difference in the world. Of course there are bad and good people of every race, but I think a lot of people tend to focus on the bad— they see on the news a burglar who’s African American and it becomes a negative stereotype. And people forget that you have to acknowledge and accept the bad along with the good, instead of simply ignoring the good and using the bad to form damaging ideas about an entire race of people. (General)

A lot of the friendships that I have made, especially through the Black student club, have really impacted my life. We did a fall retreat this year and we had maybe 15 students total in attendance, and about 8 of those students were African American. In addition, there were Latino students and White students, as well. So it was all of us coming together, and we were able to develop really strong, lasting, sincere relationships based off of our experiences in general. For example, we were talking about how other people see us. And although the Latino students didn’t identify the same way, we were able to connect and to empathize with one another, simply because we are all minority students and able to see things from that perspective. It was amazing. I cherish each one of the friendships made there for that reason. Because I know that we truly understand each other’s point of view.

One thing that I found to be really interesting was that the African American and the Latino students have very, very similar points of view and experiences. And I was really surprised by that. One point of connection was that at one point in history, and arguably this still exists today, African Americans were pushed out. We were... ostracized for our color, for our background. And a lot of that exists today when it comes to Latino students. With the issues regarding immigration, a lot of the Hispanic and Latino students on campus feel that they’re not welcome. So being able to connect on that was amazing because I never expected it, and I never really considered it before. But we also had some similar experiences when it came to our families. Since we are on a predominantly White campus, we are surrounded by a different culture from our own. Some of the Latino students mentioned that when they go home, they sometimes run into
the word “whitewash”, and that makes them feel put down and outcast.... I’ve run into the same problem. A lot of the African American students have run into that problem. So we began a discussion around it- what does “whitewash” mean and why is it a derogatory term? Why is it that when a person is educated, or when a person is goal-oriented, or when they speak with proper grammar, it is attributed to the White community instead of just saying, “This is a really intelligent Black woman, or this is a really hardworking Latino male”? It’s like saying that, because this person a minority, they can’t have any of those positive characteristics on their own, and if they have them, it must be because of Caucasian influence. It’s basically saying that we, as minorities, are not self-sufficient, and are not capable of achieving success without outside assistance. By using terms like these, we put ourselves down and we undervalue and underestimate ourselves. So that point of connection was something that I ran into that was really interesting to me. However, I did find that the White students didn’t connect in the same way. Just being able to hear some of these things helped them understand it better, because they’d never heard some of this at home. And I think that’s just due to privilege. They’re born with a certain amount of privilege, just by being Caucasian. So they don’t even consider these other things because it’s not a part of their daily lives. So they understood it, but they didn’t really connect to it the way that the rest of us did. (SP)

Well, I am a part of a Black student club. By being involved with that, I’m able to connect with other people with similar backgrounds. That provides some support. Also my job is to support African American students in a multicultural office for the school that keeps me grounded and makes me feel supported. I used to live in an environment where I was surrounded by other people my color with similar backgrounds and so being here, it’s difficult to feel that way. So my racial identity is supported by the interactions and experiences I have through my work and my participation in the club.

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes: Has been difficult getting this interview scheduled. She is just so busy. She was happy to see me. Actually seemed excited. Very warm greeting. Smiled, eye contact. Good posture. Shoulder length, relaxed hair. Dark skin. Very formal in her responses. Had a difficult time finding connection. Burdened. Works a lot, mom laid off, racist comment from a friend. Mentor has been a key supporter. Mentor expresses care. Race is on the forefront of the relationship. Cares about multiculturalism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus leader.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Reactions: I really like her. She is so polished and professional. Very smart and insightful. Has experienced a lot of emotional pain.</td>
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<tr>
<th>CONTINUITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>My first year here, I was really struggling. My mother lost her job. Her company laid her off because of the bad economy. And I was supporting myself, and my three younger siblings and my mother and working all the time and doing the best that I could to stay in school. I started reaching out to friends, trying to find somebody who could maybe understand what I was going through. And I met a girl who lived on the same floor that I did and she and I began a friendship. And at one point she turned to me and said, “I can’t be friends with you anymore.” And I said, “Why not?” And she said, “Well, it doesn’t look good for me to be friends with the poor Black girl on campus.” And that broke my heart. But that was something that I could talk to (my mentor) about. Because she completely understood the way that I’d been feeling. Not just coming from the standpoint of growing up in a family that didn’t have a lot of money, and struggling, but also from the standpoint that my racial identity was called out there. It wasn’t just that I was poor, it was that I was Black. And so just in that sense, being able to converse with her about things like that and have her say, “Whether or not this person chooses to stand by you, I will stand by you at all times, because I care about you.” That was huge to me. When we had that conversation, I felt my racial identity and my socioeconomic status were supported because she was able to remind me of some of the obstacles I’ve overcome in getting where I am and reassure me that she was invested in helping me succeed. (SR)</td>
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**Observation Notes**

Descriptive: Warm smile when we met. Excited. Good posture, hair is straight, shoulder length. Asked about my research. Seem impressed.

Personal Reactions: Sad. Reminded me of when I had to leave school after my first semester. Felt so lonely. No one to talk to. Found support in Dawn

| Present | In most of my classes, I’m the only African American student and I guess in a backwards way, my racial identity is reinforced there as |

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well. Just because of the differences I see. The way that I’m treated, the way that people speak to me. It’s a constant reminder, in a way. And some of the students on campus have lived very sheltered lives in White suburban communities; and so when they meet me, they don’t know how to respond, what to say. They see modern media and learn stereotypes from that. They might say something to me that I feel is offensive and I realize that, because of that ignorance, the just don’t know any better. It reminds me of the differences that exist there, and the fact that a lot of people on campus do view me as “different” because of my skin color. I feel that everywhere I go on this campus.

Observation Notes:
Personal Reactions: Racial battle fatigue?

Future

My mentor identifies as African American. Race shows up in our everyday interactions. Mainly because we met through work positions that are surrounded around our race. She works in the multicultural center and I’m a coordinator in the same office. So everything we work on together is based on bringing African American students together, providing them with any emotional or academic assistance that they need. We end up talking about how African American students are feeling on campus, and because I am a student, she comes to me to see how things are going with them, how I feel they’re progressing, what more she could do, so we kind of approach everything from a racial standpoint. This is different than in previous mentoring relationships I’ve had because of the jobs. That we do on campus. That guides our relationship. We do have conversations outside of race often, but the most frequent conversations that we have are focused around race. Because my mentor is an African American woman who went through a lot during her college years, and she knows that perspective, she definitely does a lot to reach out to African American students on campus. Because she wants to provide that support that maybe she didn’t have that she wishes she did. So that’s a pretty big thing for her and for all the students that she comes in contact with. But besides that, she also helps out other minorities as well. So I think in general, I think race shows up in that she reaches out to the minority students, because they’re minority students and they wouldn’t have as many resources without her there.

If I were to have a mentor who wasn’t as racially conscious I would still get a lot of benefits from that. But being in this relationship with her has opened my eyes to a lot of things that I wouldn’t have seen before because she’s able to talk about her history, her personal
history, with me and learning about her past experiences, especially when it comes to things that I haven’t encountered, really makes me think about myself and my personal identity more. So I think just being in this relationship with her has made me more secure within myself. Because I feel that I know myself better through some of the conversations that I have with her. I have had mentors before outside of school who weren’t racially conscious and that’s great, that’s awesome, just being able to have somebody to talk to. But I don’t get the same personal benefits from it.

For me, I don’t think a good mentor has to be a person of color. I think it just depends on the mentor’s personality type. For example, if I were to have a mentor who was Asian, who really couldn’t understand my point of view as an African American, then there would be a huge point of disjunct between us and we wouldn’t be able to connect the same way. But if I were to have an Asian mentor who understood privilege and who understood a little bit about my history as well as their history and was able to kind of bridge that gap so that we could feel bonded, then that’s just as significant. Really it’s about being able to reach out and understand one another. So as long as the mentor is open to other ideals and other views and can really connect to that student’s background, I think it’s fine either way.

Race was not important to me when I entered into this relationship. I kind of fell into the mentoring relationship after meeting her. It just happened that we really got along and she became, on her own, a support system for me. If I am looking for someone to guide me, in general, race is not usually something that I consider beforehand. In this case it is convenient; it is nice because I can have conversations with her that I might not feel comfortable having with someone else, but it wasn’t something that I sought out. I think for me the reason that I was so glad to have met her in the first place was that she’s so successful and she’s so generous and she’s well known for the work that she’s done and that, on its own, shows that she has a great character and I can learn a lot from her no matter what race she is.

| SITUATION/PLACE | Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view. |
Participant Comments
Ummm. . .when I approached the college experience initially, during my first year, I wasn’t really involved with the Black club. I guess I was just trying to get a feel for college in general, and I looked around one day and realized I didn’t see anybody like me, and I felt out of place. I felt a bit pariah on campus. And I knew that it was necessary for me to engage with other people that I feel very comfortable with, that I feel are very similar to me in order for me to have a positive college experience. So at that point, around the beginning of my second year, I made the conscious decision to reach out.(NC)

Observation Notes
Descriptive: Snowing like crazy. Looks like a blizzard. Difficult time finding parking. Interview had been difficult to schedule. Angie is very busy on campus, works more than one job, said something about family issues.

Personal Reactions: Did not feel like doing this interview today. Just so cold and messy outside. Very glad I met her. She is amazing.
Application of Robert’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure Approach

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<tr>
<td>Personal/Social</td>
<td>Once during class we were talking about politics and kind of the demographics and how people get placed in society in terms of income. We had kind of a debate and being that there’s only two African Americans in the class, we had a low representation so through that experience, we kind of just held our ground. We didn’t have a bias opinion. Just because when you’re biased you don’t get input from being biased so we gave our case and it just kind of seemed like two against the whole class. But everything was fair. No arguments came out. Nobody felt like they were cornered or anything like that. It was a good experience but it would have been nice to have had more representation. The other people in the class were just learning about it. They had a misunderstanding because you look at it through a book and they have their definition but, um as me and the other person in the class, we have seen it through our own eyes and we have other friends and family that are in situations and all that, so we kind of basically explained to them and told them the real things instead of what’s in the books.</td>
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<td>My mentor is African American and she is my supervisor. We’ve been working together for almost a year. Our relationship is just straight business. We meet once a week and specifically discuss what I am doing or what I am planning on doing in the near future or from this time right now to the next time we meet, what goals do we want to finish and what’s on the agenda basically. When I go in there we have an agenda. We talk about what we’re gonna get done, so race doesn’t really come up. But I’m sure. . .we have a relationship. . .I have an open relationship with her where I can say hey something is happening that I’m not comfortable with race wise and she would talk about it with me and give me ideas on how to handle it. Race isn’t really present when we talk to each other and I don’t really mind that it’s not there. Definitely if there’s a problem, if I wasn’t comfortable like I said before, I would definitely talk to her about it but nothing has come up and there hasn’t really been a reason to talk about it. I really can’t tell</td>
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how my mentor views race. Like I really can’t tell how she views her race because I never talked about it. I don’t think there would be any telltale signs of how she uses it, how she deals with it or anything like that. In her office there’s a lot of artistic stuff. Now maybe those artists can be African American, I don’t know who the artists were but she a lot of art in her room. I guess I can assume that. I don’t have the right to assume, but I’m thinking she’s not as strong, in African American culture, as like my parents are. That can definitely be misconstrued. I found out this morning she is from the south and her mom’s from the same town my mom is from so we learned that and I know that she’s very open to anything that you want to talk about she’s open to talk about. She’s a very great listener and she gives you very good advice. She gives you her true feelings about what she feels about a situation I feel like our relationship is ongoing and race is going to come up here and there. Cause she’s been to different universities and done mentoring for herself and I’m sure we’ll talk about it and what it was like for her. I’m pretty sure from the south to here there was a difference so I think we will talk about how she dealt with. I feel like a lot of this comes up even in a business realm, it’s like when you have an HR department you talk to the HR and tell them about what you see can change in the company about diversity and what are the problems with diversity. I feel that that’s where racial matters really should be dealt with.

Observation Notes
Personal Reactions: First interview—he feels very serious. Felt like I needed to sit up straight. Conservative. Second interview—I wonder if he is stressed. Feels like he carries a lot of concern about doing what’s right and projecting a particular image.

CONTINUITY
This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

Past
About two months ago my sister and I went to a career fair sponsored by the National Black MBA Association with my sister. It was a conference, but after the career fair there was a lot of like social networking. We talked to a lot of people from different companies and they were all graduated and well educated. I never. . . through my experience, I had never ever seen that before. I’ve met people obviously, African American people that are very educated, but to see just a whole group of just hundreds and hundreds of them. . . it was just definitely an experience that I
have never ever been through before. It was the first time in my life I saw rooms full of successful Black African American people and it was like the best experience I’ve had in my life and I came back just saying I want to get to that point. (SP)

Present

I understand that it is hard to understand racism today, but it still exists. People do things, step out of the boundaries. Who is going to teach them? I have not experienced racist problems at college but my sister was at another school and has talked about racist activity on her campus. (SR)

My roommates are also African American and you know the subject of race always comes up. We talk with each other just about our race and what it looks like in today’s times versus the past times and maybe what it will look like in the future. With my family, everyone is already in the workforce, I’m the only one that’s in college, everybody else in my family is in the workforce right now and they’re always telling me about their experiences in work and how/where their position stands. (NC)

Observation Notes

Descriptive: Race is important. He’s Nigerian. Mentioned being a positive role model. Wants to be credit to his race. Seemed caught off guard with some of the questions. If he didn’t have an answer, he would come back to it later. Likes his mentor, but doesn’t seem to know her very well. Just started working with her not long ago.

Personal Reactions: I wonder if he’s stressed. Image seems so important. Seems scared to be associated with negative stereotypes.

Future

My race is 100% important. My dad’s from Nigeria so our family does consider race seriously and with pride. There’s obviously different views of how everybody views different races and I just try to do my best within my power to try to represent my race as well as possible. I view my race as being very prestigious and I work hard to try to decrease a lot of the negative statistics that we have towards our race. I want to be a positive representative of the African American race. I have intentions to do more after I graduate, but with my limited time I think the thing that I do right now is just do as well as possible in school. Choosing college, showing up to class, getting involved, speaking up in class and getting good grades are all ways I strive to be a positive representative. That’s it for the time being, but as soon as I graduate I already have plans of helping out my
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<tr>
<td>Situations, Physical Spaces, Context &amp; Time</td>
<td>Our office handles programming for the campus. Our programming is for all students, like all student activities so we don’t really put (diversity) into effect. We try to reach everybody. They have Black student clubs and GLBT groups where they do their events and they focus on a specific demographic on the campus.</td>
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**Observation Notes**


Personal Reactions: Formal. Seems conservative. Felt like I needed to sit up straight and run my credentials by him.
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<tr>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
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**INTERACTION**

I take pride in the fact that I am Black. But it’s not something that I. . .most people would say. . .it’s because you’re Black or you’re successful and you’re a Black man but I don’t take it to be like that at all and I think that’s from my parents bringing me up in a very White setting and then also just being around mixed races all my life. I mean, yeah, I see it, but it’s not something that to me is like, a huge thing. I would say it’s not what defines me, that I am Black. If somebody asks me, “who are you?”, I wouldn’t say that I am a Black man. (RM)

When it comes to race, it’s more like my success here and the way I stand out is, most people would say, because I’m Black. . .Black, you have a White girlfriend because you’re Black all that kind of stuff so it’s definitely something that is a lot more noticeable here than back home. That’s what it is a lot of times. For instance, I’ve been involved in student government and I’ve heard a lot of people say, well “yeah, you’re going to be student body president because you’re Black and because that makes you stand out where as all these other people are like. . .to me that’s like. . .so any Black person can run for student body president and win. And so, I hear that and then as far as even when I was rushing for my fraternity. . .for actually all the fraternities. I got into all of them except for like one. And so, people were like, well that’s cause you’re Black, but at the same time I was also named the first year senator. I was like yeah, I’m Black and they want a Black person in their fraternity but there’s also the success of the leadership. I’ve never been the type of person who holds onto that kind of stuff. But it absolutely does play out and my girlfriend even has been like, “everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys.” She’s like, “I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. So that’s probably the most prevalent thing that I see at college. That’s what I’d like to continue to mentor and hopefully reach out to Black students at college and hopefully in my future that I can stand up and be like you guys can defeat that stereotype and go for what you want to do and it doesn’t have to be that you’re a Black, successful person, it’s just. . he’s a person. To me it’s not a
problem because it’s like, yeah I am but at the same time it’s like. . what about all the other Black people that don’t have all these different things. It’s a prevalent thing that I see and then also for me I attended a diversity conference. They’re talking about how there’s White privilege and stuff like that and then there’s privilege for being Black and all different races and different things that you can have as far as privilege and so to me I think that what I’ve learned so far here at college and being an African American male is that. . . I’ve always taken things differently because to me, if that’s a nuisance or if that’s a problem to you, then you fix it. You do something to make it so that. . . okay, well. . .”I perceive Black people as lazy and poor and just like, they have kids and screw up their lives”. . . so to me instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, oh well so then. . . I hear my friends saying well, “maybe all Black people are like that. Maybe they’re not always negative. So that, to me is a huge thing that I’ve learned at college. Yeah, if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my race with me rather than look like I’m above.(RM)

CONTINUITY

This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

**Past**

Originally, I had chosen through my parents not to come visit so they had me walk around with him and everyone thought he was my dad. (laughs), he’s the only other Black guy on campus. We don’t look alike at all. He’s like, really tall. Everyone’s like, “wow where do you get those color eyes?” He’s like, this isn’t my son. That’s what they saw. (SL)

I also work with the admissions office here at school. Last year when I got here they were sending me to high schools and like, didn’t get it until a little bit into the quarter but I noticed that there are not a lot of Black people but I guess they’re, in essence, celebrating. . . me, as a Black person at this college and being successful. I helped with recruiting high scholars who were here for a camp over the summer. They brought in like 50 excelling Black students around the country and mostly in the state and I was a mentor. That experience felt supportive to me. (SP)

Yeah I’d say race is present with my mentor here at college because he is also a Black male and attended the same college and dealt with a lot of the same things that I guess I’d say I deal with and as far as. . . we don’t talk about it so much but it’s definitely there. I mean that’s one of the reasons I did pick him because he’s someone that I
can live up to but also he can talk to me about other issues besides just basketball (laughs) or other stereotypical things. I would say he probably sees it a little more than I do. He deals with it here at the college and so that’s something that’s his focus. . .and that’s the diversity of the college so he deals with all that. I mean as far as race goes he definitely looks for it more and he grew up in a different situation than I did as well so it’s more prevalent in his life than it is to mine. Race is a part of his job. But even though it is part of his job, I think just being around him, it’s been easier to see more about him. When I came during summer to do the camp I stayed with him for a night and I remember he said to me, “this isn’t what a typical Black person’s house should look like, hum?” And I remember being like, I don’t know what a typical Black person’s house should look like (laughs). It’s just a house to me. And then, he played basketball here and he makes little remarks that are funny but are . .that’s how I’ve gotten to know him more.(NC)

I think it’s important for race to be considered in my relationship with my mentor. I mean I chose him to be my mentor and he took me on but I think it would be different if it were . .I mean I chose him for a reason, because I could have chosen plenty of other people on the campus. But I think I that is something that I guess I was looking for. I didn’t even think about it until this came up but . . yeah taking him into consideration and knowing a little bit than other people, other professors or other faculty and staff on our campus would know about me and being Black or any cultural lens at all is important. I think I knew I was choosing him somewhat because he was Black. Umm. . .I mean I didn’t think about it so much but at the same time, yeah. I identify more with him over. . .I mean I got to know him more quickly than others, so that was one of the reasons but also there’s. . .him being called my dad and being called my brother and being called. . .(laughs), I mean that could be what made us bond. It wasn’t just him being Black but also that was part of the picture, so. . .I mean we’ve definitely talked about that and he’s like well. . .I mean I’ve talked to a lot of people about that since we’ve had this study, but as far as he said that’s the same thing back. It’s still even with his coworkers he... that it’s because you’re Black. . .because he can be very friendly and very outgoing and he can draw a lot of diverse populations into the college and so a lot of his coworkers will say well, “It’s because you’re Black. . .and they feel comfortable” . . .and all that kind of stuff. And I talked about, you being Black had nothing to do with my comfort with you. Like that had nothing to do with why I came here, because I was surrounded by the little amount of Black people that were here. It was just that, yeah you are a comfortable person. . .if you were White, if you were Latino, it
would be the exact same thing and so I think... and he said that going here, he had that same experience but then still working here it hasn’t really changed. I mean, you put yourself in the situation so.(NC)

**Present**

What are my perceptions about African American people? Well, again, going back to my family my parents are, to me, very successful African American people and that is what I base myself off of. My parents both did not receive 4-year degrees but they are successful and they work hard and they got houses and cars and all this kind of stuff so that is basically what I set myself off of but as far as media, they would absolutely be stereotypical Black people as silly, loud, obnoxious, ignorant, all that kind of stuff. People that cuss a lot, drink a lot, smoke and do a lot of different crimes and all that kind Of stuff. ... but as far as the Black people I’ve surrounded myself with. are successful. As far as even people in the multicultural center, admissions and I have a mentor back home who is Black as well and they’re all successful. A lot is based on upbringing as well. I didn’t have a TV growing up. All the Black people I knew were successful. So that is what I hoped to be.  

As far as nurturing my racial identity, I’d say mostly my family and then getting involved with the Black student club here. That was something that I did in order to nurture it definitely because coming here I didn’t really hang out with a lot of Black people so it’s something... and then I took the initiative and went and did. Like you know with my family our family is all out of state and we’re just over there by ourselves and I don’t really hang out with that many Black people so definitely getting involved with the student club and making that connection here and then the multicultural center I’m trying to get involved with that so. . . (NC)

Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black and then, we really don’t talk about it a lot but we get there sometimes and my dad picks up his accent. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home. It’s not something that we concentrate on but definitely it’s there and I appreciate it. (RM)

**Observation Notes**

Descriptive: Very interested in multiculturalism. Does not like traditional stereotypes of Blacks. Opposed to victim mentality. Does not want to ascribe many of his racialized experiences to race. Does not want to acknowledge that his Blackness matters in most of
what he experiences. Sounds like most friends are white. Comments made by friends about his race. Very hard working. Active leader. Popular. Second interview: He’s been thinking about our last interview. Race is on his mind. He brought some of our discussion to his mentor. Commented on it. He chose his mentor because he was Black

Personal Reactions: I felt concern about him being tokenized. Some of his stories felt that way. I had a strong desire to support his awareness raising. I had to reserve comments, although by the end of the second interview I found myself asking him more questions and sharing my own experiences as a college student. He was very interested. Seems racially unaware

Future

I think a lot of times the multicultural center, from what I see is kind of secluded as well on campus and so it’s like although the college is working towards the diversity and the inclusiveness, inclusivity, they can say it, but it’s only the multicultural center that mostly pushes it and those people. . .you know what I see from being in student government, fraternities and all that kind of stuff, it’s all these people, and I get pulled into that section sometimes over inclusivity and all that awareness and that kind of stuff and so to me what I’d rather fight for, and I talked to my mentor about this, I’d rather instead of excluding myself and being pushed in this direction, I’d rather just go and be me and that’s what I see as inclusivity. It doesn’t have to be a section of campus and they have a student body president representing the multicultural center versus the Greek life. That’s one of my reasons that I chose to run as soon as I got here because I think that would bring kids together. Yeah, I can hang out with the people that represent inclusivity and I can tell about how I got a scholarship at the multicultural center.(NM)

I know that I am not gonna make a difference at the college within a year but what I’ve seen from being a freshman to being a sophomore it’s what I heard from one of my big brothers in my fraternity he was student body president last year and him saying that, “oh the college is gonna always have a White president, they’ve had a White president since the beginning and it wasn’t him discouraging me it’s was just like letting me know it’s gonna be hard, it’s all these kids. And so then at the end of the year him coming back and being like, “wow, if people don’t see you that way so much it’s not like. . . it won’t. . . but at the same time we talked about there’s our current student body president picked—kid who does work with the multicultural center, he works with all the student clubs, with the United Student club, Asian Student club, Black Student club, so he
chose to pick that one so that he could kind of bring the campus together, however, it's still kind of keeping him under because I think, for his student body vice president, he knew that's what he was chosen for. He was chosen to bring... he was supposed to bring all these people so, and then we were talking about, well if I were supposed to run against Felipe, then it would be a Black guy versus a Mexican that's how the college would see you. It would be like, here went the Black guy with the Mexican (laughs). So we were talking about that. So, I think that, I mean hopefully, what I'm seeing and what I see especially for student government and hopefully for the campus, is that as we work to... the inclusivity, like, although I think it's mostly the multicultural center and mostly like the residence hall, they are the ones who push it so hard, and then... but I want to hopefully combine those and hopefully work to make it so much not... because right now I would say that it is the multicultural center and it is residence halls versus Greek life and the rest of the campus because that's just, what they know. So I'd say, what I'd like to see is more of the campus being more united and that does take someone that does not concentrate so much on the race issue and so much on the inclusive issue but just go out there and show it. And so I do try to stay away from all the inclusivity and stuff so that I'm not connected with that but then I can bring it in the end so it's not supposed to be my main focus but it is something that is definitely important.

Observation Notes:
Descriptive: Highly energetic. Wants to impact change. Exhibits a love of life that is contagious. Colorblind mentality. He's open to learning more. Has discussed This interview with his mentor.

Personal Reactions: Seems to love life. Forgiving. We are the world.

SITUATION/PLACE

Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.

Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time

Ryan Alexander: When it comes to race, I see it more here. In high school I didn’t even see it as a problem. Yeah, I mean, yeah there’s those jokes and like... but it’s so much like, but there’s still community and family and it’s like if we went and said this is a multicultural center event, the whole school still attends. There wouldn’t be a big deal and so I’d say my problem with... and the reason why I haven’t gotten involved so much with the inclusivity movement here at the college is that I see it as, “poor me, poor us”, that mentality and I don’t want it to be that way and that’s why I, when I was brought in here and when I went to the high schools and stuff, I’d say, if you’re gonna go to the college, don’t have that
mentality. Just go and do whatever you want. You can be whatever you want and that’s what I’m gonna do. It’s not something that you worry about. It’s like ok . . and I’ve gotten over that where yeah, one of my big brothers told me that, “yeah, you might not make it because you’re Black but then he turns around and says, well you can, you can do it and so that is what I hope to push to the rest of the people, the rest of everyone coming to the college. It doesn’t have to be just Black people or just Latino people, White people. . . anyone. You can go to college and do whatever you want. I definitely shared that with my mentor and he. . I mean, that’s something he believes in and I think that’s something that he probably struggles with a lot on the staff, just because it’s always going to be there, and it’s just this whole campus environment, but instead of being poor me he goes about his business and moves on and so you’re not always seen as just the Black guy. (NM)

The local community as well is a lot different. My home town is like. . . there’s a lot of stuff that you see done in the state, being in this city. And where I’m from is just not like that, it’s not that environment, and so I do see the victim mentality coming from. . . yeah, I lived in this poor neighborhood and then I got to come to this college but the students treat me like I’m invisible. . . so I understand when people say that but I don’t think that’s gonna help, to be honest. I think that the only way that inclusivity will be pushed on this campus and this country is just by people being them and not being. . . I mean the same thing that Obama being, well he’s a Black president but now people are not judging his decisions so much on him being Black, it’s just he’s the President now. And that’s what I hope to push on this campus by the end of my four years just hopefully seeing some more . . hopefully not so much victim mentality but people can do whatever they want. Even if they mess up, not being like, oh well you messed up because you’re Black or you did this because you’re Black. It’ll come over time and I hope to see it. (NM)

Observation Notes
Descriptive: Charming. Hazel eyes and beautiful smile. I like him. He was very relaxed and friendly.
Personal Reactions: Felt like he was really thoughtful about his answers. I also feel like he gets a lot of attention because of his looks.
**Application of Ty’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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| Personal/Social | I think for me, I never really experience (racism) directly because I have the privilege of having light skin so people don’t really necessarily know what I identify as and I’ve really been able to pass off for White when I wanted to.  

My African American heritage has not really been a part of my life in the past. My father is African American and he wasn’t in my life so there was no one to really foster that history or to teach me other than what I got in school. So (my mentor) has taught me a lot. I just learn a lot like just from her talking to me. . . I think my race is really important sometimes. Especially like on campus. I don’t feel like I fit in on campus so I feel like it’s more important to me at school but like when I’m with my family and stuff, race isn’t an issue. I don’t have to think about it because that’s my family and I don’t really identify with them on that level. So I guess it’s more of an issue when I’m around people who identify heavily as something else other than I do. I think I’m more aware of it at school because I know that I’m not White. I think it’s just being different and having a different viewpoint and having different experiences is what makes it more important here.  

When it comes to my family I’ve noticed that race has become more important since I’ve been in college. When I went home to help my grandmother move a couple of weeks ago she started complaining to the effect of like, “oh, ok well I’ll just nigger-rig it”. And I was like. . . I guess before college I never would have thought about it or it never would have been a big deal. But when she said it, I was like “What?!” Are you kidding me? I told her that she shouldn’t say that and I even like offered an alternative. Like you can say “Jerry-rig”. Why do you have to say that? You know why does it have to be that? And I tried to like explain it to her and I can just see little things like that. . . that they’ve always done but like now I’m more aware. Since I’ve come here I’ve learned about things like that and the aggressions against people. I think she just kind of like brushed it off like, she didn’t really. . . cause my grandmother’s like the type, she’s very traditional so like you’re disrespectful, you shouldn’t say to her like. . . I’m like, I still say what I have to say but that’s how I felt, but I think she kind of |
like just brushed it off, but we’ll see if she does is again around me. Maybe it’ll least get her to think about it.(RM)

I work at an office on my campus where multiculturalism is the focus and working there really nurtures both sides of my racial identity. Just being there with the staff and getting to participate in the events and things like that. It’s really wholesome for me to be there.(NC)

My current mentor identifies as African American and I’ve been working with her for three years. Race is an important part of our relationship, but in a more positive way just because of who she is. I think race is very important in her life just because that’s the kind of work that she’s in and dealing with those issues and things like that. I think it’s very important to her just because she takes pride in being African American and so that’s why I think race is very salient and she takes pride in being successful and a positive influence and being an African American person. Because sometimes I think that people think we don’t exist and so I think she takes pride and it is very important to her.

I told my mentor about the confrontation with my grandmother. I always tell her that I can just see the dynamic changing in my family. Somebody told me a story about how their family felt a certain way about them and I asked her (mentor) , “I wonder if my family feels oh like that I think I’m better than them. I wonder if my family feels that that way cause I’m in college. She’s like, “maybe. Maybe they do because they don’t understand the significance of it. (SP)

I would say this relationship out of a lot of the ones that I have with a lot of administrators here has been probably the most positive and what’s kept me at this school because I struggled with that whole. . .do I fit in here? So I really thought about leaving, transferring. She’s the one who was able to talk me out of it. And now that I’m here and in my senior year I’m really glad that I stayed because I might have regretted. . .I don’t know. . .if I’d known what I have gained since then I would have regretted it but I don’t know what would have happened if I would have left either. I really think it’s important for everybody to find somebody. . .if they don’t have it at home. . .or just find somebody who can help them cause I don’t know if I would have made it if I didn’t have the support of her them here, this office. I look up to her and I respect her. . .she’s really positive.(SC)

I know I can always go to her if I have a question or if I think that I’m doing. . .I always like, go to her if I think I’m doing something that
might be offensive to other people or to other students of color. One thing that I really struggled with especially in my freshman year was just kind of fitting in because I never really... especially racially I never really chose... like be White... and I feel like with the White people they feel like I’m not White enough and then with Black people I’m not really Black enough and so that was something that I was really struggling with. I stopped going to Black student club meetings because my friends... I guess sometimes, we’re loud, like I know that, that’s just how we are you know, and so I think that was just playing into a stereotype of like, when you’re with your friends, you’re just like amped up and you’re excited and so a lot of the times I found myself being... around the Black people being called “ghetto” and stuff and so that was really different for me and being like you know, now I’m too Black. my mentor just really helped me work through that, like my biracial identity and understanding when I need to like... when I’m in different environments, how it’s going to come in to play and stuff like that. Just really helped me work through that. That was something that I struggled with my freshman year and my sophomore year. Just really trying to figure that out. (NC)

Observation Notes

Descriptive Notes: Pleasant, round freckled face, light complexion, short, fine, curly hair. Dressed kind of preppy. Series of events? Described several situations that have caused him to think about race in new ways.

Personal Reactions: Very comfortable with him. Feels like I’ve known him a long time. I think he’s gay. He’s so colorful, feminine, a bit flamboyant. I like him and enjoyed talking with him. I sense that thinking about race is new to him.

CONTINUITY

This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

Past

One time here at school my friend who is visibly African American... she has dark skin, got called a nigger and it really impacted me personally because I identify as Black too, just because they weren’t saying it to me... it really hurt her too, but I think it hurt me just as much even though it wasn’t directed towards me. It was an argument between her and a friend, or somebody I don’t even know who it was. And it got really heated and then they started exchanging words and then that happened and it was just like... I think it caught everybody
off guard really. You could tell that people notice when somebody says something like that. You know, it was kind of like in a movie you know when everybody stops, it’s like, you know. Yeah, it was crazy, it was just crazy. This kind of thing never happens to me so I was really shocked to even hear somebody say it, you know. I never experience it and never deal with it... just to hear somebody be so cruel. Because it is cruel for somebody to say something like that. My friend and I processed it after, but like what do you do? I think I was shocked about it and she was more verbally mad about it and was just kind of like venting like she couldn’t believe it and stuff like that. (SC)

| Present | I can’t really think of other places in my life where my racial identity is nurtured. Maybe At home with my roommate because we’re really good friends. Me and her talk about racial issues and stuff that we experience. And even sometimes with my younger sister, but not really with my mom or anybody. I guess they worked so hard to assimilate that so it’s not important to them to be cultural I guess. So we’re not really cultural in my family. We just celebrate the American holidays and there’s no culture really, so I don’t get it at home. But I think just with my sister and people closer to my age especially outside of them is where I think I get that cultural piece that I can foster. (RM) |

| Observation Notes | Descriptive Notes: Race is important to him, but just learning about it. Bi-racial, Black and Spanish. Not learned from family. Described racist comments from Spanish family member about Blacks. Some problems being accepted by other Blacks. Some might be class related. Second Interview: Loves his mentor. Seems like she has been extremely helpful in his race consciousness. Also very supportive. Almost left the university. Mentor helped him decide to stay. Active on campus. Very chatty and social, energized by what he is learning. |

| Future | It is important to me that my mentor is someone who I can share my racial experiences with. For me I think it’s really important especially for students of color to get that. Just because it’s hard to be a person of color in a “white-collar” community. This college is very much that. It’s really a white-collar community and so, it’s a factor and having that person to talk about it with has been really important and really influential for me and just helping me have a positive experiences and talk about it and just understand the differences that happen in the professional world and how much harder people feel that have to work just in general. So just really being able to identify that and talk about that is a really important piece for me in my mentorship. And so that’s a reason why I enjoy working with her so |
**Observation Notes:**
**Personal Reactions:** I feel like he is going to do well because of the support he has and his attitude.

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<td><strong>Situations, Physical Spaces, Context &amp; Time</strong></td>
<td>For African Americans, I kind of feel like it seems like you can’t be successful unless you’re popular or like you’re in entertainment or something. I think that’s like a really big perception. I guess it doesn’t really get glorified like the other things that people are doing. . .well I guess now with like Obama...but he’s popular, like he’s famous. He’s still kind of like an entertainment figure I guess. (General)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes:</strong> Met him at the cultural office where he works. He was talking to a staff member. Talked for a while before coming in for interview.</td>
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much because I get that and I learn so much about it every day from her.(NC)
Application of Ryan-Alexander’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

| INTERACTION | Involves both personal and social aspects of the participant story. Transcript is analyzed for personal experiences of the storyteller as well as stories of their interactions with others. Personal aspects include a look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. Social aspects represent conditions in the environment intentions, purposes and points of view of others. |
| Personal/Social | I take pride in the fact that I am Black. But it’s not something that I. . .most people would say. . .it’s because you’re Black or you’re successful and you’re a Black man but I don’t take it to be like that at all and I think that’s from my parents bringing me up in a very White setting and then also just being around mixed races all my life. I mean, yeah, I see it, but it’s not something that to me is like, a huge thing. I would say it’s not what defines me, that I am Black. If somebody asks me, “who are you?”, I wouldn’t say that I am a Black man. (RM)

When it comes to race, it’s more like my success here and the way I stand out is, most people would say, because I’m Black. . .Black, you have a White girlfriend because you’re Black all that kind of stuff so it’s definitely something that is a lot more noticeable here than back home. That’s what it is a lot of times. For instance, I’ve been involved in student government and I’ve heard a lot of people say, well “yeah, you’re going to be student body president because you’re Black and because that makes you stand out where as all these other people are like. . .to me that’s like. . .so any Black person can run for student body president and win. And so, I hear that and then as far as even when I was rushing for my fraternity. . .for actually all the fraternities. I got into all of them except for like one. And so, people were like, well that’s cause you’re Black, but at the same time I was also named the first year senator. I was like yeah, I’m Black and they want a Black person in their fraternity but there’s also the success of the leadership. I’ve never been the type of person who holds onto that kind of stuff. But it absolutely does play out and my girlfriend even has been like, “everybody just thinks I’m dating you because you’re Black and I’m not that girl who dates Black guys.” She’s like, “I don’t even consider you Black. I just wanted to date you”. So that’s probably the most prevalent thing that I see at college. That’s what I’d like to continue to mentor and hopefully reach out to Black students at college and hopefully in my future that I can stand up and be like you guys can defeat that stereotype and go for what you want to do and it doesn’t have to be that you’re a Black, successful person, it’s just. . .he’s a person. To me it’s not a problem because it’s like,
yeah I am but at the same time it’s like. . .what about all the other Black people that don’t have all these different things. It’s a prevalent thing that I see and then also for me I attended a diversity conference. They’re talking about how there’s White privilege and stuff like that and then there’s privilege for being Black and all different races and different things that you can have as far as privilege and so to me I think that what I’ve learned so far here at college and being an African American male is that. . . I’ve always taken things differently because to me, if that’s a nuisance or if that’s a problem to you, then you fix it. You do something to make it so that. . . okay, well. . .”I perceive Black people as lazy and poor and just like, they have kids and screw up their lives”. . .so to me instead of being sad I would rather work harder and say, ok well so then. . . I hear my friends saying well, “maybe all Black people are like that. Maybe they’re not always negative. So that, to me is a huge thing that I’ve learned at college. Yeah, if you’re going to consider me as a Black male then I’m going bring up my race with me rather than look like I’m above.(RM)

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes: Charming. Hazel eyes and beautiful smile. I like him. He was very relaxed and friendly. Felt like he was really thoughtful about his answers. I also feel like he gets a lot of attention because of his looks.

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<th>CONTINUITY</th>
<th>This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Originally, I had chosen through my parents not to come visit so they had me walk around with him and everyone thought he was my dad. (laughs), he’s the only other Black guy on campus. We don’t look alike at all. He’s like, really tall. Everyone’s like, “wow where do you get those color eyes?” He’s like, this isn’t my son. That’s what they saw. (SL)</td>
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<td>I also work with the admissions office here at school. Last year when I got here they were sending me to high schools and like, didn’t get it until a little bit into the quarter but I noticed that there are not a lot of Black people but I guess they’re, in essence, celebrating. . .me, as a Black person at this college and being successful. I helped with recruiting high scholars who were here for a camp over the summer. They brought in like 50 excelling Black students around the country and mostly in the state and I was a mentor. That experience felt supportive to me. (SP)</td>
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Yeah I’d say race is present with my mentor here at college because he is also a Black male and attended the same college and dealt with a lot of the same things that I guess I’d say I deal with and as far as... we don’t talk about it so much but it’s definitely there. I mean that’s one of the reasons I did pick him because he’s someone that I can live up to but also he can talk to me about other issues besides just basketball (laughs) or other stereotypical things. I would say he probably sees it a little more than I do. He deals with it here at the college and so that’s something that’s his focus...and that’s the diversity of the college so he deals with all that. I mean as far as race goes he definitely looks for it more and he grew up in a different situation than I did as well so it’s more prevalent in his life than it is to mine. Race is a part of his job. But even though it is part of his job, I think just being around him, it’s been easier to see more about him. When I came during summer to do the camp I stayed with him for a night and I remember he said to me, “this isn’t what a typical Black person’s house should look like, hum?” And I remember being like, I don’t know what a typical Black person’s house should look like (laughs). It’s just a house to me. And then, he played basketball here and he makes little remarks that are funny but are...that’s how I’ve gotten to know him more.(NC)

I think it’s important for race to be considered in my relationship with my mentor. I mean I chose him to be my mentor and he took me on but I think it would be different if it were... I mean I chose him for a reason, because I could have chosen plenty of other people on the campus. But I think I that is something that I guess I was looking for. I didn’t even think about it until this came up but... yeah taking him into consideration and knowing a little bit than other people, other professors or other faculty and staff on our campus would know about me and being Black or any cultural lens at all is important. I think I knew I was choosing him somewhat because he was Black. Umm...I mean I didn’t think about it so much but at the same time, yeah. I identify more with him over... I mean I got to know him more quickly than others, so that was one of the reasons but also there’s...him being called my dad and being called my brother and being called... (laughs), I mean that could be what made us bond. It wasn’t just him being Black but also that was part of the picture, so...I mean we’ve definitely talked about that and he’s like well...I mean I’ve talked to a lot of people about that since we’ve had this study, but as far as he said that’s the same thing back. It’s still even with his coworkers he...that it’s because you’re Black...because he can be very friendly and very outgoing and he can draw a lot of diverse
populations into the college and so a lot of his coworkers will say well, “It’s because you’re Black. . . and they feel comfortable”. . . and all that kind of stuff. And I talked about, you being Black had nothing to do with my comfort with you. Like that had nothing to do with why I came here, because I was surrounded by the little amount of Black people that were here. It was just that, yeah you are a comfortable person. . .if you were White, if you were Latino, it would be the exact same thing and so I think. . .and he said that going here, he had that same experience but then still working here it hasn’t really changed. I mean, you put yourself in the situation so (NC)

### Present

What are my perceptions about African American people? Well, again, going Back to my family my parents are, to me, very successful African American People and that is what I base myself off of. My parents both did not receive 4-yeardegrees but they are successful and they work hard and they got houses and cars and all this kind of stuff so that is basically what I set myself off of but as far as media, they would absolutely be stereotypical Black people assilly, loud, obnoxious, ignorant, all that kind of stuff. People that cuss a lot, drink a lot, smoke and do a lot of different crimes and all that kind of stuff. . .but as far as the Black people I’ve surrounded myself with. . are successful. As far as even people in the multicultural center, admissions and I have a mentor back home who is Black as well and they’re all successful. A lot is based on upbringing as well. I didn’t have a TV growing up. All the Black people I knew were successful. So that is what I hoped to be.

As far as nurturing my racial identity, I’d say mostly my family and then getting involved with the Black student club here. That was something that I did in order to nurture it definitely because coming here I didn’t really hang out with a lot of Black people so it’s something . . . and then I took the initiative and went and did. Like you know with my family our family is all out of state and we’re just over there by ourselves and I don’t really hang out with that many Black people so definitely getting involved with the student club and making that connection here and then the multicultural center I’m trying to get involved with that so. . .(NC)

Well, my mom cooks food that you would associate with being Black and then, we really don’t talk about it a lot but we get there sometimes and my dad picks up his accent. My mom, when she’s on the phone with her friends or family she picks up her Black accent (laughs), and so it’s definitely something that I see once in a while in my home. It’s not something that we concentrate on but definitely it’s there and I appreciate it. (RM)
**Observation Notes**

*Descriptive:* Very interested in multiculturalism. Does not like traditional stereotypes of Blacks. Opposed to victim mentality. Does not want to ascribe many of his racialized experiences to race. Does not want to acknowledge that his Blackness matters in most of what he experiences. Sounds like most friends are white. Comments made by friends about his race. Very hard working. Active leader. Popular. Second interview: He’s been thinking about our last interview. Race is on his mind. He brought some of our discussion to his mentor. Commented on it. He chose his mentor because he was Black.

*Personal Reactions:* I felt concern about him being tokenized. Some of his stories felt that way. I had a strong desire to support his awareness raising. I had to reserve comments, although by the end of the second interview I found myself asking him more questions and sharing my own experiences as a college student. He was very interested.

**Future**

I think a lot of times the multicultural center, from what I see is kind of secluded as well on campus and so it’s like although the college is working towards the diversity and the inclusiveness, inclusivity, they can say it, but it’s only the multicultural center that mostly pushes it and those people. . .you know what I see from being in student government, fraternities and all that kind of stuff, it’s all these people, and I get pulled into that section sometimes over inclusivity and all that awareness and that kind of stuff and so to me what I’d rather fight for, and I talked to my mentor about this, I’d rather instead of excluding myself and being pushed in this direction, I’d rather just go and be me and that’s what I see as inclusivity. It doesn’t have to be a section of campus and they have a student body president representing the multicultural center versus the Greek life. That’s one of my reasons that I chose to run as soon as I got here because I think that would bring kids together. Yeah, I can hang out with the people that represent inclusivity and I can tell about how I got a scholarship at the multicultural center. (NM)  

I know that I am not gonna make a difference at the college within a year but what I’ve seen from being a freshman to being a sophomore it’s what I heard from one of my big brothers in my fraternity he was student body president last year and him saying that, “oh the college is gonna always have a White president, they’ve had a White president since the beginning and it wasn’t him discouraging me it’s was just like letting me know it’s gonna be hard, it’s all these kids. And so then at the end of the year him coming back and being like,
“wow, if people don’t see you that way so much it’s not like. . . it won’t. . . but at the same time we talked about there’s our current student body president picked—kid who does work with the multicultural center, he works with all the student clubs, with the United Student club, Asian Student club, Black Student club, so he chose to pick that one so that he could kind of bring the campus together, however, it’s still kind of keeping him under because I think, for his student body vice president, he knew that’s what he was chosen for. He was chosen to bring . . . he was supposed to bring all these people so, and then we were talking about, well if I were supposed to run against Felipe, then it would be a Black guy versus a Mexican that’s how the college would see you. It would be like, here went the Black guy with the Mexican (laughs). So we were talking about that. So, I think that, I mean hopefully, what I’m seeing and what I see especially for student government and hopefully for the campus, is that as we work to. . . the inclusivity, like, although I think it’s mostly the multicultural center and mostly like the residence hall, they are the ones who push it so hard, and then. . . but I want to hopefully combine those and hopefully work to make it so much not. . . because right now I would say that it is the multicultural center and it is residence halls versus Greek life and the rest of the campus because that’s just, what they know. So I’d say, what I’d like to see is more of the campus being more united and that does take someone that does not concentrate so much on the race issue and so much on the inclusive issue but just go out there and show it. And so I do try to stay away from all the inclusivity and stuff so that I’m not connected with that but then I can bring it in the end so it’s not supposed to be my main focus but it is something that is definitely important. (NM)

SITUATION/PLACE
Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.

Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time
Ryan Alexander: When it comes to race, I see it more here. In high school I didn’t even see it as a problem. Yeah, I mean, yeah there’s those jokes and like. . . but it’s so much like, but there’s still community and family and it’s like if we went and said this is a multicultural center event, the whole school still attends. There wouldn’t be a big deal and so I’d say my problem with. . . and the reason why I haven’t gotten involved so much with the inclusivity movement here at the college is that I see it as, “poor me, poor us”, that mentality and I don’t want it to be that way and that’s why I, when I was brought in here and when I went to the high schools and stuff, I’d say, if you’re gonna go to the college, don’t have that mentality. Just go and do whatever you want. You can be whatever you want and that’s what I’m gonna do. It’s not something that you worry about. It’s like ok. . . and I’ve gotten over that where yeah, one
of my big brothers told me that, “yeah, you might not make it because you’re Black but then he turns around and says, well you can, you can do it and so that is what I hope to push to the rest of the people, the rest of everyone coming to the college. It doesn’t have to be just Black people or just Latino people, White people. . .anyone. You can go to college and do whatever you want. I definitely shared that with my mentor and he. . . I mean, that’s something he believes in and I think that’s something that he probably struggles with a lot on the staff, just because it’s always going to be there, and it’s just this whole campus environment, but instead of being poor me he goes about his business and moves on and so you’re not always seen as just the Black guy. (NM)

Ryan Alexander: And the local community as well is a lot different. My home town is like. . .there’s a lot of stuff that you see done in the state, being in this city. And where I’m from is just not like that, it’s not that environment, and so I do see the victim mentality coming from. . .yeah, I lived in this poor neighborhood and then I got to come to this college but the students treat me like I’m invisible. . .so I understand when people say that but I don’t think that’s gonna help, to be honest. I think that the only way that inclusivity will be pushed on this campus and this country is just by people being them and not being. . .I mean the same thing that Obama being, well he’s a Black president but now people are not judging his decisions so much on him being Black, it’s just he’s the President now. And that’s what I hope to push on this campus by the end of my four years just hopefully seeing some more. . .hopefully not so much victim mentality but people can do whatever they want. Even if they mess up, not being like, oh well you messed up because you’re Black or you did this because you’re Black. It’ll come over time and I hope to see it. (NM)
### Application of Stacy’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

#### INTERACTION

Involves both personal and social aspects of the participant story. Transcript is analyzed for personal experiences of the storyteller as well as stories of their interactions with others. Personal aspects include a look at internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions. Social aspects represent conditions in the environment intentions, purposes and points of view of others.

#### Personal/Social

This mentoring relationship has supported my racial identity, in a sense, yeah because it made me more comfortable being here at the school. Having somebody that I could go to. When I didn’t live in the residence hall with all the Black people, because I didn’t know it was the place to be. So, it was just like it helped me grow as a person to know that there is a place that I can call home and that’s why this office became home. Because she would be in here a lot and I would see her in here a lot. Most of the time we talked in here and I saw her all the time so it was like being around her and being in this office was home. In my residence hall there was one other Black person on my floor, not in my hall, but just on the 3rd floor in general and then I know couple that was on the second floor, but there wasn’t a lot of us. (NC)

I’ve worked at the multicultural office since the beginning of fall semester. It’s more supportive for me because I consider this home. So it’s like when outside factors start to influence me and I feel like I just need to get away because I’m mostly the only Black person in all my classes, it gets to me sometimes. Especially like when your professor talks about something Black and they look directly at you when they make that statement like you’re supposed to speak for your whole race. So like when I need to get away, this is where I come and in working here, I have to be here anyway. This is my home and I’m really comfortable here. I call it home because it’s where I find most of my Black identity. This is where I first started. When I did orientation my freshman year, they brought me here to make sure I didn’t feel left out. There were two Black people in my orientation class. It was me and another boy. I was looking around at everybody else like, “oh... I’m very different.” And everybody was like looking at me and I came here and I just got a home vibe from it. And I talk to (directors) all the time. They’re just like mom and big brother. (NC)

I think my mentor identifies as just Black. I never heard her express or call herself African American. I think part of why we connect (is because of race), but it’s never really talked about. It’s just like... I guess it’s just that floating thing... that attraction to a person. And
then their personality on top of that. (When I first came to college) my original mentor, like she was my mentor because that’s . . . I was given to her. But who actually ended up being my mentor we tended to like gravitate to each other a lot, so it was kind of like a personal choosing of each other. She just became my mentor whether she liked it or not (laughs). But she loves it. I still talk to (my original mentor) her, but when it came, to like talking to somebody on the regular, I wouldn’t choose that person. I think (race) is important (to my mentor) in a sense because of some of the things she does. I know that she’s in a Black sorority and I know a lot of times like when something happens, it becomes a big issue like, “oh my goodness, I can’t believe this happened”. Those are the only times we tend to talk about it is when things come up during class that makes her mad or she’s heard something that makes her mad or sometimes like, I had a roommate experience that made me mad and that’s the only real time we ever talk about race, but I can tell that race is important because she chose like a black sorority over like a White sorority. She chooses to be a part of the Black/African American culture center which she has a choice to be a part of any other organization or office. She just chooses to be around Black people. I know she’s taking an African studies class where someone was making a comment or a teacher made a comment and then the next time I saw her she was just so mad about it and we talked about it a little bit. (NC)

For me, I don’t think it’s something significant, because I look more at her as a person than the things she’s involved in, but you choose certain things for a reason. So I know her reasoning behind the things she does is sincere, it’s not just because “fight the power, Black power. I just need tell people to know I’m Black”. She does it because she truly has an interest in it. So I don’t really see anything into it. I don’t really see it as being significant.(RA)

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes: First interview. Hesitant Not real friendly. Behaves like she is suspicious of me. She had no questions. Followed my instructions. Nothing particularly unique about her. Common. She warmed up after a while. Turns out to be quite chatty.

Personal Reactions: Initially concerned that she would be difficult to engage. After a while my concern was gone. Chatty and very pleasant. I feel like she cares more about how she is viewed than she lets on. I think she wants to fit in, but doesn’t want to admit it.
participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

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<td><strong>Okay, so I had this class in the Natural Resources building in this really, really, really big room, and probably 300 kids in the class. And I remember I sent my professor an email. I sent it a little too late because he never responded and he never asked me my name, we never had a verbal one-on-one conversation before and normally I would sit in the back with this one girl. And um. I’d fall asleep on and off because he always had the lights dim and he just walks up to me. He’s just like, “hey, I got your email”. And I’m looking at him like, there are over 300 kids in this class how did you know it was me? And I just kind of looked at him and he gave me the answer to my email and it kind of threw me off. It was like, wow, they really do pay attention. And I felt like because I was one of like five Black kids in that class, I don’t know if he looked it up or if he just assumed that it was me. . . I’m pretty sure he looked it up. But it just threw me off that he just walked straight to me and knew exactly who I was. It was a straight shot. He knew exactly where I was sitting. It kind of made me become more aware in my classes. Like, being the only Black person or one of the few in the class, they do pay attention to you. And they pay attention to everything that you do and you don’t just blend in to everyone else. It wasn’t bad, it was kind of a good thing to realize that they actually do notice.</strong> (SL)</td>
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Of course like my freshman roommate was White. And she would watch everything I did all the time and she had all these questions. She never really had that Black friend. So she would have all these questions and I felt that I was able to help her better understand. Because if I didn’t do it then she would just sit around with all these ignorant questions. I did get mad a couple of times, but that was just because they don’t really know what to say or how to approach someone so I felt like I was able to educate her. You don’t just walk up to a Black person and ask a question like this. And you just can’t make these types of jokes. One time, I didn’t know what I was gonna be for Halloween. And she was like why don’t you be a light bulb. . .wait, you could dress up as a light bulb and you could be a black light. And I looked at her like, what did you just say to me? And she’s like, “what, did I say something wrong?” We had a conversation and she was like, “I didn’t even know that would offend you, I’m so sorry.” So I felt like I was able to help her better learn. I feel like my race can sometimes be an educational tool for some people because if you don’t do it, they could do it to the wrong person and then they get either positive or negative reactions. (SR) |
Present

As far as race and its importance in my life... I try not to dictate my life by my race. I know that my race is a part of what I do because like I’m culturally different from other people. But I try not to let my race. . .what I am, hold me back from things that I want to do or just because I’m Black, I shouldn’t be able to do this or something like that. So I just do things because I want to do it, not because my race says I should. So on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being race is most important, I would maybe rank it a 7. Race is probably more supported in my relationships. Because I know like in a lot of “Black” relationships things are like supposed to be a certain way and me, I focus on what is a relationship supposed to be like. So my main thing with my boyfriend is we focus on communication and talking and not necessarily on the outside factors. Because we don’t really do what typical people would do in relationships. We kind of talk about race. We have before. But he’s from Trinidad. He’s Trinidad-American. So for him, it’s different for him because he has Caribbean roots and I really don’t. Like it’s in my blood line but I was born here and my parents are from here. So we talk about things that his family does and things that my family does and we laugh about it, but that’s about it. We talk more about nationality.(RM)

Observation Notes

Descriptive Notes: Stories are conflicting. Race is downplayed, but she shares stories about needing connection with others of her race and experiences of racism on campus. She is very active with Black student organizations and departments and seems to have found solace in these spaces. Home. Colorblind views but not. Expressed views on race conflict with the stories she shares. Race seems more important to her than she is willing to admit. Does not want to be perceived as negative Black. From New York. More accomplished than other blacks from her community. Boyfriend.

Second interview. Relationship with boyfriend has ended. She is obviously saddened but does not talk about how she feels. We chat a little about the break up. She says, “his loss”. Really likes her mentor. Race is present, but she doesn’t clearly discuss this. Mentor is active in Black organizations. Very supportive.

Personal Reactions: Boyfriend seems important to her. I wonder if her relationship with him is influencing her responses about race. He is not from U.S. Second interview – relationship has ended. I feel badly. She does not admit it, but I am certain she is very sad.

Future

I do care about my experiences with race being something that is supported by my mentor because in a sense I feel like I can’t. . .like if
it happens in class, there’s only so much I can say in class before somebody looks at me like, “why is she responding that way? Or why do Black people always feel like they’re the victims of something when nobody is even trying to victimize them?” So it feels good that you have somebody that you can go to talk to about situations that happen because sometimes other people just don’t understand. And no matter what you say, they never will understand. (NC)

| SITUATION/PLACE | Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view. |

| Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time | My racial identity kind of supports because I know what’s expected of me, what’s stereotypically expected of me and I try not to do what the stereotype says I Should be doing. I go beyond. So a lot of people look at me and they say, “oh she’s Black and she’s a female, so wow she’s in college .. you don’t have any kids?” I’m like, no I don’t have kids. So it kind of like help keeps me motivated. To know that I’m on the right track for something that I consider good for myself. A lot of the guys. . .basketball, basketball, basketball or rapper, rapper, rapper. The females are like pregnant before they get out of high school and then they have a kid and they just accept it. I come from the east coast so like I see a lot of people I went to high school with versus the people I know in the springs, it’s very different. Like the Black people in New York, the girls I went to high school with, it’s Gucci this, Gucci that. You can’t pay your rent, you can’t have a solid phone number, but your baby is walking around in Gucci loafers. They’re not even going to be able to wear that in a month, but why are you spending the money on this? I never really understood it and they just become okay with that lifestyle. It’s weird to me. When my dad talks to people and says, “my daughter is a junior in college, they’re like, “Oh aren’t you from the east coast”? He’s like, ‘yeah, “. They’re like, “She’s in college??” Like that’s a surprise. They’re like, “she doesn’t have kids??” He’s like, “no”. Because my parents raised me a certain way and it’s just very weird. I try to stay out of that stereotype because that’s not who I am, that’s not the way I was raised. And a lot of the teen moms that I know, I’ve known them for a while, and that’s not how they were raised either, it’s just that peers and the media make it seem like that’s okay and they’re trying to keep up with everything else. And they put themselves in all this debt and they’re only 18 years old and that’s not what I’m trying to do with my life. And they see me as I’m doing something wrong because I’m not wearing the same stuff that they’re wearing or I just don’t have what they have. But I have a lot more in my mind. Because, I’m a junior now. At the end of my senior year I’ll have a college degree plus I’m going to law school. And all you have is a child who I hope you raise to be the best person |
they can be. I think to different people, success is different. My parents didn’t finish college. My mom started college my freshman year of high school, so we graduated at the same time. It was kind of cool, but it was kind of weird. My brother went to the Air Force, he never finished and then he passed away in 04. So he was never able to go back and finish, so I’m the first one of all my siblings to actually go to college and finish. It’s a lot. It’s a lot for me. (General Perceptions)

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes. Took her a while to come over and begin the interview. Kept talking with other students and office workers. I had to pull her away to start the interview. Familiar with the cultural office. Dressed casually. Straight hair, ponytail. Short, plump. Brown skin.
Personal Reactions: Seemed hesitant to start the interview. Nothing stood out about Stacy.
**Application of Alan’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure**

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<td>There’s so many things around African Americans, positive and negative. I don’t even know where to begin. Let’s see… umm… I think one of the biggest, I think most prevailing thing, not that I’ve necessarily read, this is my own personal observation in talking to other people, is that people sort of view (African Americans view it this way too). African American culture as just one thing. There is one way of being African American, like that is what it is, regardless of what that way is, but there’s that one way, you know…this is what African American culture is and I think internally and externally we’ve latched on to this perception that African American culture is just one thing. Anything else out of that is not African American. And then you run into those issues of, oh you’re not Black enough or you’re a sellout or you’re whitewashed or you’re being an Oreo because you like different things. And I think that’s kind of like one of the biggest repelling stereotypes you know in this way that all Black people are the same and that we subscribe to this one kind of cultural phenomenon. Not that all Black people are the same individually on that individual level, but that we all are the same because we all ascribe to the same cultural phenomenon that it’s only one thing. That is what it boils down to is that this is what it means to be Black. And I think it discredits some of the other things, some of the other interests and the diversity that is within the African American/Black community. We’re all so different. There’s so many different styles and in way we stuck ourselves because we try to say there’s this one thing that African American culture is, this one thing you can do. Which I think is different from maybe our White counterparts who don’t necessarily have that kind of constriction because A-you know, Whiteness is still being defined and people still have issues with it. And then B-the luxury of being White is that you can kind of pull things out of different cultures and incorporate it into Whiteness without necessarily selling out. You know what I mean? You’re always gonna be White, whether you’re rich or whether you’re poor, whether you’re dark, whether your light, whether you’re the president of the United States or homeless. You know what I mean? Whereas opposed to being Black doesn’t necessarily…the more you attain or the more you kind of move away from this one culture, you</td>
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change, you become different. You know, you’re not necessarily Black anymore. Yeah, you may be Black from the outside, but something’s different.

**Observation Notes**

**Descriptive Notes:** Very reflective. Able to describe things in detail. He shares his stories easily, with very little probing. Seems to be further along in racial identity, maybe rethinking things.

**Personal Reactions:** I like his openness.

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**CONTINUITY**

This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

**Past**

I grew up in an environment where I had the luxury of being around African Americans without actually having to associate. I know that sounds weird, but I’m gonna explain a little bit more about that. I was born into a very low income, very underprivileged, underrepresented neighborhood which is typical represented by people of color, not all the time, but in fact, that’s the trend. Lived there for about the first eight years of my life and then through a series of fortunate circumstances my parents got better jobs and through some promotions and we were able to move and things just got progressive there. We kind of moved up to say middle class. And so, I make the distinction to where I was born and where I was raised. I remember living in that environment and being around that environment, but where my values came from and where I grew and came into my own is very much around White middle class America.(RM)

We were the only African American family in my neighborhood, very typical, you know TV, you know 2-car garage, swimming pool (I grew up in Florida, so we had a pool), four-bedroom house, you know, typical four kids, young family, a dog, fish (laughs). I went to a school that was very racially diverse. It was split almost equally among Whites, African Americans/Blacks and Latinos with kind of, others thrown in there. And the reason why I say that is because in school I had the interaction with being with African Americans, but I was tracked differently than they were. There were maybe one or two African Americans I was in the advanced placement honors track which is a little bit different than a lot of African Americans/students of color were typically tracked in either you know, “you’re graduating” or “you need remedial help”. Those were the other two. So it was a very separate world and so because of that I think my racial identity was very much stunted because I feel that gap because
I was around African Americans but I wasn’t learning anything because I wasn’t really associating with African Americans outside of my own family. So that kind of changed a little bit. (RM)

That kind of influenced how I went to school, what schools I chose. You know I was like, I wouldn’t mind going to DU even thought it was predominantly White. You know, that’s how I spent my life, that’s what I’m used to you know. I’d interacted with White people my entire life, what’s four more years? I think the difference was that I didn’t have that to fall back on. I wasn’t seeing other people who looked like me and so I was confident in that enough, even though I wasn’t interacting. So when I came here I didn’t realize that at first. And so around sophomore year I kind of realized, I was like, oh like this is really, really different. This is really White. This is a lot different than what I was growing up to and what I was used to. I was expecting it to be the same. Even though I had diversity, part of me was tracked. But you know, I could choose who I wanted to interact with and here that choice is kind of taken away from me because it just wasn’t here.

I would say at this time in my life I’ve had three mentors. Two throughout the course of high school and one in college. Interesting enough, all of my mentors have always been women, never had a guy mentor. Of the three, two have been women of color and one has been an identified White woman. My first experience was when I was in high school. My first mentor I got was when I was around a freshman in high school. It was interesting enough, it came about through another relationship I had had and then this woman, who was also White, was like, I think you two should, you know, get together and meet, I think you’d have a lot in common. Turns out we did. She ran a program at Planned Parenthood and I was interested in sort of getting more involved in volunteering in issues. She was like I run an experiential education program, do outreach on sex education with youth that are considered at-risk, you know, I think you’d be a good candidate, and so it kind of started off as that working kind of relationship and sort of expanded into a mentoring relationship. We are actually still friends to this day, still talk a lot but her capacity to mentor me has kind of shifted a bit as its relevance in my life has changed.

My second mentor actually came around in that same job actually. My original mentor did end up leaving two years into the job around the end of my sophomore year of high school and another woman came up. She was a self-identified Latina. She took the job and she just kind of filled in. So it was kind of easy to just make that same
leap, sort of get into that same connection. And then with college, I didn’t have a mentor in my first year of college. I was kind of haphazardly going about things. It really came about in my second year, in kind of a more structured format. So my first two mentors just kind of happened. My second mentor relationship was developed around a structured relationship. It came about because I was interested in student affairs and she had a student affairs job and she told me about this program and you know one of the components of it was a mentorship program. So it started out as being kind of intentional about what we wanted to do, what I was looking for so we kind of had that basis of that mentor/mentee relationship and it just kind of grew into something bigger. The basis of the program is that you kind of just approach someone who you want to be your mentor and so you both apply at the same time for the program so the mentor fills out an application, you fill out an application, you apply kind of jointly and then you get accepted. You getting accepted means in a way your mentor gets accepted because they want to make sure your mentor will be qualified and meets the requirements and such so.

I think race came up more so with my second mentor. Because my first mentor, we talked about race a little bit, in the very public race. Because we were dealing with at-risk youth who just happened to be youth of color just because of the areas that we were servicing, the trends. So we talked about race in that aspect, but I think that with my second mentor, we could talk it on a personal level. I was able to ask her about her experiences about being a woman of color, what that was like, how that affected her teaching, being an outreach educator, you know, did she feel that people related to her a little bit better. So that’s how it came up, in the work that we did that’s how race came up.

Observation Notes
Personal Reactions: Appreciate his openness. I feel a connection to him as an educator and a parent. I saw a lot of what he describes in my experience with my daughter in high school. I wanted her to attend a Black school because most of her years were in all white schools.

Present
I think I have come to a place where my identity is now supported by diversity. I think that’s how I feel supported. And those diverse people who are able to sort of understand the race thing. And I don’t mean to call it a race thing, but that’s kind of what it is, you know. It’s this jumble of you know, sometimes you’re here and sometimes you’re there, and sometimes you’re in-between and you’re here and there, and I think people who sort of understand that race is
important but its not necessarily the defining factor. And I think its important that I have those relationships where to people race is the defining thing in their life and I have people who are virtually colorblind whom I’ve become friends with and who I interact with. And I think for me its important to have that diversity of perspective cause it helps me understand race much more than just what being Black or being African American is. It allows me to understand at a much deeper level and broader level because I have such diverse perspectives and friends that I feel supported in that way.

I think I’m still very much figuring out my racial identity. And so, for me being African American is really, for me a process. What that means, what that looks like, you know. When you add in my other identities you know, being male, being a college student, 1st generation college student, you know it just kind of compounds things. (RM)

I think throughout the last few years, what I’ve been able to do is realize that its missing, umm, interact with it, play around with it, kind of see the different options and then sort of make a decision about how important it is to me. Cause I think race is a very personal thing that I think for each individual it has a very prominent role or it has a very, you know, uh, subservient role in how they live life and how they choose to act upon it. And I think it’s very much a process and I think I’ve had the opportunity to sort of go through it in this kind of whirlwind capacity, but I don’t mean whirlwind in that I wasn’t able to sort of do what I need to do. I think I was able to do what I needed to do for me at the point in time, so I was able to come to the conclusion that race is important to me, but it’s not important that I interact with it all the time. And so, I think that’s kind of where I am now, is that it’s okay if I have a couple of African American friends, but you I really like my Latino friends, I really like my Asian friends, I really like my White friends. So, for me I need to be surrounded by multiple races as opposed to I need specifically African Americans/Blacks to be around, you know. I need diversity in the sense that there’s a lot of different people who look different, more so than I need to see someone who looks like me walking down the street or interact with them on a daily basis if that makes sense.

Most definitely race is a part of my mentoring relationship. More specifically because the program that I applied for is specifically for students who identify as people of color, or students with disabilities, or LGBTQ students. So, it’s something that we talk about, a lot. It’s part of the program. It’s something that we talk about. It’s part
of our conversations. You know, what does it mean to be African American, what does it mean to be African American male. How people are going to view you, how are people going to look at you. And race just kind of shows up. Race shows up all the time. Specifically, when there’s so few. Like we wouldn’t need this program if there were an abundant source of people of color and LGBTQ students going into higher education. So, what does that look like you know. You might be places where you might be the only African American student. Might be places where people are not going to understand how to interact with you. So talking about that is super important. More particularly because it’s not a field that people grow up in and think they want to be in student affairs. People just kind of fall into it. Which is really kind of interesting because it’s been around forever. Still, you just fall into it. That’s just the way it works. So talking about race is very important, you might be headlining in some places. You might be representing. Even though you don’t mean to, you’re going to be just because of where you’re going to be and the areas that you’re going to be in. You know, so what does that look like, you know, how is that gonna be?

My relationship with my current mentor is really unique because it went from student-student affairs professional to mentor-mentee to employee-employer. You know there’s all these different layers that sort of compound everything. Sometimes I miss the days when it was just, you know, mentor/mentee because I love working with her and doing the work that we do, but being a mentor on that level is a little bit different. I don’t get a chance as much to sit and talk with her like I used to.

Observation Notes
Descriptive Notes: Tracked in high school. Low income. College bound. White mostly in his classes. School within a school. Very interested in learning more about race. Really close to his mentor. She has provided personal and career guidance. Race consciousness.

Personal Reactions: His story is like many others. Black families have to choose between in-race communities and high quality education. Seems like a sacrifice has to be made.

Future I’m one of those people who is very good at reading people. I’m very good at being able to figure out how much I can trust the person to an extent through just talking, through personal interactions, through sharing tidbits of information that aren’t necessarily private, but aren’t public either and kind of see what they do with it. And through
that process I start learning to trust them more. I think that’s my way of also getting them to trust me. Through those conversations it becomes more and more personal. I think that’s how it was in my first mentoring relationship. We learned from each other. There’s always something to learn. I really feel like in a mentor/mentee relationship it should be give and take. It shouldn’t be this, “I have something to teach you, I’m gonna take you under my wing because you look like your dogged out, let me help you, lift you up, you know. You should be lifting each other up.

**SITUATION/PLACE**

Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.

**Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time**

*I think (my view on race) is very generational. I feel like my generation and maybe subsequent generations have really been able to come to that place that we can kind of view race this way because other people helped. There are not secular or singular ways of viewing race. And we are still very much scripting out different ways, but I feel that because we’ve had so many other different ways that we’ve reached a time now where we’re allowed to sort of pull elements of this and pull elements from this side and come up with a more holistic view about race as opposed to it just being about you know, diversity of skin color or culture. It’s a lot more than that. It’s much more than that. There’s so many different layers and the more you peel back, the more you kind of discover about it.*

*If I were in a different relationship where race was not considered, these questions may not come up. No, I wouldn’t expect it but the qualities I would look for in the mentor/friendship relationship, I think it would just happen. I want to clarify, in my mentor relationship it’s really good because it takes it to the other issues of race, the other issues of access, the other issues of all these things. It takes out of the realm of this is what’s happening and puts it in a private, personal sphere. How do you deal with this, how do you interact with this? Which I think is different than us being in a mentoring relationship and we’re talking about these issues that we know already exist that affect everyone. I like to think that my mentors are very diverse, maybe not gender diverse, but diverse for the purposes of this, in terms of race.*

*I can’t think of something specific where I can point to that and be like this is how it negatively affected me. I think what I can say on this sense of negativity is that in discovering race, I feel like I discover more about myself and through that I’m kind of able to see my own personal views on race and how I view it and negative aspects I didn’t even know I had towards people of other races, or people who look*
like me, especially with people who look like me. So I think, I was, in a sense colorblind and since I wasn’t force to interact with it, I wasn’t forced to sort of confront my own stereotypes and misgivings about race and I feel like as I learn more about my own race, I also discover that I really do feel this way cause there’s certain stereotypes that I also feel like I hold and these are some of the prejudices that I have and in that way it’s not negative per se, but it’s an effect of being racially aware, you know.

Observation Notes

Personal Reactions: He seems kind of nerdy, outcast-like. Not in to current trends, etc. Very likeable.
Application of Brooke’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

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<td>I did not choose my mentor. It just so happened that I ended up with a Black woman as a mentor. My current mentor identifies as Black or African. (Hesitates). Where is she from? I don’t know. She was not born in Africa, maybe it’s Black. I know it’s not African American. I know that for a fact. It has to be Black. She’s older, she’s 33. (NN)</td>
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Race has been present in my relationship with my mentor. During our staff training we did an identity skill thing...quest. We went camping and then we were asked to do an activity that defines how we identify in the world based on how the world classifies races, sexual orientation, class...all that stuff. That’s where it came up and my advisor, she identifies as an African woman and she sat in on one of our little groups because she knew from the get go that I’m intimidated by African women so she wanted to learn more about it and she also expressed how she was excited that she is my advisor so I could gain that experience. We got split in groups of four to five and then we just had to share our story with those group members. My mentor chose our group to sit in on. It didn’t bug me but at the same time, doing an activity like that right from the get go when you really don’t even know these people is intimidating and overwhelming so I understand where she’s coming from on wanting to get on a deeper level because she is a very emotional thinker but at the same time we finally figured out the fine line of “I don’t talk about my personal life, so please don’t ask me”. So it took a while to develop that. That was the only time where race showed up with me and my mentor. (NN)

I see my mentor every day when I’m at work and we are supposed to have one-on-ones once a month and then myself and the other coordinator meet with her monthly as well, but once we kind of got it out on the table that I’m not the emotional person and I’m very business forward, business mind set, our meetings kind of stopped after September because I was always in the office anyway. If we ever had a question it was answered then and there, we didn’t wait until our meeting time. Our relationship is more of a work relationship than a mentoring relationship because that is how I catered it. That is how I want it to be. (NN)
My mentor is very open about race because she does a lot of diversity workshops. But I know she also expresses the hard time she has living here and finding people to connect with because of her race and because of the age differences since we’re either all college or family. So there’s not a lot of singles in the area so she’s struggling with that. So for her race is a very important part of her identity and she talks about it a lot. Mmm hmmm. All the time. She always shares her personal stories with everyone. I kind of just shut her out because it’s whining. She always talks about this one guy in Boston, like. Wake up, he doesn’t like you like that (laughs). That’s just my take on her personal stories. I don’t know if she does it because she likes the social aspect that much and she wants all the attention on her or if it’s more of, I really want guidance on what to do in this situation cause she never really follows through on any of the suggestions made. (NN)

When she talks about race it doesn’t really affect me at all. It’s not important to me. It’s not something that I seek out in my relationship with my mentor. I know that if an issue were to arise, she would listen but other than that we don’t ever mention it or talk about it. If I need help, she’s there if I want to use it. (NN)

I didn’t choose her as my mentor and it’s hard to think about what I might be learning from my mentor (laughs). Cause we’re such opposite ends. I mean I admire her because she always has a positivity to the situation where I’m more negative mind set, kind of realistic. I give kudos to her for wanting to reach out and wanting to be a part of every aspect that we do. I like that she makes it a point to show up to our events, be involved. She’s also expressed that she wanted to be a part of our committee meetings because she wanted to get to know them as well. But that’s about it. Just businesswise we think completely differently. Especially with figuring out who we want to target market to. She, in a way, finds that targeting your market is discriminating against others. Where I see it as, no I know I want to target to these people because I know they’re gonna take it and it’s gonna make it more successful as a whole. So we’re opposite on that. (NN)

Observation Notes

Descriptive Notes: Didn’t seem comfortable talking to me. Hesitant. Chuckled when she discusses using her race to get things. Timid, cold. Not personable. No smile. 2nd interview: Much warmer. She smiled and seemed happy to see me. Small talk.
**Personal Reactions:** This was a difficult interview for me. She is so far away from being able to recognize her race. She does not value it, she does not want to learn more about it and she is willing to admit that she only considers when she benefits. Very judgmental. Thinks she knows what’s best. Not interested in learning about others. Feels corporate. Second interview was better. As I get to know her I can appreciate her experience. It’s very different from my own, but she has had her own challenges. Many Blacks have not treated her lovingly, so she is through. I cared about making sure she felt comfortable with me. I sense her wounding or hurt. Maybe her coldness is just a result of that. I wanted her to know that not all Black women will dismiss her or not value her views.

**CONTINUITY**

This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

**Past**

*I can’t think of a time in college when my race impacted my life in a significant way. I can’t say any times in college. It was mostly when I was growing up. The biggest one is until about I was 13 everyone thought I was adopted because I look nothing like my mother. And then my first real relationship, I got a lot of backlash from it because it was an interracial couple and growing up people didn’t understand exactly what that meant or if it was okay. I flat out didn’t understand it. My mom always dated interracially so I was used to it growing up but he took it harder than I did. So it caused a lot of problems down the road.*(SR)

*I’ve never heard someone directly say anything about race but I mean it’s just little social cues where you can tell they’re not comfortable or you can pick up on what they’re really thinking even though they’re not saying it. Just situations like that. I can see it and it’s mostly the stories that I hear but it usually tends to be with other races than Black. Like when someone walks into a room, I’ve seen people move away or I heard one story about two of her friends. They went to go into a hot tub and once that happened, all the White people left for whatever reason. But when the male got in it was okay. It was two females and a male, both Black and they went over to some hot tub pool thing at one of the apartment complexes and majority Whites live there. And so I guess a couple of girls were in the hot tub and when all of them got in. well actually when the two girls got in all of the other girls got out. But when the guys came over to get in they came back.*(SR)

We did a breast cancer awareness event just on the plaza and we
were talking about the information that we wanted to put up on the board and she wanted to challenge us on not making it only about women, she wanted us to look at men and the struggle that they go through as well as transgender and things like that, but...so we tried, and we did find information that men can get breast cancer on rare occasion. That’s about all we could do, cause the facts just aren’t there or the knowledge isn’t known because it’s not something that is accepted in society, yet. When we have a difference of opinion I kind of just take her feedback and see what I can do with it and if I can’t do anything, just tell her that. But we’ve never had a talk on...in business, this is how you execute a marketing plan more efficiently. I highly doubt that she’s taken any advertising, business classes in her life. (NN)

*Observation Notes*

**Personal Reactions:** Reminds me of the Black students in college who avoided BSS, hung out only with whites and wouldn’t look at us. We called them Oreos.

**Present**

(My race is) probably not that important. I’ve never been in a situation yet where...well, I can’t say that either. It’s not that important but I guess in a way, I know when to play the card if I need to. There’s certain situations where it becomes more important. ...(Giggles). Applying for college was a big one because I come from a single mom, one job, African American. Clearly I had more opportunities to get funding to go I also dance and as light skinned as I am, I have advantage over other Blacks that are there because I fit the mold that the team wants but at the same time, if there were to ask they could still say they’re integrated.

I don’t know how my racial identity is supported or nurtured in my life. (Long pause). Hmm...I don’t know. I never...really...been through anything. I don’t know. My mom’s always supported interracial couples. So I just grew up with it, with an understanding of it. My dad always said that I should find a Black female mentor. Never said why, but that’s about it really. (NN). I don’t know what it means to be African American. I really don’t know. I don’t really pay attention. Cause it’s not that big in my life to be able to pay attention to it or want to figure it out. I really don’t know how to answer that. (Long silence). (General Perceptions)

*Observation Notes*

**Descriptive:** Does not like her mentor. Like oil and water. Mentor is trying to get her to learn more about her Blackness. She has no interest. Also seems to not respect her mentor much. Talks about her
with contempt. Likely at very early stages of identity, maybe self-hatred?

**Future**

When it comes to race I understand the importance of your background and this is who I am and this is where I come from but I don’t think that should be a judgmental thing up front with the people that you’re working with. Because yes, your background defines who you are but it shouldn’t be stereotyped. (RA)

**Observation Notes**

*Descriptive Notes:* She talked about her career interests. Wants to travel abroad. Told her about my job. Seemed interested. Gave her some ideas, email. She was open to the interview after a while and showed signs that she was interested in me. Asked me questions, invited me to her work program.

*Personal Reactions:* She is a challenge for me, but she is also the type of student I would like to stay in touch with. Just something about her.

**SITUATION/PLACE**

Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.

**Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time**

I can say that I do feel more comfortable with Whites just because I grew up around that and I do feel more comfortable with people older than me. I’ve gotten a lot of backlash from my dad for not joining multicultural offices and being involved with Blacks per se just because female Blacks is the most hatred I get from any other race. I don’t feel that I want to have my racial identity more supported in my life. I’m cool with how it is now. Definitely developed into it. Identified myself, so this is who I am and you kind of go with what works.

**Observation Notes**

*Descriptive Notes:* First interview wears all black. Tiny, thin. Light skin, freckles. No smile, kind of stoic. I also asked if she wanted to conduct the interview in another location since she had expressed discomfort before. Said this was fine. Context is that Brooke is uncomfortable with Blacks, especially Black females.

*Personal Reactions:* I feel tense early in the interview. Not sure why. She is not easy to talk with. Learned more later. I eventually feel compassion for Brooke. She has not been treated well by some other Blacks, so that explains her hesitancy. I care about her feeling comfortable with me. I work hard to really build trust during our interviews, phone calls and email exchanges.
Application of Cree’s Story to Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

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<td>I don’t think my mentoring relationship has nurtured my racial identity. It sounds bad to say no, but I don’t think so. Because I think, his any my mentoring relationship is not. . .like I said it’s more religiously and faith based so in that area, he’s like nurturing me in that way and like helping me to grow in that way, but in like race and the very certain things that we’ll talk about, like he knows like, “I can’t help you”, so he’ll send me to a woman in our community who is a woman of color and she’s older than me and so, he’ll send me to her and like, we can relate better. And that would nurture my racial identity, but not with him and I. So, him and I, it’s more how I can grow and develop my relationship with God, whereas he’ll send me to someone else for something else that may be going on. (NC)</td>
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Ummmm. . .I think that it’s tough to say how important my race is to me because it’s important to me if I’m around certain people, but it’s not as important to me if I’m just by myself. Like I don’t think about it when I’m by myself, but when I’m around other people I am consciously aware of who I am and what I do because I don’t want to be perceived as a negative image for people so ummm. . .I guess it’s really important. I think it’s in certain types of situations so. . .I mean my family’s really unique in that, like the way we were raised so if I’m around other Black people, I’m aware of it a lot because they may say things or do things that I’m like, “wow, I would never do that”. You know and then if I’m around other people who aren’t minorities then I’m really aware of it because I don’t want them to group me in the same category as, “Oh, well she’s just loud and then all Black people are loud”. So I think it’s a situational thing. And then there are some people I hang around and I don’t even think about it just cause I’m that comfortable around them and I know they know me well enough and they’re not going to judge whatever I do or whatever I say if I’m just joking or something. But I think it’s more of a situational thing. Because also being Native American too like that’s really different than being Black because you have more standards to uphold, I feel like. And you have more responsibility on your shoulders so yeah, I think it’s pretty important to me.(RM) |
**Observation Notes**
*Descriptive Notes: Multiracial. . .looks Black. Blue jeans, sweatshirt, tennis shoes. Hair pulled back in ponytail. Friendly. Friendly. Mentor is not African American. Expresses frustration with certain behavior by some Blacks. She likes to align herself with successful Blacks*

**Personal Reactions**
Strong character. So diverse. Her background is shaped by so many unique cultural influences. Maybe they compete? Feels like she wants to be considered part of the Black bourgeois. Since I really don’t share many of the bourgeois values I already have a reaction. I also have a reaction to the negative tone expressed for rappers. Not that I support the behavior of many popular rappers, but I do feel affinity in the sense that rap music emerged from the margins, is a form of storytelling and an art form. I don’t like the automatic dismissal of it, but that is where she is. I liked her. Her looks were piercing. Felt like she was studying me.

**CONTINUITY**
This aspect considers the past, present and future experiences of the participant in terms of remembered feelings, stories, actions and implied or future possible experiences. Include tensions and conflicts and resolutions.

**Past**
*There was an incident regarding race. It didn’t happen at school, but it was really cool because my boyfriend and I are out at Wal-Mart going shopping for something and there’s this cute little old (white) man walking in the store and I was like, “Awww, he’s such a cute little old man you know, he just looks so sweet. And so we’re over by the fruits and vegetables aisle and he just came up to us and he was like, “You guys are such a handsome couple”, and I was like, ‘Awww, thank you.’ And so we started talking and he was like, “Well, what do you want to do” and all this stuff. And he had to be like, pretty old, at least like 70 or 80, probably older than that. But he was really sweet and so my boyfriend was like, “yeah, I’m gonna be an architect engineer”, and I was like yeah, I want to go into politics, become an ambassador and he was like, “Well, I think you are very articulate, you’re gonna do great. You really remind me of Condoleezza Rice and she made it really big”. And I was like, “Oh, that’s really nice”. So I guess, I don’t know if he would have said that to us if we were any other race but I think the way that we work really well together and cause maybe because we were Black, maybe it’s not I don’t know, but I don’t know if he would have said that had we not been Black. Especially like the comment about Condoleezza Rice, so I thought that was really cool. (SP)*

**Present**
*When I think about how my race is supported in my life. . . Oh wow, ummm. . . I don’t know, I think probably by the people that I hang around a lot. I don’t come in the multicultural office that often, but*
when I do it makes me feel better because I know there are other people on this campus who are like me and some of them are raised from races just like me so that makes me feel good. But then also I think the way my family is like really strong so we are always around each other so I don’t feel out of place with whatever race that I am, so that kind of supports me. And other people around me in my family really support me. (NC)

Do I feel it’s important that my racial experience is considered in my mentoring relationship? Not in my mentoring, well. . .not in our relationship, no. But if I did get another mentor, later in life, race isn’t very important but I would appreciate them to be like a person of color just so that they understand what I’ve been going through, you know. . .if that makes sense, but in our relationship no, it’s not important at all, but in the future, it doesn’t have to be a requirement but I would, like, appreciate it. I think I would want them to be a person of color just because the older people I have been around, the people in my community, they are people of color and they kind of remind me of like my grandparents or my parents or something, so I can relate easier to them and like know when they’re like saying wisdom or when they’re just like teaching me things I’m more willing to just sit and listen to them because one, just because they’re older and because they’re people of color. They’re not just saying it as, well. . .”well if I was a person of color I would say this”, but because I’ve been through this. So like him (mentor) being white, it has nothing, like. . .I still sit down and listen to his mentoring but I do. . .I listen to it on certain things, but I also go to like, my mom or someone just to check and make sure. . .and she’s like “yeah, this is right”. So, you know, just checking it that way, I guess. . .if that makes sense. Not undermining his authority, but just confirming.
| Future | I feel like because of my race and what I want to do in International Relations, I feel like people are more accepting or encouraging of me doing that and going abroad. And I can’t say it’s just because of my race but I think it might be the people that I’ve encountered. And maybe it’s just the stuff here is really good, like they really do appreciate diversity, they really encourage that. I think people wise there are a few Black people on campus that I feel like they do a lot of things and they feel that they can get away with it like just like, “oh I’m Black so, I can be brutally honest with you” . . . or something and I’m just like, no that was just rude. I think I’ve noticed kind of an entitlement in that way with certain people and it’s not everybody, it’s just like two people but that’s just their personality I guess, but it’s definitely like a negative representation of who we are. When I’m around them, they’re just talking to everybody. So sometimes it’s around African Americans but it’s not as brutally honest or it doesn’t come off as rude, but then they can be talking to some White person and then it’s just like, that was really rude. They can say the same thing but their tone changes. And I feel like that’s because I can say whatever I want to you because I’m Black. You know, like you’re not going to say anything to me. There’s like this sense of entitlement when they say it and it’s not necessary at all but that’s what I’ve noticed just with certain people and then images. . . outside of like, the normal stereotypical images like on posters and stuff. Especially, like there’s a concert coming up for Wale and the poster . . it’s a really bad poster. And a lot of the posters like for parties and stuff, they always refer to Black people as like with the dreads and like the big teeth and all this stuff with the big shades. And I’m like uh, so horrible. Not every Black person is Li’l Wayne, not every Black person wants to have dreads. Not everyone wants to go to jail you know, not everyone has tattoos all over their face but I mean that’s just the image that they portray and a lot of time like for party banners and stuff going out to the clubs they’ll have images like that and people are like, “Oh God it’s going to be so much fun” and it probably won’t be, but it just looks that way and so, yeah, I think they’re trying to attract more Black people to the parties so they put people like that up there and it doesn’t work for me. Other things that stand out for me with Blacks I think it’s kind of hit and miss. I know a lot of people will have seen, like the posters for Precious and all they saw was the girl on the front so they’re like, “oh wow, all Black women are obese” but they didn’t see the movie, they didn’t understand how she really is this way. So that’s one image you can have of the overweight girl that just eats all the time or it’s either overweight and eats all the time or its really classy. So I know like a lot of times people will be like, “Oh my God, Black people are so awesome and this kind of stuff, but they don’t really... |
equate that with Condoleezza Rice or Michelle Obama or Jada Pinkett Smith or like the classy Black ladies. I know a lot of people who are looking on campus for the classy Black ladies will only find certain ones. So you’ll see them all over campus but you’ll point out the ones that you know hold themselves up high because they know they can accomplish more.

**Observation Notes**

**Descriptive Notes:** Very much like other participants. Wants connection with other Blacks. Expresses concern about negative images of Blacks. Race is important to her, but she has concerns about views about Blacks. Very bothered by behavior of some Blacks. Has maintained some traditional Native American beliefs. **Personal Reactions:** Image is her focus. Seems judgmental. Good versus bad Blacks. Strong character

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<tr>
<th>SITUATION/PLACE</th>
<th>Explores specific situations, physical spaces, context and time for participant intentions, purpose and points of view.</th>
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Situations, Physical Spaces, Context & Time

I have to say my mentor identifies as White. It’s my guess just because I know his parents and his parents are White too. I think the closest...I don’t know like nationality wise where their history comes from I just know that he’s White, so I don’t know outside of that. Is race present in my mentoring relationship? I would say no. Um, I don’t notice it when I talking with him. When we’re having day to day conversations, like race usually never comes up and then I don’t think about like he’s White and I’m Black. So it never comes up. I feel pretty okay with it not being there. I’m happy that not every relationship has to be like race defined or like I’m more comfortable with a black mentor than a white mentor. So feel fine, I mean our relationship has not changed or anything. So, I think it’s good. I would describe it as a mentoring as a mentoring where...he’s my pastor at my synagogue so we would sit down and talk like once a week, maybe more. And just catch up and see how each other is doing and he would definitely try—if I’m going through anything, help me through that and then just talk to me about anything that’s going on and then also guide me in that direction. So he’s like, well I definitely encourage you to stay in your bible this week, maybe read these passages, do like a devotional program with like psalms and proverbs and stuff like that so help me out that way. So it’s not really more academic based, rather like faith and religious based. We didn’t really choose each other; ummm...I think it kind of just evolved. Because I started going to that youth ministry once we moved back down from Seattle and then ever since, like, he and I got pretty close and then we just start hanging out and talking and then
talking more often and then one-on-one time and stuff. I think that he appreciates race and he appreciates diversity, but we’ve really never talked. About race or ethnicity or anything like that. But as far as I can guess, I think he appreciates it. Cause I know like at our synagogue everyone’s really diverse, so there’s so many races represented there so he has to appreciate that. And in the youth ministry alone there are many races and a lot of like mixed races as well, so he has to balance that out. And he works really closely with a lot of our pastors who are. . .a lot of them are Black and there are a couple of Hispanic ones and an Italian one too, so I think he has to appreciate it.(NC)

Observation Notes
Descriptive: Blue jeans, college sweatshirt, tennis shoes. Hair is straight, shoulder length?? Pulled back in a ponytail. Very friendly. Seems happy to be involved in this interview. Multiracial, but considers Black primary. She knows a lot of the other Black students. A group of them were standing outside the office chatting. She garnered a lot of attention. Popular. Her mentor is White. Leader in her synagogue.

Personal Reactions: I like her. I wonder if her mentoring relationship will be different than some other participants.