The Implementation of Group Mentoring Between At-Risk Teenage African American Males and Successful Adult African American Men

Cornell Mathis

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GROUP MENTORING BETWEEN AT-RISK
TEENAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND SUCCESSFUL
ADULT AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN

by

Cornell Mathis

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 1998
Little research has been done to examine the implementation of group mentoring. This study of group mentoring involving at-risk teenage African American males and successful adult African American men will provide insight into group mentoring as demonstrated through interpersonal communications.

An investigation of the composite reduction provides the foundation for establishing the following definition of the group mentoring experience. The mentees are drawn to the mentors by mutual respect developed through the use of a special language. Availability leads to bonding between the mentees and mentors. The relationships are fostered by the authenticity of both individuals while producing social enlightenment and humility which gives the mentees an enhanced self-perception. Through persuasion the mentees develop self-confidence and become more productive.

This definition presents group mentoring as a source for presenting possibilities not previously available to students. At-risk teenage African American males are encouraged to maintain their cultural authenticity and achieve goals valued in mainstream American culture.
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CHAPTER I

GROUP MENTORING, COMMUNICATION, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN TEENS

Introduction

Many African American teenage males are said to need African American adult male mentors not only because these adults have been successful, but also because only they can fully understand the youth's social and psychological experiences well enough to help them and act as models with whom the youth can identify (Watson, 1992). A large number of these teens have low self esteem and a restricted view of their possibilities due to the environments where they live and because they internalize the negative attitudes of the larger society toward them. To counter these destructive influences teachers and mentors in their communities of the same race or ethnicity, filter out belittling and fatalistic attitudes by sending them different messages (Watson, 1992).

Many concerned social scientists believe that to many black male adolescents are destroying themselves. They die disproportionately from homicide (their major killer), suicide (tripled since 1960), and drug abuse (endemic), and their risk-taking behavior often mimics reckless daredevils courting disaster (Poinsett, 1988). Inner city black males are over represented among high school dropouts and under represented on college campuses. Burdened with an unemployment rate that is three times higher than it was in
1960, they fill the lowest civilian and military jobs. Detractors claim they lack self-esteem, loathe the work ethic, and generally are social leeches. However, many social scientists believe that poverty, racism, family disintegration, and community disorganization more accurately account for the precarious plight of young black males (Comer, 1992).

**Historical View of the Black Family**

The black community functioned reasonably well until the 1950s, when only 22% of black families were headed by single parents. As education became a major prerequisite for obtaining living-wage jobs during that decade, however, many black families began to falter (Comer, 1992). Comer attributed the decline to a number of interlocking factors, in particular the traumatic social history of blacks, accelerating change in technology and the economy, and adaptive mechanisms that were available to some but not all.

It is unfair to compare the historical experience of blacks to that of white and Asian immigrants because, although they also experienced hardships, they also had cultural continuity. They came from the same place in the old country and settled in the same place in the new country, and were able to adjust, assimilate, and become a part of the mainstream (Comer, 1992).

This cultural continuity strengthened the social cohesion among the immigrants, Comer (1992) noted, and along with the vote helped them to secure political, economic, and social power all
within a generation. Mainstream opportunities motivated families to function well and train their children to take advantage of the available opportunities.

Cultural discontinuity, on the other hand, devastated the lives of blacks wrenched from West Africa’s protective environment and governmental and political institutions (Comer, 1992). This enslavement forced them into complete dependency on their slave masters, perpetuated feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, and generally made it impossible for them to create better conditions for themselves, no matter how hard they worked.

A large proportion of blacks were legally prohibited from voting until the middle 1960s. And with no vote, they could not get political, economic, and social power in society’s mainstream.

Nor did blacks have adequate educational opportunities. As late as the 1940s, four to eight times as much money was spent on the education of a white child, as opposed to a black child in the eight states that had 80% of the black population. And where it was disproportionately black, the disparity was as great as 25 times (Ajamu, 1991). The same disparity existed in higher education.

University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson (1987), described massive structural changes—exacerbated by racism within the American economy that crippled the black community in recent years. Wilson, by studying disaggregate data on the ten largest cities in the United States, has found that growing problems of poverty, joblessness, and welfare dependency have essentially struck
the rust belt cities—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Baltimore. While the job pool increased in sunbelt cities from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, rust-belt employment in manufacturing, retail trade, and wholesale trade declined dramatically, with the biggest change in unemployment rates and labor force participation coming in the 1970s.

These changes were accompanied by a sharp drop in labor force participation among black males, particularly among young males, noted economist Margaret Simms (1992) of the Joint Center for Political Studies. During this period there were much higher rates of unemployment among blacks relative to the white population. That is when you see much higher rates of unemployment relative to the white population.

Three decades of decline in rust-belt employment was not balanced by subsequent moderate increases in entry level service jobs. Consequently, the urban ghetto poor became more concentrated and socially isolated than ever before (Wilson, 1987).

The exodus of working and middle class families from these extreme poverty areas over the past several decades left the ghetto poor more vulnerable to the kind of prolonged and increasing joblessness that had plagued inner city’s basic institutional decline (Wilson, 1987). In turn, formal and informal social controls weakened and contributed to increasing levels of crime including violent crime, therefore creating the perception that the inner city had become a dangerous place.
Wilson (1987) notes that the high concentration of poverty has had significant impact on educational achievement in inner-city schools. A predominance of low achieving students has undermined teachers morale and weakened students perception of a meaningful relation between education and work, thus decreasing their academic aspirations. Wilson also contends that the local social structure has become less supportive and demanding of educational achievement.

In five of six major social indicators, Gibs (1988) notes that black youth are worse off than they were in 1960's in spite of civil rights legislation and a generally improved economy. Their unemployment in 1988 was three times higher than it was in 1960 for black youth it is about 34% and up to 50% in some cities. Nearly half of all black youth 18 to 24 years of age have had no legal work experience. Delinquency rates among blacks have risen and 25% of AIDS cases are among blacks nationally. Although the high school dropout rate for blacks has decreased since 1960, many are unable to read or write above the fourth-grade level.

Educators and social researchers across the country have suggested that the African American male is the most at risk segment of the school population in America (Ajamu, 1991). They are the group most at-risk for not being able to read and compute basic mathematics. They are also the group most at risk of being absent from the graduation process. Yet the group most at risk in being suspended from school, placed in Special Education classes and becoming a school drop-out. The African American male is most at risk never to
receive a college education. Once this group has failed to complete the educational process, odds are that the African American male will frequently be unemployed, involved in drugs or gangs—or become the one in every four males that will end up either in jail, on probation, or on parole (Ajamu, 1991).

There are several studies of the low academic performance of the African American student in which much of the debate has centered on whether this low academic performance was due to ethnicity or to the fact that most African American students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Recently, the prevailing thought on the subject is that the socioeconomic status of the family is the most significant factor.

Nonetheless, low socioeconomic background does little to explain the growing gap between the African-American male and female student. The problem with African American males and schools does not abruptly appear in the middle school. In fact, there is a gradual slide from the first grade where the black male is abreast or ahead in some subjects when measured against other ethnic and gender groups (Ajamu, 1991). However, by the time the sixth grade is reached, the typical male enters middle school, without the basic and fundamental academic skills to compete in the classroom.

Academics

In a report prepared by McDaid, Abbott and Borton (1990) for San Diego City Schools, data showed the current lack of academic...
progress of the African American male. Citing the 1989-90 figures, the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) in grades 7, 9, 11, the African American male averages 23 points below the 50th percentile in reading comprehension and mathematics while the average of all other students is 9 points above the 50th percentile, an overall 32-point difference in (CTBS). The cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2,732 7th-12th grade African American males was 1.79, with less than 5% of this figure maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or better. Of the 397 African American males that met San Diego district graduation standards in 1990 (approximately 6.5% of class), only 3.5% met college entrance requirements (McDaid, Abbot & Borton 1990).

**Dropout Rate**

In New York City, African Americans make up 75% of the student population in some of the schools, yet 72% fail to complete high school (Witherspoon, 1987). In the San Diego District, the dropout figures for the African American male is relatively close to that of all students, 7.9 for African American males and 6.8 for all other students. In New Orleans Schools African American males comprise 45% of the student population, they account for approximately 45% of the districts dropouts. In Michigan, African American school dropout rate is considered a disaster. It is estimated that 30 to 60% (depending on location) of African American students who enter the ninth grade fail to receive a high school diploma (Witherspoon, 1987).
"The failure of African American children to learn in the current educational system has been attributed, in part, to the negative expectations that teachers have for them" (DeMeis & Turner, 1978, p. 77). A study completed by DeMeis and Turner (1978), was designed to assess the effects of teacher reactions to a student's race, physical attractiveness and spoken dialect. The results indicated that the teachers were heavily influenced by these three variables, and any combination of these three variables proved to be to the students disadvantage. Teachers consistently rated African American students more negatively than they did the white students. In one demonstration, despite the fact that both white and African American students were given identical material to read from a standard text, the teachers consistently rated the white students performance superior to that of African Americans (Chunn, 1988).

Low teacher expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This self fulfilling prophecy--black skin, black dialect equals non-reader. The teacher teaches to these expectations proving them correct. "African American children have become victims of low teacher expectations, and it must be pointed out that black teachers as well have problems with expectations" Chunn (1988 p. 97). According to Witherspoon (1987), teachers have very low expectations of the African American male, perceiving them as slow learners and intellectually inferior. The African American male is stereotyped as a non-learner, and his dark image is consistently
seized upon by opinion makers in both newspaper copy and Hollywood movies to conjure up negative, sinister, dangerous and evil illusions that frighten the majority and reinforce the negative stereotype (Lemelle, 1988). Many adults have succumbed to this negative illusion and at times act frightened or intimidated by even the youngest African American male child. It is further stated by Lemelle (1988) in a paraphrase of Harry Edwards, Sociologist,

...blacks are a macho hustle in American culture...the role of the black male is that of a prostitute to masculine institutional systems-school athletics, military and the prisons--where macho is the dress needed to pass through... the more black males the better. (p. 226)

Some social scientists feel that the assault upon the African American male child is premeditated, and that the African American male is functioning at a level desired by the school establishment (Lemelle, 1988).

**Negative Counter Culture Influence**

"Running buddies, the boys, the posse reward academic failure and rebellious behavior" (Dent, 1989, p. 56). Many African American males believe that if they are academically successful and obedient to school authorities, they will be branded white acting by ethnic peers and forced out of the crowd because they did not conform to the negative group standards. In some cases it is more important for the African American male to gain peer acceptance than to excel in academics (Dent, 1989). Dent also quotes the remarks of a fifteen year old Nashville youth "If I study all the time, I won't have
any friends...I would be like some white nerd who studies all the
time, studying all the time is like white folks" (Dent, 1989, p. 56).

This negative reaction towards academics may be rooted in the
slave history of the African American past. Trying to read and write
was perceived by some as trying to act like the master, acting like
you are ashamed of your color and blackness (Lemelle, 1988). During
the revival of Black nationalism or the Black Power movement among
African Americans during the 1960's, the most haunting parable de-
picting this ingrained disdain for the acting white black person or
the wanna-be was colorfully stated by the most venerated personality
of the 1960's black nationalist movement, Malcolm X. Although Mal-
colm was addressing the issue of integration versus separation of
blacks in American life, the analogy well fits the logic used by
those who colored education white or less than being black:

Ajamu (1991) states:

There was the house negro and the field negro...now the house
negro lived in the Big House with his master, he loved his
master, when the master got sick-that house negro would say
wee sick masta, wee sick...the house negro cared more for the
master then he cared for himself. When it was time to eat,
the house negro ate whatever the master left on his plate...
the house negro wanted to be just like master, he dressed like
the master, talked like the master and identified more with
the master then he did with himself.

Then there was the field negro, he lived out in a raggedy
shack, he hated the master-when the field negro heard that the
master was sick, he hoped the master would die. When the mas-
ter's cotton fields caught on fire, the field negro fanned the
flames, he hoped the fire would burn every thing up, including
the master and his house. The field negro just wore whatever
he could find for clothes, he worked in the fields choppin' cotton from can't see in the morning til can't see at night.
The field negro hated everything about the master, but he was proud of his blackness...when the field negro tried to get the house negro to run away from slavery and the plantation, the house negro said...iz you crazy!! You want me to run away from this good house, from all this good food, leave these nice clothes, leave my good masta...you’s crazy...you can run if you want to, but Iz stayin' right here with the masta... that field negro ran away, and when he was caught, the master had him beaten, but he'd heal up an try running away again he hated slavery, and the master and all the master stood for... we still have a lot of them house negroes [mentality] runnin' around here today.... (pp. 63-64)

The field negro became the cultural metaphor that African American males strongly identify with as positive and correct; defiant of the white establishment and defender of black values. On the other hand, the image of the house negro became the object of ridicule and shame. For an African American male to be perceived as a house negro or Uncle Tom was viewed as disgraceful.

During the 1990's, again, there is a strong undercurrent of African American nationalism among young males. This renewal in ethnic pride manifests itself in hip hop or rap, the music of choice for many African American males. Although there are many young African American males that have no problem blending the academic skills with the strong masculine persona as portrayed in Malcolm's parable, there is a real fear in some youth that becoming academically successful is an attempt to shed cultural identity and act white Ajamu (1991). Many African American males oppose academic success out of some misguided allegiance to their race or culture.

Black Masculinity

For many black male teens in America, mainstream society plays
a major role in their socialization process. Mainstream society, in teaching young Black males, fails them miserably because it wants nothing to do with them. Because of this, most black males' societal conditioning consists solely of prescriptive teaching (what Black males are not supposed to do), with little emphasis on prescriptive teachings (Franklin, 1984). The author further suggests that the reluctance to teach Black males directly what they should do as men in society may be due to a reluctance to accept Black males as men on a level with other recognized men in American society. Perhaps American society is not ready to give full recognition to the masculinity of Black men and some alterations in hegemonic definitions of masculinity.

Popular socializing agents such as television, radio and newspapers portray black males as irresponsible predators and link them to highly publicized statistics of social pathologies. Their faces are frequently used to illustrate illegitimacy, crime, illiteracy, alcoholism, drug addiction, espousal abuse, and family abandonment (Franklin, 1984). This happens despite the fact that there are millions more whites involved in those activities than Blacks.

Black Males and the Criminal Justice System

Throughout this century, black Americans, especially men but increasingly women have been more likely than whites to commit violent and property crimes (Tonry, 1995). At every criminal justice system stage from arrest to incarceration, blacks are present in
numbers greatly out of proportion to their numbers in the general population. And although blacks make up 13% of the U.S. population, they comprise nearly half of the population of U.S. prisons and jails and, in recent years, represent more than half of those sent to jail or prisons. An analysis performed by Marc Mauer of the Sentencing Project showed that nationally 23% of blacks males aged 20-29 were under justice system control (Tonry, 1995).

The war on drugs is the primary cause of the soaring number of young African American males sent to jail or prison. It foreseeably and unnecessarily blighted the lives of young disadvantaged black Americans and undermined decades of efforts to improve the life chances of members of the urban black underclass. Tonry (1995) suggests that the war was based on partisan political motives to show that the Bush and Reagan administrations were concerned about public safety, crime prevention, and the needs of victims. He shows that inconsistent drug enforcement efforts in the 1980's can account for the sharp increase in black male imprisonment. He goes on to say that

the decline in arrest rates of whites after the 1974 peak was undoubtedly a consequence of the general trend toward decriminalization of marijuana in the United States. A major factor contributing to the decriminalization was undoubtedly a realization that the arrestees were much too often the children of individuals, most white, in positions of power and influence. These parents certainly did not want the consequences of a drug arrest to be visited on their children, and so they used their leverage to achieve a significant degree of decriminalization. (pp. 112-113)

The get tough on crime movement has taken hold throughout America and is supported by both Republican and Democratic politi-
cians. Many politicians attempt to outdo each other on their support for the death penalty and more repressive crime control measures (Majors & Gordon, 1994).

Another explanation for the high rate of criminal justice system supervision of African American men relates to their real and perceived lack of opportunity and their hopelessness about the future. Majors (1994) states that young men growing up today have a radically different perception of the criminal justice system than young white men do. When one in four young Black men come under the control of the system, Black men find it hard not to view that system as an almost inevitable part of one’s life cycle. This is not to say that it is a rite of passage but that it is part of growing up, taken for granted almost as many white boys assume they will go to college. (p. 90)

**Group Mentoring: As An Intervention Technique With African American Teens**

A number of African American males must make conflicting choices between the values, accepted behaviors, and attitudes of their own group and those of the larger society (Watson, 1992). These youth must choose between assimilation, separation, and alienation from the larger society or a kind of biculturalism. They cannot easily remove themselves from their home environment, which, as has been suggested, may be a safer haven and more powerful option for them than any special program. Not having the maturity or a fully integrated identity, they need guidance and support to evaluate these choices, and many people feel that only a mentor of the racial group can understand this conflict well enough to truly help
the teens.

Having been involved with at-risk, male African American teens for several years, I have had teens report the positive impact their interaction with mentors has on their confidence and ability to make wise decisions.

Unfortunately, increased rates of incarceration and joblessness among African American men, along with the ever soaring rates of unwed African American mothers creates a scarcity of positive African-American male role models to serve as one-to-one mentors. As a means of maximizing the efforts of this small pool of mentors, more and more organizations are experimenting with group mentoring.

Concerned Black Men, through their participation in the Moyo Baraza program as group mentors offer opportunities to divert the attention of teens who are at-risk of becoming criminal offenders. These men, in their role as group mentors attempt to intervene before the young black teens become a part of the justice system. They accomplish this by giving support and motivation to the youth, understanding them, and being a resource to help develop their self-esteem.

The idea of mentoring is often used to address teens' needs for supportive interpersonal relationships. Mentoring in the context of this research is used to refer to the reciprocal interactions between individuals in which approximately two mentors/group facilitators interact with a small group of approximately seven teens of lesser experience and knowledge of the world. It is
no longer acceptable to address the issue of mentoring without looking at group mentoring and its new role in serving African American male teens.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to create a fundamental definition of group mentoring through the implementation of a project where the researcher will function as an observer of the interpersonal communications between at-risk African American male teens participating in small groups with mentors. The guiding question for this study is: What components of group mentoring are present in satisfactory group mentoring relationships involving at-risk African American male teens?

This study is an implementation evaluation of Moyo Baraza, a collaborative effort between Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Kalamazoo, Boys and Girls Club of Kalamazoo, and Concerned Black Men of Kalamazoo. The mentors are members of the Concerned Black Men Organization and the boys were selected primarily from two Kalamazoo schools.

This study is comprised of a participant observation of the interpersonal communication between the men and the teens within the three groups. The study, conducted over a nine week period, is an effort to understand group mentoring as it is experienced by at-risk African American male teens.
Theory

This section is divided into three parts:

1. The first deals with Afrocentricity and Interpersonal Relationships.

2. The second deals with multiple dimensions of group mentoring are discussed.

3. The third is an elaboration of the multiple dimensions of interpersonal communication.

Afrocentricity and Interpersonal Relationships

Afrocentricity is a perspective that recognizes the centrality of Africa as a starting point for analysis and the synthesis of thought (Asante & Asante, 1985). This idea of Africa as a starting point includes its people as well.

An Afrocentric approach to social group work is based on a humanistic and naturalistic orientation. An Afrocentric view recognizes that African American culture is a nexus between Western culture and traditional African culture (Greif & Ephross, 1997).

It is within the African culture—a holistic and naturalistic orientation to the world—at the value system and behavioral patterns of African-Americans have their roots. The philosophical concepts work in conjunction with the natural order, working toward such principles as balance in one’s environment; family/personal life, and a multi functional, discretionary, harmonious approach to life rather than a one-dimensional, predetermined, conflictual ap-
proach (Greif & Ephross, 1997). The goal of this approach is to facilitate the development of persons who are aware and who can operationalize their sense of unity or collective, extended selves (Nobles, 1976).

Asante and Asante (1985) write that "the African American view of a holistic personality, which is the healthy person, is grounded in the African idea of Sudicism, the spiritual commitment to an ideological view of harmony" (p. 185). Asante and Asante argue that the quest for harmony is what allows African Americans to recognize their humanness, and this occurs only in the midst of others. The harmony of African American culture is developed from an inter-relationship, an inter connectivity of the whole environment. An interpersonal relationship with successful African American men within the context of group mentoring can reduce the sense of alienation from the larger society experienced by many at-risk African American male teens.

Multi-Dimensions of Group Mentoring

Group mentoring can represent a wide range of apparently different generalizations and implications. It becomes clear when examining group mentoring that mentoring is multi-dimensional in scope.

Growth

Growth-oriented groups provide an opportunity for members to become aware of, expand, and to change their thoughts, feelings, and
behavior regarding self and others (Toseland & Rivas, 1984). The group serves as a conduit to foster mentee competency to the fullest extent. Studies also show that growth groups stress self-improve-
ment and the potential of human beings to live a full and rewarding life. Mentors in these groups create supportive environments for mentees to gain insights, share experiences, ask questions, and grow into competent and healthy adults. As a means of enhancing inter-
group understanding and support, many such groups are composed of members with similar characteristics, such as at-risk African Amer-
ican male teens.

Educational

Educational groups are those whose primary purpose is to help members learn about themselves and their society (Toseland & Rivas, 1984). They are aimed at heightening mentees' information or skills through group discussions and presentations. These discussions offer opportunities to learn from mentors as well as other group men-
tees.

Members of educational groups are bonded together by a common interest in the material to be learned as well as by common char-
acteristics, such as being adolescents (Toseland & Rivas, 1984). Small educational groups allow for mentee to-mentee communication and discussion. Many mentors leading such groups utilize an indi-
vidualized approach to learning that concentrates on the personal needs of the mentees.
Socialization

Socialization groups aim at helping mentees learn social skills and socially accepted behavior to prepare them to function effectively within their communities and larger society. Events such as games and recreational activities are frequently used to help mentees accomplish these goals. The roots of group work can be traced back to scouting, camping, sports, and club groups (Boyd, 1935; Smith, 1935; Wilson, 1976; Slavson, 1945, 1946). These groups may engage in pleasurable leisure activities as well as activities designed to improve social skills of group members. Studies have also shown recreational groups to be particularly important for working with youth in neighborhood centers. They help mentees understand community values and norms of acceptable behavior, and to develop interpersonal skills and to feel a sense of belonging (Toseland & Rivas, 1984).

Multi-Dimensions of Communication

Attending

Attending is letting a group participant know that you are paying close attention to what she/he is saying or doing, so that she/he will continue (Bertcher, 1979). Attending involves nonverbal behavior such as eye contact and body position, and verbal behavior that conveys empathy, respect, warmth, trust, genuineness and honesty. This technique is used to establish rapport, acceptance and
cohesiveness between group members. Egan (1975) suggests, in addition to body position and eye contact, skills which indicate a worker has heard or understood a member are part of effective attending. Paraphrasing, repeating and responding enthusiastically to what a member has said are specific examples to demonstrate your interest and understanding of what a member has communicated to you. Scanning or making eye contact with each member of the group is another technique used to show mentees that there is concern for each individual.

Trust

The idea of trust is one that describes faith in the behavior of and confidence in the other person (Devito, 1988a; Johnson, 1990). Trusting relationships are built upon the sharing that exists between two or more people. Devito (1988a) describes the relationship between sharing and trust succinctly: Interpersonal trust is built through risk. Trust cannot exist in the absence of risk. As in any relationship, trust between mentor and mentee is what allows for the relationship to move forward.

Authenticity

In interpersonal communication, authenticity allows individuals to be sensitive to the others and encourage authenticity on the part of the other participants. Authenticity is the intuitive awareness one possesses of self while in the company of others.
Each person in a relationship provides input into the development of the relationship while simultaneously attempting to remain authentic to the self. In this context, authenticity becomes important. In contrast to communications with adults outside of their racial and cultural world, at-risk African American male teens may expect their African American male mentors to communicate a sense of shared history and culture.

**Person Building**

Interpersonal communication is fundamental in our self development. Much interpersonal communication which takes place builds group consensus, yet each person remains true to the self they brought to the relationship. The idea of building the self can be thought of as person building. It is another variable found in interpersonal communication. Devito (1988a) states that who we are and how we perceive ourselves and others influences our communication more than any other element. This concept of self is basic to all forms and functions in human communication. Similar to Devito, Weaver (1990) posits that the "self is formed through interactions with others and that these interactions are constantly creating change" (p. 101). Through the process of interpersonal communication we develop our view or perception of self. Our communication with others can either provide positive or negative perceptions, but whatever the case, it is this interaction with other persons which helped to shape who we are.
The previous discussions of group mentoring, Afrocentricity and interpersonal communication show the close affinity of these three endeavors. In this study, the men harmoniously blend together these three topics throughout their discussions with the teens. A separate examination of each topic allows for a clear explication of the key ingredients to successful group mentoring from the experiences of African American teens. An elaboration of group mentoring demonstrates the unique structure of the mentoring experience. It highlights the advantages and flexibility of the group structure along with techniques utilized by the men to establish rapport with the teens. Following this, a discussion of Afrocentricity explains the shared racial identity between the teens and the men. It also serves as a foundation that bonds them and is used as an external and internal resource to assist the teens effectively adapt, cope, and buffer stresses associated with being young African American males. This discussion is also utilized by the men to assist the teens in developing positive self concepts.

Finally, a discussion of communication offers a lucid understanding of how participants convey their ideas and sense of care and concern to one another. This discussion focused on how the teens viewed the men and thus receive their messages. It focused on the verbal and nonverbal behavior.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PROCEDURES

This section begins with a discussion of the methodological foundations of naturalistic inquiry and then expounds on the participant observation and focus group procedure utilized to investigate group mentoring.

Naturalistic Inquiry

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981) the selection of a methodology for a study should be determined by the purpose of that investigation. The intent of this study is to investigate the impact of implementation of group mentoring between successful African American adult male mentors and at-risk African American male teens participating in the Moyo Baraza program.

Two paradigms dominate the present field of research, rationalism and naturalism (Patton, 1990; Anderson, 1987, Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The rationalistic paradigm is a quantitative/deductive, objective, and sometimes logical positivistic inquiry generally aimed at uncovering and reporting hypothetical--deductive generalizations. The naturalistic paradigm is a qualitative, inductive, subjective, inquiry attempting to understand human experience in context specific settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).
Inductive Versus Deductive

Naturalistic research starts by exploring open questions within the context of the data allowing for categories. Interrelationships are allowed to evolve without interference by the researcher. As opposed to this, rationalistic research begins with a preformulated hypothesis derived from previous research and proceeds with testing the hypothesis.

Subjective Versus Objective

The naturalistic paradigm views being subjective as a way of understanding and gaining insight into the subject. The rationalistic paradigm "views objectivity as essential; whereas, being subjective is a means to be biased, unreliable, and irrational" (Patton, 1980, p. 336).

Qualitative Versus Quantitative

Naturalistic research obtains information by using a qualitative approach in which detailed textual description is provided by those persons experiencing the phenomenon under investigation. On the other hand, rationalistic research data are most often generated from standardized instruments such as tests and surveys in order to limit the data collection to prespecified responses.

Human Instrument

Because humans act in ways that are incomprehensible by non-
human instruments, methods associated with qualitative and naturalistic inquiry were utilized in this study. The researcher, in the role of participant observer, served as the instrument, data collector, data analyst, and data interpreter. The naturalistic method relies heavily on the human being as instrument and in this role the researcher sought to measure specific variables in the implementation of group mentoring but attempted to make himself more personally and environmentally sensitive. He aimed to create an instrument that reflected idiosyncrasies rather than norms. The human instrument is almost infinitely adaptable as a data-gathering device (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

To make sense of the whole, the inquirer must, like an anthropologist in an utterly foreign culture, immerse himself totally in the new environment and suspend his own value judgments, adopting, in Dexter's (1970) words, "what the interviewee regards as conceivable and pertinent frame of reference, something which the interviewee shares" (p. 36).

The researcher developed a contextual, holistic, sense of the situation. He recorded some of the group discussions and wrote and dictated notes during the other sessions. Both the mentees and mentors interpersonal communication was given consideration in this study, with primary attention given to the experiences of the mentees. The researcher allowed the theoretical constructs aforementioned to structure the investigation.
In this thesis, phenomenology is employed as a means of heightening my sensitivity to the group mentoring phenomenon under investigation. In this study I will employ a reduction of common sense or taken for granted knowledge in order to expose the realm of pure consciousness. I focus directly on the common sense, suspending presuppositions in order to bring them into view in the group mentoring experience. Presuppositions conceal processes of meaning—constitution and assume that meaning inheres within ideas, objects, and events as if they lead an independent existence. This conscious reflection of the group mentoring experience allowed me to question the mundane, common sense knowledge that is frequently taken for granted.

Phenomenology is also concerned with understanding the essence and structure of an experience. Put simply and directly, phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: "What is the structure and the essence of experience of this phenomenon" and views it "as the source of all human significance without which there would be no meaning whatsoever...since experience is intentional it must be investigated descriptively" (Colaizzi, 1973, p. 5).

Phenomenology first examines and then describes the phenomena as presented to consciousness. From the reality of experience, individual consciousness creates structures that explain and pattern the meaning of an experience. The essence of these patterns is contained within the phenomenological structure of one's conscious-
ness. This is an individual pattern that is created by the theoretical system of the individual. Phenomenology, then, provides a method for studying structures that are understood by reflection on experiences as presented to consciousness.

Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world. "To be conscious is to be aware, in some senses, of the aspect of the world" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

Phenomenological research acquires through description the essence of the phenomenon being examined. The descriptions and structures obtained are viable for naturalistic inquiry. In phenomenological research, the phenomenon in the world is captured and then submitted to rigorous and systematic investigation (Von Eckartsberg, 1986). A three-step approach to phenomenological investigation involves the following: (1) phenomenological description, (2) reduction, and (3) interpretation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). These steps provide the outline for the present study: analyzing the effects of the implementation of group mentoring with at-risk teenage African American males with successful adult African American male mentors.

The first stages involve the phenomenological description. Description is "balance by analysis and leads to interpretation" (Patton, 1990, p. 430). Description is the reformulated reflection of the phenomena as presented by the researcher or investigator involved in the investigation. Descriptions in this context are group behavioral narratives presented through the participant observation process. In other words they are personal accounts of their actual
experiences. Descriptions involve introspection and reflection and do more than just explain or report. They reconstruct through a language of reality (Natanson, 1974). A good phenomenological description is an adequate elucidation of some aspect of the life world--it resonates with our sense of lived life (Van Manen, 1990).

The second step is phenomenological reduction. Reduction involves an analysis of the essential structure of the experience. The attempt here is to capture the essence of the phenomenon through reflection on the descriptions. The reduction may be pictured as a 'bracketing' the attempt to place the common sense and scientific foreknowledge about the phenomenon in parenthesis in order to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon (Kvale, 1983).

In bracketing, the subject matter is confronted, as much as possible on its own terms (Patton, 1990). Patton equates reduction with inductive analysis and states that: patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data instead of being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990, p. 390).

This phase of the phenomenological method involves going from the particular essences of the description to the general essences of the reduction (Spiegelberg, 1960). It is the process of thematizing because the researcher attempts to cluster aspects of the descriptions into like categories or themes as a part of the reduction process.

Phenomenological interpretation involves discovering the es-
sence of the descriptions and reductions in an attempt to specify meaning. "Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, making inferences, building linkages..." (Patton, 1990, p. 423).

Interpretation moves beyond acquainting itself with the components to the discovering of relationships. Phenomenological interpretation is a discovery of intentional relationships that unites conscious experience and the experience of consciousness.

Phenomenological interpretation is an attempt to identify the pre-reflective and intentional meaning that is essential for the described and reduced phenomenon. Interpretation attempts to understand the meaning of human expression.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), this systematic procedure of reflecting back in interpretation upon description and thematization gives the qualitative inquiry credibility.

Participant Observation

In order to get at an understanding of the group mentoring experience, participant observation of each group mentoring meeting was employed. Guba and Lincoln (1981) define participant observation as a form of inquiry in which the inquirer--the observer--is playing two roles. First of all, of course, he/she is an observer; as such, he/she is responsible to persons outside the milieu being observed. But he/she is also a genuine participant; that is, he/she is a member of the group, and he/she has a stake in the group's ac-
tivity and the outcomes of that activity.

There are many good reasons for utilizing participant observation and qualitative research utilizes participant observation as a means of generating and interpreting data. This research technique also builds upon direct experience. Douglas (1976) makes the point that in everyday life people use various tests of truth but that the most important of these tests is direct experience. People prefer to observe situations for themselves and are strongly convinced by their own direct experiences.

Participant observational techniques also make it possible to record behavior and events as they occur. The quality of simultaneity, the "I was there quality, is enormously persuasive not only to the observer but also to others to whom the observer reports" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 192).

Participant observation makes it possible to build on both propositional and tacit knowledge. The participant observer provides the broadest range of inputs that can be interpreted by the inquirer using his tacit knowledge base. Also, McCall and Simmons (1969) have noted, observational techniques are well adapted to maximize discovery and description. This asset is advantageous when no a priori theory exists to guide observation.

Participant observation techniques can also heighten the observer's ability to understand complex situations. When some behaviors are taken for granted or are so much "second nature that they escape awareness and resist translation into words or when meanings
are problematic or the phenomena under investigation are not concrete and thus more subject to moral or material-interest conflicts" (Douglas, 1976, p. 25). "The use of participant observational techniques may be the only way to understand the complexity of the situation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 193).

Participant observation also maximizes the inquirer's ability to understand motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like; they also allow the inquirer to see the world as the subjects see it, to live in their time frame, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment. Participant observation also allows the inquirer access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively--that is, in a real sense it permits the observer to use himself as a data source.

To prevent the participant observer from experiencing the setting in a biased manner, the perceived reality was checked against prior expectations. When there appeared to be no difference between the two, the observer will conclude that he has likely closed his mind to new and unexpected ideas. Another way to overcome the predisposition to see the new situation in terms of old preconceptions is through a process that Douglas (1976) calls immersion. The researcher is believed to be a valid tool based upon the belief that he/she can leave behind preconceived notions of what the inquirer will find by becoming so deeply involved with the context that the earlier prejudices are forgotten: The researcher defocuses and
discontinues to think of his new experience in terms of prior ideas.

The participant observation employed in this study was much more than just seeing. It referred to things the observer paid special attention to, things that I remembered, inspected, studied, and contemplated. All these shades of meaning were important to observe. As an observer, I listened to as well as viewed the group mentoring relationships. To understand and grasp social meanings, I sought to understand the context of events and behaviors, and gain an understanding of their feeling tone. Without listening to those I observed, I would not have recognized humor, joy, sadness, scorn, and all other shades of emotion that shaped their verbal communication (Cuba & Lincoln, 1981).

Role of the Researcher

Because this group mentoring experience was intended to serve as an alternative intervention technique used to prevent this at-risk population from becoming delinquent, it was necessary for the men and I to seek the maximum level of communication and input from the teens. They were responsible for developing the focus of each discussion and were allowed to communicate in a style most comfortable for them.

Because I freely shared some of my own personal experiences with the group participants, I feel I had a strong impact on the group during the many weeks we met. During this time I, along with all other participants, shared my goals, beliefs, and hopes for the
group. We all explored our experiences of knowing, learning, and sharing, and each emerged with a stronger sense of self.

I began the research aware of the influence my presence would have on the dynamics of the group process. With this in mind, I made all participants aware of my role as both an observer and a genuine participant at the start of the first group meeting. As a participant observer, I immersed myself in the group process as a way to overcome the predisposition to view the group dynamics in predetermined beliefs. This process allowed me to forget any learned ideas about African American men and youth and acquire a fresh understanding of the participants as they behaved.

After explaining the nature of my study to the participants, many teens asked questions about the usefulness of the study. Most delighted in the fact that I deemed them important and worth studying. However, a few seemed inhibited by the presence of my tape recorder and were less natural in the speech and behavior. For this reason I discontinued my uses of the tape recorder following the second group meeting and recorded their interaction through note taking. Most of the teens seemed to ignore my note taking and appeared uninhibited by my observation.

In helping to organize the meeting, I volunteered to transport some of the teens to and from the Boys and Girls Club for the group sessions. It was during these drives that I came to know many of them on a more personal level as we continued our conversations that begun in the group. Through providing them with a reliable
source of transportation, they came to trust me as they shared their likes and dislikes. To the surprised of many of the boys, we held a mutual appreciation for certain rap artist; And after listening to their music tastes, they seemed more receptive and open to my jazz music tapes.

Being the youngest mentor in the group, and approximately ten years older than most of the teens, I attempted to bridge the gap between the teens and the older mentors in the group.

Language as Data

How the phenomenon presents itself to the researcher becomes a major concern. Our everyday vocabulary and ordinary language constitute our access to experience. The language that is used to describe the experience is made manifold within the life text that is a narrative of an experience (Van Manen, 1990). It is this narrative that provides the data for the methodological investigation into the structure of the implementation process.

Focus Group

In order to increase the level of understanding of the group mentoring experience, a focus groups was employed. A focus group is an informal, small-group discussion designed to obtain in-depth qualitative information. One of the two mentoring groups participated in this form of discussion. In this study, researcher Cornell Mathis served as the focus group moderator.
A focus group discussion is informal. Participants are encouraged to talk with each other about their experiences, preferences, needs, observations, or perceptions. The conversation is led by a moderator whose role is to foster interaction. The moderator makes sure that all participants are encouraged to contribute and that no individual dominates the conversation. The moderator manages the discussion to make sure it does not stray too far from the topic of interest. The moderator also follows up on participants comments to obtain further details or to introduce new topics to the group. The overall goal of this focus group is to reveal the participants' perception about the topic of group mentoring. Focus groups are a form of qualitative research that offers a way to explore the topic in depth with a small group of participants drawn from an often narrowly defined target population (Whooley, Hatry, Newcomer, 1994).

Focus groups have the following four characteristics:

1. Each group is kept small to encourage interaction among the members,
2. The sessions usually last for ninety minutes,
3. The conversations focus on a restricted number of topics; the actual number varies depending upon the objectives of the session but is usually no more than three to five related subjects, and
4. The moderator has an agenda that outlines the major topics to be covered.

The topics are usually narrowly defined to keep the conversation relevant.
The task of the adult group mentors was to foster interaction by creating an informal atmosphere which encourages the teens to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and observations. The conversation was led by the mentor who encouraged all participants to contribute while preventing any one individual from dominating the conversation. They followed up on comments to obtain further detail or to introduce new topics to the group. Conversations were allowed to develop naturally to provide an opportunity for new dimensions and insights to arise. Teens were encouraged to use their own words; This freedom allowed the researcher to examine what teens think about the topics and how they approach it and why they arrived at the attitudes and opinions expressed (Whooley et al., 1994).

Discussion was fostered by asking the teens to discuss topics that a majority of them find relevant to them. The boys were usually allowed to speak at their own will. The atmosphere was informal as the boys were encouraged to verbally convey their ideas in language most natural to them. During the meetings, many of the boys elaborated on some of the topics while only a few of them freely spoke while discussing other topics. No one was required to speak. The discussions took place in two small rooms inside of the Boys and Girls Club. The rooms were furnished with two couches and several comfortable cushion chairs for the boys to sit. Full transcriptions of two group meetings and the focus group session are included in Appendix B.
Coding

Research is a process of searching for meaning. The researcher must identify categories of meanings submerged within the interactions observed during the participant observation and focus group discussion. As noted above, the methodological approach leads to the discovery of categories which emerge out of the data presented. Coding is a process whereby raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981) the coding process ought to be guided by two overriding principles:

First, whatever method the inquirer may choose to code, that method or set of categories has embedded in it assumptions pertaining to the nature of the data and whatever inferences may be drawn from them. Second, theory, hypotheses, and inquiry questions alone ought to guide the coding process and determine content categories. (p. 243)

While the coding process is informed by practice, theory, and careful reading, it ultimately determines whether or not the resultant research is worthwhile, for without coding categories the research may be incomplete or irrelevant or possibly reach erroneous conclusions. There are two broad types of category: the what is said (or subject matter) dimension and the how it is said (or device dimension). Since there are no standard norms of classification, the construction of categories is often a trial-and-error process, forcing the investigator to move between the data and either an a priori or a grounded theory.
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

In compliance with University established guidelines for human subjects research at Western Michigan University, I submitted and gained approval of my research by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. Understanding that the involvement of human subjects in research is not permitted until the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved the research protocol, I gained approval prior to beginning my research. The research was expedited and did not require full board review.

Informing the Participants

All participants received a letter of introduction which also described the study and their participation in it. All participants were asked verbally if they understood the letter and were then asked if they had questions. (See Appendix C.)

Protection and Confidentiality of Data and Subjects

All participants were informed that those wishing to terminate participation at any time would not be pursued, coerced, or encouraged to continue. There were no problems in the study; however, an attempt was made to remain sensitive and aware of the potential for problems. The data consisted of the personal beliefs, values, attitudes of the respondents in the research and could have been considered sensitive to the participants. Therefore all precautions and procedures to maintain confidentiality were taken. No names or
other identifying information is contained in the thesis.

Data Collection

The Kalamazoo United Way funded this project which began in 1995 through a grant to Big Brother/Big Sisters of Greater Kalamazoo. The project is a collaborative effort involving Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Kalamazoo, Boys and Girls Club of Kalamazoo, and Concerned Black Men of Kalamazoo.

According to Linwood Cousins, the supervisor of this collaborative effort, several Kalamazoo public school administrators and one representative of two Youth Service Organizations, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Kalamazoo, and Boys and Girls Club of Greater Kalamazoo, assisted in the selection of participants for this program. To determine which youth could most benefit from this program, Linwood articulated the programs goals to the persons specified above and generated a small list of teens whose needs matched these goals. There were several youths selected who refused to participate. The ages of the youth ranged from 13-16. Some of the participants had previously participated in the program and others were new to the program. There was no effort by the project supervisor to obtain a random sample, nor was he interested in including all teens who perform well academically. The teens chosen are at-risk African American males between the ages of 13-16. All reside within Kalamazoo County and attend one of the public schools within the county. Most live within a five mile radius of the Boys and
Girls Club and all sessions were held there. The respondents were asked to attend a total of 9 sessions: The sessions were held once a week for the 9 week period.

Data Analysis

The tape recorded and written transcriptions of each observation of the mentoring sessions, along with the recorded transcriptions of the focus group session provide the final data for analysis. In the analysis of the data, a phenomenological method of description, reduction, and interpretation was employed. To acquire a complete grasp of the group mentoring experience, I listened to the recording several times. To describe and reduce, I read over the written transcriptions immediately after each session. In order to formulate a definition of mentoring, I reflected on the relationships between reductions and descriptions.

What follows in Chapter III are the descriptions and reductions of the group mentoring experiences.
CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION AND REDUCTION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF GROUP MENTORING

Observation of the Beginning Group Mentoring Sessions

During the initial group mentoring session, the boys and the men gathered in the recreation area of the Boys and Girls Club and introduced themselves. Many of them had participated in the two previous series of group sessions and had therefore acquired a familiarity with fellow participants. Nearly half of the teen participants were new to the group mentoring sessions and had no prior acquaintance with the men. During the initial sessions approximately 20 teens and eight men were present. The ages of the teens in the group varied. The president of the Concerned Black Men welcomed all the participants and outlined some fundamental issues pertaining to the assumptions behind such group meetings. He stated his desire for them to share with the men issues of concern to them because the men were their to serve as resources to them. He encouraged them to view the men as adult friends who could help them establish and accomplish positive goals. Participants were served pizza and beverages prior to beginning each session. Participants were randomly separated into two groups. The group covered several topics.

Description

The beginning group mentoring sessions between the men and the
teens were very positive. This was due to the use of group interactive process whereby many of the youth participating in the groups got involved in structuring an agenda complete with topics of interest to the teens and their adult mentors. Older, and more outgoing teens offered input into the agenda setting at a much higher rate than did the younger, and more quiet teens. The mentors observed the unequal participation and quickly sought contributions from all teens. After seeking and acquiring participation from everyone, it was decided that the following topics would be discussed over the eight week period: college, goal setting, lifestyles, careers, job interviewing, money management, race, and relationships. Soliciting the ideas from the mentees was no easy task, and this activity utilized the full amount of time allotted for the group discussions.

The older mentees illustrated this in our first group meeting by stating the following: "What are we going to talk about?" "Last year we talked about a lot of things. Can we talk about some of those things this time."

Mentor:

Well, what we intend to do is allow each of you to offer one or two topics for discussion. Then, after everybody offers a topic of interest, we will decide on the eight or nine topics that most of us would like to discuss.

First (older) mentee: "Man, I think we should talk about money because we talk about this last year and learned a lot."

Second (older) mentee:

Yeah, I forget the guys name, but he brought in a newspaper and showed us how to read the stocks. Man, that was cool. He even talked to us about how much money we would need in the
future in order to live the kind of lifestyle we wanted. I forget a lot of what he said but would like to talk about it this time.

Mentor: "Well does anyone else want to learn about how much money you’ll need to live the lifestyle you want?"

Third (older) mentee: "Yeah, It's probably something we all need to know about because if we don't, how will we know how money we need to make."

Fourth (younger) mentee: "Man, I already know that, I know how much my mother paid for her car and how much our house cost."

Mentor:

It's good you know these things but others may not and it could benefit all of us to learn more about how much money will be needed to have a nice home and a nice car in the future. You also needed to know how much it cost to raise children, since many of you will have your own families one day.

Third (older) mentee:

So, you saying you know how much it cost to go to college and how much it's gonna cost to buy a home ten or fifteen years from now? Do you know what kind of jobs pay the most money? We need to know what jobs pay the most money so we can know what jobs to get. That's what we talked about before.

Mentor: "Okay, we can talk about this because it is one of the most important things you will need to learn. What about some of you other guys, What would you like to discuss?"

Fourth mentee: "What about space exploration, we talked a little about this in school just the other day."

Mentor: "Okay, that's a good one, space exploration, and what else."

Fifth (new) mentee: "Let's talk about cloning."
Third (old) mentee: "Man, I don’t care about that, why do you want to know about cloning somebody? That’s some strange stuff. You must want to be a scientist or something."

Mentor: "That’s a good topic, let me write this down. I just read about sheep being cloned."

Second (older) mentee:

Black history, we need to learn about black history. We talked a little about this last time and I learned a lot. We all need to know this. The only black person we learn about in school is Martin Luther King Jr. What about all the other successful black people?

Other mentees express their approval.

Third (older) mentee: "What about racism, because we got some racist in our school. One of my friends just got into a fight with a white boy because he called him a nigger."

Mentor: "Okay, I will write this down because it is important for you to know how to deal with racism in a more positive way."

First (older) mentee: "What about college, let’s talk about applying to college because I want to go to college."

Mentor: "Certainly we are going to talk about applying to college. All of you need to know this regardless of what your grades are. How many of you know how to apply for college?"

Fifth (younger) mentee: "You can talk to the guidance counselor at school about this."

Mentor: "That’s right, you can talk to the guidance counselor, but in case you are not able to talk to her, you may need to know what steps to take to apply to college."
As mentioned above, mentees who had previously participated in the Moyo Baraza sessions dominated the discussions. In formulating discussion topics, they mainly pulled from issues discussed during the last series of sessions, and in doing this, quickly assumed the role of spokespersons. They can be credited for initiating the dialogue between the teens and the men during the first session and providing the mentees with an example of how to communicate with the men. The relationship they shared with the men allowed teens new to the group to feel comfortable getting involved and asking questions of the men. An illustration is when Second mentee asked a mentor and fellow church member about the message delivered by the pastor. The mentee and mentor communicated with each other in a familiar manner. The two even talked about other members of their church. This friendly exchange encouraged other mentees to relax and open up.

Toward the end of the first session, the mentees had increased their involvement and attentiveness. They were vitally interested and displayed such interest through listening carefully. They listened to the various topics of discussion proposed by their peer participants and made rational judgments of the importance of each. This discussion technique employed by the group mentors effectively combated the apathy and boredom often found in many discussions involving teens and adults.

This initial session revealed a number of important aspects and characteristics of the discussion technique. First, the tech-
nique utilized was appropriate in terms of the age level of the teens involved and the social significance of the activity. Teenagers are tremendously interested in demonstrating their independence and they appear to be deeply interested in making decisions for themselves. Most of the teens gave favorable treatment to the subject matter. First mentee illustrates this as he suggests topics that he feels are important and worth discussing. He states, "I learned a lot during our last sessions, and one thing that I would like to learn more about is how to spend and manage our money." Second mentee demonstrates his support by stating the following: "Yeah man, I think we all need to know more about this."

Second, this discussion was productive. It moved purposefully and logically from one point to the next. The teens verbally conveyed a sense of accomplishment and completion. While they listened to one another and compromised on what topic would be discussed, there was an absence of aimless chatter during this session. Their ideas were focused and their plans were consummated.

Second mentee illustrated his willingness to compromise and express agreement with another mentee by asserting that "they all need to learn more about money management." He realized the importance of the topic and gave support to mentee introduced the topic for discussion.

As the meeting progressed, the teens who had previously participated in a series of group mentoring sessions spoke more often
than the others. They directed most of their comments toward the men and tried to impress them. Quickly the men turned to the new and more silent members of the group and they slowly began to share their ideas and concerns with their peers. This gave them a vested interest in the decisions and a basis for further deliberation. The men encouraged prolonged discussion between the mentees, instead of a one-dimensional flow from mentees to mentors.

One mentor demonstrates this during our first group meeting by stating the following: "Instead of attacking him for asserting that cloning would be a good topic of discussion, why don't you ask him what he finds interesting about cloning. This way you will not put him on the defensive." Third mentee, wanting to understand why fourth mentee wanted to discuss cloning asked fourth mentee why. Fourth mentee stated the following: "We talked about it in class. I would like to learn more about it. It just seems cool. Nobody knows much about it right now and, just think of what you could do if you learned how to clone people." Third mentee, realizing the value in what he said, agreed that it would be a good subject to discuss.

The role of the mentors as the leaders in the initial discussion sessions was the last element of concern. In order to ensure full participation from the mentees, the men encouraged them to help establish rules and an agenda for each group session. A favorable climate was established and standards were set, and notes outlining the main points of discussion were taken. When the discussion began
the mentors became group members, observers, and guides. The mentors did not assume the role of authorities who had the final answers. They served as interested participants with leadership skills that they exercised when necessary.

An illustration of this point can be seen as the men initiated a discussion during the second group meeting. He began by stating the topic of discussion (college preparation) and commenting on the significance of furthering their education beyond high school. Following his comments, the first mentee inquired about the qualifications for college:

Can you get into college with a 2.1 grade point average because that’s about what I have now. I messed around a lot last year but I’m bringing my grades up because I plan on going to college on a football scholarship. But even if I don’t get a scholarship, I’m still going to college.

Fourth Mentee:

You might be able to go to a small college but you won’t go to a big school. I know because my cousin goes to Michigan State University and he got straight A’s in high school. I know he wouldn’t have gotten into Michigan State with a 2.1 grade point average. I’m not trying to put you down or anything like that because my GPA is lower than yours.

The objective of a group mentoring relationship involving African American male teens and successful African American men in their community is to enhance the decision making skills of the teens. By doing this, it enhances the mentees concept of self and allows them to view themselves as individuals who can work with others to achieve desired goals. It also helps to provide them with the necessary support to ensure a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood.
The interpersonal communication contributed to the formation of the relationship. The interpersonal communication components present in the group mentoring relationships contributed to the mentees positive responses to the interaction and instruction provided by the mentors. A example is the first mentee’s response to his group, particularly the four mentors present, to the fourth mentee’s remarks about college entrances requirements:

Fourth Mentee:

What do you guys think, I mean I know you guys said we need to get good grades to go to college but how good do they have to be? I only have one more year to really get my grades up and I know I want be able to raise them up from a 2.1 to a 3.5 in one year. That’s just not gonna happen no matter how hard I try. I know you guys know what the requirements are because all of you have been to college. Do you think I’ll be able to go to a big school?

The mentors created a positive relationship through speaking in a positive, encouraging way that invited the mentees to take part in the decision of forming an agenda for the group. They managed the input and made sure that everyone agreed to the agenda. They made the mentees feel confident that their input was not just welcomed, but strongly needed.

This observation demonstrates that group mentoring is dependent on the language employed by the mentors. Mentoring, then, is concerned with the nature of the interaction between mentors and mentees. It is the language employed by the mentors that offers the strongest motivation for the mentees. First Mentee shows this during our focus group discussion by stating the following: "Having listened to a couple of the mentors talk about accomplishments
they achieved despite experiencing racial segregation and obvious racism, I was motivated to work much harder to achieve my goals.

The mentees perceived their mentors as having credibility as a result of successfully overcoming obstacles to reach their goals. This struggle to transcend racist barriers is a common, yet different experience and is a basis for building bonds of friendship and ease of communication.

Second Mentee commented during our focus group discussion about one of the mentors in his group:

We attend the same church and whenever he sees me he talks to me and asks questions about how things are going. He always seems to have time to talk and show his concerned for me. He is always happy to see me and offer help or information to me if I need it.

Mentoring is a relationship that entails mutual authenticity between individuals. Interpersonal communication components found in mentoring relationships, to some degree, provide the source for establishing and guiding the interaction between mentors and mentees.

Reduction

Mentoring as experienced by the mentees is a relationship which progresses in a natural way. Both the mentees and mentors maintain their identify. The mentees feel positive about the focus of the relationship and are encouraged by the relationships motivating, socializing, and educating effect. The presence of the interpersonal communication components such as language, authenticity,
and availability create a context wherein the mentees are able to become more comfortable in the mentoring relationship.

**Language**

Language is an interpersonal communication component present in mentoring as described by the First Mentee stating, "the use of verbal language to express feelings, ideas, experiences and beliefs is practiced by most of us." Language can be used to express experiences with others. It functions as a means of conveying meanings from one individual to another. This process enables us to determine the embedded structures within the mentoring described by First Mentor.

Language is employed as a means of describing our experiences to others. The First Mentee's use of words generally understood as recounting interpersonal communication places the identified interpersonal components at the core of his mentoring experience. First Mentee illustrated this point during the focus group when he said, "the mentors motivated me through stories of successfully overcoming obstacles." Lewis and Lewis (1984) allude to this in a discussion of effective mental health prevention programs for African American families and children. They suggest that one important factor in such programs is maintaining positive self concepts. Teens who possess this will be more likely to acquire the resilience needed to achieve their goals. For First Mentee, the interaction between him and the mentors is perceived as containing both motivating and un-
derstanding statements.

Communication can be viewed as the act of sharing one's private meanings with others. Through this interpretation, language within interpersonal communication can be seen as a process which allows one to make private experiences public. Language accomplishes this group consolidating function through the exchange of messages, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of the individuals communicating.

Enhanced Perception

First Mentee identifies group mentoring as a factor in enhancing his perception of achievement within the school environment and society at large. "They motivated me through stories of their success in overcoming obstacles of racism and segregation." Self-enhancement is intimately connected to the self's experience of inspiration within mentoring as described by First Mentee. Mentoring for First Mentee elevated the personal and social self. First Mentee asserted that he initially felt apathetic about achieving good grades as a means of accomplishing his goals. As he states it: "I excused myself for my failure to achieve the goals I had originally set out to achieve in school and other places. I sort of felt that being black gave me the right to fall short of my goals."

Grief (1997), when discussing values and norms communicated and demonstrated by teens, mentions peer groups as being the dominant influence on their behavior. He suggests that as a result of peer
influence weak achievement motivation and antisocial behavior is encouraged. He feels that the more traditional institutions in the African American community abdicate their responsibility for socialization of their children, the greater the influence of the peer groups.

Observations of the Middle Group Mentoring Sessions

The groups began to discuss the topics decided on in the first group sessions. The topics discussed during this period included goal setting, careers, and money. At this time, the teens had grown familiar with each other and the men. A small number of mentees had begun demonstrating behaviors that prevented constructive dialogue from occurring. Besides this, the teens seemed to taunt and jeer at one another more than they did in the beginning. They engaged in lots of play activity during the discussions. And, having acquired an understanding of each mentor’s predictable reaction to their behavior, they affected different behavior depending upon the particular mentor leading the discussion.

Description

As mentees, the teens developed unique relationships with the mentors. Although many of them see the mentors only once a week, some became attracted to the mentors as role models and friends. Eighth mentee illustrates this point during one of the sessions when he said, "I am going to wait to talk with First mentor about this
because he is an engineer and will be able to help me interview for a job with an engineering company."

As Third Mentee put it during our focus group discussion,

I feel like I am able to identify with them. Sometimes they joke around with us and show different sides of their personality. Some adults are so serious that you feel uncomfortable talking with them, but most of the men here play around with us.

Third Mentee credits the mentors with fostering an environment which allows for authentic self expression.

During the discussions at this stage, the mentors increased their expectations for the group. For the discussion on careers, group members were asked to visit the local library to seek and gather information on their career choice. After doing this they were asked to lead a group session. This required a larger commitment on the part of the mentees. The discussions of the careers of interest to the mentees represented intellectual teamwork, resting on the philosophy and principle that the pooled knowledge, ideas and feelings of several persons have greater merit than those of a single individual (Jarolimek, 1964). Initially, mentees seemed hesitant to lead the discussion on their chosen topic but as the men encouraged other members to ask questions and add opinions to what was being presented, mentees became more involved in their discussions. An illustration can been seen in Eighth mentees discussion about his research of electrical engineers: Electrical engineers work for the city and state government, and might work for big companies like Ford or General Motors or and engineering firms.
Sixth Mentee: "What do you need to know to be an electrical engineer?" Ninth Mentee: "To be an electrical engineer you need to be good at math and science. You have to go to college or a technical school."

Seventh Mentee: "Yeah man, you have to go to college to learn everything they need to know. You have to take advance math and science course not offered in high school."

As a result of sharing, combining, and evaluating ideas, the group discussion of careers and occupations had greater depth and validity than the work of an individual mentee. Discussions led by mentees generated more interest and stronger motivation to learn as a result of participation in the discussion by fellow mentees. This involvement led to deeper understanding and greater possibility of changes in both attitude and behavior.

Mentors, in the role of group participants, also asked questions and encouraged mentees to use effective speech habits during their discussions. In researching some of the topics, Mentees increased their vocabularies and ability to express themselves. Seventh mentee illustrates this point during one of our group discussions when he said, "Most people play billiards as a hobby but there are a few people who actually make a living playing billiards." Fifth mentee responded, "man, what’s billiards? I’ve never heard of it." Seventh mentee then said, "That’s the technical term for the game of pool."

The mentees also developed social skills and gained other
advantages such as improved ability to listen carefully and purposefully. Ninth mentee illustrates this point during a group discussion when he asked what is the difference between the job duties of a draftsman and an architect because having listened to your description of the work of a draftsman and knowing what an architect does, it sounds like the two jobs have many similarities.

With adequate knowledge of the teens, the mentors spoke with a few overly garrulous teens to curb their excessive talking, and this helped to balance the distribution of contributions during the discussions. Mentors were attentive to all mentees and gave encouragement throughout the discussions. In attending to the mentees, the mentors looked around at everyone from time to time and smiled at them. They leaned forward in their chairs and often restated the points mentees made to emphasize that they were listening. A mentor illustrates this in his response to First Mentee:

I understand how much football means to you and how badly you want to become a professional football player, but just like everyone else here, you will be required to get good grades to be considered for a scholarship to attend one of the better schools.

When mentees directed comments to mentors and mentors did not hear or understand them they asked them to restate the comment. Generally, mentors did not give too much attention to one or two mentees and neglect others. Mentors withheld their attention when mentees participated in a way that was distracting or disruptive to the group. As stated by Fourth Mentee during the focus group discussion:

I don't feel that too much attention is given to any one member of the group, although some members talk more than others. The
men usually try to involve all of us to talk at our own will, and if we have nothing to say they do not pressure us to talk.

For Fourth Mentee, the attitude the men took toward interaction in the group demonstrated their mutual respect for the mentees. Like many teenage African American males, feeling respected was important to Fifth Mentee. As he stated, they talked about respect during the first meeting and, at first, I thought that they were just talking about us showing respect for them, but they have shown us the same respect that we give them.

Although most of the men were much older than the teens, they interacted with the teens in a mutually respectful manner. The teens and the men referred to one another by first names. As stated by Sixth Mentee:

Initially, I felt a little intimidated by the men. After all, they are educated, successful, and much older than we are. I did not know what to expect from them. But after noticing the respect they gave to me and other teens in the group, I felt more comfortable approaching them and asking them questions.

For Sixth Mentee, group mentoring is recognizing the presence of an other in group interaction. This includes observing the verbal and nonverbal messages being communicated by an individual with superior rank and knowledge in society. The group mentoring relationship, as described by these Mentees, provides both respect and modeling.

Following our discussion about careers, we spent the next session discussing money. During this discussion emotions ran high, as mentees talked about how much money they wanted to make. Having already talked about careers/jobs, mentors commented on the posi-
tive relationship between the career/job one has and the potential amount of money one can earn. Mentees were then asked why they desired the amount of money they were pursuing. This question evoked various responses by mentees who soon began to make value judgments on comments made by fellow teens. The mentors were left with the task of refocusing the group.

In refocusing the group, the mentors called their attention to the original question and asked that the mentees bring the discussion back to the original business of the group.

Because there was lots of excitement about the topic of money, the mentors performed an act known as gate keeping, which is defined as behavior that helps all members of the group to participate by limiting those members who monopolize the discussion and encourage low participants to talk more (Betcher, 1983). Included in this discussion was the cost of living, which comprised the cost of housing, transportation, food, clothing, entertainment, and miscellaneous expenses. Many of the teens seemed surprised to discover the cost of housing, automobiles, utilities and vacations. As the men gave the cost of these things they seemed to become less animated. Their mood changed, and suddenly they appeared to take the discussion much more seriously. It was as though at that very moment they understood the realities of adulthood.

As stated by Seventh Mentee during this discussion,

I can't believe the amount of money one must earn just to drive a nice car, living in a nice home, and take an occasional vacation. You guys are right, If we don't finish high school and attend college, chances are we aren't going
to live comfortably. I'm glad we are talking about these things.

Seventh Mentee credits the men with providing him and the group information needed to make good decisions in life. For Seven Mentee, as for many of the mentees, motivation was dependent on the environment and the messages it conveyed. He feels that the mentors genuinely tried to encourage through the information they shared while interacting with them during the group discussions.

During this discussion, some of the mentees indicated that they did not need much money to survive. And after the mentors explained what it takes to survive, some became silent. The mentors then focused on the emotional responses. As Eighth Mentee states:

The men always seemed genuinely concerned about us. Whenever we are quiet, or confused, or don't understand something they offer their help. They ask us what we do during our free time and try to find out what our interests are. Many have given us their phone numbers to call them if we need to talk. And others have volunteered to help us find jobs.

The concern Eighth Mentee perceived from the mentors is based on the communication of empathic understanding to them about their feelings.

Reduction

Group mentoring, as experienced by Seventh Mentee, is an enlightening relationship that helps mentees increase their information and knowledge about themselves and society. During group mentoring, mentees become aware of the value of the relationship in
guidance, motivation, and self enhancement. Toseland and Rivas (1984) point out that when leading groups for educational purposes, leaders concentrate on both the individual learner and the group as a whole, as a medium for learning, reinforcing, and discussion.

For Eighth Mentee, group mentoring is a process which involves recognizing and understanding how mentees feel about an issue. Mentors are expected to pay attention to what mentees are saying, how they say it, and their body language. The presence of the interpersonal communication components such as availability, authenticity, and person building, provide a means in which the mentees are able to become more trusting in the mentoring relationship.

**Authenticity**

Frequently, the mentees, particularly Third Mentee expressed appreciation for the atmosphere of authentic self-expression created by the mentors. Authenticity here refers to ease of communication between of the mentees and the mentors within the context of the mentoring relationship. In this instance, both the mentees and the mentors are encouraged to express themselves honestly and openly. Neither is taken over by the other, but each maintains a sense of one's own self. While there are obvious status differences in the relationship, each participant remains unique and the mentees are not pressured to become copies of the mentors. All participants are valued for their uniqueness.
Mutual Respect

Fifth and Sixth Mentee gave descriptions of group mentoring which contains within them mutual respect between both mentors and mentees. Consistency between the behavior illustrated by the mentors and the expected behavior of the mentees is evidenced in their description of group mentoring. Their expectations of the mentors derived from the language used and their nonverbal body posture which set the stage for the mutual respect shared between the mentors and the mentees. Fifth and Sixth Mentee perceived their mentors as having respect for the mentees. Fifth Mentee stated that observing how they treated everyone with respect reassured him of his need to respect his mentor. To the degree that reciprocity exits in the relationship, interpersonal respect is established and maintained.

Social Enlightenment

Seventh Mentee identifies group mentoring as a factor in increasing his awareness of what it takes to survive. "You guys were right, if we do not finish high school and attend college we aren't going to live comfortably." The acquisition of knowledge about the self in relation to society had an inspirational effect on Seventh Mentee. Mentoring for him forged a connection between the self and society. Preceding this discussion, Seventh Mentee lacked the information needed to contemplate the expectations accompanying adulthood. Weaver (1990), when discussing interpersonal communication
roles, mentions family as being the basis for many of the roles we think should project versus those we truly want to project. The group mentoring experience noted by Seventh Mentee served to bring into balance the personal and social self.

Availability

From Eighth Mentee description, the physical and psychological presence of an other both during the discussions and outside of the context of the group mentoring experience is significant. He talks about how some of the mentors paid attention to verbal and nonverbal feelings. He also mentions that some of the mentors would ask about what the boys did during the time they were not in their presence, as a means of understanding what the mentee’s interests were and how they spent their free time. The mentors offered their telephone numbers to the mentees and made themselves available outside of the group discussions. The availability of the mentors allows for the development of the relationships. It provides for interpersonal and emotional sharing that serves as a conductor for promoting bonding.

Bonding

One of the most noticeable interpersonal communication components that many of the mentees described is the experience of bonding. Many of them clearly identify bonding with some of the mentors. Bonding in this case is created within a complementary relationship simultaneously when individuals create a relationship
with a valued significant other. First mentee demonstrates this point during a group meeting when he said "Where is third mentor? I want to tell him about something I read yesterday in this book. He and I were just talking about it and I just a couple of days ago I read the same thing." First Mentee’s description indicates that bonding in his group mentoring relationship is based on his perception of concern and acceptance by the mentors. Along with this, a number of interpersonal communication components which facilitate the group mentoring relationship are exposed. They consist of the individual’s ability to maintain authenticity within a complementary relationship, availability of the the mentors, the mutual respect existing in the relationship, and the use of verbal language to create understanding.

A reduction of the comments on group mentoring as described by many of the mentees shows that many of the dimensions associated with interpersonal communication are apparent in group mentoring. Taken together these elements help form the essence of group mentoring.

Observations of the Final Group Mentoring Sessions

The final discussion topics comprising job interviewing, relationships and race concluding this series of group sessions. The groups had met a total of six times at this point, and it was apparent from observing them that the participants felt a commitment to attend and remain involved in the group discussions.
Through these weekly discussions, the men and the teens had come to share expectations, beliefs, and motivations. They had developed a common understanding of the purposes and meaning of the activities, and had come to use common strategies and problem-solving techniques. Many of the mentees accepted the role of learner because they recognized the value the knowledge and experience the mentors offered. The familiarity and social similarity of the mentors and the mentees fostered the development of the relationship. This could be seen through the interpersonal communication exchanged between the mentees and the mentors. Fourth mentee illustrates this point during a group session while speaking with Third mentor about race when he said "it's hard for me to learn in school with all the stuff going on in the class. Man, was it like that when you went to school."

At this stage, it became evident that many of the mentors, through demonstrated interpersonal interaction, had cemented trusting relationships with many of the teens.

The interpersonal style or interaction of each of the men differed as they responded uniquely to the desires and needs of the mentees. Many of the mentees had come to recognize certain men as supportive as these men would naturally offer assistance, support, concern attention, and encouragement. Others mentor were seen as instructors, who were primarily providing skills, conveying appropriate behavior, and warning the youth of dangerous and socially
undesirable behavior. There were others men who seemed to be socializers who wanted to be the youths friends. Many of the mentors seemed to fluctuate between interactive styles but few behaved instinctively.

During a simulated job interview activity, Ninth Mentee illustrates his awareness of the unique talents of two mentors while deciding on who will interview him.

I'm gonna wait awhile until First mentor is free because he will be able to give me an understanding of how to interview for an engineering position. When I interview for the sales position I talk with Second mentor.

Ninth mentee recognizes that mentors are resources who possess knowledge and experience in different areas and intelligently reacts to this by asking mentors to provide information in their area of specialty. A conscious attempt by the mentees is made to identify with specific mentors out of practical self-interest. In the exchange shared by the mentors and the mentees the mentees frequently learn something new. The mentees gained knowledge about how to plot and plan for tasks can be transferred and applied to the larger tasks and activities of life (Institute For Urban and Minority Development, 1992).

The simulated interviews offered mentors opportunities to build the mentees sense of self. Adolescents frequently compare themselves favorably and unfavorably with other people and rely on certain social standards. The mentors act as mediator between these social influences and the mentees introspective and possibly distorted self judgment. The mentee's self-esteem is positively af-
fected by the perception of the mentor’s opinion. And the regard of
the mentor in this area of importance helps build the teens self-
esteem. Group mentoring offers teens opportunities for self obser-
vation in a number of social activities and psychological situa-
tions. Through this, the teens develop their own standards of beha-
voir, and not to just adapt or measure themselves by the standards
of others. The mentors validate them.

Following our session spent simulating job interviews, we
spent the next session discussing race and relationships. Unlike
the attitudes displayed during previous discussions, the teens spoke
cynically about the current state of race relations in America.
They communicated an awareness of the discrimination, and systema-
tic, institutionalized racism that blacks face. They seemed to
understand that their race made them different in the minds of some
Americans. As the teens asked questions about race and race rela-
tions in America, a few of the men recounted experiences they had
with racism, discrimination, and prejudice. In general, the men
tended not to initiate a racially oriented discussion concerning the
group mentoring experience. However, in response to the teens
probes, it became clear that racial identity was an important factor
in their lives and in how they interacted with the teens.

The mentors wanted to teach the teens to take pride in their
racial identity. They also emphasized the importance of learning
to cope successfully with whatever problems emerged including racism.
An illustration of this can be seen when Third mentor said,
you know that you might already be starting off with two strikes against you being black and being a male. That means that you have to work extra hard and be better than everybody else. You have to be tough minded and believe you can make it. I really believe all of you have what it takes to make it.

Many of the mentors talked about qualities that the teens need to develop such as being positive and respecting themselves. And mentors were careful to put pride in racial identity in its proper perspective so that it does not become a crutch.

The mentees experienced a sense of encouragement from the comments made by the men. During the focus group discussion Tenth Mentee states,

I think that being a black male in America makes it harder to succeed at accomplishing your goals but I feel that I can do it. You guys did it when times were harder so I know I should be able to do it.

Tenth Mentee is inspired by the success of the mentors, and uses their success as motivation to accomplish his own scholastic and professional goals.

Reduction

From Tenth Mentee description it is evident that the relationship had a motivating, inspiring, guiding effect.

Persuasion

Tenth Mentee’s description of mentoring reveals that group mentoring serves to influence the teen’s attitudes, belief, values, and behavior. Although the mentee believes that "being a black male
makes it harder to succeed at accomplishing your goals," he gained inspiration through awareness of what the mentors had overcome to accomplish their goals. One of the most widely held definitions for persuasion is the process of influencing people's attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior (Larson, 1992; Weaver, 1990; Devito, 1988b). According to Weaver (1990), to get others to do what we want them to do is one of the primary reasons for engaging in interpersonal communication. Tenth Mentee group mentoring experience indicates that within group mentoring, interpersonal persuasion is present.

Humility

In addition, mentoring for Tenth Mentee and others, created a sense of humility in regard to his attitude toward successful African American men in their community. Their interpersonal communication with the mentors also caused them to change their perspective regarding their own ability to succeed. The ability to consider the other's perspective is an important element in interpersonal communication.

Throughout this chapter, I offered the descriptions and reductions of the group mentoring experiences between the men and the boys over a three stage period. Chapter IV will present a fundamental definition of group mentoring as developed from the composite reductions.
CHAPTER IV

FUNDAMENTAL DEFINITION OF MENTORING

This chapter presents the fundamental definition of group mentoring experienced by teenage African American males and successful African American men. The reductions are presented as a composite from which a basic definition is derived from the group mentoring sessions.

Composite Reductions of the Group Mentoring Experience

Language

The communication of meanings is achieved through the use of language. Individuals use language to describe experiences and language is the ingredient within group mentoring that allows for expression and interpretation. The participants in the group mentoring sessions rely upon each other’s use of language to create cooperation. For this reason, Language is the essential means used to exchange and interpret meanings created between the mentees and their mentors.

Enhanced Perception

Enhanced perception is the increased awareness experienced by the mentees in a group mentoring relationship. Within group mentoring, enhanced perception refers to the process of enhancing the the
self awareness of the mentees as a direct result of the interaction between them and the mentors. Enhanced perception is the ingredient present within group mentoring that positively influences the mentee's self concept and has the effect of elevating their self confidence. The mentees enhance their perception as a result of their interpretation of the information, ideas, feelings, and behaviors experienced in their interaction with the mentors.

**Authenticity**

Authenticity refers to the unique selves of the individuals involved in the group mentoring relationships. Being authentic means to remain true to your concept of self held prior to the initial creation of the group mentoring. The idea of authenticity relates to the uniqueness of the individuals. The mentees remain loyal to the self while participating in a hierarchical relationship with the mentors.

The self is the definition one creates for himself. It is defined from perceptions formed through interaction with others. The individual's ability to maintain self and to view others as being true to their unique selves is the essence of authenticity presented in group mentoring.

**Mutual Respect**

Mutual respect refers to the reciprocation illustrated between the mentees and the mentors. This is the element in group mentoring
that expresses the value and appreciation of the other. Mutual respect deeply influences the creation of successful group mentoring. Each person exemplifies a high relationship ethic. The hierarchical nature of the relationship makes it important to accept and recognize the unique humanity of the other. It is the compatibility between the behavior illustrated by the mentors and the expectant behavior anticipated by the mentees that typifies mutual respect.

Social Enlightenment

Social enlightenment is the positive influence on the social outlook of the mentees as a direct result of interaction between the mentees and mentors. The perception of the social environment is positively altered by the group mentoring experience. The conversation, interaction within the group mentoring sessions impacts the mentees perspective of their social environment. This enhanced perception gained through the group mentoring experience enhance their ability to effectively manipulate their social world.

Availability

Availability is the physical and mental presence of the other within the group mentoring relationships. Availability relates to the frequency that mentors extend themselves for encounters with the mentees. It is the willingness to listen and be present with the mentees. Initially, the individuals involved in the group mentoring may make themselves available in a superficial manner. But as the
relationship develops, each becomes more conscious of the other. This conscious availability can be identified as a key factor for fostering a successful group mentoring experience.

**Bonding**

Bonding in group mentoring is the coming together that exists between the mentees and the mentors. Bonding happens when individuals in relationships see themselves as intricate parts of one another lives. The togetherness is what constitutes bonding. Bonding brings about a feeling of oneness within the group mentoring relationships. The bonding established within the mentoring relationship provides the mentees with a significant other outside of the family.

**Persuasion**

Persuasion refers to the ability to influence the behavior of mentees as a direct result of the group mentoring experience. Interpersonal persuasion is the intention of the mentors to change the dysfunctional behavior of the mentees into a more positive sense of self. Within group mentoring, persuasion is the ingredient that influences the mentors to perform a behavior or embrace a set of ideas desired by both. Initially, this desired goal may have been desired by only the mentors. Persuasion occurs through intense dialogue whose purpose is to arrive at shared beliefs, values, and attitudes.
Humility

Humility as presented in group mentoring is the creation of an altered perspective of the mentees. It refers to a restored esteem for self and others which emerges out of their interaction with the mentors. The interpretation of the verbal messages serves as the conductor producing the humility.

Fundamental Definition of Group Mentoring

An investigation of the composite reduction provides the foundation for establishing the following fundamental definition of the group mentoring experience.

The mentees are drawn to the mentors by mutual respect developed through the use of a special language. Availability leads to bonding between the mentees and mentors. The relationships are fostered by the authenticity of both individuals while producing social enlightenment and humility which gives the mentees an enhanced self perception. Through persuasion the mentees develop self-confidence and become more productive.

The authenticity and shared culture allowed the mentees to express their true feelings within the group mentoring sessions. This led to bonding between both mentees and mentors. This occurred as the teens adjusted their interaction to harmonize with the mentors. As this happened the mentors also adjusted their interaction. African American teens often bring to mentoring a style of communicating that is not clearly understood by those unfamiliar with their parti-
cular culture. The adjustments during the interaction with the mentors helped to produce a sense of involvement within the group. Some of the adjustments took the form of slight changes in gestures, vocabulary, or even eye contact as a means of more effectively communicating with the others.

Group Mentoring Experience, Afrocentricity, and African American Teens

Group mentoring is an important valuable process that fits well with the experiences of many African American teens. As seen in the cultural perspective prominent in Afrocentricity, group mentoring provides a means of fulfilling the unique needs of many teens. Much of Afrocentricity is based on the idea of harmony and many African American teens do not live in communities that manifest themes found in traditional African culture which is why mentoring is an important intervention.

Harmony, as a concept within Afrocentricity thought can be seen in several important aspects of group mentoring. Many teenage African American males come into the group mentoring relationships with a deep need to feel connected to successful African American men. And the group mentoring experience provided the mentees with this opportunity.

The bonding that occurred within the group mentoring process encouraged the teens and supports the idea of harmony alluded to in Afrocentricity. In Afrocentricity, individuals are reliant upon others within the environment to aid in the creation of a harmonious
Asante and Asante (1987) write,

the African American finds energy and life in the midst of persons; he or she does not escape to mountains or the valley or the seashores in order to find energy, in the productive engagement with the other we truly experience our harmony. (pp. 187-188)

A teenage African American male can experience a harmonious relationship when involved in group mentoring.

Group mentoring is a source for presenting possibilities not previously available to students. Teenage African American males are encouraged to maintain their cultural authenticity and achieve goals valued in the mainstream black culture.

We can see from this investigation that teenage African American males gain much from group mentoring relationships. Such relationships offer them much needed sources of support. For the participants, the group mentoring experience made a significant difference in their lives.

It is my wish that this research will produce more effort to use this intervention strategy to salvage more young black males.

is for this reason that I performed investigation.
Appendix A

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: 27 May 1997

To: Douglas Davidson, Principal Investigator
    Cornell Mathis, Student Investigator

From: Richard Wright, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 97 05 05

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Implementation of Group Mentoring of At-Risk Teenage African American Males and Successful Adult African American Male Mentors" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 27 May 1998
Appendix B

Focus Group Session, Group Meetings
Focus Group Moderator: What do you think about the subjects that we have talked about so far?

Second mentee: There straight, there okay. I liked talking about money management more than anything else. I wished we could have talked more about that.

Third mentee: Yeah, that was a good topic, let's talk more about that. Let's do that today.

Fourth mentee: It's straight but we need a little more organization, we need to stop fooling around so much in the beginning and get settle and ready for the discussion. I think it is a good program and I enjoy coming.

Moderator: Does everyone feel listened to? Yes, I feel listened to. No, I do not feel listened to. Yes I feel comfortable giving my opinions. I think that most of the guys respect us. Do you feel respected?

First mentee: Yes until the fools come.

Moderator: Who are the fools. First mentee: You know, those who come late and disturb the group when they come. The ones who laugh at you when you comment and try to make you look stupid. I don't feel comfortable when they come.

Fourth mentee: Yeah, some people never say anything but laugh or criticize whatever you say. I don't like saying anything when this happens. Do you think that this is a good sized group?

Sixth mentee: I think that we should have a everyone in the
program in one group so that we can compare what we have learned. That way we can see who learned the most. You could also see who behaves most appropriately in the group. Maybe you can reward the member who learned the most from the discussions.

First mentee: I like the size of the group because it is not too big. But most times only a few people talk. I am the most talkative. Besides me, only a few others speak regularly. A couple of them never say much of anything. They act like they're afraid to talk.

Moderator: Does everyone think that their are some people in the group who participate too much?

First mentee: As I said, I do, but it does not bother me because as long I say what's on my mind and get the help I need I'm straight. If nobody else say nothing it's their decision.

Moderator: If there is someone who does not say anything in the group can you try to make that person feel comfortable and maybe then he will participate.

First mentee: Yeah, Seventh mentee, you never say anything and we would like to hear from you some of the time. Are you uncomfortable talking in this group setting?

Other mentees: Laughing!

Moderator: I did not say that in order for you to direct the attention to one particular member but to encourage those who speak frequently to encourage others to open up and talk.

Fourth mentee: I don't feel too much attention is given to
any one member of the group, although some members talk more than others. The men usually ask all of us questions, but if we don’t want to talk they are cool about it. They don’t pressure us into talking.

Moderator: Do you feel that there is praise or recognition given to each group member.

Second mentee: Well, we really only had one assignment and that assignment did not work well. It did not happen because most of the guys did not participate.

Moderator: What about the rest of you, do you feel you are recognized for things you do. Yeah, I feel like attention is given to all of us. But some of the men talk to some of us more than others. All of the men treat us with respect but not all of them show up and spend the same amount of time with you. Not to say that they are not cool guys, I think they are all cool.

Eighth mentee: The men always seemed genuinely concerned about us. If we are quiet, or don’t understand something they offer to help us. Some have asked me questions about how I spend my free time to find out what my interest are. Many have given us their phone number to call them if we need to talk. An others have volunteered to help us find jobs.

Moderator: Do you feel as though you know enough about us or would you like for the men to tell more about themselves.

Fourth mentee: I know about the men in my group but I do not know much about the men in the other group. All the men are cool
and they all speak to us. I know that I can ask any of them for a ride home and they will do it. But I do not know all of their names.

Third mentee: We do not get to be with the other guys as much but I know they are cool.

Fifth mentee: I know him but I do not know him well.

Moderator: Feel free to ask us questions, we are always asking you questions, question us.

Moderator: There were a few things that we had planned outside of the meeting that we have not done yet.

Moderator: Are the men in your group friendly and easy to talk to.

Moderator: I know I am serious most times but.

Second Mentee: Yeah, you are serious most times but we know that you are cool by the way you talk to us.

First mentee: Yeah, I got to know you through getting rides home with you. I know you’re cool. I know that most of you are coming from work and have probably had hard days at work. I remember the time when Third mentor and I were on our way here and a cop pulled us over for speeding. He was so mad that I thought he was going to curse the cop out but he didn’t. It was kind of funny but he kept his cool.

Laughter from the group.

First mentee: When this happened I got a chance to see him in a different light.
Third mentor (smiling) Yeah, but I held it together.

First mentee: Yeah, you did.

Moderator: What kind of experiences do you want us to share with you. Like embarrassing things. Like with most of the men, First mentor, Third mentor, Second mentor and others, they all work in office jobs and seem like they’re of a much higher class. They probably went to good schools. What school did you go to?

Moderator: I went to Western.

Fourth mentee: How did they do it? They must of had it hard growing up in the fifties and sixties being called niggers almost every day.... I do not know how they did it.

Moderator: Well, if they could do it in the fifties and sixties when it was much harder to succeed then why can't you do it?

Mentee: I did not say that I can't succeed but I am saying that it is hard. I do not know how they got their good jobs when I am struggling to get a simple job at Long John Silver.

First mentor: Most people start off with the small jobs first. These jobs are most important because they teach you how to punch a clock, how to follow instructions, how to work with other people and how to work. I started as a dish washer, and that was a real important job because I learned how to work there. I learned how to respond to my coworkers and how to apply what I was learning in school on the job.

First mentee: I have a serious question, If you are apply for another job, but the previous employer is not likely to give you a
good recommendation, I have an application that I turned in to this new job that I’m apply for but I did not put my previous employer down because I knew he would not give me a good recommendation.

Moderator: well, you want to do good work, but maybe you made a smart decision.

First mentor: I think in general that If you know that you are going to get a bad recommendation do not put the persons name don’t put the employers name down, but if the guy gets any clue at all that you work there he will call that employer and ask about you and there goes your job opportunity.

Third mentor: It is important that you do a good job all the time, regardless of if you like it or not. Do a good job and go find another job. The thing you do not want to do is get fired from a job. You want to be able to leave it in good standing.

Mentee: I was fired from a job at the last restaurant I worked. Mentor: Why were you fired.

First mentee: I was fired for yelling at my boss.

Second mentor: why did you yell at your boss?

First mentee: Well, she yelled at me first.

Another Mentee: I got fired from my job too.

Moderator: That’s not good.

Second mentor: The thing that you want to remember is that when you go to look for another job and you have one black mark against you and no one else has a black mark you are not going to get the job.
First Mentee: I know but she shouldn't have yelled at me, she yelled at me and said she was tired of all this dumb shit, because I used luke warm water, because my hands were hurting from burning them earlier, instead of scolding hot water to wash the dishes. She said, next time use hot water. I said I was using hot water. She fired me because I yelled back at her.

Second mentee: Where were you working?

First mentee: You know where the video watch shooting was, I worked down there.

Second mentor: What was your take home pay.

First mentee: I got paid good. I was bringing home around 90.00 to 150.00 a week.

Second mentor: Did you learn anything from this.

First Mentee: Yeah, I learned that I sealed my fate when I yelled back at her.

Mentor: In situations like that, all you have to do is tell yourself time out, I have to chilled down on this one.

Fifth mentee: I got fired from my job too.

Moderator: Where were you working. I was working for Olive Garden. I was fired because I was playing around rolling the tomato paste.

Other Mentees: Laughter.

Third mentor: You should have done your job before you began playing around.

Fifth mentee: How hard was it to get the good jobs that you
guys have.

Second mentor: It's hard work for anyone to obtain a good job. You have to work hard. Real hard... Nobody is going to give you anything, and unfortunately with my skin color I have to work doubly hard. The opportunities to succeed in certain areas are greater for you than they were for me and you guys must take advantage of those opportunities.

Moderator: What do you think it takes to succeed at accomplishing your desired goals?

First mentee: I think you have to work hard no matter what people do to you and keep your mind on your goals. Man, after listening to a couple of the mentors talk about accomplishments they achieved despite experiencing racial segregation and obvious racism, I was motivated to work much harder to achieve my goals.

Moderator: What do the rest of you think about this?

Fifth mentee: I think that if you work hard you will be able to go to college or do whatever it is you want to do. But, you know, it's sad that in 1997 blacks still have to work harder than whites and other people. That ain't right.

Tenth mentee: I think that being black in America makes it harder to accomplish your goals but I feel I can do it. You guys did it when times were harder so I know I should be able to do it.

Moderator: Do you feel you can be yourself around the men?

Second mentee: What do you mean? Like talking to them like I talk to my friends?
Moderator: Yeah, that's what I mean, being able to talk to them like friends.

Second mentee: Me and Third mentor attend the same church and whenever he sees me he talks to me and asks questions about how things are going. He always seems to have time to talk and show his interest. He is always happy to see me and offer help or information to me if I need it.

Moderator: Anybody else want to comment on that:

First mentee: I feel I am able to talk and identify with them. Sometimes they joke around with us and show different sides of their personalities. Because most of the men play around with us, I feel I am able to be myself around them.

GROUP MEETING

First mentor: Well, how is everybody doing today.

Third mentee: I'm doing okay!

First mentee: Alright! What are we going to do today? Last week we just talked about things we wanted to talk about. You guys were writing down stuff.

Fourth mentee: Man, lets do something fun this week. You should let us play music in here! Other mentees: Smile and laugh!

Second mentor: You know, I thought we might talk a little about college preparation. I'd like to know how all of you feel about school and whether or not we can help you in anyway.

Fifth mentee: School! Why do we have to talk about that?
I don't want to talk about school.

First mentee: You should've said something last week, man it is too late now. We already made the list.

Fifth mentee: What about school?

First mentor: I want to know if any of you have made plans to go to college.

Second mentee: What plans. I try to get good grades but, the teachers be trippin man.

Third mentee: What do you mean. My teachers gives to much homework. I ain't doing all that work. And because I don't do all my homework, I get bad grades.

Third mentee: Man, I know but ain't no way I'm staying in the house all day doin homework and then going back to school the next day to do more... that's crazy!

Third mentee: I bet yawl (mentors) didn't do as much home work as we do.

First mentor: I know how you feel because I felt the same way when I was a teenager, but by the time I was in college I wished I had done more homework and paid better attention. I probably would not have had to work as hard in college trying to learn what I should have already learned. I don't want you guys to go through what I did. Have you guys heard the saying practice makes perfect. If you practice what you learn in school by doing your homework, you'll go to college confident in what you know.

Sixth mentee: You're right, but man, when I get home I'm
tired. I might want to go to sleep for a minute or something. Anyway, I don't know if I'll be goin to college anyway. I might just go to a trade school or something. I might even go to the army.

Third mentor: What kind of grades do you have to have to get in college anyway?

First mentee: Yeah, man that's what I need to know because I have a 2.1 now. But, you know, I want to go to a big school, I not talking about A community college.

Seventh mentee: I doubt it you'll go to Michigan State or Michigan with a 2.1 GPA. Man, my cousin goes to Michigan State and he had all A's in high school. You want get into there, man! I'm not trying to put you down or anything, because my GPA is lower than yours but I know this.

First mentor: What do you guys think, because I know yawl, know... yawl already been to college!

Second mentee: Does anyone else wanna know how to go about getting accepted to college because this is very important. Some of you already know that you do have to have above average grades. That along with getting a good score on your ACT is most important. I don't even think they had test like that when I was in high school. That's what you need to focus on. I know you guys probably spend most of your time thinking about girls or sports.

Seventh mentee: Yeah, Sixth mentee, you always talking about how you can play basketball and you know you can't play. You know
you ain't gettin a scholarship the way you play. You better hit them books boys!

Sixth mentee: shut up boy, before I hit you!

Second mentor: Alright, stop playing around.

First mentor: I know all of you have what it takes to succeed in college just from talking to you so don't think you don't. Some of you may not have the grades to get into some of the big schools but don't let that stop you from going to a smaller school. That's what a lot of people do. And once you get to the bigger school nobody will ever know you were at a small school unless you tell them.

Second mentee: How do you apply to college.

Second mentor: You have to send them an application. And you should be able to get them from your guidance counselor's office. If you can't get them from there you can simply call the schools and ask them to send you an application for admission. I can help anyone if they need some help. You need to get your applications in as quickly as possible because this will improve your chances of getting into a good school. That also means you have to take your ACT as soon as possible.

Fifth mentee: What if you want to go to college but you don't know what you want to do.

First mentor: You mean not knowing what you want to study, like studying engineering, or business or something?

Fifth mentee: Yeah! Can you still go?

Second mentor: Some people attend college for two or
three years before they figure out what they want to do. Man, college is a place for exploration and experimenting with new ideas and beliefs. You don’t have to already have your mind set on what you want to study the first day of college. It is good if you do but it really want matter much in your first year or so. You’ll see...college will be fun for you guys. I had much more fun in college than I did in high school. One thing about college is, you get to study what you want. And you get to plan your own schedule. That way if you think better in the afternoon you can schedule all your classes in the afternoon and if you are a night person you can take some of your classes at night.

First mentee: Man, are you serious? You can schedule you own classes.

Second mentor: Yeah, that’s right.

First mentee: That’s live man!

First mentor: So guys, there are more reasons to go to college than just studying. But first you have to get good grades in order to get accepted.

Third mentee: College sounds pretty straight.

First mentee: Oh, now it sounds straight! Man, you just want to go to party and hang out and stuff.

Second mentee: Shut up, boy!

Third mentor: Guys, it’s alright to have a good time some times, just as long as you keep your priorities straight. Its good to mix fun in with your work. That way you don’t burn yourself out.
First mentee: Yeah, I guess you right.

Sixth mentee: How much harder is the work in college. It’s at different levels of difficulty depending on what you study and where you are in you field. It’s no different than being in the first grade and having to learn how to add before learning to multiply and divide. You will learn the basics first and then learn more as time goes on.

Second mentor: That’s why it’s important for you guys to work hard in school and do your homework.

Seventh mentee: I gotta go to the bath room! I’ll be back.

First mentor: What time is it anyway? We may have to wrap up things here and maybe pick up next week because it’s almost time to go.

Third mentee: Can you take me home First mentor?

First mentor: Yeah, I guess.

GROUP MEETING: SIMULATED JOB INTERVIEWS

Third mentor: We need to try to get here at the same time so that we can begin the meeting together, Okay?

Fifth mentee: You know some people; are gonna be late, they never come on time.

Second mentee: I hope you ain’t talking about me because I here on time more than you are so don’t even try it.

Fifth mentee: I wasn’t talking about you but since you wanna go there, I’m always here on time, boy!
Second mentee: Whatever!

Third mentor: Let's try to treat each other with respect and courtesy. There's no sense in trying to attack one another because we have all been late including some of the men.

Sixth mentee: Some of you always late and you want us to be on time.

Third mentee: But they coming from work, I bet they say they have an excuse.

Mentees: looking at the men and awaiting their response.

Third mentee: Man, I'm glad I don't have to work everyday.

First mentor: Yeah, maybe not now but sooner than you know.

Second mentor: Anyway, Speaking of work, aren't we supposed to do the simulated job interviews today? Did you guys remember.

Mentees: Yeah, we remembered, why do you think I wore my good pants and shirt? I was gonna wear a tie but I said no, that would be too much for this.

First mentor: You do have to worry about what you have on now but as I said last week, during a real job interview you would want to wear good clean clothes that are appropriate to your job. For instance, if you are applying to work for an engineering firm, you might not need to wear a suit but you would need to wear a clean pair of slacks and a clean dress shirt.

Second mentor: Well, you might want to wear a suit just to be on the safe side although most engineers don't wear suits to work. You future engineers know this.
First mentee: nods his head no. The same thing is true for you future architects and draftsman. Just like if you wanted to be a teacher, you would not be required to wear a suit to work but it would be to your advantage to wear one to the interview. Now, for some of you who will be going into business will likely wear a suit and tie everyday. That's standard business attire and you would be expected to wear it to an interview.

First mentee: Anyway, lets get started, with the interviews. I have some employment sections of several papers and I'm gonna pass out these and have you guys look through and pick out a job that you would like to interview for. We will help you locate a job that fits your interest if you can't find one. If you see more than two you can interview for that one as well. Be sure to interview with at least two mentors in order to get feedback from different people.

Second mentee: I'm ready! I already know how to interview for the kind of jobs I want.

Second mentor: What kind of jobs do you want? I wanna interview for a entry level engineering position and a sales position because I was looking through the paper and I saw that sales people make big money, man. I know I would be good at sales.

First mentor: Yeah, I think you would be good at either one because engineers have to be able to think in detail and sales people need to be good with people and you can do both of these things.

Second mentee: You thinks so?

First mentor: Yes!
Second mentor: What about the rest of you...do you remember what you said you wanted to do for a living? Now is your chance to find that job and interview for it. I'll help you find something if you don't know, but let's get started.

Fourth mentee: Man, I've never done anything like this before. I wanna look for a cook position?

Third mentor: I didn't know you wanted to be a cook. I thought...

Second mentee: I thought you wanted to be a dee Jay or a music manager or something.

Fourth mentee: Man, I'm talking about a job for now. I heard that some of those cooks make good money. I ain't talking about a job for when I graduate from school.

Third mentee: What you guys can do is find a job that you want to work part-time right now and a job that you want to do as a career when you get older. Now we're going to give you guys 10 to 15 minutes to find two job that you like and then prepare for an interview.

First mentee: We want be grade or anything for this will we?

Fourth mentor: You'll do find. We're doin this so that you guys will be familiar with the kinds of questions you'll be asked during a real interview. This is just something to help you. We'll give you feedback but only to help you guys.

Eighth mentee: man, I 'm nervous, I don't know what to say.

Fourth mentee: Me too!
First mentor: relax and be yourself. That’s the best way to approach an interview because if you try to be somebody else you’ll come across as unnatural.

First mentee:

First mentor: what do you think about this engineering position? Ninth mentee: That’s an attractive position but it’s for someone with many years of professional experience and advanced training. Try to find something that someone right out of college could get with little experience. Then try to find something you could do part-time now.

First mentee: Alright!

Fourth mentee: (I gotta good one here). Can you (Second mentor) interview me for this one?

Second mentor: What is it?

Fourth mentee: A position as a manager. Let me read over the qualifications so that I be able to ask you some good questions and then I’ll be ready.

Seventh mentee: Man, I was looking at a managers position.

Third mentor: That’s fine, I’ll just interview one of you and (Fourth mentor) can interview the other. What about you Ninth mentee. Would you like for me to interview you?

Ninth mentee: I’m gonna wait awhile until First Mentor is free because he will be able to give me an understanding of how to interview for an engineering position. When I am ready for the sales position I talk with Second mentor because he said he would
help me.

Second mentee: All, I did not know you (Third mentor) had that tape recorder out recording us. I don’t want to be recorded interviewing, man; I might get nervous.

Third mentor: Okay I’ll stop the tape recorder so that you guys can concentrate without being nervous.

Second mentee: Cool.
Appendix C

Informed Consent Letters for Participants
Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

The implementation of group mentoring between at-risk teenage African
American males and successful adult African American men.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Douglas Davidson
Student Investigator: Cornell Mathis

Informed Consent for Parent or Guardian

I understand that my child has been asked to participate in a research entitled: The
implementation of group mentoring between at-risk teenage African American males
and successful adult African American male mentors. This research is to be
conducted by Cornell Mathis of the Department of Sociology at Western Michigan
University during the two months of July and August 1997 under the advisorship of Dr.
Douglas Davidson, Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Michigan University.
I understand that its purpose is to create a fundamental definition of the
implementation of group mentoring as revealed through the researcher's participant
observation investigation of interpersonal communication between teenage African
American males participating in small groups with mentors. This study will help
Volunteer Youth Service Agencies understand the key components needed to
establish an effective group mentoring program for this population.

My consent for my child to participate in this project means that my child's participation
during group mentoring discussions and activities will be observed, recorded, and
interpreted by Cornell Mathis. I understand that in order to conduct this project Cornell
Mathis will engage in a participant observation investigation of weekly group
mentoring discussions and activities. He will also conduct focus groups involving
participants of both small groups. I also understand that during the focus group, my
son will be asked to respond to focus group questions which will last for approximately
one hour per group.

I understand that all participation in this study is completely voluntary and my son is
free at any time to request the researcher not observe, record or document his
participation during regular group mentoring or focus group discussions. This can be
done without any risk of penalty to my son. I also understand that his refusal to
participate in the study will not affect his continued participation in the group mentoring
discussions. I understand that results of the study will be shared with my son and me
upon request.

I understand that the information collected during this study is entirely confidential.
The researcher will not release my son's name in sharing the data with others. No
identifying information will be publicly revealed. Code names will be used in place of
my son's real name. A master list containing his real name, along with other raw material will be kept, for three years, in a locked file located in Dr. Davidson's office, located in the Sociology Department. Any possible inconveniences to my son will be avoided. It is further recommended by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board that I consider the following before agreeing to this experiment: As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to my son. I understand that if an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken, however, no compensation or additional treatment will be made available to my son except as otherwise stated in this consent form.

I understand that this research will be of general benefit by outlining the implementation of the multi dimensions of interpersonal communication during the group discussions and activities as demonstrated by my son. It may also be of personal benefit by providing my child with an opportunity to examine the implementation of group mentoring as he has participated in it.

I understand that if I have any questions I may contact Cornell Mathis (387-7587) or Dr. Douglas Davidson (387-5285). I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

My signature below indicates that I agree
1) to allow my child to be observed and recorded during regular group mentoring discussions/activities.
2) to allow my child to participate in focus group discussions and allow for Cornell Mathis to record and document responses.

Print name here ________________________________

Sign name here ____________________________ Today's Date_________________________
Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

MAY 27 1997

The Implementation of group mentoring between at-risk teenage African American males and successful adult African American men.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Douglas Davidson
Student Investigator: Cornell Mathis

Informed Consent for Mentors

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research entitled: The implementation of group mentoring between at-risk teenage African American males and successful adult African American male mentors. This research is to be conducted by Cornell Mathis of the Department of Sociology at Western Michigan University during the two months of July and August 1997 under the advisorship of Dr. Douglas Davidson, Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Michigan University. I understand that its purpose is to create a fundamental definition of the implementation of group mentoring as revealed through the researcher's participant observation investigation of interpersonal communication between teenage African American males participating in small groups with mentors. This study will help Volunteer Youth Service Agencies understand the key components needed to establish an effective group mentoring program for this population.

My consent to participate in this project means that my participation during group mentoring discussions and activities will be observed, recorded, and interpreted by Cornell Mathis. I understand that in order to conduct this project Cornell Mathis will engage in a participant observation investigation of weekly group mentoring discussions and activities. He will also conduct focus groups involving participants of both small groups. I also understand that during the focus group, I will be asked to respond to focus group questions which will last for approximately one hour per group.

I understand that all participation in this study is completely voluntary and I am free at any time to request the researcher not observe, record or document my participation during regular group mentoring or focus group discussions. This can be done without any risk of penalty to me. I also understand that my refusal to participate in the study will not affect my continued participation in the group mentoring discussions. I understand that results of the study will be shared with me upon request.

I understand that the information collected during this study is entirely confidential. The researcher will not release my name in sharing the data with others. No identifying information will be publicly revealed. Code names will be used in place of my real name. A master list containing my real name, along with other raw material will be kept, for three years, in a locked file located in Dr. Davidson's office, located in
the Sociology Department. Any possible inconveniences to me will be avoided. It is further recommended by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board that I consider the following before agreeing to this experiment: As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to me. I understand that if an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken, however, no compensation or additional treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise stated in this consent form.

I understand that this research will be of general benefit by outlining the implementation of the multi dimensions of interpersonal communication during the group discussions and activities as demonstrated by me. It may also be of personal benefit by providing me with an opportunity to examine the implementation of group mentoring as I have participated in it.

I understand that if I have any questions I may contact Cornell Mathis (387-7587) or Dr. Douglas Davidson (387-5285). I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

My signature below indicates that I agree
1) to be observed and recorded during regular group mentoring discussions/activities.
2) to participate in focus group discussions and allow for Cornell Mathis to record and document responses.

Print name here

Sign name here

Today’s Date
The Implementation of Group Mentoring between At-Risk Teenage African American Males and Successful Adult African American Men.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Douglas Davidson
Student Investigator: Cornell Mathis

Informed Consent for Mentees

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research entitled: The implementation of group mentoring between at-risk teenage African American males and successful African American men. This research is to be conducted by Cornell Mathis of the Department of Sociology at Western Michigan University during the two months of July and August 1997 under the advisorship of Dr. Douglas Davidson, Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Michigan University. I understand that its purpose is to create a basic definition of the actions of group mentoring as revealed through the researcher’s participant observation investigation of interpersonal communication between teenage African American males participating in small groups with mentors. This study will assist Volunteer Youth Service Agencies understand the key components needed to establish an effective group mentoring program for this population.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this project my participation during group mentoring discussions and activities will be observed, recorded, and interpreted by Cornell Mathis. I understand that in order to conduct this project Cornell Mathis will engage in a participant observation investigation of weekly group mentoring discussions and activities. He will also conduct two focus groups involving participants of both small groups. I also understand that during the focus group, I will be asked to respond to focus group questions which will last for approximately one hour per group.

I understand that all participation in this study is completely voluntary and I am free at any time to request the researcher not observe, record or document my participation during regular group mentoring or focus group discussions. This can be done without any risk of penalty to me. I also understand that results of the study will be shared with me upon request.
I understand that the information collected during this study is entirely confidential. No identifying information, including names, will be publicly revealed. A separate list of names will be kept in a secret file. Any possible inconveniences to me will be avoided. It is further recommended by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board that I consider the following before agreeing to this experiment: As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to me, the participant. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken, however, no compensation or additional treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise stated in this consent form.

I understand that this research will be of general benefit by outlining the implementation of the multidimensions of interpersonal communication during the group discussions and activities as demonstrated by me, the participant. It may also be of personal benefit by providing me with an opportunity to examine the actions of group mentoring as I have participated in it.

I understand that if I have any questions I may contact Cornell Mathis (387-7587) or Dr. Douglas Davidson (387-5285). I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

My signature below indicates that I agree
1) to be observed and recorded during regular group mentoring discussions/activities.
2) to participate in focus group discussions and allow for Cornell Mathis to record and document responses.

Print name here______________________

Sign name here______________________  Today's Date______________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


