AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF MINORITY MALES PARTICIPATING IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM MINORITY MALE MENTORING PROGRAMS

A Dissertation
by
JOHNNY MICHAEL SMITH

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Abstract

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MINORITY MALE MENTORING PROGRAMS

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the perceptions and

experiences of minority males participating in the North Carolina Community College

System's (NCCCS) mentoring programs. To increase college enrollment, retention and

graduation rates, NCCCS implemented minority male mentoring (3M) intervention programs

in many of its 58 colleges. Much has been written in support of mentoring programs and their

positive impact on minority male student success. However, this study specifically sought to

explore perspectives of nine minority males who were currently enrolled, graduated, or who

had stopped out of NCCCS mentoring programs in western North Carolina.

To better understand the perspectives of minority males, this study addressed the

following questions: 1) How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of

3M programs? 2) To what do minority males attribute for their involvement or lack of

involvement in 3M programs?, and 3) To what extent do minority males attribute their

student success, as well as personal development, to 3M programs? Using a phenomenological perspective, this qualitative study sought to understand the overall experiences of minority males in NCCCS mentoring programs, in relation to Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. Key themes emerging from the data included the value of the mentoring relationship for enhancing the students' sense of inclusion and meaning. Positive relationships with mentors contributed to the development of student leadership and an intrinsic motivation for service. In addition, recommendations for action to 3M stakeholders as well as suggestions for future research have been considered.

Dedication

This study is dedicated first to the Ultimate Mentor, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Lord, thank you for showing me that "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23 New American Standard). I would also like to recognize my parents, particularly my mother, Gloria D. Smith, who worked tirelessly and sacrificially for 37 years in a cotton mill to provide for both my siblings and me. Last, but not least, I must pay special tribute to my lovely wife, Mrs. Tesia Smith, whose enduring love, strength and encouragement serve as the wind beneath my wings. I am indebted to you all.

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Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge study participants and program mentors for volunteering time, thoughts and considerations for this study. Had it not been for these individuals, this investigative study would not have been possible.

Recognition is also extended to my dissertation editors: Mr. Ari Sigal, Mr. Charles Wiggins, and Mrs. Robin Wiggins. Along with her editing assistance, I would like to especially acknowledge Robin for her support of me and this body of work. Your kind words of encouragement have been an inspiration to me. I am truly appreciative of each of you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The mission of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is to open the door to high-quality, accessible educational opportunities that minimize barriers to post-secondary education, maximize student success, develop a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce, and improve the lives and well-being of individuals (NCCCS, 2009). In keeping with its mission to "open doors," the NCCCS, in 2003, implemented its mentoring initiative to increase the enrollment, retention, graduation, and transfer rates of its minority male students. In an effort to create successful mentoring outcomes, monies were allotted to community colleges to establish support services for minority males.

Due to increased demands on budgets, the NCCCS has begun evaluating the impact that mentoring has on minority male student success. Practitioners, educators, and program mentors across the state have grappled with the impact of mentoring on student achievement. However, a missing element of this conversation has been the voices and perspectives of the minority males for whom these programs were established. What do the minority male participants view as issues of significance? What valuable insights can these men share to increase understanding and awareness as to the importance mentoring may have in the lives of minority males?

This study focused on the North Carolina Community College System's Minority Male Mentoring (3M) initiative. More specifically, this study aimed to understand the experiences of minority males in the NCCCS mentoring programs by giving voice to their perspectives as to the significance of mentoring in their academic, social, and personal lives.

Each of the men had a story to tell, sharing the value of mentoring and the ways in which a mentoring relationship had impacted their future outlook. As a qualitative researcher, it was my goal to understand the personal narratives of the mentoring participants and to discover ways in which they may intersect with my own experiences.

Since qualitative researchers seek to make sense of personal narratives and the ways in which they intersect (Glesne, 2006), I share an account of my connections to the research. If the reader knows something about my story, then he/she may better understand and interpret the perspectives in the work that follows. In the subsequent passage, I share my story as a beginning instructor and recount how my interest was drawn to minority male mentoring programs.

Focus on Minority Male Mentoring

As a first-year instructor at a community college located in the rural south, I did not know what to expect as I entered my first day of class. I arrived at my classroom thirty minutes early to get my room prepared for what I thought would be a typical beginning to the fall semester. As I proceeded to remove my syllabus from my briefcase, I could not help but notice a large African-American male, whose presence literally filled the doorway. He looked at me and said, "I am here for the Sociology 210 class. Are you my professor?" I said, "Yes! My name is Mr. Smith; I am your instructor for this course." He immediately brought his large-framed, tattoo-covered, earring and baggy-pants wearing, afro-puffed sporting self into my classroom, lethargically plopping down into a desk that was obviously too small for him.

From that moment, I knew that this was not going to be an ordinary day, nor a mundane semester. As the classroom facilitator responsible for learning and student success,

what was I going to do for this student to ensure his engagement in the learning process? On a larger scale, what role would my institution play in motivating this young minority male to continue his enrollment and persistence in his other college courses? Interestingly enough, this young minority male, who looked intimidating due to his rough outward appearance, became one of my best students that year, arriving on time for class and asking thought-provoking questions. His presence in the classroom helped transform the thinking of his classmates, as well as my own. As a consequence, my passion and fascination with minority male mentoring initiatives was kindled. I began seeking ways to help these students achieve their goals, while increasing an awareness and appreciation of "difference" on this small, rural, predominantly-white community college campus.

The epiphany experience I had that year was not for me to grapple with alone, but as I have observed, issues surrounding minority mentoring programs and the need to provide opportunities for success to this population continue to be at the forefront of NCCCS administrators' agendas. During a time of increasing globalization, corporate diversity initiatives, and historical political firsts (such as the election of President Barack Obama), the NCCCS has heightened its effort to increase the retention and graduation rates of minority male students by implementing mentoring programs.

Program Establishment and Description

To address the issues that contribute to the low levels of academic success for minority males, the North Carolina Community College System obtained a $73,580 grant in May 2003 from the Governor's Crime Commission to develop and establish Minority Male Mentoring (3M) programs throughout the community college system. In July 2003, a call for proposals was released to all 58 colleges in the NCCCS to begin the establishment of 3M

programs. Of the 58 colleges, only six institutions were selected for establishing the first 3M

programs: Durham Technical, Johnston, Mitchell, Piedmont, Southeastern, and Wayne.

These colleges would later be used as models for future programs. After receiving additional

funding in 2007 from the General Assembly in House Bill 1473, 3M programs were

expanded to 15 additional community colleges, including Isothermal Community College,

where I serve as supervisor of the 3M program. Each school received a grant for $30,000

based on a competitive proposal process.

As already mentioned, the 3M initiative was established to increase college

enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among minority males in North Carolina

community colleges. To boost student success, 3M programs sought to expose participants to

diverse enrichment experiences, academic interventions, and professional development

opportunities. Additionally, participants were provided activities in leadership development

and experiences that promoted personal, professional, and academic progress.

Most of the NCCCS mentoring programs were designed as an extracurricular activity

such as a school club or fraternity. Others have been designed with the academic rigor and

structure of the classroom. Either way, mentees were expected to attend meetings and

participate in enrichment activities and social functions. Often, mentees led events, helping

them develop public speaking and leadership skills.

According to the *North Carolina Community College System Minority Male*

Mentoring Program Annual Report 2008-2009 (NCCCS, 2009), 3M programs formed

partnerships with local, state, and community-based programs, and were responsible for

serving the targeted male population. Once identified and selected, program participants

engaged in workshops with mentors helping them to identify personal, educational, and

career goals. Also, special programming provided and implemented by program mentors highlighted personal health and wellness, as well as drug/substance abuse counseling for participants. To promote responsibility, the 3M program had a group of mentors (i.e. faculty, staff, and peer mentors) to serve as accountability partners by monitoring participants' academic progress and social integration. Participants were engaged academically and socially to promote student satisfaction and increase retention rates.

Introducing mentees to leadership experiences served as motivation for achievement, both in and outside of the college setting. The goal for these experiences was to open doors of opportunity, as well as to create an awareness of new possibilities for participants. Overall, the minority male mentoring initiative served as a transformative experience for participants, providing enrichment activities for self-discovery and improved confidence in their abilities to achieve.

As of September 2010, there were forty-six 3M programs operating within the community college system. In September 2012, another contribution from the NC General Assembly allocated the NCCCS $900,000 to proceed with its efforts to serve this disadvantaged population. The colleges selected to host 3M programs represented a number of regions within North Carolina and served populations with varying needs. Due to the differing dynamics of the students served, each program varied in its approach to reaching students.

Definition of the Problem

As noted in the program description in the previous section, mentoring programs have been incorporated by the NCCCS to encourage minority males to enroll and persist until their desired educational goals are attained. However, the NCCCS still finds itself faced with the

challenges of a growing and diverse population, as well as decreasing funds allotted to support mentoring initiatives like 3M. Both an increased number of minority males entering community colleges and dwindling resources pose new challenges and opportunities for NCCCS administrators to consider.

Additionally, the American college campus, like society as a whole, continues to experience an expansion of racial and ethnic diversity. With the continuous diversification of student enrollment in community colleges, challenges concerning educational attainment and retention of ethnic minority students remain in the forefront of discussion. According to Baber (2012), experiences promoting students' social and intellectual integration into the life of the college are likely to strengthen their commitment and therefore, support their persistence. However, the absence of integrative interactions is likely to lead students to disassociate themselves from the college community (Tinto, 1993). To combat early withdrawals of minority males, the NCCCS implemented minority male mentoring intervention programs.

Leaders and educators in North Carolina and other states have invested in mentoring initiatives such as 3M in an effort to improve student retention. However, one very important missing component in the conversation about program sustainability and growth seems to be the voice of the 3M participants. If those who participate in 3M are not engaged in the discussion when program planning occurs, some of the most meaningful information may go unknown, hindering the advancement of minority males. The voices of 3M participants may add critical information needed in the community college effort to retain minority males.

Social Impacts of Minority Male Retention

Minority males face social and educational challenges before entering mentoring programs. As a result, barriers to student success remain problematic. The lack of academic success among minority males continues to have devastating impacts on minority men generally. In 2001, college graduation rates for white males were 50% higher than that of minority males (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010). Research by Lewis et al. (2010) also reported that approximately 15% of minority males graduated in four years and about 33% graduated in five years, compared with 33% of white males who graduated in four years and 50% who graduated in five years (p. 88).

In addition, *The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* (Holzman, 2010) found that 46% of black males (compared to 66% of white males) were estimated to graduate from high school in 2007-2008, leaving a 20% educational gap (Holzman, 2010). The following table (Table 1) highlights the alarming data recorded by the Schott Report comparing a cohort of black and white males, which demonstrates a significant gap in graduation rates for Black men in both North Carolina and the United States.

Table 1
Educational Gap Comparison of Black and White Males in NC and the USA

| | Percentage Enrolled in Post-Secondary Education | |
	in NC	in USA
White males	66%	78%
Black males	46%	47%
Educational gap	20%	31%

Adapted from Holzman (2010, p. 16)

As demonstrated by the data, black males are falling behind their white counterparts with a 20% enrollment gap at the state level, and an even larger gap of 31% at the national level. The Schott Report also indicated that despite President Obama's bold desire to place the country on a trajectory to a 2020 goal of being a global leader in postsecondary credential

attainment, extraordinarily few black men are set on the road to college, while many remain in the school-to-prison pipeline (Holzman, 2010).

Minority males are no strangers to the penal system. In 2008, minority males ages 18 and over were imprisoned at a rate six and a half times higher than white males (Lewis et al., 2010, p. 88). Also, in 2008, minority males accounted for 41% of the prison population ages 18 through 34 while white males accounted for approximately 27% of inmates at that age (Lewis et al., 2010). Even more disturbing is that in 2008, minority males ages 18 and over accounted for 5% of the total college population and 36% of the total prison population. According to Holzman (2010), the rate at which minority males are being pushed out of school and into the prison pipeline far exceeds the rate at which they are graduating and reaching high levels of academic achievement. Deliberate and intense interventions are needed to help minority males move toward a more promising educational pathway. National data clearly indicate the need for intensive intervention programs, a radical rethinking of education methods, and a substantial increase in funding for efforts to change the dismal outlook for these men.

According to Holzman (2010), the data indicate a denial of educational opportunities for this under-represented population and resistance by public school officials to use the most effective teachers to provide curricular opportunities that prepare minority males for college and future employment. Holzman (2010) further stated that the factors that contribute to the negative and ineffective educational experiences for minority males include the following:

- A watered-down curriculum for disadvantaged students in schools funded at a level far below successful suburban schools.

- Insufficient access to well-planned and high quality preschool education.

- Little intensive early instruction, large class sizes and short school days.

- Few social and health services.

- Old, over-crowded and ill-maintained facilities.

- Little or no state accountability to ensure progress in improving student achievement.

- Lack of educationally-sound living and learning environments.

- Lack of parent and community engagement, as well as mentoring programs.

Minority males, if not held captive in the penal system, face other barriers within the educational system, as conveyed by the aforementioned list of disparities and challenges these men endure. Other barriers preventing minority males from enrolling and persisting in higher education include, but are not limited to, high unemployment rates, low income, low occupational status, limited access to scholarship information, as well as fear of indebtedness due to large student loans (Blackwell, 1987). Minority males face both economic and social barriers that cause them difficulty from the start. Academic preparedness, availability of family support and financial resources, as well as institutional access barriers all directly influence whether or not a minority male enrolls and persists in a postsecondary institution.

The American educational system is failing minority males particularly when there continues to be a persistent over-classification of minority male students as mentally challenged or learning disabled, and when more than twice as many minority males than white males are suspended from public schools (Holzman, 2010). Out-of-school suspensions lead students to end their education prematurely. High suspension rates and unacceptably low high school graduation rates confine minority males to a lifetime of socio-economic disenfranchisement (Holzman, 2010).

Blackwell (1987), Holzman (2010) and Vann Lynch (2002) highlight the plight of the minority male and cited significant barriers to their educational success. Obstacles like racism, under-preparedness, and lack of financial resources prevented minority males from being as successful as their white classmates. These issues pose a serious predicament that community college and four-year college administrators, faculty, and staff across America continue to confront. Developing and implementing retention programs that mentor minority males may help reduce cultural isolation and institutional barriers by engaging them in an effective learning environment. Higher education personnel must redefine roles and responsibilities of their institutions, so that more minority males can enroll, persist, and graduate from college.

Student retention, particularly for minority males, continues to be a vexing problem for institutions of higher education. Despite the money allocated for creating programs and services to retain minority males, until these men achieve their personal, academic, graduate and professional goals, low persistence and graduation rates will continue. According to Baber (2012), while recent evidence suggests that retention and completion rates at colleges and universities are on the rise, a closer examination reveals continuing disparities based on racial/ethnic demographics. Baber (2012) continues, "Among a cohort of students who began at a four-year postsecondary institution, in 2003, 21 percent of the African Americans dropped out of postsecondary education 3 years later compared to just 11 percent of White students" (p. 67). Although Baber's analysis is based on four-year institutions, his observations can also be applied to my focus which is to understand the perspectives of minority males about their involvement in the NCCCS 3M programs.

Research has demonstrate a positive correlation between student involvement, role modeling/mentoring, and establishing meaningful relationships with faculty in student engagement and college completion (Baber, 2012; Flowers, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Tinto, 1993; Wlodkowski, 2008). However, what is not specifically addressed in the literature is whether or not 3M programs, when implemented in a community college setting, actually produce positive outcomes and student success such as attitudinal or behavioral changes, persisting from semester-to-semester, degree completion, or transferring to a four-year college. There is a paucity of research specifically aimed at demonstrating how mentoring programs influence the perceptions and outlooks of minority males in community college settings, particularly in North Carolina community colleges. A significant body of mentoring research exists supporting the benefits of mentoring; however, much more can be learned about the productivity of mentoring programs and their impact on minority male participants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of minority males who were enrolled, graduated, or had stopped out of NCCCS minority male mentoring programs. This study sought to determine the perspectives of minority males regarding their 3M mentoring experiences. Using interviews and a brief questionnaire, each of the nine minority male participants had the opportunity to describe and share the impact of his experience in 3M programs.

Research Questions

To better understand the perspectives of minority males about the NCCCS 3M programs, this study addressed the following questions:

- How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of 3M programs?

- To what do minority males attribute their involvement or lack of involvement in 3M programs?

- To what extent do minority males attribute their student success, as well as personal development, to 3M programs?

Research Methodology

To further understand mentoring influences, this study examined the perceptions of minority males who were currently enrolled, graduated, or who had stopped out of North Carolina community college 3M programs. Using a phenomenological lens, this study sought to emphasize, explore, and make meaning from shared stories and narratives of the 3M participants. According to Creswell (2009), phenomenology identifies the essence of human experiences. The stories of 3M participants were used to better understand the participants' perceptions of how the mentoring program impacted their personal, social, and academic success.

This phenomenological investigation focused on uncovering the voices of minority males in the context of 3M programs. Nine minority male participants were identified and purposefully selected, having met the following criteria: three currently enrolled participants in a 3M program; three former 3M participants who have either transferred to a four-year college or graduated from a community college, and three former 3M participants who stopped out of the 3M program.

Significance of the Study

There is limited research on how the North Carolina Community College System's 3M participants view mentoring programs. More significantly, there is little information explaining why students do not stay engaged with 3M programs. Why do 3M participants stop out, and what is there to be learned from their experiences? This research seeks to understand the overall impact of 3M programs on minority male student persistence and retention.

In recent literature, Senegal (2011) performed a qualitative case study focused on the perspectives of minority males at one NC community college about their 3M mentoring experiences. Senegal's case study indicated that minority males who participated in a 3M program perceived the program to be inspiring, encouraging, and considered it to be a significant reason for their student success. In spring 2011, I served as an evaluator for the NCCCS 3M programs, and I interviewed minority male participants from seven NC community colleges regarding their mentoring experiences. They, too, credited their 3M participation with providing encouragement, guidance, and with building their self-confidence in their ability to learn. Both Senegal's and my preliminary findings suggest that mentoring has a meaningful impact on minority men. However, what remains unknown is why 3M participants disengage from these programs and what is there to be learned from their perspectives?

I also observed that there is no systemic method or conceptual framework to support NCCCS mentoring programs. Not having such a foundational underpinning leaves program implementation strategies to the program mentors. In some instances, their strategies are only individualized and difficult to replicate.

This study sought to understand the perceptions of minority males who participated in NCCCS 3M programs. Having this understanding may be useful in addressing future needs of minority males, as well as provide valuable data to North Carolina Community College System administrators, North Carolina legislators, and NCCCS mentors as they make decisions about funding and expanding these initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

To understand minority male perceptions of mentoring, Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching was incorporated as a lens through which to interpret participant experiences. From my analysis, several themes and subthemes emerged. A primary component of the framework focused on the establishment of inclusion through creating a learning environment that embraces belonging and connectivity. Developing a positive attitude was another component recognized by this study, which was attained through relationships with mentors, and an increase in the mentees' self-efficacy. Finally, enhancing meaning and engendering competence were noted, capturing the significance of mentoring experiences and the roles of mentoring in the lives of minority males. Several subthemes emerged, including the importance of a positive cultural identity, increased leadership opportunities, positive mentor relationships and a desire to mentor or give back to the community. Wlodkowski's motivational framework is discussed more thoroughly in the review of literature, highlighting its application to this phenomenological study.

The following chapter summarizes a comprehensive review of mentoring and retention literature. The works of retention theorists such as Senegal (2011), Wlodkowski (2008), and Tinto (1993) were emphasized in the literature review to provide clarity and

understanding of the mentoring process in relation to minority male student engagement.

Also, Wlodkowski's model is examined focusing on four major learning conditions: inclusion, positive attitude, enhancing meaning and engendering competence. Chapter 3 (Methodology) discusses the phenomenological research methodology and the data collection process. Chapter 4 (Findings) summarizes findings from the research. In Chapter 5 (Analysis and Conclusion), findings are further analyzed and discussed in comparison with the mentoring literature. Limitations, recommendations for future research, implications and lessons learned are also presented.

Definition of Terms

Mentee is defined as a student who is advised and counseled by program mentor (Blackwell, 1987).

Mentoring is understood as "the act of anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge and opportunities to those less experienced, for whatever period the mentor and mentee deem this help to be necessary" (Burlew, 1991, p. 214).

Minority Male, as defined by the NCCCS, is an African American or Hispanic/non-white, excluding Asian (NCCCS, 2009).

Minority Male Mentoring (3M) is a mentoring program designed to increase college enrollment, persistence, graduation and transfer rates of minority males (NCCCS, 2009).

Persistence in this study means a consistent college enrollment from semester to semester (Gorman, 2005).

North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) consists of 58 public, two-year colleges.

Stop out is considered as a mentee who disengaged from his participation in the 3M program, but continued his enrollment at the college.

Student Success in this study is defined as a consecutive semester of college enrollment, college graduation, or attainment of personal, academic, career and professional goals (NCCCS, 2009).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The review of literature is divided into several categories. Each section highlights the literature's relevance to this study and its relationship to minority male mentoring programs in postsecondary institutions. The first section begins with a foundational and historical understanding of mentoring. Next, mentoring classifications involving formal and informal relationships are discussed. Also, several case studies from a global and national perspective are explored including aspects of mentoring in K-12, two-year, and four-year settings. Finally, theoretical frameworks guiding this study such as Tinto's (1993) student departure theory and Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model are reviewed, along with Senegal's (2011) case study of a North Carolina community college's minority male mentoring program.

Mentoring: A Historical Context

In 1983, Merriam published one of the most comprehensive studies to date, establishing the first critical review of mentoring literature (Merriam, 1983; Underhill, 2006). Mentoring was believed to create success in the career of the protégé but this hypothesis lacked substantial evidence to support it (Underhill, 2006). Explorations into mentoring were scattered across disciplines and had not been analyzed with a view towards identifying common themes and similar trends (Merriam, 1983). Crisp and Cruz (2009) suggested that mentoring research literature has lagged behind program development and implementation

levels. The extent to which mentoring impacts learning continues to remain unclear (Crisp &
Cruz, 2009).

Mentoring has continued to be a popular topic of discussion in both business and
education sectors comparing mentored to non-mentored individuals (Underhill, 2006).
Retrieving over a hundred articles on adult mentoring from a scholarly database, Underhill
(2006) performed a critical literature review and meta-analysis of material since Merriam's
1983 mentoring study. Underhill's findings suggested that more attention should be given to
the characteristics and career outcomes of mentored and non-mentored individuals to
determine the influences mentorship has on career acceleration and/or student success.
Underhill's argued that the researcher should not automatically assume that mentoring is the
only variable related to achievement without first considering non-mentored individuals and
their life successes. Underhill (2006) questioned the belief that mentoring is the sole factor
which causes mentees to excel in their career and educational ambitions. According to
Stromei (2000), mentoring may not be the only source of an individual's ambition; however,
it can assist with one's ability to progress in a career or educational setting. Stromei (2000)
further noted, "Companies are discovering that few mentoring relationships develop
spontaneously and are implementing formal programs to nurture all their promising
employees" (p. 56).

Unlike Underhill's study which examined the impacts of mentoring primarily in the
workplace, Crisp and Cruz discussed mentoring, its origin, as well as its positive impact on
student success. In their research, Crisp and Cruz (2009) noted that although mentoring
literature has grown, it appears that mentoring research has made little progress in identifying
and utilizing a consistent definition and conceptualization of mentoring. They reported that

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studies were lacking that demonstrated the supportive role played by mentoring in academic

environments such as community colleges and other postsecondary educational institutions.

Moreover, the literature review also indicates the uncertainty surrounding a common

definition and conceptualization of mentoring. There are over 50 definitions of the words

mentor or *mentorship,* varying in scope and breadth. According to Crisp and Cruz (2009),

researchers defined the words mentor or mentorship in a variety of ways. For instance, the

following definitions demonstrate the elusiveness surrounding the terms. They are:

- A person well equipped to assist a student with everyday problems (Stromei, 2000).

- A one-on-one relationship between an experienced and less experienced person for the purpose of learning and developing specific competencies (Murray, 2001).

- A mentor is anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity for a period of time (Burlew, 1991).

- A trusted and experienced guide (Johnson, 1980 as cited by Burlew, 1991).

- Blackwell (1987) defines mentoring as a process by which a person of superior rank, special achievements and prestige will instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés.

Similarly, Roberts (2000) defined mentoring as "a formalized process such as in a

business setting whereby a knowledgeable, more experienced person actuates a supportive

role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning with a less experienced and

knowledgeable person" (p. 162). This type of formal mentoring is intended to facilitate an

individual's career and personal development. Roberts' (2000) stance considered mentoring

as a set of behaviors in which more seasoned, experienced members of the organization

provide guidance and support to employees of less experience, increasing the likelihood of

new members becoming successful employees. In accord with Robert's mentoring

perspectives, Stomei (2000) also noted that businesses and corporations were implementing

formal mentoring programs to nurture the success and productivity of their employees.

Though several definitions of mentoring were shared, they demonstrate its multifaceted

nature. According to some scholars, inconsistencies in the way mentoring has been defined

should be eliminated and a generalized, common understanding needs to prevail (Crisp &

Cruz, 2009). Mentoring has been defined by some researchers as activities conducted by a

mentor, while others classify it in terms of a process or concept (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The

operational definition for this study considered the term *mentoring* as "the act of anyone who

provides guidance, support, knowledge and opportunities to those less experienced, for

whatever period the mentor and mentee deem this help to be necessary" (Burlew, 1991, p.

214). In other words, mentoring involves an individual with more experience and skill

teaching another person lacking that knowledge. In such a relationship, both mentor and

mentee share responsibility for the learning outcomes.

Although the literature on mentoring shows considerable differences among both

researchers and practitioners regarding its characteristics, there is consensus that mentoring

relationships and their focus on the growth of an individual includes various forms of

assistance such as psychological and emotional support, support of goal setting and life

planning, academic knowledge support and role model support (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Also,

the literature establishes that mentoring processes may include broad forms of support

including assistance with professional and career development (Crisp & Cruz, 2009;

Underhill, 2006). Lastly, mentoring literature agrees that mentoring relationships are both

personal and reciprocal, involving a one-on-one relationship between an experienced and less

experienced person for the purpose of learning and developing specific competencies

(Murray, 2001).

Formal and Informal Mentoring

According to Murray (2001), formal or assigned mentoring relationships are based

upon the goal of a particular business or academic institution. In the business sector, perhaps,

the goal is both professional development of the employee, as well as increased productivity

and growth in regards to the corporation's mission. Deploying these methods depends

primarily on the setting (e.g., academic or corporate), projected goals, desired outcomes of

the business or postsecondary institution, as well as the perspective and background of the

mentoring practitioner. In postsecondary institutions, the focus of mentoring has been to

increase student retention by assigning a mentor to students or providing a formalized, more

structured means of mentoring. By definition, formal mentoring, also called facilitated

mentoring according to Tillman (1995), is a structure or series of processes designed to

create effective mentoring relationships, guide desired behavior change of those involved, as

well as evaluate the results for mentees, the mentors, and the organization.

Supporting the classical and formalized approach to mentoring processes, Carden

(1990) suggested that mentoring is an environmental intervention, demonstrated in both

corporate and academic institutions. In this study, mentoring programs within corporations

and postsecondary institutions were identified. These mentoring programs were examined

because of their formalized, structured approach and because they had been established in

response to affirmative action mandates as a means of providing access to women and

minorities. Although formal mentoring is mandated and assigned, because of the nature of

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human interaction, it is not without challenges and risks of harm for the mentor and protégé (Carden, 1990). Despite the caution, there are benefits of formalized mentoring, particularly to persons of color and women seeking access into corporate and academic settings. Carden (1990) contended that formal mentoring assures the development of diverse talents and skills of the protégé which may otherwise go uncultivated resulting in adverse consequences for institutions and society as a whole.

In contrast to the position of both Roberts (2000) and Campbell and Campbell's (1997) formal approach to understanding the meaning of mentoring, psychologists Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) focused their earlier definition on the psychosocial development of an individual which involves an informal approach to mentoring. Hence, they defined a mentor as one who provides moral and emotional support, contending that informal mentoring is based on a mutual attraction between mentor and protégé. As the evolution of this relationship takes place, the mentor assumes more responsibility and genuine interest in the development of the protégé. According to Blackwell (1987), this is "true mentoring," and it can only transpire when the mentor assumes multiple functions and roles in the life of the protégé, whether supporting academic development or the career development of the protégé. Synthesizing Blackwell's conception of true mentoring, choice and influence become key contributors to the progress of the protégée. It is safe to assume that mentor/protégée relationships must be mutual and authentic, particularly if true mentoring is to occur.

As a final observation, the literature does not make a distinction or place limitations on who may serve as a mentor. Instead, mentoring relationships are considered fluid, evolving through different stages. As examined throughout the review of literature, defining

the term mentor or mentorship can be an elusive process. However, mentoring can be best understood when categorized into a formal/informal context of understanding (Vann Lynch, 2002).

Examination of Mentoring Case Studies

The following case studies suggest the impact mentoring has on minority male student achievement. National and international mentoring initiatives were reviewed. Research on mentoring in public K-12 schools, two-year community colleges, and four-year public institutions was also examined. A positive connection between mentoring programs and minority male student success was noticeable and created by mentoring relationships, whether formal or informal.

Additionally, the case studies demonstrate that minority male students participating in mentoring programs do better academically. According to Anderson's (2007) case study on mentoring, minority males who participated in mentoring programs such as 3M performed better on standardized achievement tests than those who do not participate. In some instances, minority males connected to mentoring programs demonstrated an increase in persistence rates (James, 1991). The most influential factor noticed in these studies was the student's engagement with a mentoring program and/or mentor.

Beginning with a global view on mentoring, Ayalon (2007) presented a case study on *Kedema*, a teacher/mentoring program for poor and minority children in an urban Israeli school. Developed in 1994, *Kedema* had 12 teachers who served 150 students as both their teacher and mentor. As part of their responsibilities, teachers would conduct two-hour mentoring classes and receive four hours a week to meet with students. As a result of their mentoring efforts, teachers who mentored experienced revitalization, empowerment, and a

satisfaction from developing a relationship and connection with students. Teacher

satisfaction and revitalization can mean a happier and more pleasant learning environment.

Not only were teachers re-energized, the students were encouraged to persist, despite their

poor living conditions. Most significantly, students in *Kedema's* mentoring program

improved their attendance and rate of completion, with few who dropped out of school.

Students not participating in *Kedema* had a 50% higher attrition rate, demonstrating the

positive results of mentoring for those involved with *Kedema* (Ayalon, 2007). Although this

particular case was not directly aimed at mentoring minority males, the results from this

study do indicate a higher student success rate for students enrolled in mentoring programs

than those students not enrolled in mentoring programs, which affirms the positive impacts of

mentoring on student motivation.

Exploring the effects of mentoring on standardized achievement tests for African

American males in elementary and middle schools, Anderson (2007) examined a district-

wide mentoring initiative for males in grades 3-8 called *Helping Hands*. Mentors for the

Helping Hands mentoring program were selected by school administrators and paid a small

stipend to complete a two-hour mentoring training as well as to provide mentorship to the

young males. The minority males also were selected by teachers, counselors, and staff to

participate in *Helping Hands*. Throughout the year, mentees participated in oratorical

contests, poems recitations, learned study skills, and other interpersonal and social skills,

helping them to navigate their way to success. Anderson found that minority males who

participated in the *Helping Hands* mentoring program experienced significant effects on

achievement, particularly minority males labeled as learning disabled, suggesting that

perhaps these young minority males were falsely labeled and indeed were not mentally

challenged at all. Also, this study indicated that minority male students who participated in the mentoring program for at least two years performed better on standardized achievement testing than those who did not participate, suggesting the impact mentoring has on minority male student achievement.

Santos and Reigadas (2000) conducted a survey based on the role mentoring plays in increasing student confidence levels. From a survey of 32 Latino students who participated in a faculty mentoring program at a state university campus in California, they found that students experienced an increase in two of three of their top college measures: college self-efficacy, academics, and goal definition. The third college adjustment, anxiety about college success, showed no significant change after student completed the mentoring program. However, practicing formal mentoring, where the mentor was assigned to a student, had some impact on the mentee's personal and social adjustment by providing the mentee emotional support and access to information. This study supported the notion that students who were emotionally adjusted to college and have information on how to navigate their college experience are more likely to stay enrolled in college and persist, as opposed to those who do not have this same information.

A successful strategy for connecting students with college representatives and other community college leaders, mentoring programs serve as a major element of retention for Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian students at Prince George's Community College (Stromei, 2000). Mentors are selected from the college's full-time and part-time faculty, staff, and administrators. The mentor and mentee training emphasizes relationship building with minority students, as well as fostering a supportive classroom environment for this population.

Examining the impact of Prince George's mentoring program on minority male retention, James (1991) evaluated retention differences between two groups of students of color, those who participated in the mentoring program and those who did not. He also compared success outcomes between students of color (participant group) that participated in mentoring programs and white students' success outcomes. The findings indicated 66% of the students of color in the participant group completed 100% of their college credit courses, yielding a percentage equivalent to that of the first-time, degree seeking white comparison group. Out of the students of color who did not participate in the mentoring program, 51% completed 100% of their credit courses. Moreover, 80% of the participant group persisted to the next semester, in comparison to 73% of students of color who did not participate and 83% of the white comparison group that returned (James, 1991). The results from Prince George's mentoring initiative demonstrate solid evidence as to the positive impact mentoring programs can have on minority retention and persistence rates.

What would happen if mentoring programs were shown to impact minority students' college-going and graduation rates, particularly for minority males? American public education has a 20% educational achievement gap between minority males and white males (Holzman, 2010). Perhaps mentoring programs like those at Prince George's can present programming strategies that may decrease this educational achievement gap between minority male and white male students. Though the data presented from the Prince George's case study may not be recent, this program continues to be an example of the positive impact of mentoring on minority male student success. The data points toward mentoring programs like 3M programs and their positive influence on minority male achievement.

According to Stromei (2000), Northeast Illinois University (NEIU) has a minority population of 54% and has a minority student program known as *Partners for Success*. The program goals are to guide students in learning the ropes at NEIU to promote the development of their academic and career success, and enrich their personal growth through meaningful contact with a mentor. As a result of efforts to conduct research over a 5 year span, NEIU found a positive relationship between minority students' participation in mentoring programs and their persistence in their degree program, demonstrating a significant relationship between minority student success outcomes and the relationships with a faculty member, advisor, and mentor.

These case studies are important to note because of their connection with the NCCCS mentoring initiative to increase enrollment, persistence, graduation and transferability of minority males. They are also significant because they demonstrate the favorable impact that mentoring programs have on minority male student success.

Conceptual Framework

This study sought to understand how minority males describe their perceptions and experiences with 3M programs. Two conceptual frameworks intersected to guide this study: Tinto's integration theory and Wlodkowski's motivational model. Senegal's NCCCS 3M program findings, as well as my own experiences with the North Carolina Community College System 3M programs, were also considered in the development of this framework.

According to Karp, Hughes, and O'Gara (2008), one of the most significant studies in reference to why students leave college, failing to persist, is Tinto's (1993) study of student departure. In formulating a framework for examining mentoring relationships as an effective means for retaining minority males, Tinto's conclusions provided an archetype for the North

Carolina Community College System initiative to enroll, retain, and graduate minority males. However, the primary framework used in this study to interpret minority males' experiences in North Carolina Community Colleges was Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Both Tinto's and Wlodkowski's importance are thoroughly discussed in the study. The significance of Tinto's work was to understand why students leave college early. This section begins with Tinto's student departure findings and concludes with Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework.

Student Departure Theory: Leaving College

In his 1993 study of student persistence, Tinto found that students are more likely to stay enrolled in a college or university if they became connected to the social and academic life of the institution. He suggested that students who became integrated into a college by developing relationships, participating in clubs, and engaging in meaningful activities were more likely to persist than students who were socially isolated or not involved with the college culture. Tinto established that both academic and social integration are needed for students to persist. Academic integration occurs when students are intellectually connected to the institution. Social integration involves an emotional and personal connection to the institution due to accumulating friendships/relationships of various kinds. The degree to which the student is academically and socially integrated influences the chances for persistence.

Tinto (1993) also proposed two primary causes of student departure: intention and goal commitment. From my understanding of Tinto's departure framework, intention and goal commitment refers to the student's motivation to persist from semester to semester or

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until goal completion is attained. Although students may enter college with high levels of

motivation for success, they experience challenges that cause them to leave college

prematurely. It is for this reason that researchers generally agree that what happens following

entry is, in most cases, more important to the process of student departure than what has

previously occurred. Moreover, Tinto (1993) pinpointed four clusters that impact student

departure from college: "adjustment," "difficulty," "incongruence" and "isolation" (p. 37).

Tinto's four explanations of student departure, beginning with adjustment, describes

the process of transitioning from one world to another (Gorman, 2005). It is critical that if

persistence is to occur, the student must adjust both socially and intellectually. According to

Tinto (1993), "Most persons, even the most able and socially mature, experience some

difficulty in making that adjustment" (p. 45). Minority males often face external

responsibilities, causing them to modify their lifestyles if they are to persist. Hence, they will

need time to get acclimated to going to class, completing homework assignments and

managing their time (Gorman, 2005). If college adjustment does not occur, then students are

likely to leave the college early.

Student persistence will require more than the students' acclimation to the college

environment. Academic standards must be met as well. Tinto (1993) suggested of all the

students entering college, not all of them are able to meet college standards, causing them to

withdraw to avoid embarrassment of failure. Tinto (1993) defined difficulty as a student's

inability to complete college work due to lack of academic and college readiness.

Incongruence is defined by Tinto (1993) as "a mismatch or lack of institutional fit

between the needs, interest and preferences of the individual and those of the institution" (p.

51). Springing from student perception of not fitting in, incongruence occurs, causing the

student to feel disconnected or isolated from the college environment. A student can also feel academically incongruent, discovering that his chosen academic career path is no longer of interest to him/her, thus causing the student to withdraw from school.

A final reason for early student departure is isolation, referring to the absence of sufficient contact between the student and other members of the social and academic communities of the college (Tinto, 1993). Although similarly related to incongruence, isolation occurs with students who are not misfits. Unlike incongruence, isolation occurs among those who share some commonality with the institution. However, the lack of personal bonds, social involvement, and personal ties drives students away, leading to withdrawal. Although Tinto's work was not aimed primarily at the retention of minority males, it presents valuable insights as to why minority males leave their academic setting without obtaining their degree. It has been my experience that interaction between minority males and their environment has a significant relationship with their decision to stay enrolled in college.

Furthermore, my assumptions regarding Tinto's four clusters for student departure led me to consider these factors when exploring the perspectives of 3M students who choose not to stay enrolled in a mentoring program or college. How will these criteria for early departure mirror the responses of 3M participants who leave early? When examined more closely, insights gained from Tinto's theory of departure may lend valuable insights into how programmers move forward with the development of 3M formats and program structures.

Although I agree with Tinto's premises as to why students leave, his model did not necessarily consider the minority male college experience or the variable of race. Tinto may posit race or one's ethnicity as a basis for what he terms incongruence; however, one's race

does not necessarily determine early withdrawal. Therefore, one concern about the Tinto model may be that it does not account for cultural and ethnic differences. However, Senegal's (2011) study accounts for race as she considered the experiences of minority males participating in NCCCS 3M programs.

Senegal's investigation is on the forefront of the research on social, cultural, and academic impacts of minority male mentoring initiatives. In 2011, Senegal performed a qualitative case study where she explored the experiences of African-American male students participating in a 3M program at one particular college in NCCCS. In her quest to find a correlation between minority male student success and participation in mentoring, she grounded her methodological approach in critical race theory, having race and culture as a central focus of the minority male higher educational experience. Furthermore, Senegal guided her study with questions delving into the social, cultural, and academic experiences of minority males. Although Senegal's research focus revolves around one particular 3M program, her findings are interesting. Along with Tinto (1993), Senegal (2011) leads one to believe that mentoring does play a valuable role in student success. According to Senegal's (2011) research, the findings revealed that minority male participants described their experience as being emotionally uplifting, as well as a source for gaining access to critical knowledge, and as an avenue for personal development. Academic progression was also demonstrated in the findings of Senegal (2011) showing that students benefited from positive interactions with mentors.

Building on Senegal's (2011) recommendation for future research, this study contributes to her work by extending her research from one NCCCS community college to understand the experiences of minority males from additional community colleges.

Moreover, this phenomenological perspective sought to understand the success of NCCCS mentoring programs, as did Senegal's study, but it was also designed to identify the challenges of these programs as stated by minority male participants. To determine program successes and challenges, participants who were currently enrolled, graduated, and those who had stopped out of the program were interviewed. Senegal's study only considered currently enrolled students at one NCCCS community college. This study, however, builds on the results of Senegal by also considering motivation for minority male success by employing Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

The following section connects Tinto's and Senegal's ideas by discussing student success in a way that emphasizes both student motivation for success as well as the issue of cultural sensitivity. In other words, Tinto addressed why students leave college and Senegal addressed minority male students' need for cultural identity. However, Wlodkowski incorporated motivation for learning and cultural awareness in an effort to support student success.

According to Wlodkowski (2008), practitioners should be conscious of cultural relevance in and out of the classroom. Wlodkowski (2008) explained that theories associated with intrinsic motivation are designed to respect cultural differences such as the learner's values, perspectives, languages and ways of learning. Wlodkowski (2008) states, "When adults care about what they learning and know they are becoming more effective at what they value by means of that learning, their intrinsic motivation rises like a cork rising through the water" (p. 20). In essence, students are motivated to learn when the learning has meaning and value. According to Wlodkowski, meaning is enhanced when the learner's competence is

heightened. Cultural awareness and sensitivity help create the learning environment conducive to the learning process.

Culturally responsive teaching and mentoring are critical to teaching adult learners effectively. According to Wlodkowski (2008), instead of trying to figure out what is wrong with learners, teachers (mentors) should try to work with students, eliciting their intrinsic motivation. Through relationships and effective teaching strategies, teachers and mentors can access prior knowledge of the student or mentee, looking at existing systems expressed through the student's own cultural perspectives. By doing so, relationships can be built between what the learner or mentee knows and new learning. Wlodkowski (2008) further suggests that when teachers and mentors see adults as unique and active, communication and respect can be established, realizing that through understanding and sharing of resources, a greater energy of learning is established. Paraphrasing Wlodkowski (2008), the teacher/mentor and the student/mentee have roles to play in the facilitation and motivation for learning. When this synergistic approach works well, both the teacher and the student come away from an engagement having had a motivating learning experience.

Although Tinto's (1993) study on why students leave college is important, my apprehension with his framework is that it does not consider cultural and ethnic difference as a variable. However, Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching conceptual framework heavily considers cultural differences and has established four criteria which embrace and seek to establish an inclusive learning environment for people of color, in this instance, minority males.

Wlodkowski's framework is based in neuroscience and the field of intrinsic

motivation that considers the powerful influence of one's emotions and one's motivation to

learn (2008). According to Wlodkowski (2008), "Theories of intrinsic motivation fit very

well with the neuroscientific understanding of motivation" (p. 19). Also, what makes

intrinsic motivation so powerful is that it considers one's culture on the influence of learning

(Wlodkowski, 2008). In other words, when learners can see that what they are learning

makes sense and is important, they become motivated. With his extensive research in the

field of neuroscience, intrinsic motivation, and adult education, Wlodkowski developed a

method with which to improve adult teaching and learning environments, thus enhancing the

motivation of all adults to learn.

Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Cultural Responsive Teaching is a

model for teaching adult learners, taking into consideration the learner's culture. What is

intriguing about this model is its versatility and applicability to minority male mentoring.

Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model highlights four conditions for learning that provide

the structure for planning engaging learning experiences for adults with culturally diverse

backgrounds. The four conditions for learning are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2
Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Condition	Description
Establishing Inclusion	Creating a learning atmosphere in which learners and teachers feel respected and connected to one another.
Developing Attitude	Creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through relevance and volition.
Enhancing Meaning	Creating challenging and engaging learning experiences that include the learners' perspectives and values.
Engendering Competence	Creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value.

Adapted from Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995)

Wlodkowski (2008) stated,

The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is respectful of

different cultures and capable of creating common culture that all learners in the

learning situation can accept. It is a holistic and systemic representation of four

intersecting motivational conditions that teachers and learners can create or enhance.

(p. 113-114)

Conclusion

To conclude, the reviewed literature established a conceptual framework, helping to

guide my understanding of the perceptions of minority males about North Carolina

Community College System 3M programs. The four categories of this literature review

presented were: historical context, formal and informal classifications, mentoring case

studies and theoretical frameworks. The reviewed literature has served as a guide for the

methodological design and data analysis in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

During the design of this study, my understanding of the retention literature informed

the questions asked in the interviews. In particular, my knowledge of Senegal's (2011) and

Tinto's (1993) studies, as well as my experience as an evaluator, helped to influence the

participant interview questions. And later, in this study, Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational

framework was incorporated as an interpretive lens to help me determine what the men were

saying about their 3M experiences. Wlodkowski's principles were used to organize

participant responses and emerging subthemes. In chapter 4 (Findings), the principles and

subthemes and their relationship to research questions are discussed further.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study sought to understand the perceptions of minority males participating in the North Carolina Community College System 3M programs. Frameworks developed by Tinto (1993) and Wlodkowski (2008) provided a lens through which to understand and interpret the experiences of minority males who participate in 3M programs. Additionally, I utilized my experiences as a 3M mentor and program evaluator to make meaning of the perspectives on mentoring shared by these men. The three research questions that guided this study were:

- How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of 3M programs?

- To what do minority males attribute their involvement or lack of involvement in 3M programs?

- To what extent do minority males attribute their student success, as well as personal development, to 3M programs?

This chapter discusses the phenomenological research perspective and methodology utilized in this study. This chapter also explains the site and sample selection, data collection, data analysis, and efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design

To address the research questions, this study employed a phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Patton (2002) suggested that a phenomenological perspective seeks meaning and helps to capture the essence of the lived experiences of a person or group of

people. According to Baber (2012), the phenomenological research perspective can also be utilized to focus on individual perceptions and/or viewpoints of a phenomenon. The phenomenological research perspective allows for the exploration of the multiple perceptions and viewpoints of the study participants, in this case, 3M participants' perspectives on mentoring. According to Merriam (2002), one's world or reality is not fixed, but is socially constructed, based on one's individual experiences and life happenings. For this study, I utilized a phenomenological perspective as the central research methodology because this approach allows the researcher flexibility with understanding the subjective meaning, structure and essence of the participants' lived experiences (Patton, 2002). In addition, phenomenological perspective is fluid; it ebbs and flows with each participant's life narrative and lived experiences.

To further clarify the value of the phenomenological approach, Patton (2002) explained that phenomenology focuses "on exploring how human beings make sense of experiences and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (p. 104). He continued, "To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have "lived experience" as opposed to second-hand experiences" (p. 104). In this study, a phenomenological perspective allowed for exploration and deeper understanding of the perceptions of minority males regarding their lived experience of NCCCS mentoring programs as well as provided insights into how mentoring impacts student retention.

Another aspect of the phenomenological approach is that it acknowledges the researcher's experiences and presuppositions as they may play a role in the interpretation of the data. Creswell (2007) argued that "epoche" or "bracketing," which are components of the

phenomenological perspective, allow the researcher to set aside his/her own experiences, as much as possible, in order to take a fresh look at the phenomena. However, Creswell further explained that to suspend one's judgment can be difficult and challenging for the researcher to implement. As I understood this study, I suspended judgment during the participant interviews and the data collection process. However, as the study evolved, I clearly recognized a strong relationship and connection between my own experience as an African-American male and the perceptions and educational experiences of the participants. My racial identity provided an advantage to understand what the participants shared regarding their perceptions of 3M programs.

As stated earlier, phenomenology is a qualitative research design utilized by researchers seeking to understand an individual's or group's lived experiences. Qualitative researchers are encouraged to confront subjectivity through reflexive articulation and clarification of assumptions, experiences and theoretical orientations (Baber, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). According to Patton (2002) reflexivity helps the qualitative researcher to become more cognizant of his/her beliefs and assumptions. Once again, I believe my African-American identity and years of involvement with 3M programs both professionally and personally proved valuable, allowing me to gain an enriched understanding of the minority male experiences in NCCCS 3M programs. Sharing a similar life narrative as the program participants, I was able to understand more deeply their stories and perspectives, as well as their difficulties and struggles.

Site and Sample Selection

In my study, I used a strategy of purposeful sampling to identify site and participants that would provide relevant and useful data in relation to my research questions. Describing a purposeful sampling strategy, Patton (1990) stated:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases (phenomena) for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research, thus the term purposeful sampling. (p. 169)

To facilitate participant selection, I chose three community colleges based on a review of community colleges in the western region of North Carolina that have functional and sustainable 3M programs on campus. From a total of forty-six North Carolina Community College System 3M programs, there were seven colleges located in the identified area. Of the seven colleges, three were identified as study sites. These colleges were selected based on program longevity and sustainability. For selection purposes, programs must have been established for two years, demonstrating programmatic in terms of academic progression and/or student graduation. The colleges were similar in population size, in close proximity, as well as shared the mission to improve student success for minority males.

After identifying three community colleges, I invited nine minority men to participate in the study. Based on the focus of this study, the primary factor for participant selection was race. Participants must have self-identified as a minority male. In addition, participants were required to be eighteen years of age or older. Students from a range of different majors (except for certificate and high school programs) were eligible for participation in this study as can be seen in Table 3 in Chapter 4 (Findings).

Following the identification of the three sample sites, I sent an email asking mentors from the three participating colleges for their assistance with identifying participants who met the prescribed participant selection criteria for this study. Nine minority male participants (three men from each of the three identified colleges) were asked to participate in this study. The mentors recommended three program participants in each of the key study categories: one who was currently enrolled, one who had graduated, and one who had stopped out of the mentoring program. These three categories were selected in order to examine both student successes and challenges in 3M programs. Unlike Senegal's (2011) mentoring study that investigated current students' perspectives on mentoring, I chose to further the understanding of mentoring by examining why men stay connected or disengaged from 3M programs.

Once identified, participants were contacted by phone and/or email and given information regarding their participation in this study (see Appendix A: Informed Consent Form). The mentors were also helpful with identifying a space on campus to conduct the scheduled interviews, if needed. If students could not meet on campus, then arrangements were made to meet at a convenient location.

Data Collection

Following site and sample selection is the collection of data. For this study, as a primary data gathering technique, I focused on in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted at the three identified community colleges, or at an alternate site, convenient for 3M participants. The interviews were scheduled for at least a two hour time period. Interview questions were open-ended, allowing the interviewee to answer the questions based on their perceptions and experiences (see Appendix B for the Interview Protocol).

My professional experiences as a NCCCS evaluator and 3M mentor provided me with a basis for understanding the men's responses to the interview questions. In spring 2011, as part a NCCCS evaluator's team, I asked minority men questions similar to those for this study; therefore, I had a general understanding and comfort with conducting the interview process. For some participants, I did have to clarify some of the questions to ensure understanding. Doing so enhanced the quality of the interview sessions by providing me with opportunities to probe for additional information and gain deeper clarity of the interview questions.

Of the nine participants interviewed, I conducted a face-to face interview with six of them. For three of the respondents, due to issues of distance and scheduling conflicts, I had to conduct phone or email interviews. Two telephone interviews were conducted as well one interview by email. According to Creswell (2009) face-to face, telephone, and email interviews can all be useful to the data collection process.

The interviews were recorded on audiotape, and to supplement the audio recordings, I made my own notes on a memo pad. The interview data was then transcribed. In addition, the respondents were emailed a copy of the interview transcript and/or interview summary documents and invited to respond. One of the men (Uganda) could not be reached, and therefore did not receive a copy of his interview summary document.

In addition to conducting face-to-face interviews, I gathered additional academic/demographic data from each participant using a tool based on Senegal's (2011) minority male case study as well as my professional experiences as a 3M program evaluator. The participants were asked to share supplemental data such as their GPA, program major, educations goals, professional goals, date of graduation, etc. Later, I used this document to

summarize interview notes as well as begin organizing common themes (see Appendix C for the Interview/ Summary Questionnaire).

Data analysis

After collecting the data, I read through each transcript, organizing, and reflecting upon common themes appearing from the participants' responses. According to Glesne (2006), data analysis involves organizing what has been learned assisting the researcher with the process of interpreting the data. Glesne noted that "Focusing on conversations and words is deeply rooted in the sociological traditions with thematic analysis, involving coding and the segregating of data into clumps for further analysis and description" (2006, p.147). The recognition of patterns and themes that were generated from the data collected was essential to this study. Creswell (2007) stated:

> Data analysis in the qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data
> (i.e., as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the
> data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, finally
> representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. (p. 148)

I analyzed the data by reading and coding the transcripts of participants' interview responses (Glesne, 2006). As I coded the material, I discovered recurring themes that led me to a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of NCCCS 3M programs. As I analyzed the data, I began developing notions, creating explanations, as well as linking my story to those of the participants (Glesne, 2006). Guided by the key dimensions of Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational framework, thematic analysis focused on: sense of

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belonging, need for accountability, positive attitudes toward mentor, self-efficacy, positive cultural identity, leadership opportunities, mentor relationship and a desire to mentor. The identified themes are discussed and further analyzed in the following chapters.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were taken into account prior to beginning this research study. First, I followed the rules and guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). One of the requirements of the IRB is to complete a battery of research modules used to ensure an understanding of correct, appropriate, and legal approaches to data collection. Upon successful completion, I submitted this proposed research project to the IRB, resulting in approval to proceed. In addition, prior to speaking with the selected participants, I created a standard lay summary that I would read prior to each interview, whether over the phone or during face-to-face interviews. Participants understood their roles and rights of becoming a participant. I made it clear to each participant that if during any time they should choose not to participate in this study, they were free to withdraw. In all, participants made an informed decision to participate in this study (see Appendix A for Informed Consent Form).

Also, careful attention was given to preserve the anonymity of each minority male participant. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect his identity. Prior to interviews and audio recordings, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form, stating the purposes for this study and his rights as a participant, as well as the responsibilities of the researcher to create no harm and to protect the participant's identity. Information used for this study was kept in a discreet and secure location.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was important. According to Glesne (2006) "Trustworthiness or research validity is, however, an issue that should be thought about during research design as well as in the midst of data collection" (p. 37). According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative researcher may use a multiplicity of ways in which to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the research. He offered eight different strategies to address trustworthiness such as: triangulate different data sources, use member checking, use rich, think description to convey findings, clarify the biases of the researcher, present negative discrepant information, spend prolonged time in the field, use peer debriefing and use an external auditor (Creswell, 2009).

As mentioned previously, for this study, the primary method of data collection was participant interviews. Interviews were recorded on audio tape, as well as notes documented on a memo pad during each of the interview sessions. As a final measure of accuracy, interview transcripts and the Interview Summary and Questionnaire (see Appendix C) was sent to participants for their review.

Another consideration of trustworthiness is years of experience that I have with minority male mentoring programs. Having served in the community college for years and as a 3M mentor and evaluator provides me with a rich understanding of the issues surrounding mentoring initiatives. According to Creswell (2009) prolonged time in the field can improve trustworthiness. He stated,

> In this way, the researcher develops an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and can convey detail about the site and that people lends credibility to the narrative account. The more experience the researcher has with the in their actual setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings. (Creswell, 2009, p. 192)

Again, my professional experiences helped to provide me with a deep understanding of the context for this study.

A final point on establishing trustworthiness is the subjectivity of the researcher which, in the case, is both an asset and liability. In this study, the researcher's role was that of interviewer and interpreter. Having previous involvement with mentoring programs, along with years of higher educational experience provided me with previous knowledge about the NCCCS mentoring programs. Although having former knowledge is helpful, it can also stand in the way of new developments contrary to one's beliefs. In this case, personal experiences of the researcher informed and assisted with the interpretation of the interview data. In a qualitative approach, it is reasonable and appropriate for the researcher to bring a unique perspective to the study. Creswell (2009) explained, "Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background such as gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin" (p. 192). In this regard, my African-American ethnicity and years of mentoring experience do not weaken the findings of this study. My ethnic origin and professional experiences with 3M were beneficial and critical components to enable participant's feelings of openness and authenticity during the interviews. However, as the researcher, it is important to acknowledge how my biases may impact results.

According to Glesne (2006), the credibility of findings and interpretations of those findings depend upon one's careful attention to the establishment of trustworthiness. As researcher, I took steps to be fair and accurate with both recording the views of the study participants, as well as to correctly interpret information revealed through study results and findings.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the perceptions of minority males and their experiences with the North Carolina Community College System 3M program. In this chapter, an introduction to the methodological approach was presented. Also included were considerations regarding site and sample selection, data collection, data analysis, ethical safeguards, and issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 (Findings), presents results, in particular the perceptions of minority males and their perspectives on 3M programs. A 3M program description is provided and the program participants are also highlighted. Findings are discussed in relation to Wlodkowski's motivational framework as the primary interpretive lens for this examination.

Chapter 4: Findings

Purpose of Study

This phenomenological research study examined the perceptions and experiences of minority males participating in North Carolina Community College System 3M programs. This chapter describes and analyzes the data collected and introduces the voices of 3M participants. A brief introduction of 3M participants is followed by the results which are presented according to themes and subthemes. These themes are presented through the use of Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. The research questions were (a) How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of 3M programs? (b) To what do minority males attribute their involvement or lack of involvement in 3M programs?, and (c) To what extent do minority males attribute their student success, as well as personal development, to 3M programs?

Program Description

Before moving forward, it is important to describe the focus and programmatic structure of the North Carolina Community College System 3M program. Including this brief explanation of the program provides the reader a foundation from which to understand the comments and perspectives of 3M participants. Following this discussion are data from interviews with current and former participants of the mentoring program. The participants' narratives provide the context for the insights and conclusions that are presented later in this chapter.

The minority male mentoring programs of NCCCS are designed to increase college enrollment, persistence, transfer, and completion for minority males. The basic structure utilized by NCCCS and mentors provides academic, social, and personal support through supplemental instruction, academic advising, networking, and enrichment activities. The men are mentored and grades are monitored by a program mentor. Structurally, most of the NCCCS mentoring programs are designed as an extracurricular activity such as a school club or fraternity. Others have been designed as structured academic courses. Either way, mentees are expected to attend meetings, enrichment activities, and social functions; oftentimes, mentees are in charge of these events, teaching them public speaking and leadership skills. Introducing men to these leadership experiences is believed to motivate them to achieve, both in and outside of the college campus. These experiences are also designed to help men to develop a positive cultural identity. Participants take trips to historic civil rights sites such as the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Boyhood Home, in Atlanta, Georgia, Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama, and Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham, Alabama. As described and further examined later in this chapter, the minority male mentoring initiative served as a transformative experience, providing support for self-discovery, improved competence and increased confidence in the participants' own abilities.

The Interviews

Participants selected for this study were currently enrolled, graduated, or stopped out of a 3M program. Also, all participants were enrolled or had been enrolled full or part-time as a North Carolina community college student. Nine minority male interviewees were selected for this investigation: three were currently enrolled, three had graduated and three had

stopped out. They had been identified through a process of purposeful sampling with the assistance of mentors from their respective 3M programs.

Four of the interviewees were seeking the Associate of Applied Science degree and two were seeking the Associate of Art degree. Three had graduated from the community college and were enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs. Taken as a whole, the interviewees maintained an average grade point average of 3.7. Demographically, all participants were men of color (African American), varying in ages from 18 to 42. For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned for all participants. Below is a brief introductory narrative for each participant selected for this study.

Currently Enrolled

Benin (age 19) was a college transfer student with a desire to play Division 1 basketball, later turning pro and playing in the National Basketball Association (NBA). If this plan does not manifest, he will become a graphic artist. Benin has a 4.0 grade point average now, and seemed very focused on maintaining his grades and accomplishing his goals.

Nairobi (age 42) was a retired military veteran who has a desire to complete his degree in business administration, with a concentration in human resources. He was mature and confident, sure of what he wants and how to obtain it. Perhaps his time in the military had something to do with this sense of self-assurance.

Sudan (age 39) was seeking a double major in Criminal Justice and Computer Networking Systems. He is currently employed by the college where he is a 3M mentee. Also, he plans to graduate with his degree in Criminal Justice and transfer to a four-year college.

Graduated

Egypt (age 26) graduated fall 2011 with an AAS degree and entered his first year at a North Carolina historically black university in the spring of 2012. He is focusing on becoming a law enforcement officer.

Kenya (age 22) graduated fall 2011 from a NCCCS college with a 3.3 GPA and transferred to a four-year college in North Carolina, where he is pursuing a double major in English and Political Science. After completing his baccalaureate degree, Kenya would like to attend law school or pursue a career as a technical writer, translating difficult subjects into laymen's terms.

Mali (age 22) graduated from a community college, spring 2011, with an Associate of Arts degree, English concentration. This self-proclaimed writer and poet is well on his way to becoming an English teacher in secondary education. He has published his first book.

Stopped Out

Morocco (age 20) stopped out of the 3M program due to his work schedule and conflicting program meeting times; however, he is still enrolled in community college courses, pursuing an Associate of Arts degree in Psychology. Having a 1.8 GPA, he was not sure of the direction of his future plans, interested in obtaining a Music Education degree or becoming a singer.

Rwanda (age 32) had been laid off from a local factory. Having been away from education for 11 years, he expressed his apprehension with starting college. However, he decided to attend his local community college and is pursuing a Licensed Practical Nursing Diploma (LPN). His plan is to become a registered nurse. As a full-time LPN student, full-time employee and father, Rwanda had to end his participation with 3M. His non-traditional

status made him unsure of himself upon college entry. He is now tutoring others while maintaining a 4.0 GPA in the Practical Nursing Program.

      Uganda (age19) plans to graduate December 2014 with an Associate of Applied Sciences degree in Physical Therapy. He currently has a 2.5 GPA in pre-physical therapy and desires to establish his own physical therapy practice. He discontinued his 3M enrollment due to personal life issues.

      Below in Table 3, I provide a collective snapshot of the 3M participants indicating their ages, program statuses, program majors and grade point averages. As indicated in Table 3, the men who stayed engaged with 3M whether currently enrolled or graduated demonstrated an overall higher grade point average (3.6) than those men who stopped out. The ones who stopped out only had a (2.7) grade point average. Further, findings are discussed and interpreted later in this chapter using Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching as an organizing structure.

Table 3
Participants

Name	Age	3M Status	Current Major	GPA
Sudan	39	Currently Enrolled	Criminal Justice	4.0
Benin	19	Currently Enrolled	College Transfer	4.0
Nairobi	42	Currently Enrolled	Business	3.8
Egypt	26	Graduated	Criminal Justice	3.1
Kenya	22	Graduated	English Political Science	3.75
Mali	22	Graduated	English	3.3
Morocco	20	Stopped Out	College Transfer	1.8
Rwanda	32	Stopped Out	Practical Nursing	4.0
Uganda	19	Stopped Out	Pre-Physical Therapy	2.5

Results

        Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model was used to organize and interpret the study findings, as well as to analyze the connection between student motivation, student persistence, and the participants' responses. Further, Wlodkowski's motivational model also served as an interpretive lens through which to view and address the study's research questions. With Wlodkowski's principles as themes, subthemes were generated from participants' responses and then aligned with Wlodkowki's principles. The themes and subthemes originating from participants' responses are presented in Table 4.

        Overall, participants' responses aligned and connected with the motivational model; however, there were some responses shared and highlighted in this chapter that were outside Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model. Although some of the comments did not necessarily align with the model, it was still very important to the authenticity of this research to share these responses. Moreover, responses outside the motivational model provided additional discoveries and considerations presented later in the study.

Table 4

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Establishing inclusion	1a. Sense of belonging
	1b. Sense of accountability
2. Developing a positive attitude	2a. Attitude toward mentor
	2b. Attitude toward self-efficacy for learning
3. Enhancing meaning	3a. Positive cultural identity
	3b. Leadership development opportunities
4. Engendering competence	4a. Mentor communication/engagement
	4b. Desire to mentor/community service

Theme 1: Establishing Inclusion

To begin, participants were asked to describe their perspectives regarding 3M. The students perceived their mentoring experience to be positive and meaningful, and they credited the program with helping them become acclimated to the college environment. Further, participants considered their mentoring program experience motivating in terms of feeling welcomed to the college environment, providing them a sense of belonging and fit. "Fit," according to Rodgers and Summers (2008), refers to the degree the institution meets the needs and wants of students, whether academically, socially, or psychologically.

Participants also considered the program emotionally uplifting and encouraging. It helped them establish purpose and goals for their lives. Participants felt empowered and encouraged, having gained an appreciation for the value of their learning. The participants expressed satisfaction with their mentoring program and reported that they gained the confidence that they needed to navigate the college environment. As a result, they had greater confidence that they could achievement their goals. The men learned strategies to identify and manage personal and academic challenges as a result of structured academic advising, financial aid workshops, and other enrichment opportunities provided by 3M. From their responses, it is also reasonable to conclude that participants must have considered their mentoring experiences as having helped them develop a feeling of belonging and connectedness to the campus (Rodgers & Summers, 2008). As a result of their 3M involvement, the men were inspired to excel both socially and academically.

The data from the interviews showed that the men believed that the 3M program played an important role in helping them feel a sense of connection with their college environment. For example, Sudan, a current 3M participant, stated that prior to his

enrollment in the mentoring program, he felt lost and that he did not belong in the college. As a first generation college student, Sudan felt that he had no support from home and lacked support from his college. However, due to his experience with 3M, he felt more connected to the campus, citing that he now feels that he belongs and that he fits into his college surroundings. Further, he said,

> The mentoring program tries to give minority males, black males, whatever race of males, opportunities to get connected on campus and feel supported by people who care. And, that they are not alone and that people want you to succeed.

Like Sudan, Benin stated, "the mentors make you feel welcome. Because of this program, I have been exposed to diverse opportunities and people with whom I have established a bond." Similarly, Nairobi described his experience with 3M by saying "3M provides opportunities for men to connect with a mentor, someone to support and encourage them to achieve their goals." Sudan, Benin and Nairobi's comments demonstrate the need for students to feel a sense of welcome, connection, and belonging at their institution.

Graduates from the 3M program (Egypt, Kenya and Mali) also used very similar terms to describe their experiences. Egypt stated that the 3M program supported and nurtured him and gave him the encouragement he needed to feel connected with his college environment. Further, Kenya explained how he credited 3M with bringing him out of his shell. Prior to 3M, he was reserved, quiet and isolated. However, his participation in 3M provided him with the support he needed to feel more comfortable with opening up and connecting with others. Mali, a 3M graduate, also noted that he perceived the mentoring program as a means to connect with the college campus by getting involved in the Student Government Association (SGA) and other clubs and social activities. Like the other 3M

graduates, Mali's point is that his club association (whether 3M or SGA) positively impacted his sense of feeling welcomed and connected to the learning environment, resulting in his academic progression and graduation from that institution.

Unlike the 3M graduates previously mentioned, stop out students Morocco, Rwanda, and Uganda, discontinued their involvement due to a series of events common to community college students such as the need to seek full-time employment, school responsibilities, family obligations, and financial challenges (Tinto, 1993). Although these men stopped the program, they all described their college experience as meaningful. Further, they credited the mentors with providing the structure and encouragement needed to help them reach their goals. For example, Rwanda talked about the program's impact on his waning confidence. He shared his fear and anxiety with starting school again after having been laid off and having an eleven year hiatus from academia. He said,

> Deciding to go back to school and pursue a career caused lots of uncertainty. I wasn't too sure if I had the ability to complete a college education, so I was looking for a program that could provide academic, social, and personal support. When I heard about this program, I knew it was for me.

Rwanda's comments, as do the observations from others, demonstrate this need to be accepted and included. In this case, he found support and connection in the mentoring program. Although he had to stop the program due to working and going to nursing school full-time, he credits the program for making him feel welcomed, as well as helping him become acclimated to the college environment. Wlodkowski (2008) reports that a welcoming and inclusive environment are closely connected to student motivation. In this case of participant perceptions of 3M, all of the students (currently enrolled, graduated and stopped

out) felt they had a positive relationship with their college environment and their mentors. According to Wlodkowski (2008), it is this experience of inclusion and acceptance that serves as a key condition of student success.

Subtheme 1a: Sense of belonging. A subtheme closely connected to the desire for inclusion and connectedness is also a desire for belonging. As noted previously, a major theme of the study was that 3M participants perceived the program to be meaningful, helping them connect with and navigate their college environment.

Participants indicated a desire to "belong" or "fit in" (whether in a group, club or fraternity) on their respective campuses. When students were asked to share their perspectives on 3M, all responses were reflective of a need to connect with the learning environment and more importantly with others from their culture and ethnic identity. Cole and Omari (2003) suggest this need for cultural affiliation provides refuge for black Americans to cope with the psychological stress of life in the white mainstream. Mentoring programs provide support and space in which the men can unwind from their interactions with whites (Cole & Omari, 2003). According to Baber (2012), in predominately white institutions, African-American students experience themselves as "outsiders." According to the interviewees, 3M has provided opportunities and experiences to be insiders.

Overall, the data indicate that the men's need to belong was met. As a result, most participants were motivated to stay engaged and persist in their studies. Sudan indicated his need to belong with others similar to him. He said, "Minority males would benefit from sports or some type of fraternity, creating a brotherhood or (group) in which minority men encourage other minority men." After our interview, Sudan has become involved in the Student Government Association, becoming student body president. His status as president

and his continued participation in SGA demonstrate his desire to belong and to be connected with the people like him and who share similar interests. Most profoundly, Sudan stated,

The mentoring program is like gaining a brother. . .I am here to help you and you are here to assist me. When I first enrolled in college, my mentor talked with me, encouraging me to get plugged into campus activities. Over time, my mentor has been like a brother to me, giving me ideas and encouraging me by telling me that I was not alone.

Sudan made several observations that link to Wlodkowski's (2008) principle of inclusion and the need to belong as well as Baber's (2012) concept of becoming an insider by establishing relationships with other marginalized and underrepresented students. Benin, like other mentees, expressed his need to belong, stating,

So, when I came to orientation was like the first time I had heard about these programs and I really, well that was the main reason that really sparked interest in me coming here and I said the first thing I wanted to do as far as clubs, extra-curricular activities, I said I wanted to join this club. And once I got here and just learned more, as far as how they basically try to make sure that you're always doing the right thing in the classroom, first off, so that was in my experience. To see that there are other people around me who are trying to do the same thing. That was one of the reasons why I joined 3M along with the community service opportunities. Being around other minorities, ya'll may share the same issues and you help each other grow.

Benin's response demonstrates his desire to fit and be connected to men who share his cultural identity. More importantly, his comments show his need for commitment and the advantages of cultural affiliation which helped him to navigate college (Cole & Omari,

2003). Like Benin, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda, Egypt, Kenya, and Mali all used similar

terms to describe this intrinsic need to belong. Words and phrases such as "I enjoyed bonding

with others like me," "I am not alone", "It's like family" were used to describe the

importance of establishing relationships among 3M participants sharing the same cultural

identity. These terms indicate that the men's need for connection and relationships was met.

This occurred primarily through informal and formal mentor/ mentee interactions and

enrichment activities (Baber, 2012; Carden, 1990; Cole & Omari, 2003).

Subtheme 1b: Sense of accountability. A new level of accountability also became

evident as a subtheme. The men indicated a greater level of accountability, crediting the

guidance and tutelage of their mentor(s) for this new self-discovery. In essence, participants

perceived the program as helping them take ownership for their actions and for their

decisions. Responses from participants indicated that the 3M mentor was the most significant

factor in helping them learning to take charge of their personal, professional, and academic

progress. This finding is consistent with Cole and Omari's (2003) research. They reported

that the mentor/mentee relationship, whether formal or informal, provided black Americans

much needed support, enabling them to more effectively develop so as to make their way in

white mainstream society. Mentoring relationships seemed to provide a bond that

incorporated such characteristics as responsibility, integrity and the importance of following

through. All participants noted their growth and development, as well as heightened

awareness, in the area of personal responsibility.

Morocco's comment about his mentor was typical. He stated, "My mentor pushed,

inspired and encouraged me to be more accountable for my learning." In agreement, Uganda

explained, "My mentor made me stay on top of my school work and made me accountable for my actions." He continued, "I now understand that accountability is the key in my life."

The 3M participants cited their participation with enrichment workshops, motivational speakers, and awareness events as strategies mentors used to increase their accountability. Implemented by mentors, these learning and enrichment strategies helped to increase 3M participants' desire to be accountable and more responsible. Sudan stated, "They [mentors] meet with you, they call you, they email you, they come to classroom to check on you, and I kind of like that because it keeps me focused." He continued,

I need somebody to keep me focused. . .somebody to give me a positive word and somebody that was really interested in me going to school, and somebody that could show me again, something I didn't know. I need somebody to say hey, you could do this or you could do that.

Sudan's comments demonstrate the need to have someone hold him accountable for his actions. He simply desired someone to show him that they cared. In a similar way, Kenya, one of the 3M graduates, said, "I became a little more accountable after being in the program." During the interview, Kenya told me that prior to engaging in 3M, he was quiet and anti-social. However, because of his involvement with the program, he said, "I have become more conscious of my behavior. Now, I am aware and take responsibility for my social/interpersonal development." Benin reported how his mentor holds him accountable:

We talk about my academics every time we have a meeting, that's something we talk about, making sure everybody's good and to see if anyone needs a tutor or anything. Usually every time he asks if we need tutors, everybody says they are doing well in their classes. Mr. L actually talks to our teachers too, so he can actually say, I talked

to your instructors and I know you are all doing good. So, I believe that helped me with staying focused.

Interestingly, stop - out students, Morocco, Rwanda and Uganda all agreed that 3M holds students accountable for their academic and social well-being. Although these men were no longer 3M participants, all appreciated the attentiveness of their former mentor(s). Morocco humorously reported that the mentor knew his father and would contact his father, should the need arise. "It helps to hold you accountable whenever you have somebody there giving you that extra push and that knows you can do better," stated Morocco. Rwanda claimed his experience with 3M was influential with his successfully completing the Licensed Practical Nursing program. He stated, "Everything I learned within the 3M program, I began applying it in my life and you know the 3M program is big on the peer tutoring and mentoring and that's what I do." It is clear that the 3M program helped Rwanda to become more accountable for accomplishing his career goals. Concurring with Morocco and Rwanda's sense of accountability development, Uganda also noted that "Academically and personally, my mentors make me stay on top of my schoolwork and hold high expectations for my personal decisions."

Several of the 3M participants stated that the mentor frequently asked how they were doing in their courses or whether they had completed the application for financial aid in a timely manner. The mentor also asked them about personal issues they might be dealing with. They also reported that empowerment workshops/presentations and seminars focused on self-efficacy skills were successful.

As noted in Table 3, of the three students who stopped out, two had lower grade point averages than the others. Morocco's grade point average was 1.8 and Uganda's was 2.5. In

contrast, the students who are still enrolled had at least a 3.0 GPA. It may be that the two of them were not able to develop the sense of accountability needed to be successful. Following the interview, Morocco commented, "By the look of my GPA, I need to get back in the program." His comments demonstrate that he is aware that he needs to be held accountable and responsible to a mentor or program in order to excel academically.

Theme 2: Developing a Positive Attitude

Participants were asked to share thoughts about their involvement with the 3M program. Their responses were then compared with Wlodkowski's (2008) premise that an individual's attitude predisposes him to respond favorably or unfavorably toward particular people, groups, ideas, events and objects, in this case, 3M programs. The data reported above indicate that the men found the program to be relevant and appealing. In the following section, the men's responses concerning their attitudinal changes are highlighted. According to Wlodkowski (2008), "Adult attitudes focus on one or more of four directions: (1) toward the instructor, (2) toward the subject, (3) toward their self-efficacy for learning, and (4) toward the specific learning goal or performance" (p. 172). For purposes of this study, I incorporated Wlodkowski's (2008) attitudes toward the instructor and attitudes toward self-efficacy as subthemes related to the larger theme of Developing a Positive Attitude.

Subtheme 2a: Attitude toward mentor. The attitude of adult learners toward the instructor and in this case mentor is very important (Wlodkowski, 2008). A negative attitude toward the mentor at the beginning of an activity creates a challenge that needs to be dealt with. According to the program participants, the 3M mentors created a safe and welcoming environment which mentees found favorable for learning. Most of the men also credited the mentors with creating a learning environment that fostered a sense of accountability and

success. The mentors did this through such activities as academic tutorials, advising workshops, and field trips.

With respect to attitudes toward mentors, several participants indicated having a positive relationship with their mentor as a primary reason for their 3M participation. Regarding his feelings toward his mentor, Sudan credited his mentor for establishing a close, brotherly relationship. He said,

> When I got with my mentor, he talked to me at first, but then he just became like a brother to me and he was like. . .I want you get involved in this program; I want you to get involved with this activity, etc.

Sudan continued, "Mentors meet with you, they call you, they email you, they come to the classroom to check on you, and I kind of like that because it keeps me focused." Although Sudan's comments were noted previously, they do emphasize the positive impact of mentoring relationships in life as well as demonstrate his perception of those relationships.

Benin also associated his program involvement with an established mentor/mentee relationship when he stated, "Mr. L. [his mentor] actually talks to our teachers. . .he knows if we are doing good or not. So, I believe that helped me with staying focused." It appears that this relationship strengthened Benin's active participation in 3M. When Morocco was asked about his program association, he said his primary reason for starting 3M was due to his mentor asking him to participate. He went on to say, "The mentors get to know you. They push you to reach your goals."

Egypt, Kenya and Mali (the 3M graduates) indicated that a mentor or member of the faculty was a factor in their participation in the program. Egypt stated, "Although I have graduated, I still check on my mentor. My mentor showed interest in me. But, my teacher

recommended that I participate with 3M." Interestingly, Egypt's instructor, not his mentor, challenged him initially to get connected with 3M. Whether it was the mentor or faculty member, what became evident was that all of the 3M participants credited their involvement with someone simply demonstrating an interest in them and urging them to participate in the mentoring program. Further, the men felt connected and committed to college and to reaching their academic goals. According to Cole and Omari (2003), having an outlet such as 3M, particularly for black Americans, can have a positive influence in developing the ability to cope and receive affirmation as they deal with daily pressures of being students in majority white institutions.

Subtheme 2b: Attitude toward self-efficacy for learning. According to Wlodkowski (2008), self-efficacy is "one's personal assessment to perform a specific task" (p. 187). In this case, several 3M participants had to overcome a self-destructive attitude which detracted from their ability to reach their learning goals. A pessimistic attitude towards an instructor, subject matter or an activity/event can cause the learner to have difficulty beginning and progressing through new experiences. In essence, if one has low self-efficacy, chances are that the individual's self-doubt will decrease his chances for attaining his goals. On the other hand, if the student has a sense of self-efficacy, he is much more likely to accomplish his goal.

A primary goal of 3M is to increase the likelihood of student success by building the self-esteem and confidence of program participants. Participant responses indicated a significant increase in self-efficacy. They cited their increased ability to manage effectively their educational, social, and personal lives. All of the respondents credited 3M for their more positive and more hopeful attitude toward their ability to be successful in college. For

example, Sudan talked about his feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt during his first college experience. When asked why he got involved with 3M he stated,

> That's easy. I did not know what I was doing. I did not know what I was doing when I got here and it was like I don't know; I thought you just go in and do your book work and go home. But it's a whole lot more than that and I needed help.

He continued,

> Okay, to be bluntly honest, the 3M program helped me to find what I could not find on my own. The staff tells me things that I don't know and they show me things that I haven't seen. And that's just being honest. I don't know anything about, you know, progressing yourself in college. I don't know which way to go, how should I conduct myself, who should I talk to. So, when I can go to my mentors, they can direct me directly to the person I need to go to instead of me going through different hoops with different people.

Sudan's comments profoundly described his first college experience. He said that he had a lot of uncertainty. For example, he was not sure how to complete financial aid forms, whom to ask about admissions issues, or where to go to register for classes. He said that he lacked confidence and had feelings of self-doubt. Now, due to his involvement in the program, he says,

> I want to get as many degrees as I can. I want to have a lot of knowledge under my belt. If I could, I'm 4 classes shy of CIT, Computer Information, so with my educational side, I want to just try to get as many degrees or as much knowledge under my belt that I can have to make myself more versatile in the work field.

These comments, made a year after he started the program, make it clear that Sudan credits 3M for having positively altered his belief in himself.

To drive this point home, having been a 3M participant for at least a year now, Sudan seemed confident in himself, as he discussed his future collegiate plans and life goals which consisted of degree attainment and employment opportunities. His sense of self-efficacy is demonstrated in his comment:

> I would really like to be a computer specialist somewhere. We have a lot of data centers coming here. And I would love to be a computer specialist for Apple or Disney or Facebook. But if that goal doesn't work out for me, then I would like to be some kind of administrative worker for the criminal justice system.

Like Sudan, former 3M mentee, Rwanda, was asked his reasons for his participation in the 3M program. He said that he experienced anxiety and had self-defeating thoughts. He indicated that 3M had impacted his life by providing a learning environment that promoted self-confidence and a sense of competence in accomplishing life tasks. Rwanda explained that his 3M involvement was largely due to his need to connect with a program that could help him become more acclimated to the college environment. Rwanda reflected on his program experience:

> Starting 3M was very important. . .being a minority male who graduated high school back in 1998, now 10 or 11 years later, decides to go back to school and pursue a career goal. There was a lot of fear. I wasn't too sure about whether I had the ability to fulfill a career and that's why I chose to join that program.

Rwanda had not been in school in more than a decade, and his need for involvement in the program was related to his feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-confidence. It is

clear that Rwanda's commitment to 3M was related to his belief that the program would help

him overcome fear and his anxiety about starting college. With respect to self-efficacy,

Rwanda clearly communicated his lack of belief in his own competence as a college student.

Having completed three months of the 3M program, however, he reports there is a difference:

> You know, my grades are great. My study skills are pretty excellent I guess. I have
>
> the grades to show it. My leadership abilities have excelled within the nursing
>
> program. I am an officer for the nursing program. I also am a peer tutor for the
>
> nursing program; so, on so many different levels it's really paid off.

What transformed Rwanda's low level of self-efficacy experienced at the start of his

college career? What helped him develop greater motivation in terms of making greater

academic progress? He credited 3M for boosting his confidence and his learning competence.

His grades improved, his leadership skills increased, and he served as a peer tutor in his

practical nursing curriculum. Although Rwanda had to discontinue 3M activity due to work

and scheduling conflicts, he was still very complementary of 3M and its impact on him. He

also said he used what he had learned in 3M to encourage his classmates. He added:

> Well, like I said, going in (starting school), I had a lot of doubt and stuff like that. . .
>
> but, through watching myself develop and persevere through some uncertainty within
>
> the Practical Nursing program, participating in the 3M encouraged me to pursue my
>
> goals and to be whatever I want to be. . .so to speak. Within the nursing curriculum,
>
> you see the expressions on people's faces coming back to school, being out of work
>
> and laid-off or whatever the reason and you're able to share with them to continue to
>
> study hard, continue to show up for class or share some of the tips that worked for
>
> me. I share these words with my classmates and assure them that hard work pays off.

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The findings reported in this section are consistent with the literature, specifically, with Tinto (1993) and Wlodkowski (2008) who found that college environments that are welcoming and inviting are factors for student retention. Further, according to Rodgers and Summers (2008), self-efficacy also leads to effective coping strategies, helping to reduce stress while increasing confidence and student motivation.

Theme 3: Enhancing Meaning

Based on the data, all the men involved with 3M found the program meaningful and in alignment with their core values. During the interviews, 3M participants demonstrated their motivation to learn and their commitment to the 3M program. Two further subthemes emerged from my analysis of the interview findings: positive cultural identity and leadership development opportunities.

Subtheme 3a: Positive cultural identity. For this study and from my understanding of Baber's (2012) writings on black Americans in white stream American, I define positive cultural identity as a way of seeing one's culture in an affirmative, productive, and constructive manner. According to Baber (2012), "As students from traditionally marginalized groups enter institutions they confront a community that is not value neutral, but a place that maintains certain preferences and tendencies that exclude those dissimilar cultural experiences" (p. 68). As a result of being isolated and excluded from mainstream white America, African Americans have struggled to feel optimistic or better yet proud of their racial and cultural identity due to the stereotypical views and years of racism and exclusion from white mainstream society (Baber, 2012).

However, it appears that the program helped the participants redefine (in a positive way) what it means to be a black man in America. One very powerful perspective regarding

positive cultural identity was given by Kenya when he stated that, "3M is for those of us with untapped potential to become better people." He goes on to say that prior to his involvement, he was troubled by negative stereotypes connected with his African-American heritage: fighting, dropping out of school, etc. But now he describes how, through his academic performance and achievement, he strives to move beyond a history of disenfranchisement and how he plans to help others look beyond the stereotypical views of white America. Paraphrasing Kenya, it appears that his 3M experience heightened his awareness of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and racial stereotypes that are still prevalent in society. His ways to combat these negative images are not through violence, but through his own decision to achieve academically.

Also, Kenya, 3M graduate, mentioned that he had met with former NAACP President Kweisi Mfume during one of the 3M enrichment activities, and it was a pivotal learning experience. It challenged him to "think about the perceptions of a black man in America." He continued, "Currently, we are portrayed as being violent savages, drug dealers, etc. And admittedly, I have an anger problem of my own, but it's tied to this frustration over the stereotype." Kenya's reflection describes his frustration with marginalization. But, as previously mentioned, 3M has introduced him to very positive aspects of his Black culture. These experiences have helped him gain a positive personal and cultural identity.

Like Kenya, all respondents associated a positive cultural identity with their involvement with 3M. They all referenced their enjoyment with having an avenue for associating with other men of their same culture/ethnicity. Because of this association with one another, the men gained a higher appreciation for themselves and their peers as well as their black culture. In describing his mentoring experience, Sudan used words like "family,"

"fraternity" and "brotherhood." Words like these point to a greater appreciation for his sense of place and culture. Involvement with his mentors and peers provided him with a sense of "we are in this together," thus motivating him to continue his program of study. According to Tinto (1993), maintaining a sense of community is one of the factors for increased likelihood of persistence.

It appeared that an established cultural connection with other minority males aided the connection that male participants experienced on campus. To the participants, 3M was a type of cultural community where men helped one another, whether it was with transportation to school, academics, finances, or other issues. According to Senegal's (2011) minority male study, minority males demonstrated tendencies to become heavily immersed in a peer group, fraternity, sports team or other social/cultural communities. Having this type of social engagement and cultural interaction has proven beneficial and motivating, thus keeping minority males committed to college and reaching their goals.

Subtheme 3b: Leadership development opportunities. The development of leadership skills was another theme distilled from the responses of the men. As noted in its learning objectives, 3M is designed to expose men to uncommon life experiences. Minority male mentoring programs appealed to the men by nurturing and exploring career interests, providing opportunities to network with business professionals, as well traveling to conferences. The men reported that the 3M program provided opportunities for them to gain leadership skills. One leadership/enrichment opportunity shared by several 3M participants was the annual 3M Leadership Conference. While in attendance, the men reported improved networking and communication skills due to workshops at the conference on such topics as

dress for success, money management, and public speaking. As an illustration, Nairobi stated,

>What I like the most is the opportunity to meet promising individuals that, well, successful individuals, I should say, that have already made it. . .like minority doctors, the lawyers, and someone to inspire the young males to see that they can achieve these goals. And really be able to talk to them one-on-one, you know, or face-to-face is definitely a big plus.

Nairobi, who is a retired military veteran, (now college student), shared more about the impact of leadership opportunities for minority males:

>Really, a lot of participants like going to the Minority Male Conference and you know actually having the time to speak to [leaders], you know, one-on-one, not telling them your whole life story, but just talk to them. I think that carries a lot of weight.

The comments of Nairobi emphasize his satisfaction with the leadership enrichment opportunities 3M provided him. As a result of his enhanced leadership skills, Nairobi remained active in the Student Government Association on his campus as well as served in an array of other leadership roles.

Speaking further about leadership development, Nairobi indicated that requiring students to attend the annual Minority Male Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina was a good idea. He also stated, "Another mandatory requirement, along with attending the mentoring conference, would be to attend a workshop where 3M participants could go to practice interviews with business people." Nairobi's comments emphasize his gratitude for leadership opportunities provided by 3M programs. Similarly, Benin expressed his

appreciation for his 3M meetings and conferences. He said the seminars presented "opportunities to network with others from diverse populations particularly Hispanic and Hmong populations on campus." He, too, expressed that his leadership skills had been enhanced by 3M; as a result, Benin was selected as a key leader in the minority male mentoring program on his campus. Further, Sudan also talked about uncommon leadership and networking opportunities and how these activities impacted his leadership ability. He said:

> We meet every Friday and Mr. M. brings in a special guest speaker. . . .Somebody in different fields and they just talk to us about what they do on their job and how they got their job and some of the things they took in school. So, we do that every Friday and twice a month, we go out to some kind of event. Whether we volunteer or we go to some kind of event that's about culture or about music. We get together and maybe once a month and just eat and talk.

Like Nairobi and Benin, Sudan was also selected as a leader on his campus. At the time of the interview, he was the vice-president of his Student Government Association and was contemplating a run for Student Government president. All three of these men described the impact of 3M on their leadership skills. Their participation in 3M proved to be instrumental in helping participants learn about possibilities beyond those they were already aware of. Wlodkowski (2008) explained that "When an individual's interest is sustained and positive feelings are acquired, then knowledge and value for particular content is enhanced" (p. 231). Based on the comments from Nairobi, Benin, and Sudan, the motivation engendered by the leadership and networking activities the 3M program provides deepened their commitment to learning the content in their courses. Regarding male mentoring, the context

for learning lessons in leadership was enhanced through enrichment activities such as attending conferences and networking with guest speakers and community leaders. Having men exposed to the previously mentioned experiences has enabled 3M participants to stay engaged with their learning environment and increased their desire and motivation to learn.

Theme 4: Engendering Competence

To determine participant competencies gained from their participation in 3M programs, participants were asked to share if they believed that their mentoring experiences had positive impacts on their progress, academically, socially, and/or personally. My research indicated that participants believed that 3M had a positive influence on their ability to acquire new information.

As an interpretive lens in which to view and understand 3M participants' statements, I utilized the Wlodkowski principle, "Engendering competence" as a theme to organize and summarize responses. In addition, two subthemes emerged 1) mentor communication and engagement and 2) a desire to mentor others or give back to the community through community service. Subthemes are discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

Subtheme 4a: Mentor communication/engagement. Mentors can play an important role with student engagement. Noel, Levitz, Saluri, and Associates (1985) state, "It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and learn how to put them to use" (p. 17). According to 3M participants, mentors were in constant communication with them via phone calls, text messaging, Facebook, and other social media. Interestingly, of all the factors influencing men to stay engaged in the learning environment, my analysis

indicated that mentor communication and engagement was overwhelmingly the most significant influence in the lives of these men.

The respondents credited their mentor as the key component of their community college environment, even above the support of family and friends. In demonstration of this point, Sudan commented, "My mentor sought me out and asked me if I would like to get involved with 3M." Sudan's remarks about his mentor demonstrate his mentor's persistence in seeking his involvement in 3M. Furthermore, it shows the commitment of his mentor to communicate with and engage him in the learning environment. As a result of his mentor's determination to connect him with the 3M program, Sudan felt like someone cared about him. He stated, "My mentor showed interest in me." As a result of the interest shown by his mentor, Sudan excelled as a student leader, becoming his college's student body president as well as a scholar, maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

Similarly, Egypt, a 3M graduate, shared that his mentor had a positive influence on him. He said, "My mentors are positive and they showed an interest in me." Although he has graduated, Egypt credited his mentor with having a significant impact on his academic, social, and personal progress. Egypt's comments are reflective of those of Sudan. Again, they also point to the importance of mentor/mentee communication. Because of the passionate efforts of the mentors to connect with 3M mentees, the mentees experienced a sense of caring and that they were special in the eyes of their mentors. In these two instances, the men responded to the mentor's "act of caring" and interest in them by achieving their personal goals.

Like Sudan and Egypt, Morocco (stop out student) felt that his mentors were supportive. He said, "Mentors get to know you. They care about you." Morocco continued,

"My mentor know my father personally, so if I mess up in school, they might inform him."

Morocco's comments highlight the fact that his mentors care about him, therefore, they are willing to do whatever is necessary, even calling his father. Similarly, Uganda stated, "The support of my mentors is very big and they help me out." He continued, "My mentors help me out academically and personally because they make me stay on top of my schoolwork and make me accountable for what I do." Although Morocco and Uganda stopped out of 3M, they still recognized that their mentors cared for them and sought to engage them in the learning environment.

Therefore, the research indicates the importance and positive impacts of what happens when mentors communicate with the 3M participants and engage them in the learning process. As demonstrated from students' responses, mentors who engage with students on a regular basis can help to increase the likelihood of that student achieving his goals.

Subtheme 4b: Desire to mentor/community service. In addition to the favorable responses of 3M participants about their mentors' ability to communicate with them, they also expressed a desire to give back to their community. In their research on black Americans who attain middle class statuses, Neckerman, Carter & Lee (1999) referred to this intrinsic need to give back as "minority culture of mobility" (p. 790). By this they meant a feeling that black Americans should give back to their community, both as an act of service and obligation.

Participating in service-learning activities has encouraged a spirit of giving. Several of the 3M participants commented that they would come back to mentor other young men once they graduated from the program. Mali, a 3M graduate, commented, "I want to better

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myself and others," indicating the fact that he would like to help others because of what he received from 3M. It was also apparent from Egypt, another graduate, that he, too, possessed a desire to mentor when he stated, "I credit my mentors for helping me. . . .I still keep in contact with my mentors, looking to help others when I can." In effect, he was indicating that if his mentor from the 3M program needed him, he would be pleased to assist other mentees even though he had graduated.

Benin and Nairobi stated their plans to give back to others by working within the peer-to-peer model of 3M, as well as serving in their communities. The spokesman for this spirit of mentorship, Nairobi put it this way:

> I just wanted to give back. There was a time when I was talking to the military about going back to school, so I know of the struggles that some of the young men are facing and it was just an opportunity for me to try to give back and try to help them avoid some pitfalls that I'd stumbled through and across again.

Nairobi's desire to give back to those who shared his cultural identity is not uncommon as a key component of 3M is to complete service-learning projects. Although I discuss "acts of service" later in this study, it is also necessary to state here that this expectation of service relates to Neckerman, Carter and Lee's (1999) ideas on "minority cultural mobility" which they described as "the obligation for middle-class blacks to give back to the lower-class blacks" (Neckerman, Carter & Lee, 1999, p. 954). In this instance, Nairobi's 3M participation compelled him to assist younger, less experienced men due to his intrinsic motivation and sense of obligation to empower the less experienced. Benin's view is similar to that of Nairobi as he stated: "My program allows me to mentor younger kids in my community. I have a desire to give back to kids in my community."

Finally, Rwanda acted on his desire to give back. "Everything that I learned within the 3M program, I began applying it in my life and you know the 3M programs are big on the peer tutoring and mentoring and that is what I do." He continued, "I'm a peer tutor within the nursing program, giving up to 20 hours a week of my time." According to my research, the men developed an appreciation and commitment to mentoring others and to volunteer in their community.

Summary

This study sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of minority males in the North Carolina Community College System 3M programs. The major themes that emerged from this study were organized according to Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational principles.

The first major theme was establishing inclusion. Two subthemes focused on participants' sense of belonging and a sense of accountability. Participants indicated their college environment was welcoming and gave them a sense of belonging. The perception of program participants supports Wlodkowski's (2008) premise that creating a welcoming and responsive climate can positively impact student learning experiences.

The second major theme was developing a positive attitude. Two subthemes were: attitudes toward mentor and attitudes toward self-efficacy for learning. According to Wlodkowski (2008), motivation for learning is a direct result of collegiate staff who demonstrate support and encouragement of students. The 3M participants agreed that their mentor had been instrumental with helping them enroll, persist, and find success in college.

Because of their interconnectedness, the data from Wlodkowski's (2008) final two themes (enhancing meaning and engendering competence) were analyzed together. The

subthemes were: a positive cultural identity, leadership development opportunities, mentor communication/engagement, and desire to mentor/community service. Overall, the 3M participants' responses support the positive impact of a sense of community. Because of the support provided by mentors, 3M participants desired to achieve academically and provide mentorship to other minority males. Participants reported that 3M had been very helpful to them. They also indicated that increased levels of belonging, meaning, confidence, and learning competence were intrinsic motivators in their work in college and in their personal lives. The mentoring process continually provided positive, meaningful interactions between mentors and program participants.

Participants in this study shared positive attitudes toward the mentoring initiative at their colleges, demonstrating an increased sense of motivation and confidence in their own learning. Supported by the 3M programmatic structure, participants conveyed a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and most importantly, a sense of meaning and purpose resulting from their association with NCCCS mentoring programs.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Conclusion

This study sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of minority males who were currently enrolled, graduated or who had stopped their participation with the North Carolina Community College System's 3M programs. This chapter includes a summary of the findings and their relationship to the literature suggested areas for further research, lessons learned, and conclusions.

This study originated from my professional interest with the NCCCS 3M programs. As a community college administrator and 3M mentor, I desired to understand the extent to which minority males recognized and attributed 3M with supporting their academic success. Findings from this study will inform North Carolina community college administrators, North Carolina policymakers, and mentoring practitioners of practices that may positively influence minority male student persistence.

The review of literature revealed a gap within retention and mentoring research. The gap that emerged was the paucity of men's voices regarding their experience of NCCCS 3M programs. To address this gap, this study sought to understand how minority males perceived and described North Carolina Community College 3M programs. This phenomenological study incorporated Wlodkowski's (2008) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching which focuses on the following key themes: establishing inclusion, developing positive attitudes, enhancing meaning and engendering competence. Both my professional and personal experiences as a minority male and 3M mentor provided an additional lens

which informed my understanding of minority male perceptions of 3M. Phenomenology (which seeks to understand phenomena) was the methodological foundation used for this study. This approach helped reveal the voices of 3M participants as they described their own mentoring experiences.

Addressing the Research Questions

This study sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of minority males with the NCCCS 3M programs. There were three research questions used to guide this study. They were:

- How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of 3M programs?

- To what do minority males attribute their involvement or lack of involvement in 3M programs?

- To what extent do minority males attribute their student success as well as personal development to 3M programs?

Aligning with Wlodkowski's framework, the men's responses focused on themes of inclusion, positive attitude, meaning and competence. These broader themes were found to include subthemes such as the value of positive cultural identity, the role of the mentor in creating a sense of accountability, and the development of motivation to serve others.

This section briefly summarizes the findings relating to the themes and subthemes in this study which closely connect to the three major research questions for this study. The first research question asked, *How do minority males describe their experiences and perceptions of 3M programs?* I found that students experienced a sense of belonging and a sense of community on their respective college campuses. Because of the mentoring program, they

perceived the college environment to be welcoming and inviting. All of the 3M participants spoke very positively about their mentoring experience, using words like "I feel that I belong" to describe their mentoring program experience. Participant responses all point toward an intrinsic need to feel included which corresponds to the emphasis on inclusion in the Wlodkowski framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. According to Tinto (2002), student involvement is important to retention, and students engaged in social activities and mentoring programs like 3M are more likely to persist and graduate from college. When minority males participate in mentoring programs like 3M, they feel a sense of connection and sense of belonging to the college campus.

A sense of belonging was developed through the relationship that mentees have with mentors. Among the nine respondents, there was a unanimous expression of satisfaction and connection with mentors and peers in the context of the 3M program. Because of their relationship with a mentor, the men said that they were likely to stay enrolled. According to Noel, Levitz, Saluri, and Associates (1985), "It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and learn how to put them to use" (p. 17). In essence, mentors provided the men with positive experiences that made them feel good about themselves and their surroundings. For instance, Sudan stated that he felt 3M mentors were like his family and in some ways closer than his primary family. From such responses, it was clear that the mentoring experiences satisfied the need to find belonging within the learning environment.

In addition to feeling a sense of belonging, the men developed a sense of accountability. For instance, Uganda commented, "My mentor made me stay on top of my

school work and made me accountable for my actions." He continued, "I now understand that accountability is the key in my life." Like Uganda, other men indicated a greater level of accountability, praising their mentors for their guidance and tutelage along their educational journey. Further, program participants indicated that the 3M mentor was a significant influence with them learning to take more responsibility for their personal, professional, and academic progress. Tinto (2002) stated, "High expectation is a condition that promotes student retention" (p. 3). In the context of 3M programs, because mentors held men to higher expectations, the men responded with increased levels of accountability. According to Tinto (2002), no student rises to low expectations.

Overall, Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational framework posited establishment of inclusion as a key factor to student motivation and success can be affirmed by this research study. The men, because of an inclusive mentoring experience, developed a sense of belonging and accountability, and the majority agreed that an environment promoting inclusion did increase the likelihood of their persistence and success.

The second research question asked, To *what do minority males attribute their involvement or lack of involvement in 3M programs?* When asked to share reasons for involvement with 3M, the participants indicated having a positive relationship with their mentor as the primary reason for their 3M participation. A positive, ongoing relationship with a mentor was determined to be a key influence on continued program involvement. What became most evident to me is the fact that 3M participants credited their involvement with someone simply demonstrating an interest in them and their well-being.

Because of this affirmative relationship, the attitudes of the men went from disbelief in themselves to that of self-confidence and determination. For example, Sudan stated that

because he was a first-generation college student, he lacked the support needed to be successful in college. His feelings of inadequacy caused him to doubt his ability to complete college courses. However, his attitude changed once Sudan established a relationship with his 3M mentor. Now, Sudan credits his mentor for his new attitude toward his learning. The men's favorable comments support Senegal's (2011) findings that men who participate in NCCCS 3M programs report their experiences to have been emotionally uplifting and encouraging.

Several participants also indicated an increase in their self-efficacy, citing their ability to better navigate their educational, social, and personal lives because of program involvement. The respondents credited 3M for their new-found positive attitude toward learning which they gained through opportunities to engage and network with community leaders and motivational speakers, participate in advising and financial aid workshops, as well as other educational and enrichment activities.

In addition, 3M participants indicated high levels of confidence and self-reliance due to their 3M involvement. For instance, prior to his participation in 3M, Rwanda (stop out student) stated, "When I enrolled in college, there was a lot of anxiety and fear. I was not too sure if I had the ability to fulfill my career goals. That's why I joined the program." However, after participating in 3M for several months, Rwanda commented, "Now, I am an officer for the nursing program. I also am a peer tutor for the nursing program." According to Rwanda, his confidence in himself was increased due to his 3M involvement. Like Rwanda, after having been involved with 3M, other men described themselves as self-assured, positive, and self-starting. In this respect, minority male comments highlight a strong connection with Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational framework. As suggested by the

literature review, an environment that is uplifting, inspiring, and positive can be a determining factor for a student's belief in himself and his ability to successfully navigate his environment (Senegal, 2011; Tinto, 1993; Wlodkowski, 2008). Having a strong sense of achievement and goal attainment was also noted as a central pattern in the responses from men who participated in 3M.

The final research question asked, *To what extent do minority males attribute their student success, as well as personal development, to 3M?* Findings related to this question speak to Wlodkowski's categories of enhancing meaning and engendering competence. According to Wlodkowski (2008), "Meaning impacts 'competence' and 'competence' effects meaning." (p. 112). In other words, one does not exist without the other, describing the close relationship between both conditions for learning.

With regard to research question number three, the men involved in 3M found that the program related to their core ideals and personal mission while also giving them a positive cultural identity. In connection with Tinto (1993), when a student feels their core values match that of the institution, that student is more likely stay enrolled and persist. Tinto (1993) describes a student's connection with the institution as *congruence*. When congruence between the institution and the student is achieved, it is more likely that the student persists. In this case, 3M participants desired to learn and stay engaged with the mentoring program and its objectives because it matched their personal values and their desire for a welcoming, familial college culture.

In conclusion, the participants' responses about the value of their mentoring experience correspond to the key dimensions of Wlodkowski's framework for culturally responsive teaching. According to Neckerman, Carter & Lee (1999), and their research on

black Americans who attain middle class status, middle class blacks feel a sense of "minority culture of mobility". For instance, Benin reported, "My program allows me to mentor younger kids in my community. I have a desire to give back to kids in my community." Therefore, as indicated by Benin's statement, 3M provided an opportunity in which to fulfill his desire to be of service to others.

Limitations and Further Research

The findings of this study are based on a small group of nine men and are not meant to be a comprehensive statement about to mentoring. Careful considerations must be given when extending the results of this to other populations. Only three small, rural community colleges were considered out of the forty-six participating colleges that host 3M programs. Although this study provided an important contribution to the knowledge base on minority males' perceptions of 3M programs, additional studies could incorporate more than three community colleges, seeking a broader understanding of mentoring programs from around the state as well as institutions from metropolitan and suburban areas.

Associated with this limitation is the size of the study sample. This study focused on the perceptions of only nine minority males who were currently enrolled, graduated or who had stopped out of a NCCCS mentoring program. More specifically, the sample included three currently enrolled students, three graduates and three stopped out students from the identified community colleges. In a future study, a larger minority male population could be selected and interviewed, seeking a more comprehensive minority male mentoring perspective. Moreover, a quantitative rather than a qualitative analysis could yield interesting responses from a larger pool of student participants for a wider understanding of student perceptions of mentoring.

Another study limitation was that none of the respondents shared critical views regarding their mentoring experiences. Although I believe the men accurately responded to the interview questions, they could have felt some reluctance to engage in a conversation exposing criticisms of the program. My assumption about this hesitancy is that the men felt a sense of loyalty to their mentor and to say something negative about the program might appear as criticizing their mentor. A future research study could incorporate a quantitative design, using a survey instrument to gain a broader range of participant views.

Lastly, a limitation of this study is that it did not consider the perspectives of 3M mentors. Only 3M participants were interviewed. However, a future study could interview the 3M mentors. Further, a research study considering perspectives of mentors from western, central and coastal regions about their perspectives on 3M programs may also prove to be valuable.

Recommendations for Action

The literature makes a strong argument for minority male mentoring initiatives. The literature review demonstrates a positive impact of mentoring on minority male student development. According to LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs (1997), "When support systems such as mentoring programs are put in place, minority males demonstrate an increase in student success" (p. 43). Considering the emerging connection between mentoring programs and minority male student achievement, it seems apparent that mentoring initiatives like 3M should become a central focus of NCCCS. Therefore, I offer recommendations for NC legislators, for NCCCS administrators, and thirdly, for 3M practitioners.

The first recommendation is aimed at stakeholders on the state-level, particularly North Carolina legislators. Legislators are largely responsible for funding 3M programs,

therefore, consideration should be given to providing funding for mentoring programs in elementary, middle, and high school settings. By the time the men get to college they have made some poor life choices which could possibly by averted if the students had a mentor earlier in life. According to Holzman (2010), minority males ages 18 and over accounted for 5% of the total college population and 36% of the total prison population. Perhaps if mentoring programs were initiated earlier, then it may prevent minority males from dropping out of school at an early age, or encourage them not to get entangled with the penal system. Men who engage in mentoring programs at a young age may be more likely to complete college later. In this respect, early mentoring programs can build a foundation for student success in the community college system.

Another recommendation to NC legislators is to consider additional ways to utilize grant funds. Several of the men expressed the difficulty their program mentor had with expending the 3M funds, citing very rigorous stipulations for the use of funds. For example, program funds could not be used to purchase food for induction ceremonies, special events, and celebrations. Also, and even more important to this population, was the stipulation that funds could not be used for outreach purposes such as the purchase of program t-shirts, school bags, and other various recruiting items. To engage and recruit minority males, items which promote group identity are vital for successful retention. Therefore, state legislators may want to consider allowing funds for these purposes, helping to attract and keep men involved with the family atmosphere which the men described as important to them. As indicated in the study findings, a sense of belonging and positive cultural identity is central to men's engagement in mentoring and the broader learning community.

A recommendation for NCCCS officials deals with hiring and developing mentoring skills among community college faculty and staff. Later in the section, I discuss from my professional perspective that current 3M practitioners are overworked because mentoring is added on to their current work responsibilities. But here, I would suggest that NCCCS officials consider making mentoring a priority and a culture value on their campus. This may mean creating new positions that incorporate mentoring or restructuring current positions to include a mentoring component, or including mentoring as part of the duties of faculty. According to this study, effective mentoring programs can change the academic trajectory for minority males. If this is to occur, it will take more than a few positions dedicated to mentoring, but it will take faculty to become dedicated mentors as well.

Next, NCCCS officials should consider developing a common, systemic framework for mentoring programs that could be used by all forty-six of the NCCCS 3M programs. From the research, some of the men reported they experienced a club format and others, a class format. Structurally, it appeared that 3M programming was left to the autonomy of each individual community college and/or mentor. Although such flexibility can be beneficial, it can also be difficult to measure success and outcomes, particularly when each school is working independently. Having noticed this lack of a comprehensive framework first-hand, my recommendation would be to use Wlodkowski's (2008) Model for Culturally Responsive Teaching as an underlying framework to develop a systemic approach to mentoring minority males. The major reason for implementing this particular framework is largely due to its sensitivity to motivating students from diverse backgrounds. Sensitivity to one's cultural identity can favorably impact a student's motivation for learning.

Also, NCCCS officials may consider implementing a 3M Advisory Board to review and discuss how each college designs its mentoring program. Board members may select community college mentors to pilot a programming structure. For instance, some programs may use a club format while others implement a class format. Once the piloting of the new structure is complete, the advisory board may seek to implement the established and unified programmatic structure within all 3M programs.

A consideration for 3M practitioners is finding innovative ways to implement Wlodkowski's (2008) Model for Culturally Responsive Teaching. The findings from this study demonstrate that Wlodkowski's adult teaching principles can support minority male student retention and engagement. To begin implementing Wlodkowski's model at my institution, I developed a minority male mentoring manual incorporating Wlodkowski's model and the principles of inclusion, positive attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. Using Wlodkowski's framework for responsive teaching as foundational support, I translated the teaching strategies into mentoring strategies. For instance, to create an inclusive environment, Wlodkowski suggests that instructors allow students to share learning values and for instructors to implement cooperative learning opportunities. The same strategy can be applied to 3M practitioners when implementing Wlodkowski's principles within the 3M mentoring model. So likewise the remaining principles also can be altered from the teaching approach to complement the mentoring model of 3M programs.

Furthermore, on a grassroots level, 3M practitioners may want to strongly consider planning and programming for non-traditional students. According to the data gathered for this study, the men that stopped out of 3M did so because of conflicts with 3M meeting times and their current work and family responsibilities. Learning or mentoring communities could

be established for men who are non-traditional working students with full-time classes and family responsibilities. My findings suggest that the students with non-traditional status experienced different concerns than those men who had recently graduated from high school. Of the three men who stopped out, two commented that club meeting times made it challenging for them to continue 3M. More emphasis should be extended to the needs, schedules, and prior obligations of non-traditional mentees. For example, a needs assessment among participants could be administered to address time, goals, desire for mentorship and previous commitments prior to starting and establishing group meeting times.

Another programming concern on the grassroots level is time commitments from 3M practitioners. From what I have observed, 3M practitioners serve their institutions in a multiplicity of roles, having 3M assigned as an extra duty. Hence, based on my professional observations, mentors are "burning out," finding themselves operating in what could be a full-time program, as well as their current teaching or student services staff positions. Mentors may want to seek assistance from faculty and other staff.

In conclusion, North Carolina legislators, leaders of North Carolina community colleges, and 3M mentors must all seek strategies to enhance learning opportunities for minority men. Resources do play a significant role in whether 3M thrives or becomes just another good idea lacking sustainability. However, the most influential and important of all resources is the relationship a student develops with a mentor. Thus, it is essential for leaders from grassroots levels to legislative levels to seek ways to ensure that NCCCS 3M programs continue to move forward, helping men (like those interviewed for this study) to develop the relationships and supports to be successful. It may prove beneficial that the college president, vice-presidents, and college faculty assist, not only as sponsors for this initiative, but as

mentors as well. To be successful, mentors will need more assistance from their campuses, making 3M a campus-wide approach, not just a small segment of people with a passion to improve minority male enrollment.

Theoretical Implications

This study provided new findings relating 3M mentoring experiences with Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model. Wlodkowski's motivational model originates from the classroom, not necessarily mentoring initiatives. A distinctive finding of this study is that Wlodkowski's conditions for motivation (establishing inclusion, developing positive attitude, enhancing meaning and engendered competence) directly relate to minority males' involvement with community college mentoring programs and also support their persistence. A significant implication of this study is that Wlodkowski's motivational criteria may be applied to other mentoring studies and programs as a design framework.

On another note, findings from this study point toward two major bodies of literature and how they intersect, which are teaching and mentoring. Wlodkowski's principles are based on a motivation framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching; however, according to the minority male responses the same principles are effective for mentoring. In other words, this study demonstrates a close relationship between teaching and mentoring, which implies that teachers can mentor and mentors can teach, specifically when they create an environment of inclusion, positive attitude, meaning and competence. In essence, good teaching and good mentoring intersect and can contribute to student success for minority males.

Finally, this study incorporated the work of Tinto and Senegal and their understanding of why students stay engaged in classrooms and mentoring settings. But where

this study makes a distinguishing mark is in the area of why students disengage from NCCCS 3M programs. The voices of those who stopped out were included in this study. They reported financial difficulties and family obligations as their main two reasons for stopping 3M. However, they stayed with the program as long as they could because they felt that their mentor cared about them and by stopping the men felt they were disappointing their mentor.

Lessons Learned

As a researcher and practitioner, Wlodkowski's motivational framework has become a lens for my understanding of 3M programming. As articulated by the participants, they want and need an environment that generates inclusion, a positive attitude, a sense of meaning and feelings of competence. Using this framework as a design model, 3M programs may keep minority males engaged more effectively.

Wlodkowski's framework also provided a unique lens through which to describe the motivations of the men as they remained engaged with 3M. Most of the men interviewed described their 3M experience as positive, meaningful and life changing, thus demonstrating the significance 3M played in their self-confidence and their ability to succeed in college. Most importantly, because of their experiences, the men expressed a desire to mentor someone else, due in large part to their mentoring experience and meaningful connection with their mentor.

My Voice

What remained a challenge for me in this study was the aspect of voice. Not only did the voices of the men resonate with me, but I had my own voice. Where and when should I speak? I found that as I explored the men's perspectives and motivations to learn, to excel and to prosper, I was really uncovering my own motivations. The voice of the men and my

own voice (although silent until this point) were one, in unison and quite reflective, taking me back to a significant time in my own life when I needed the help of a mentor. There were times during my college career when I felt like I did not belong or that I did not fit in the college environment. I, too, had to deal with the stereotypes ascribed to me by my cultural identity. As I wrote this dissertation, it was not me answering the questions. Then again, it was me. The feelings of wanting to belong and wanting to connect with others were so deep that I can still go to that place very easily today. Even while I write this, I am there.

At an experiential level, I am Sudan, Benin, Nairobi, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, and Uganda. I am the men that I interviewed. Their story is my story. When they spoke, something in me rose up in agreement, as if I had lived their stories. Like them, had it not been for my mentor keeping me focused, encouraging me, exposing me to possibilities, I do not know where I would be. I know for certain that I would not be this far along in my academic journey as I am now; neither would I have the appreciation and fascination for life-long learning that I have now. I believe that mentoring for minority males, along with others like me, will have a lasting impact on academic, social, and personal competence.

Conclusion

Through a phenomenological investigation, this study sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of minority males participating in NCCCS 3M programs. Framed by the key dimensions of Wlodkowski's (2008) motivational model, several key sub-themes emerged: sense of belonging, sense of accountability, attitude toward instructor/mentor, attitude toward self-efficacy for learning, positive cultural identity, leadership development opportunities, faculty communication/engagement, and desire to

mentor/community service. All these themes and subthemes assisted with addressing the research questions, as well as provided valuable insight into future mentoring practices.

       Overall, this study demonstrated the impact of mentoring in the lives of minority males, highlighting the fact that students want to feel like someone cares about them as well as want to be held accountable to someone for their behavior. In other words, commitment of mentors to students became the key factor involved in keeping minority men in school.

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Appendix A: Consent To Participate Form

My name is Johnny Smith. I am a doctoral student at Appalachian State University, under the supervision of Dr. Vachel Miller, Dissertation Chair. I invite you to participate in a research study focusing on *Minority Male Mentoring Programs 3M in the North Carolina Community College (NCCCS).* The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of minority males who are either enrolled now, have graduated or have dropped from the 3M program. I am endeavoring to understand the value of mentoring and its' impact on minority males persisting in college. This research project is being fulfilled as part of my program of study.

While there may be no immediate benefits of your participation in this study, your insights could help add to the body of knowledge pertaining to the persistence of minority males in community college settings. Also, your expertise and participation in 3M mentoring programs may help impact the mentoring program on your campus, and provide you with a more detailed sense of the role this program has or could have in supporting minority male persistence.

No foreseeable risks are associated with your participation in this study. As a participant, your name will be disguised with an alternate name. Information used in this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and destroyed after one year of this study.

Realizing the value of time, I plan on limiting interview sessions to two sessions per participant. Each participant will be interviewed no longer than 2 hours. You may also be asked to participate in a focus group, if needed. However, participation in the study is voluntary, so you may choose at any time to discontinue participation. Your discontinuance of this study will not have any adverse effect on your standing with Appalachian State University or with the institution you attend.

I would like to ask permission to take written notes and/ or audio record each of the interview sessions, so that I may accurately transcribe or review our discussions. I thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at jsmith@isothermal.edu or my Dissertation Chair at vwmiller@appstate.edu.

Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the IRB Administrator, Research and Sponsored Programs, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608 (828) 262-2130, irb@appstate.edu.

The ASU Institutional Review has determined that this study is exempt from IRB oversight.

I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature/ Date_____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Questions for currently enrolled 3M participants

1. What is your age?

2. What is your GPA?

3. What is your program of study?

4. What are your educational/ professional goals?

5. What is your date of graduation?

6. What do you like most/ least about 3M programs?

7. How would you improve 3M programs?

8. What are your perceptions of NCCCS 3M programs?

9. Why did you participate or get involved with 3M programs?

10. As a current 3M participant, what is your perspective regarding the format and structure of 3M programs?

11. Would you credit 3M programs for helping you succeed academically, socially, personally?

Questions for graduates of 3M programs

1. What is your age?

2. What was your GPA?

3. What was your program of study?

4. What are your educational/ professional goals?

5. What was your date of graduation?

6. What did you like most/ least about 3M programs?

7. How would you improve 3M programs?

8. What are your perceptions of NCCCS 3M programs?

9. Why did you participate or get involved with 3M programs?

10. As a 3M graduate, what is your perspective regarding the format and structure of 3M programs?

11. Would you credit 3M programs for helping you succeed academically, socially, personally?

Questions for 3M participants who stopped the program

1. What is your age?

2. What was your GPA?

3. What was your program of study?

4. What are your educational/ professional goals?

5. What was your date of graduation? If applicable.

6. What did you like most/ least about 3M programs?

7. How would you improve 3M programs?

8. What are your perceptions of NCCCS 3M programs?

9. Why did you participate or get involved with 3M programs?

10. What is your perspective regarding the format and structure of 3M programs?

11. Would you credit 3M programs for helping you succeed academically, socially, personally? If applicable.

12. Why did you not stay enrolled in the 3M program?

13. As a former participant of 3M and graduate what are your perspectives and experiences in 3M programs? After having graduated from NCCCS and/ or transferred to a 4 year college, were you prepared for the transition?

14. As a 3M participant who did not continue the 3M program, what are your experiences and perceptions of 3M program? What factors contributed to you not staying connected with the program?

15. As a result of participating in 3M programs, how do participants perceive yourself and your progress in the program, society, academia, and the professional world as a result of participating in 3M programs?

Appendix C: Interview Summary/Questionnaire Form (example)

3M Summary of Student (Pseudonyms) Questionnaire Responses

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Age			
GPA			
Program. of Study			
Educational goals			
Professional goals			
Graduation Date			
Like Most about 3M			
Like Least about 3M	.		
Ideas for program. improvement		.	
Perceptions of NCCCS 3M			

Why did you get involved			
Perspective format & structure			
Do you credit 3M for helping/ grades, social and personal			
Final thoughts			

Biography

Johnny Michael Smith was born in Shelby, North Carolina on April 13, 1973. He graduated from Shelby High School in Shelby, North Carolina in 1991. He furthered his education by attending Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services in 1995. He also received a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration in 1999 and Education Specialist Degree in Higher Education, Adult Teaching in 2000, both from Appalachian State University located in Boone, North Carolina. Johnny currently works at Isothermal Community College in Spindale, North Carolina as the Dean of Learning Support and Retention. Prior to this position, he was the Director of the Career Center and a Student Affairs Counselor at Isothermal Community College. Johnny worked with Shelby City Schools as an Administrative Assistant for three years and with Cleveland County Schools for two years as Director of Black Youth in Action (B.Y.I.A.) Afterschool Program before joining the North Carolina Community College System in 2001.

His work in the North Carolina Community College System includes numerous leadership roles and student leadership initiatives. He has served as chair of academic advising and co-chair of retention committees. Johnny was a consultant and evaluator for the North Carolina Community College System's Minority Male Mentoring Program, and has played an integral role with this system's Minority Male Mentoring Initiative as a program mentor and advisor.