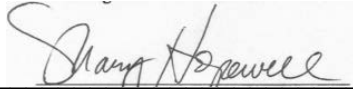


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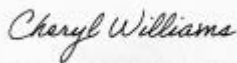
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THE INFLUENCE OF ADULT MENTORS ON MY LIFE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

by

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A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

There have been numerous discussions surrounding the issues African-American males face in schools today, many specifically addressing the “achievement gap” between Black and White students. Research indicates that mentoring programs can be invaluable in addressing the risks that youths face today. The study explored and utilized a reflexive investigation of the researcher’s life experiences as a mentee, and of his mentors’ motivation to support him throughout his teenager hood, his collegiate and Olympic years, and as an educator. This study is relevant because it explores the positive influence that adult mentors have on the attitudes, confidence, and school connectedness for African-American teen males. The attention to mentoring incorporated an understanding of the relationship between adult male mentors and at-risk African-American high school males.

This dissertation uses autoethnography as the methodology. The study centers on two theoretical frameworks to guide this inquiry: developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches. Memory, interviews, reflective journal, and an attitude survey serve as supporting data sources. The research questions guiding this dissertation are as follows:

1. What motivated my mentors to support me in my academic, athletic, and educational journeys?
2. How have relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth during my youth, collegiate and Olympic years, and as an educator?
3. What have I learned about how to mentor African-American male youths from my relationships with adult mentors?

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“We must never forget our teachers, our lecturers, and our mentors. In their individual capacities [they] have contributed to our academic, professional and personal development” (Akita, 2015).

It was Sunday, September 25: the finals of the 400 meters hurdles in the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. That morning, I discovered that the representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in their infinite wisdom, posted the racers’ lane assignments in the hotel lobby in the middle of the night, perhaps to avoid any confrontations with those unsatisfied with their lanes. Nervously, I searched the board for my event. The committee had assigned me to lane six. Ordinarily, this would have been a great lane, but every one of the athletes who had been worthy competitors over the years had received more favorable placements.

Despite this, I trusted my training from the past ten months and recalled the words of a mentor: “Conditioning breeds confidence” (S. L. Dowell, personal communication, August 31, 1987). This gave me the calm demeanor necessary to embrace the new challenge.

But myriad worries threatened to overwhelm me as I arrived at Seoul Olympic Stadium, approximately three hours before the race. Most of these fears regarded my preparation for the race, but I took solace in remembering that I was supported by the greatest coach the world had never known. But beyond that, Coach Dowell was also one of my high school coaches, my mentor, and my friend.

I reminded myself that I came from a rich tradition of track and field Olympians from my hometown of San Jose, California, including Tommie Smith, John Carlos, Lee Evans, Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner), and Millard Hampton, to name a few. That tradition of becoming

one of San Jose's great track athletes was embedded into my soul and I wanted to make all who came before me proud. Lastly, I thought about my family, friends, and mentors who had graced me with the insights of their life experiences and invaluable support over the years.

I warmed up for over an hour before the last call for the finals of the 400 meters hurdles. My heart raced as I approached the prerace area, where the officials checked my credentials to ensure I was the individual scheduled to run. They also reviewed my competitor's "bib" number and my running spikes (shoes) to certify that I had only six, one-quarter inch spikes in them.

We sat next to each other in chairs that coincided with our lane numbers, waiting for the race to start. Those 15 minutes seemed like an eternity. The lineup of lanes—one through eight— included Harald Schmid, Germany; Kevin Young, USA; Edwin Moses, USA; Winthrop Graham, Jamaica; El Hadj Amadou Dia Ba, Senegal; myself; Kriss Akabusi, Great Britain; and Edgar Itt, Germany respectively.

I attempted to gauge my competitors' anxiety, but they all seemed at ease. In contrast, the closer I was to the start of the race, the more I experienced feelings of intense nervousness, excitement, and confidence.

The final announcement came, directing the competitors to enter the stadium. I remembered again the proverb of Coach Dowell, "Conditioning breeds confidence" and of my high school history teacher, coach, and mentor, Mr. Poynter, "Finish what you start" (R. A. Poynter, personal communication, February 12, 1974). Mr. Poynter referred to obtaining my degree from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), but I had decided it applies to track and field as well. But the last words I recalled before the race were from my post-UCLA coach, who loved Westerns: "Get on your horse and let the cowboys ride" (R. Kersee, personal communication, March 1985). The race and the results were only minutes away.

An Olympic official escorted us to the track as the chants from the crowd bellowed into my ears, “Let’s go Andre!” along with the names of my competitors. The setting of my starting blocks was a part of my training, but for the life of me, I could not remember setting them. As a routine, I ran a quick practice over the first hurdle, returned to the start, and waited for the whistle, signaling us to remove our sweats. I stood anxiously behind my starting blocks and only vaguely heard my name announced to the onlookers in the stadium and to the television audiences around the world.

The words sounded, “On your Mark!”

These men had been my competitors numerous times throughout the years, and so I was accustomed to their strategies and patterns. Edwin Moses—two-time reigning Olympic gold medalist, winner of 107 consecutive finals, and four-time world record holder—preferred being the final person in the starting blocks. This approach prevented two challenges from other competitors: a) overthinking the race, and b) the tightening of the muscles from crouching in the starting blocks while waiting for the command to move into the set position.

Before stepping into my starting blocks, I glanced left to see if Edwin and I were symbiotic in that approach. We were, and at that moment, I had an epiphany. If I was using my competitors’ strategies against them, they must be using mine against me.

I was their race rabbit, meaning they would use me to set the pace before making their final moves. It was then, moments away from the race, that I altered my race tactics. I had planned to clear the first three hurdles quickly, but changed my strategy to the first five. My internal mantra was, “If you want me, come and get me.”

The starter’s pistol went off. I bolted from the starting line and beat everyone over the first seven hurdles—not just the five I intended. I remember the swell of confidence I felt at that

point in the race as I came off the final turn, running to the eighth hurdle. My technique was flawless, but I was aware that, when you are in top physical form (“race shape”) the race does not truly begin until after the seventh hurdle. Here I was at the pinnacle race of my amateur track and field career, 100 meters from becoming the 1988 Olympic champion.

If I could freeze that exact moment in time, I would have reflected on my journey and asked myself many questions. How did I get here? Who were the people responsible for guiding me here? And not just here, 100 meters from obtaining the most important award of an Olympian’s career, but for guiding me since my youth?

I did not have the luxury of such reflection, and so I stayed focused on the race, pulling just slightly ahead of my competitors with metaphorical blinders on. I cleared the ninth hurdle.

As I neared the tenth and final hurdle, I recalled the problem I encountered in the semifinals the day before. I had to stretch for the tenth hurdle to ensure thirteen strides, and in doing so, I clipped the top of the barrier, nearly crashing to the ground. The ideal strategy is to run an odd number of strides between each hurdle. In my case, that meant thirteen strides between each obstacle to clear them with my dominant leg and reduce the risk of crashing.

But by then, fatigue was setting in. I leaped just a little too high over number 10—my first and only mistake in almost 42 seconds. With 40 meters to go, my competitors were hot on my heels. Twenty meters from the finish line, and for the first time during the race, I could feel Amadou Dia Ba’s presence to my left. I made one last surge to hold him off. I looked up at the Jumbotron and ran through the tape in first place.

I had won. I was an Olympic champion.

After receiving hugs and congratulations from some of my competitors, I wearily dropped to the ground, took a moment to pray, and reflected on my long, arduous journey. It

was official; I was an Olympic gold medalist. I had finally joined an elite group of athletes and hoped my supporters were proud of this significant accomplishment.

In the years since winning the gold medal, the preceding questions in those figurative freeze-frames and many more have repeated in my mind. Who were the people responsible for guiding me here? Did I make them proud? Have I paid it forward?

Now, as I reflect on those questions and look back to the summer of 1973, when my high school journey began, more inquiries arise. Among them: how could I have known that the amazing individuals I met as a youth would become my adult mentors and role models through those challenging years and beyond?

Background

High school can be a time for personal discovery and can test a student's ability to connect with peers and adults on numerous levels. Feelings of belonging, peer and adult connections, lack of confidence, and poor academic performance were some of my concerns. Research by Uwah, McMahon and Furlow (2008) states that the positive feelings of belonging to a school community are essential for all students, especially for African-American males because academic success correlates to their perceptions of self-worth.

Goodenow (1992) defines school belonging as "The extent to which students perceive themselves to be welcomed, valued, and respected members of the school community" (p.178). This ideal school community involves support from teachers, counselors, and athletic coaches; their involvement has positive effects on the attendance and educational ambitions of minority students (Flaxman, 1992).

Uwah et al. (2008) examine the relationships between African-American male high school students' perceptions of school belonging, academic self-efficacy, and educational

aspirations by using two hypotheses to guide the study: a) perceptions of school belonging are positively related to academic self-efficacy, and b) measures of perceptions of school belonging and indicators of educational aspirations confidently predict academic self-efficacy scores. The researchers found that the overall perceptions of school belonging were not positively related to academic self-efficacy. However, there was a positive correlation between students who felt encouraged to participate, school belonging, and academic self-efficacy.

More specifically, African-American male students responded in the affirmative when personally invited to engage in academics or extracurricular activities from members of the school community. The second hypothesis was supported by identifying that educational aspirations would significantly predict academic self-efficacy. This was consistent with the study by the same researchers suggesting that Black, male students would benefit considerably if their educational goals and academic achievement were somehow interconnected.

It was because of the guidance from these non-parental adult males that I was encouraged to become involved in school clubs and activities, including sports. It was because of them that I felt a sense of belonging in the school community and was able to experience academic achievement and aspirational success. These men, my mentors, were employees of the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California. One of them was my high school principal, an African-American man who became another role model for me. My contact with most of these incredible people continues to this day, whether through meeting in-person or via social media, telephone, or text.

I have often wondered whether fate or destiny brought me to this point in my life. Why was I the only sibling of nine to attend and graduate from college? Why did mentoring work only for me when my siblings had equal access to these same mentors?

Our family migrated from Wisconsin to San Jose, California when I was four years old. Both parents and my eight siblings lived under the same roof in a small, yet well-kept home on what many would call “the rough side of town.” Neither parent graduated from high school. My mother discontinued school in the ninth grade, and my father dropped out in the tenth grade. Miraculously, all of my siblings finished high school. Six followed a traditional path, one earned a GED, and another completed high school because of my gaining guardianship to ensure he would graduate instead of becoming another dropout. I was the only sibling to have continued with my education, let alone graduate from college and earn a Master’s degree.

We moved multiple times throughout the city of San Jose during my prep school years. Yet, I was fortunate enough to experience stability by attending one middle school and one high school. The only exception was a short stint of two months at another high school on the west side during my junior year. The two-month move was due to the loss of our home after failing to pay the mortgage. Our family of nine at that time relocated to a two-bedroom apartment across town in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, separating me from my school, my friends, my coaches, and track mates.

San Jose was significantly different when I grew up in the 1970s than what you might see today. Back then, the population was 445,779: 93.6 % White and 2.5% Black. In 1977, during my senior year at Silver Creek High School, the school population was approximately 1,750, with 236 or 13.49 % of students being Black. Of these 236 Black students, 106 were male. Throughout the next decade, San Jose grew to a population of 629,442: 74.7% White, 8.5% Asian and Pacific Islander, and 4.6% Black (Bay Area Census, 1970-1990).

In the 1970s, San Jose was an agricultural city in the heart of the current “Silicon Valley.” The landscape was spacious with vast fruit orchards surrounding many neighborhoods.

Adjacent to my home were walnut and cherry orchards. In other parts of the city were orchards of prunes, grapes, and apricots, and fields of cucumbers and broccoli. I would usually pass at least two dairy farms during my walks to school, and in the summers, my friends and I would enjoy the local ice cream made there.

The paragraphs above portray an All-American city, an ideal that may seem impossible in the context of the 1970s—the time immediately after the peak of the civil rights era. It included the assassinations of Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, and Robert Kennedy. The repercussions of this era still loomed, contributing to the emergence of high-profile social groups combating segregation and racism, and fighting for human rights and equality. Some of these groups were established or had prominent leaders from or near San Jose. Groups such as Congress on Racial Equity (CORE), The Black Panther Party, Chicano Civil Rights, and The Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) were familiar to many during this time (Civil Rights Movement in the Bay Area, 2017; Janowiecki, 2017).

Meadow Fair, my neighborhood, was diverse, but segregated. During those years as a black youth, it was common to hear racial epithets and not know which streets I could walk. I had to avoid at least two of the neighborhood streets; one consisted primarily of Hispanics and the other mostly of Whites. Ironically, some of my good friends lived on both of those streets, but it was generally a good idea to keep my distance because of the less tolerant people living there. Unfortunately, many of my friends did not avoid those areas. Some got into fights while others committed crimes.

According to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (2015), arrests in 1976 for youths aged 10-17 from San Jose was 8,526 per 100,000 (8.5%), which included 3,689 (3.7%) felonies such as violence, murder, rape, robbery, assault, property damage, and drugs. This

context is relevant because many African-American males face similar circumstances today.

One of my intentions while working in Stockton, California is to gain a deeper understanding of the local statistics. According to the California Sentencing Institute (2015), there were 62,703 juvenile felony arrests in the year 2014 for all males ages 10-17 in California. Of these, 2,810 (4.48%) were in the San Joaquin County, which includes Stockton.

My reasons for writing this dissertation as an autoethnography are twofold. First, I sought to understand my journey and the obstacles that I overcame, but which led many of my friends on a downward spiral. I know now that, had it not been for my adult mentors encouraging me to persevere and achieve my goals, I would have followed a drastically different path. Secondly, it is my hope that, in sharing this narrative, the reader might resonate with the lessons learned, whether as a student, athlete, mentor, or parent.

Statement of the Problem

Since the 1980s, topics such as academics and socioeconomic status have been deliberated extensively by researchers and educators (Garibaldi, 1992; Jackson & Moore, 2006; Wyatt, 2009) surrounding the issues that African-American males face in schools. Discussions have specifically addressed the “achievement gap” between Black and White students.

When observing gaps in the reading and arithmetic skills of African-American and White students by their senior years of high school, African-American students’ skills were comparable to White students’ skills during the eighth grade (Hoffman, Llagas, & Synder, 2003).

Achievement gaps were also evident in student grades, course selection, and passing Advanced Placement (AP) tests (Education Trust, 2014). While the 1990s saw progress towards closing that achievement gap, it has broadened again in recent years (Uwah et al., 2008; White, 2009).

From 1992-2013, researchers identified that fourth-grade reading scores for African-American students had fallen from 69% to 50%, and eighth-grade mathematics scores had fallen from 81% to 49% (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013). The NAEP further stated that African-American students were still 2.5 times behind White students when acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in both school and life. Additionally, only one-third of these students were proficient or advanced in reading and arithmetic compared to White students (NAEP, 2013).

Between 2003 and 2013, the academic performance for African-American students increased exponentially in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics (Education Trust, 2014). In 2013, the overall Academic Performance Index (API) in California for African-Americans in grades two through 11 was 707 compared to the 852 achieved by White students. Further disaggregation of API scores for high school students in grades 9-11 resulted in a score of 666 for African-American students, compared to 819 for White students. Additionally, during the 2013-14 academic year, the API scores for African-Americans in Stockton Unified School District (SUSD) was 634. In comparison, their White peers scored 734.

California graduation rates for the 2013-14 school year reported African-American students as the only subgroup that failed to meet their expected graduation rate; this data included English Learners and students with disabilities (California Department of Education, 2013). Additionally, African-American females outperformed African-American males at a much higher rate, including college graduation. Most would agree that the consequences are dismal for our society in failing to ensure the proper education of African-American males. According to Uwah et al. (2008), Black, high school males will find more difficulty attending

college or obtaining a degree, are less likely to be hired or utilized effectively in the workforce, and are incarcerated to a higher degree than any other racially-classified male group.

In 2015, California adopted a new end-of-the-year summative assessment tool called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). It is a comprehensive tool that measures progress for college and career readiness for students in 3rd grade through 8th grade and 11th grade. The CAASPP results for 2017 compare African-American and White students in the areas of English language arts and mathematics (California Department of Education, 2018).

Table 1

African-American versus White Comparison for the 2017 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

Ethnicity	Content	Grade Level	State	District	Stagg High School
African-American	English	11	41.20%	25.12%	37.78%
White	English	11	72.23%	41.96%	49.06%
African-American	Math	11	14.63%	11.63%	10.42%
White	Math	11	44.50%	17.14%	18.52%

When comparing the scores between African-American and White students, African-American students scored low in every data category referencing the state, district, and school levels. There was as much as a 3:1 ratio in the statewide gap for math. When observing scores for eleventh grade only, White students significantly outscored African-American students.

I currently serve as Principal of Stagg High School in Stockton, CA. As of January 2019, SUSD is a diverse community home to approximately 40,000 students. The student demographic data includes 63% Hispanic/Latino, 14% Asian, and 11% African-American. More than 75% of the student population received free and reduced lunch. In comparison, California's student population is 16,220,413, with a collective student body that is 54% Hispanic/Latino, 23% White, 9% Asian, and 6% African-American (CDE, 2018).

In an effort to address the abysmal academic data, SUSD chose to restructure eight of its 54 schools (four elementary and four middle schools) after being identified by CDE as a Program Improvement district. This decision was made in response to a consistent lack of academic achievement by students in Stockton Unified School District (California Department of Education, 2017). The individuals working directly with students considered one effective solution would be to provide mentoring programs.

The effectiveness of these programs hinges on a mutual commitment between the mentor and mentee to meet regularly for the minimum of six months (Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Frank, 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Karcher, 2005). Many of my peers and I had access to mentoring in high school. We were those at-risk African-American youths from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who lacked parental involvement, had low self-esteem, and had poor academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze my life experiences as a mentee and my mentors' motivations to support me throughout my life. This study will also determine the extent of the positive influence that adult mentors have on the attitudes, confidence, and school connectedness of African-American teen males.

Research Questions

This autoethnography was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What motivated my mentors to support me in my academic, athletic, and educational journeys?
2. How have the relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth during my youth, my collegiate and Olympic years, and as an educator?
3. Through the lens of developmental and instrumental approaches to mentoring, what have I learned about how to mentor African-American male youths from my own relationships with adult mentors?

Theoretical Frameworks

I have documented specific personal accounts through three eras of my life, from my teenage years in San Jose, to my UCLA and Olympic years, and to my professional years working in SUSD. Further examination of my relationships with adult mentors has influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of self-worth throughout my life. Finally, this study examines what I have learned as a mentee and how it supported me to become an active mentor to others.

This study employs two distinct theoretical frameworks: developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches. It is the former that resonated most with me when I think about my adult mentors as a youth.

Developmental Approach

The Developmental style of mentoring is youth-driven (Morrow & Styles, 1995). The principal focus is on building and sustaining a close, trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee, where the ultimate goal is to encourage youth development by creating conditions to

assist in the mentee's social, academic, and emotional development through relationships from their mentors (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006). Morrow and Styles (1995) proposed the initial characteristics of the developmental mentoring approach. These authors utilized mentoring relationship goals and content to determine how to achieve success in mentoring program activities.

The developmental style of mentoring consists of multiple aspects and are distinguished into two parts (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Part one entails relational and goal-oriented activities. Relational aspects of mentoring are the core focus, and goal-directed actions are subsidiary to the former. Part two is the collaboration and relationship. This includes respecting and encouraging the youth's interests and opinions in the decision-making process. The developmental style of mentoring was crucial in my youth because it built trust between my mentors and me; we would agree to play basketball, football, or simply have casual conversations. However, I was not aware of the term "developmental style of mentoring" back in 1973.

This relational style encourages the mentor to have supportive relationships with the mentees, often engaging in recreational activities and discussing mutual interests. This approach is consistent with those authors who theorize that having a close relationship built on trust is how youths learn skill-building (Karcher et al., 2006).

Instrumental Mentoring

In contrast to the developmental approach, instrumental mentoring is goal-directed and focuses on skills to improve behavior, peer relationships, and academics. This relationship style is "adult-driven"; mentors challenge the mentees to complete predetermined tasks (Morrow & Styles, 1995). Morrow and Styles further indicate that the instrumental style is viewed

negatively by youths because the mentors chart the direction of the relationship and the goals that the mentees must meet. However, this approach is more favorable for youths in a work environment (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2005). The goal of this theoretical model is to improve the mentees' academic skills, which will then boost self-esteem and school connectedness (Karcher et al., 2006).

The theoretical frameworks of this research analyze the approaches of developmental and instrumental mentoring to determine my mentors' motivations to support me, how they influenced my overall growth as their mentee, and how I will transfer that knowledge to mentor other African-American males.

Significance of the Study

Students matched with caring and supportive adults achieve higher grades, increased self-esteem, improved attendance, and better academic performance (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). Michael Fullan (2010) echoes this sentiment, "often the difference between staying or going [dropping out of school] for many borderline students is whether they have a meaningful relationship with one or more caring adults" (p. 8).

Tierney, Grossman, and Resch (1995) add that providing caring adults to mentor youths will decrease discipline issues while also increasing attendance and grade point averages (GPAs). This research reveals the need for mentorships for many African-American high school males. The role of mentor was explored to address academic self-efficacy, effects associated with lack of school connectedness or belonging, and lack of parental involvement or adult support.

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap: The disparities between African-American and White students (White, 2009).

African-American/Black: A person having origins in any of “the Black groups of Africa,” (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery Jr., 2011). In this dissertation, the reference will be interchangeable because of the context of colloquial terms of the day or the time in history.

At-Risk Students: Students with low academic performance, lower socioeconomic status families with parents who either have low educational backgrounds or low educational expectations of their children, low self-esteem, and lack a sense of school belonging (Donnelly, 1987).

Developmental Mentoring: A variation in mentoring in which the focus is on promoting the youth’s social, cognitive, and emotional development (Karcher, et al., 2006).

Empathy: Experiencing others’ feelings “as if” they were your own (Davis, 1980).

Instrumental Mentoring: A “prescriptive approach” of mentoring that is goal-directed and focused on skills to improve behavior, peer relationships, or academics. This relationship style is “adult-driven,” where mentors challenge the mentees to meet predetermined tasks (Morrow & Styles, 1995).

Mentee: A person who is mentored (Dubois et al., 2002).

Mentor: An adult who has a specific amount or type of influence on the mentee. The term originated in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where “a man named Mentor was given the duty of educating the son of Odysseus” (Burgsthaler & Cronheim, 2001, p. 60).

Mentoring: The “sustained relationship between a young person and an adult in which the adult provides the young person with support, guidance, and assistance” (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002, p. 1).

Mutuality: The quality of a cooperative relationship with undertones of benefit distributed between the two parties; of shared ownership (Rose & Wadham-Smith, 2004).

School Belonging: The extent to which students perceive themselves to be accepted, valued, and respected members of the school community (Goodenow, 1992).

Trust: “One in which confidence is placed,” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Limitations

The limitations of this study include relying on my own experiences and those of a small sampling pool. As such, the experiences and perspectives yielded from this study may not produce generalizations.

Delimitations

One delimitation of this study is in narrowing the scope of variables to a single gender and grade level (adult males, ninth grade, and African-American high school males) to reduce biases within the study. Another delimitation is in the use of a purposeful sampling of my own mentors.

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided an overview regarding adult mentoring, school connectedness, and two approaches to mentoring: developmental and instrumental. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed discussion of these topics. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this dissertation. Chapter 4 provides the results from the data analyzed along with the rich stories from the lives of both the researcher and the youth mentors. The final

chapter discusses the conclusions of the study and provides a summary, including implications and recommendations for future research.

Summary

High school can be difficult to navigate even for the well-balanced teen. Researchers have discussed the importance of feeling like a valued and respected member of the school community. Furthermore, all school staff play an important part in ensuring the academic success of all students, including teachers, coaches, and counselors. The achievement gap continues to be an issue between Black and White students and is especially dangerous for at-risk Black males who feel disconnected from school. Research has proven that mentoring programs with caring adults can be invaluable in addressing the needs of African-American males.

The purpose of this study is to explore and utilize a reflexive investigation of my life experiences as a mentee. The design of this research is to understand what motivated my adult mentors to teach, coach, train, guide, and support me throughout my life. The study is also designed to determine if, by understanding the relationship between adult male mentors and the researcher, at-risk African-American males could become successful. Additionally, the overarching question addressed in this study is intended to determine the degree to which an adult mentor's positive influence affects the attitude, confidence, and school connectedness for African-American teen males.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The effectiveness of mentoring programs and positive outcomes on youth hinges on the longevity of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

A host of literature presents numerous perspectives of at-risk African-American male students. The challenges these youths face include school violence, lack of parental involvement, low self-esteem, and low academic performance (Garibaldi, 1992; Grossman & Garry, 1997; Hickman & Wright, 2011). This literature review addresses (a) the problems of at-risk, African-American male students underperforming in high school settings, (b) the use of adult mentorship, and (c) the theoretical frameworks of developmental and instrumental mentoring theories. Knowledge regarding developmental and instrumental approaches can provide a deeper understanding of the impacts of adult mentoring.

Academic Challenges Among African-American Male Youths

The demographic data cited in Chapter 1 indicates that, according to the NAEP (2013), White students are 2.5 times ahead of African-American students when acquiring the skills necessary to be successful in school and in life. Additionally, when comparing state data for the CAASPP between Black and White 11th grade students, African-American students fall behind by more than 30% (41.20% to 72.23%) in both English and in math (14.63% to 44.5%) respectively. Many African-American males fail academically for a variety of reasons, including poverty, school violence, a lack of school connectedness or belonging, self-esteem issues and cultural identification, teacher expectations and perceptions, and a lack of parental involvement in their child's education (White, 2009). Each of these factors will be discussed briefly to provide clarity and context for the issues contributing to academic challenges.

Poverty

The socioeconomic status of African-Americans has commonly been associated with the achievement gap (White, 2009). According to the United States Census Bureau (2014), there are approximately 47 million or 14.5% African-American people in America, including those who are or a combination of Black and another race. Among all demographic groups, 22.9% of all Blacks, including children, live below the poverty line, as opposed to 11% of all other demographic groups (US Census Bureau, 2014). Of this percentage, 38% of Black children live below the poverty threshold, in contrast to 22% of children representing other groups (Blackdemographics.com, 2016; US Census Bureau, 2014).

Additionally, single Black women raising children under the age of 18 suffer the most significant disparity of poverty. This disparity is especially notable when considering this represents 46% of those living below the poverty line. Even more significantly, single Black women led 55% of all Black families in 2014 (Blackdemographics.com, 2014; US Census Bureau, 2014).

According to White (2009), reading and arithmetic achievement gaps between poor and wealthy students is evident by the time the students enter first grade. Children living in poverty and the “lack of appropriate exposure to language development” within the home results in students entering school with inferior language skills (White, 2009, p. 3). The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation conducted a study analyzing the connection between poverty and academic achievement. The data reflected that students who reportedly live in households making \$20,000 or less annually are twice as likely to receive a “D” or an “F” in school as compared to those households reportedly making \$50,000 or more annually (Toldson, 2008).

School Violence

According to Blackdemographics.com, in the 2009-10 school year, 73% of all public schools recorded at least one incident of violence, including fighting, robbery, sexual offenses, carrying weapons to school, and threats against a person with or without the use of a weapon. Less than 6% of African-American students in grades 9-12 brought weapons to school. A demographic comparison between African-Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanic students indicates that Blacks brought weapons to school at a rate of 5.3%, while Caucasian and Hispanic students were 5.6% and 5.8%, respectively (Blackdemographics.com, 2016).

Self-Esteem/Cultural Identity

When African-American males view themselves negatively, it affects their academic achievement; this is because “oppositional bias culture can hinder academic success” (White, 2009, p. 3). For example, should a Black male receive good grades, he perceives himself as “acting White” and thus is excluded from social functions and mocked by his peers (Ferguson, Ludwig, & Rich, 2001, p.3).

Teacher Expectation and Perceptions

There is a phenomenon called “stereotype threat,” wherein the way teachers view students can affect how students see themselves (White, 2009). Stereotype threat influences teachers to set low expectations for poor and minority students based on their current performance instead of their potential (Kober, 2001).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement often determines how well their children will perform academically (White, 2009). When African-American parents are involved in all aspects of their children’s lives, including monitoring their “comings and goings” in the house, their homework, friends,

and academic and social endeavors, it increases the likelihood of their children's success in school (Mandara, 2006).

The research previously presented by White (2009) and Kober (2001) indicates that poverty, violence, connectedness and belonging, self-esteem and cultural identity, teacher expectations and perceptions, and parental involvement influence the academic success of African-American males. Poverty may be mitigated by parental involvement to the extent that parents are available, giving way to an argument suggesting that mentors may act in a similar capacity as parents (White, 2009; Toldson, 2008; Mandara, 2006).

The factors described above explain many of the challenges and struggles of African American males. The research attempts to address these challenges in a variety of ways. One successful strategy is by pairing the youth with an adult mentor (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005).

Mentorship Relationships

Mentoring relationships between youths and adults are nothing new to the fabric of the American landscape, but they have become more common in recent years (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008). Many of these programs have increasingly emphasized identifying the proper interventions to assist children's and youths' development through formal and informal mentoring relationships (Karcher et al., 2006). By 2005, there were approximately 4,500 agencies providing mentoring services for youths in the United States. The largest and most well-known of these is Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS) of America with approximately 500 organizations at large (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Karcher et al., 2006; Dubois & Karcher, 2005).

In a longitudinal study deriving from young adults across the United States, Dubois and Silverthorn (2005) found teens who stated that having mentoring relationships during their youths fared considerably better within the areas of academics, self-esteem, and behavior. These

factors are invaluable for graduating from high school, finding an occupation, applying and attending college, overall health, and reducing negative behaviors such as fighting, risk-taking, drug use, smoking, and gang membership (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005). However, the authors also reported that any positive benefits gained during the mentoring program declined after a mentee left and terminated the relationship with the mentor.

Although it is crucial for at-risk teens to be involved in mentoring programs, it is more important to understand how mentoring relationships affect them. Rhodes (2005) proposed a model suggesting that mentoring relationships—which form a secure connection of mutuality, trust, and empathy through close and enduring bonds—may influence positive effects for youths through three interrelating, developmental methods.

The first process consists of social-emotional development: the ability to listen to and be a positive adult role model by assisting and teaching youths how to manage their feelings. Second is cognitive development: fostering positive academic and vocational outcomes to help youths become more aware of “adult values, guidance, and viewpoints” (Rhodes, 2005, p. 256). The third method, identity development, is when the mentoring relationship opens up new worlds for the mentees in the forms of activities, jobs, college, and other resources to realize their identities. Youths may want to emulate the attitudes, behaviors, and traits of those with whom they have formed positive and healthy relationships.

The three developmental processes (social-emotional, cognitive, and identity) not only intertwine with each other, but can also affect ongoing relationships with parents and peers (Rhodes, 2005). Programs that support the mentoring relationship—such as by matching based on common interests, the frequency of meetings, and offering structured interactions—have produced greater positive effects (Schwartz et al., 2012).

It is essential to identify the critical components associated with BBBS since they are the largest and most well-known mentoring agency in America. Morrow and Styles (2005) observed how BBBS of America matched their mentors with mentees. The results produced multiple successful mentoring relationships with common, developmental elements because the mentor provided the mentee with developmental tasks, such as collaborating on decision-making, developing social skills, and ensuring emotional wellbeing. However, positive results are more likely when mentees receive a more balanced approach to mentoring that incorporates structure and support from their mentors (Langhout, Rhodes, & Osborne, 2004).

A mentoring program's success hinges on the quality and longevity of the relationship between mentor and mentee (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). When that relationship lasts over a year, the mentee exhibits more academic confidence, which improves grades, attendance, social and emotional development, and resistance to drugs and alcohol. In contrast, when the mentorship terminates in less than a year, mentees exhibit little or no improvement (Jekielek et al., 2002).

Karcher and Nakkula (2010) found that, when mentees garnered support from their mentors, they also had positive experiences when they were able to guide some of the structure in their relationship. This includes choosing fun activities, such as playing sports and going to the movies, and goal-oriented activities, such as discussing school-related or future career interests. The bonds between mentor and mentee develop more willingly when the relationship is flexible and youth-centered—when the interests and preferences of the mentee come first (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008).

In summary, mentorship can be an invaluable boon for African-American males in their academic and career endeavors. Numerous mentoring programs have been established to foster

these relationships, and some are specifically dedicated to addressing the issues of school connectedness and working with African-Americans. The following section sheds light on the strengths and weaknesses of multiple mentoring programs.

Mentoring Programs

An estimated 4.5 million at-risk youths have participated in structured mentoring programs in the United States (Bruce & Bridgeland 2014). The federal government, through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), funds many of these mentoring programs, including the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP). All at-risk youths deserve a caring adult or non-parental figure in their lives to provide guidance, support, and mentoring (Grossman & Garry, 1997; Schwartz et al., 2012). Adolescent mentoring generally occurs through the youth's established social networks—with teachers, coaches, neighbors, extended family members, and other non-parental adults. Mentoring programs are more effective when the mentor and mentee establish a close and lasting relationship that encourages positive developmental change (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008; Schwartz et al. 2012).

Although the goals, structure, and priorities of mentoring programs differ, their ultimate purpose is to produce positive outcomes in the lives of youths (Jekielek et al., 2002). Many programs also focus on improving academic achievement and decreasing negative or antisocial behaviors (Jekielek et al., 2002). This chapter will discuss these aspects and provide a summary of field-based and site-based mentoring programs.

Field-Based Mentoring Programs

Field-based mentoring programs incorporate sponsor supports for the mentors and mentees in their efforts to interact at various times and places of their choosing (Karcher et al., 2006). These mentoring programs are generally match-based, where mentors and mentees

usually meet on a weekly basis (Karcher, 2005). Most of these programs request that the mentors commit for at least one year (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012). These types of programs give the mentor and mentee autonomy to pursue their mutual interests and explore educational and recreational opportunities (Karcher et al., 2006). Two such types of field-based mentoring programs are BBBS and JUMP.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS). The leading field-based mentoring program is Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, which has approximately 500 establishments across the United States (Dubois & Karcher, 2005; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). BBBS has existed for over 100 years (Grossman & Garry, 1997) and serves children from ages five to 18 (Jekielek et al., 2002). Their goals are to support more children, improve their effectiveness and efficiency, provide additional services to the children they assist, and enhance their membership through ethnic diversity (Grossman & Garry, 1997).

Their mission is to improve the lives of the teens and preteens they serve by providing one-to-one relationships with caring adults (Grossman & Garry, 1997). The majority of the activities provided are casual or developmental and may include “taking walks, washing a car, playing catch, visiting the library, grocery shopping, watching television or just sharing thoughts and ideas about life” (Grossman & Garry, 1997, p. 2).

To be an affiliate of the BBBS program, local chapters throughout the country must adhere to strict norms and standards, including a comprehensive screening process for potential mentors and mentees upon acceptance. All volunteers must complete an inflexible training and orientation regiment; match mentors and mentees; attend a required number of meetings; and facilitate the continuing supervision of matches, which involves consistent communication

between the BBBS agency, mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995).

The Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP). This program is one of the few funded by the US Department of Justice: specifically, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (Grossman & Garry, 1997). Since the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992, the federal government has added part G: mentoring (Grossman & Garry, 1997). JUMP's target population accepts youths from ages five to 20 and from all ethnicities who may be at-risk for delinquency, drug use, gang involvement, and academic failure (Cashel, Goodman, & Swanson, 2003; Grossman & Garry, 1997).

The JUMP program involves one-on-one mentoring with regular meetings between the mentor and mentee over an extended period (Grossman & Garry, 1997). The mentors come from various professions, including fire department personnel, law enforcement, college students, elderly adults, federal employees, and other private citizens (Grossman & Garry, 1997).

Field-based mentoring programs such as BBBS and JUMP have resulted in support from the federal government to mitigate the factors associated with at-risk youth. Field-based programs are similar to site-based programs in that they emphasize mentor/mentee relationships. But site-based programs differ in that they focus on education, as discussed below.

Site-Based/School-Based Mentoring Programs.

Site-based mentoring programs are the fastest-growing school programs in the United States (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). Mentors are typically adults or high school-aged students who work with younger students (Karcher et al., 2006). Site-based mentoring programs have experienced rapid growth because they are more cost-effective than field-based mentoring (Karcher et al., 2006).

Site-based mentoring programs are explicitly designed so that mentors and mentees meet at a variety of sites, including schools, churches, youth centers, community agencies, and the workplace (Karcher et al., 2006). These mentoring programs account for 45% of all mentoring programs, and 70% of these are school-based (Sipe & Roder, 1999). School-based mentoring programs provide a consistent meeting place for mentors and mentees and include predetermined tasks to aid students in learning new skills (Karcher et al., 2006). Even the BBBS, a predominantly field-based program, now has a foothold in site-based mentorship.

In summary, field-based mentoring programs are the more popular option because of the greater emphasis on mentor/mentee relationships in addition to offering a more flexible schedule with more locational freedom. School or site-based mentoring is more goal-oriented, and mentors and mentees generally meet within the confines of the bell schedule with regular meeting times.

These mentoring programs have foundational aspects that are either goal-directed or more casual. Researchers (Karcher et al., 2006; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Keller, 2005) have identified two theoretical viewpoints that address the interactions between the mentor and mentee: developmental and instrumental mentoring. This next section will compare and contrast these two mentoring styles and will conclude with a summary of the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Perspectives

Many theorists have described various mentoring approaches, their elements, and the different structural types of relationships between mentors and mentees. Much of the research has narrowed down to the relational styles of both the developmental and instrumental approaches (Karcher et al., 2006; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Keller, 2005). These two methods

are essential in determining the most effective interactions according to the Theoretically Evolving Activities in Mentoring (TEAM) framework (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

Although these mentoring approaches have conflicting styles, they also complement each other since both have necessary components for successful relationships. Firstly, both consist of relational and goal-directed activities, which means both possess a combination or hybrid of relational and goal-directed exchanges, such as discussing family and friends and academic achievement, respectively.

Secondly, both mentoring approaches determine their priorities early into the relationship, whether they are relational or goal-directed. Lastly, the developmental and instrumental approaches both emphasize collaborative relationships, where the teen's interests and opinions are encouraged, appreciated, and supported in the decision-making process (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Karcher (2006) and colleagues state that both the developmental and instrumental approaches require interdependent relationships for either to work.

Table 2 compares and contrasts the two mentoring approaches, which includes the proximal and distal outcomes as well as the initial types of conversations held between the mentor and mentee.

Table 2

Comparison of Developmental and Instrumental Approaches to Mentoring

	Developmental Mentoring	Instrumental Mentoring
Proximal Outcome	Increased social support	Gains in academic skills
Initial Types of Conversations	Casual conversation	Talk about school
	Talk about family	Discusses attendance
	Talk about friends	Discusses behavior
	Listening and learning	Talk about future goals
Distal Outcome	Gains in academic skills	Increased social support
Future Types of Conversations	Talks about school	Casual conversation
	Discusses attendance	Talk about family
	Discusses behavior	Talk about friends
	Talk about future goals	Listening and learning

Note: Adapted from Karcher, 2010; Karcher et al., 2006.

As seen in Table 2, there are distinctions between developmental and instrumental mentoring, which is most notably due to the sequencing of the outcomes and conversations. The following section will provide additional distinctions and similarities for additional clarity.

Developmental Mentoring

The developmental style of mentoring is primarily relationship-focused and based on mutual trust. This model stresses increased social support as its proximal outcome.

Conversations are casual at the onset and focus on personal issues surrounding family and friends (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Trust is developed initially from the interactions and conversations between the mentor and mentee. Strengthening that bond is the principal element

within the relationship and is accomplished through communicating and planning fun activities. Trust is also built when the mentor listens and learns about the mentee's interests, pastimes, and feelings. As the mentee becomes comfortable enough with the relationship, he or she begins to share more personal information. The mentor listens with empathy and supports the mentee, occasionally offering some of his or her own stories to validate the mentee's experiences, which may be similar (Karcher, 2005).

Building trust and promoting social-emotional development results in improved self-esteem and school connectedness, which consequently leads to greater academic achievement as the distal outcome (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Karcher et al., 2006). As the relationship grows, discussions will focus on academics, behavior, attendance, and the student's future (Karcher, 2008; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

After a period of time committed to establishing a partnership built on trust, the mentee is considered ready to open up and discuss issues of genuine concern. These include academic achievement, classroom behaviors, peer relationships, and family conflict—issues that require guidance from the mentor through more in-depth conversations (Karcher, 2005).

Eventually, after a careful decision by the mentor, interactions will include goal-centered activities, such as discussing school, grades, the mentee's behaviors, and future goals (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). While the mentor may primarily embed goal-oriented activities, these academic goals and college or career interests can often be youth-initiated (Karcher, 2005). Conversely, the instrumental approach is more structured and less playful.

Instrumental Mentoring

As mentioned in the theoretical frameworks, the instrumental approach to mentoring is goal-oriented and fixated on the mentees' completion of tasks, goals, and skills (Karcher, 2005,

2008, 2010; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). This approach is “adult-driven,” where the mentors challenge the mentees to complete predetermined tasks agreed upon by both parties (Morrow & Styles, 1995).

Conversations surrounding goals include grades, testing, and plans proposed by the mentor to support those goals (Karcher, 2005). In time, discussions will revolve around the mentee’s future goals, such as graduating from high school, post-secondary careers, attending college, and employment (Karcher et al., 2006). As the relationship progresses, increased social support is incorporated through recreational activities and more casual conversations. It is typically the mentee who introduces topics regarding family and friends (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Karcher et al., 2006).

The mentor listens and learns about the mentee’s interests while divulging some of his or her personal information to support the mentee (Karcher et al., 2006). Increased self-esteem and school connectedness follow as a result (Karcher et al., 2006).

When comparing the developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches, both are collaboratively-driven in that the mentee and mentor agree on activities selected during their meetings (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Karcher et al., 2006). They both have relational (developmental) and goal-oriented (instrumental) interactions; the fundamental difference is in which types of interactions are primary and which are secondary at the beginning of the relationship. While the developmental approach is “youth-centered,” where the mentees control the activities of the relationship, the instrumental approach to mentoring is “adult-driven,” where goal-oriented activities are the most prioritized at the onset of the relationship (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Karcher et al., 2006).

Additionally, Jekielek et al. (2002) conducted a comprehensive nine-month study of 82 BBBS matches to further compare the developmental and instrumental approaches. They found that two-thirds of the mentors and mentees that were paired using the instrumental approach did not meet with each other after the initial nine months, whereas only 10% of the relationships that followed the developmental path had ended.

To date, I have yet to find existing research to support a hierarchy between the instrumental and developmental approaches. Therefore, when constructing a mentorship program, one must be sure which “theoretical approach” will best align to the desired outcomes of the program (Karcher et al., 2006).

In summary, the developmental approach is built on mutual trust to establish a lasting bond (Karcher, 2005). The mentor comforts the mentee and strengthens the youth’s emotional wellbeing through play and activities. In contrast, the instrumental path is goal-directed and emphasizes shared functions between mentor and mentee before building social skills (Karcher, 2005).

Mentoring interactions within developmental and instrumental approaches. There is a crucial difference between the focus and relationship styles of the developmental and instrumental approaches. Mentoring interactions consist of the chosen activities and conversations between the mentor and mentee (Karcher, 2010; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). These exchanges can be either relational (developmental) or goal-oriented (instrumental).

In the instrumental approach, mentoring meetings focus on goal-directed actions and conclusions, such as improving grades, decreasing negative behaviors, and building better peer and adult relationships. The focus is always on achieving a skill, goal, or outcome (Karcher, 2010; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

Conversely, the developmental approach emphasizes relational interactions to build, reinforce, and sustain the relationship (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Although this is achieved through recreation, some skill-building activities are implemented as well, such as classes or homework. The mentor embeds the goal-oriented activities when he or she believes the mentee has a specific goal to achieve, such as mastering a standardized test or finishing a project (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

It is vital to distinguish whether the primary focus of a mentoring approach is relational or goal-oriented. Both provide specific interactions from meeting to meeting and strengthen the youth's emotional wellbeing through increased self-esteem, connectedness, and resiliency (Karcher, 2010; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Additionally, both styles are comprised of structured interactions that evolve throughout the relationship (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

Relationship styles within developmental and instrumental approaches. Research has recognized and credited both the instrumental and developmental approaches as providing strong, collaborative relationships between mentors and mentees (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). However, the patterns and progression of interactions are categorized by the purposes stressed throughout different periods of the relationship, rather than by any single interaction (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). The focus of the mentorship reveals the “degree of goal-directedness and goal-directed structure,” whether internal or external (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010, p. 20). The instrumental approach is more directive, and the developmental approach is less directive (Karcher, 2005, 2010).

When the interaction is goal-oriented, it affects an observable or external product, such as a skill, achievement, or accomplishment. The tradeoff is minimal focus on interpersonal development (Karcher, 2005, 2010). Conversely, when the focus of an interaction is relational,

the result is an internal creation, such as self-esteem or a sense of connectedness (Karcher, 2010). However, the concentration on focus alone does not allow the developmental and instrumental relationship styles to flourish. One must determine the purpose of the interactions.

This raises the question: whose agenda do the interactions serve? Are they adult-led and conventional, or youth-oriented and playful (Karcher, 2005, Karcher & Nakkula, 2010)? The purpose of the interaction is not determined by who selects the activities, but by who has the most to gain: the adult or youth.

Adult-led interactions are future-oriented and generally aim towards the mentee's gaining employment, finishing high school, attending college, or learning a skill for a postsecondary career (Karcher, 2010). If youth-led, the goals are more immediate (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). The characterization of the interactions, adult-led-conventional or youth-led-playful, is sometimes dominated by how the mentor or mentee negotiated the activities in their meetings (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

The final dimension of the TEAM framework concerns the mentoring interactions from a moment-to-moment basis, as this determines the nature of the relationship. Whoever selects the activities and conversational topics and how this is done will determine who leads the relationship (Karcher 2005; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). These decisions can be unilateral, cooperative, or reciprocal (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Researchers believe it is not relevant as to who negotiated the topics and activities during the meetings, but how they are authored that will determine the "degree" of "buy-in" from both parties (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

If the mentee complies without being interested or the mentor resists because the plan is not in line with the mentor's role, the collaborative nature of the relationship will suffer (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Collaboration is only possible when the mentor and mentee reach a mutually

beneficial agreement during their meetings, and the agreed-upon activities and conversational topics may not have been explored outside of this collaboration. Because both parties reached these decisions through their differing perspectives—such as needs, interests, and experiences—the outcome reflects the union of these unique perspectives (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

Finally, reciprocal interactions are the result of both the mentor and mentee receiving what they want from the relationship by taking turns deciding how and when topics and activities are planned (Karcher, 2010; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). While all types of interactions have their benefits and detriments, Karcher and Nakkula (2010) agree that unilateral and reciprocal interactions cause adverse effects that can be avoided through collaborative agreements.

The research indicates there is a distinct difference between the focus of interactions and the relationship styles of developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches. The focus of interactions is defined by what happens during the mentoring meetings from moment-to-moment. Both approaches can be either goal-directed or relational, and both will feature some aspects of the other. The only difference is that the relational interactions allow the mentor to embed goal-directed activities based on what the mentee needs to achieve.

As discussed, the developmental and instrumental relationship styles reflect the pattern of interactions throughout the relationship. The developmental patterns include both relational and goal-directed exchanges, while the instrumental is primarily goal-directed. Determining whether a mentorship is adult-led or youth-led depends on whom the agenda serves. Lastly, one must discern how the interactions are negotiated throughout the relationship: unilaterally, collaboratively, or reciprocally. Until one determines the degree of investment from the mentor and mentee during an interaction, the foci and purpose of the relationship is untenable (Karcher and Nakula, 2010).

Summary

The instrumental approach begins with the mentor and mentee agreeing on a specific goal or outcome (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). This style of relationship is more conventional, more goal-oriented, and transitions over time to incorporate more interpersonal, relational activities that are guided by a mutually agreed-upon goal. Throughout the relationship, both the mentor and mentee appreciate the collaborative effort and viewpoints and develop not only mutual respect, but also a friendship (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

The developmental approach is one where strengthening the relationship is always the focus, emphasizing the present—rather than the future—through recreational activities (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Just as with the instrumental relationship style, the developmental approach also allows for the implementation of more “goal-directed, future-oriented, achievement-focused, and serious activities or conversations” (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010, p. 18).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

“The interweaving of data collection, analysis, and interpretation ultimately leads to the production of autoethnography” (Chang, 2008, p. 9).

I have reflected on the many phases of my life for over 40 years, all deliberating how I became who I am today: the holder of multiple degrees and credentials, an accomplished athlete, and a mentor to numerous students, past and present. As a student in high school, I was fortunate to have excellent relationships with non-parental male adults. Those men guided, encouraged, motivated, mentored, and utilized “tough love” techniques when needed, all contributing to the development of my ability to channel my desires into positive goals.

I often wonder, “Were my achievements due to the guidance of my mentors? Or, was it a consequence of self-preservation?” These and many other questions are why I sought to understand how my adult mentors inspired myself and others to be successful, and why I have always considered myself a mentor for many students and athletes.

The following chapter begins with an explanation of the research design and a justification for the autoethnographical approach. Next, I turn to the setting and participants, including the sample population and the instrumentation used in this study. The final section discusses the collection of data, data analysis, and steps taken to establish trustworthiness.

Research Design and Methodology

This dissertation explores the research questions to better appreciate the relationships between my mentors and myself, both as the researcher and as the mentee. The design and purpose of this research is to understand what motivated my mentors to teach, coach, train, and support me during my teenagerhood, my collegiate and Olympic years, and my adulthood.

This section is an overview of the mixed methods design that allowed me to gather both qualitative and quantitative data—open-ended and closed-ended data, respectively—through the research of the fields of social, behavioral, and health sciences (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative researcher does not study participants in a lab, but where the issues exist. Researchers speak directly with the people in a naturalistic and interpretive approach to the world in an ordinary setting (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

According to Creswell (2013),

We conduct qualitative research when a problem or issue needs to [be] explore[d]. We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices. We conduct qualitative research when we want to collaborate directly with the participants. We conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the *contexts* or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. [We want to know] why people responded as they did, the meaning in which they responded, and their more in-depth thoughts and behaviors that governed their responses. (p. 48)

However, the quantitative approach has a secondary role in this study as well, including a 24-question survey regarding my experiences during the three phases of being a mentee: youth, collegiate and Olympic years, and as an educator. My mentors were interviewed as well.

The extremely personal nature of the research—including the emotions felt by myself and my mentors during our collective experiences and the connection of these to a broader, cultural issue—warrants an autoethnographical approach as the primary methodology.

Autoethnography

Historical Aspects

Autoethnography is a unique form of qualitative research that allows researchers to simultaneously occupy dual stances in the field of inquiry; it is both an approach and a method as well as both process and product. There was a time when autoethnographical research omitted information obtained by oral history, but the rules have since changed (Ellis et al., 2011).

Conversations surrounding the validity of autoethnography have existed since the 1960s, when Sir Raymond Firth initially used the term in a structuralism seminar for an economics class (Hayano, 1979). In 1975, anthropologist Heider presented the term “Auto-ethnography” to mean the informant self (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography, as defined, would begin to affect the field of research during the 1980s because of an increased appreciation of the importance of cultural storytelling. Oral history was “now” history.

In the 1990s, Reed-Donahay (1997) provided additional variations to autoethnography: native, ethnic, and autobiographical. The first, native anthropology, is produced by the people who were formerly studied by outsiders. The second, ethnic autobiography, is written by members of ethnic minority groups. And the third, autobiographical ethnography, is where anthropologists intersect personal experience into ethnographic writing. Unlike conventional research methods, autoethnography allows the researcher to provide firsthand information of the subject. Mary Louise Pratt defines autoethnography as “Not something researchers do, but something their research subjects do that they may want to study” (Butz & Besio, 2004, p. 353). Scholars now describe the term as a form of self-study because it encompasses one’s practices, beliefs, and experiences (Chang, 2008).

Suffice it to say, the history of autoethnography is convoluted, and the 21st century has not been without contributions to the efforts of defining it (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, there has not yet been a consensus made regarding a finite definition.

Setting and Participants

Role of the Researcher

As the investigator, I had multiple, interchangeable positions within the study, including interviewer, participant, data collector, and analyst. However, my most critical role was that of storyteller. I reflected extensively on my experiences as a mentee and listened to my mentors' stories as well, including their recollections of the political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of the last 40 years.

These interviews with my mentors covered my time with them and were semi-structured with open-ended questions to allow for deeper discussion. A reflexive journal, respondent validation, and a peer review were employed to study the impact of my relationships with my mentors.

Mentors During Youth

Purposeful sampling was utilized with criteria based solely on the mentors' relationships with me. The male adults who began mentoring me as a teen determined the sampling pool targeted for this study. These mentors ranged in their job descriptions from teachers, athletic coaches, and an athletic director.

Instrumentation and Measures

Interviews

The interviews with the mentors were semi-structured. They answered questions regarding their relationships with me during my youth, my collegiate and Olympic years, and my

current profession as an educator (Appendix B). Many of the interviews took considerable time to conduct because my mentors had approximately 40 years of information to convey, not all of it directly tied to their experiences with me. Even the relevant contexts and timeframes were often ignored. For example, the mentors included vignettes of their own “memory lanes.” These stories, I found out, had yet to be shared even with their own families. Their reasoning was that no one had asked, until now.

The extensive details of their stories and mine are fundamental to this autoethnography. All interviews of my mentors were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed for themes emerging from three specific eras of my life—my teen years, my collegiate and Olympic years, and my professional years as an educator—as well as from the relevant political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of each period.

Each participant received a transcript of his interview and was allowed to make any corrections necessary for authenticity.

Document analysis. Sports clippings; medals; awards; artifacts from my mentors, including personal journals; and other personal objects were collected. Additionally, specific newspaper archives, such as *San Jose Mercury*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Stockton Record* were accessed to research the relevant contexts.

Survey

The development and design of the attitude survey were to ascertain how I felt after each era of my life: as a youth, as a college student and Olympic athlete, and as an educator. The 24-question survey was divided into three sections. I responded to each question with an answer that best described my feelings regarding academic achievement, adult relationships, and attitude or behavior in and out of the school setting. The survey reflected a 4-point Likert scale (1 =

strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = strongly agree). The attitude survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete (Appendix A).

Reliability

Among the ethical aspects under consideration were questions regarding the methodology of autoethnography. Could one recall events precisely as they happened, or is it possible that lapses in memory may compromise accuracy? Research tells us that the simple acts of remembering and narrating, even between people who have experienced the same occurrence, often yield different accounts of what they know as their truths (Owen, McRae, Adams, & Vitale, 2009).

Validity

In autoethnography, validity is established within the emotions evoked by the writing (Ellis et al., 2011). The research on mentoring relationships was based on my experiences. Among the strategies applied to validate my study were the triangulation of data, such as information from the interviews with my mentors; member checking; and a reflexive journal. This triangulation of data utilized a variety of sources and artifacts collected throughout one year. Member checking was employed in the form of providing my former mentors with summaries of the data gathered for review.

Trustworthiness

Although this dissertation utilized interviews and artifacts to gather data, the methodology is focused on autoethnography, and the overarching value of this study is in its message. The ways in which my account will be used, understood, and responded to by all—writers, participants, audiences, etc.—inherently designs an understanding of truth that exists solely between the storyteller and the reader (Bochner, 1994).

More importantly, can the narrator be trusted? It is not unheard of for a narrator to take creative license and tell a story that is more fictional than factual, or for a narrator to be skeptical of the information relayed (Ellis et al., 2011).

Plan for Data Collection

This autoethnography relies on my own experiences, the interviews with my mentors, and the collection of various artifacts, including newspaper articles, sports clippings, journals, and personal objects. All of the artifacts used were categorized by themes and dates.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were in-person and at settings of the interviewees' choosing. A recording device was utilized to capture the interviews in their entirety and to ensure accuracy when transcribing them afterward.

In qualitative research, data collection is not always separate from analysis and interpretation; the processes are often intertwined. Chang (2008) concluded, "The interweaving of data collection, analysis, and interpretation ultimately leads to the production of autoethnography" (p. 9). The function of autoethnographic research is to collect, analyze, and interpret. The lattermost function is intended to reveal an epiphany that conventional research methodologies might otherwise overlook. For example, conventional methodologies might fail to collect observable data on traits such as cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions, omitted actions, and socially-restricted activities (Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002). The notion of observable traits, thought to be private and limited to oneself, is cultural or communal. Therefore, observable characteristics are simultaneously representative of the individual and of others.

Participants were given a consent form (Appendix C), and agreements were obtained before the interviews per the requirements of the HHS regulations (45 CFR 46.116). Additionally, informed consent is appropriately documented by and to the extent required by the HHS regulations (45 CFR 46.117).

Plan for Data Analysis

Data was collected from interviews with my mentors—including by text and phone communication—and coded for similar themes based on the social, cultural, and economic contexts during the relevant eras of my life. This information was applied to better understand the relationship between mentors and mentees and how mentorship affects success.

Ethics

An environment of trust was created to ensure that the participants' rights were protected. The video and certification of the protection of human subjects' research from the National Institute of Health were completed. Approval of this study was obtained from the institutional review board (IRB). Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could discontinue and have their data removed from the study at any time.

Risks

There was a remote chance that the interviews, surveys, or email communications could pose psychological risks. Interview prompts and questions were written and reviewed to eliminate all foreseeable possibilities of inflicting emotional distress.

Compensation

None of the participants involved in the study received any monetary compensation.

Participant Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the participants' information was of the utmost importance. Therefore, only I—the researcher, chairperson, methodologist, and reader—had access to the original data for the purpose of safeguarding the participants' privacy. This does not include public information that can be researched through media outlets and internet resources.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

“I was sort of raised by my dad... The point is, I'm influenced by a male. A strong male, so I think that's where I learned my values” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

In this chapter, I share the many stories and experiences from the interviews with the adult males who mentored me over the past 45 years. Pairing the developmental and instrumental approaches with an autoethnographical methodology provides an opportunity for me, the researcher, to explore how their mentoring has affected me over the years. The lessons I learned from them have been invaluable, and I carry them with me daily as I think about mentoring other young African-American males.

Chapter 1 began with a momentous experience in my life: the 1988 Olympics. My victory could not have been possible if not for the mentors involved in all or part of my life. Approximately 95% of the data presented in this chapter was collected through semi-structured interviews with my mentors so I could understand their motivations to support and influence me throughout the years.

This chapter is divided into themes concerning the developmental and instrumental approaches employed by my mentors. The survey I took as the researcher recorded how I felt during the three phases of my life as a mentee.

In the first segment, I will present both mine and my mentors' stories and experiences in the context of common themes from the interviews. These themes, where applicable, reflect an accounting of family, athletics, Olympic associations, Olympic mentees, the mentees' reflections, and life lessons. Their stories involve rich descriptions of the social, cultural, and economic contexts that shaped their lives and possibly the lives of myself and others.

In the final segment, I will discuss the results of the 24-question attitude survey. This survey, divided into three sections, describes my experiences regarding academic achievement, adult relationships, and attitudes and beliefs in and out of the school setting.

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of each of my mentors through the lenses of family, athletics, Olympic associations, and Olympic mentees. Family will denote the dynamics and parental roles of the mentors. Athletics will indicate whether or not they participated in sports during their high school, young adult, or adult years. Olympic associations will designate whether or not they coached or had an affiliation with any Olympic or national teams. And the Olympic mentee lens reveals whether or not any of the mentors coached or mentored other Olympic athletes.

Robert Poynter

Driving through the neighborhood in San Jose, CA on a bright Saturday morning to interview Mr. Robert “Bobby” Poynter brought back memories of my high school days. I recalled the many times I had visited friends or an old girlfriend who lived just around the corner from his home. As I pulled along the curb in front of his house, I could not help but notice the wonderfully-tended yard and the two chairs nestled in the corner of the porch. Approaching this beautiful home yielded both trepidation for the upcoming interview, and nostalgia for our past interactions.

Mr. Poynter was not only a mentor to myself and others, but also my social science teacher at Silver Creek High School. He was the first and only African-American male core class teacher that I had throughout my high school experience. Let me clarify that statement. There were other Black male teachers employed at Silver Creek, but they taught either physical education or served as the band director.

I rang the bell. Coach Poynter opened the door and greeted me as he shook my hand. He invited me into the home that he and his wife had shared since 1970, when then assistant principal, Alan Hopewell, hired him to teach history at Silver Creek High School. Upon stepping into his foyer, I noticed to the left of me, on a wall, the wedding picture of himself and his wife of 57 years. He asked, “Where would you like to sit?”

I pointed to the kitchen chair. “That will be fine.”

Biography

Robert Poynter was born in 1937 in Pasadena, California. He shared his college years between Pasadena City College (PCC), San Jose State University (SJSU), and Los Angeles State College (LASC). He was a track and field star, sprinting his way to first on his way to becoming a world-class athlete. Two events changed his life in 1961. The first event was marriage. He married despite being broke and barely employed. Secondly, the army drafted him to serve in the early days of the Vietnam War. The draft worried him because he had heard the stories of going to war and not returning. But because of his prowess as a world-class sprinter, the military officer in charge allowed Robert to select where he would be stationed. He chose the Presidio Base in San Francisco to be closer to his wife.

Robert Poynter eventually left the army and decided to finish school and earn his degree. He knew even before the draft that he would need more than four years to earn his degree because many of the credits he earned at PCC were not transferable, but with the assistance of the G.I. Bill, Robert returned to SJSU. Unfortunately, his father had passed away, and he needed to return to Pasadena to handle his father’s estate. While in Southern California, he enrolled in LASC and obtained his teaching credential.

While visiting a friend in San Jose, he applied and obtained a teaching job at Silver Creek High School. Even though he was a physical education major with a minor in sociology, he taught all of the history courses, including Black history. Additionally, he was the advisor of the Black Student Union (BSU).

He later coached track and field at Silver Creek High School, San Jose City College (SJCC), and West Valley Community College, totaling 30 years of service until his retirement. Along the way, he and his wife raised two children and later had three grandchildren. He occasionally substitutes as a teacher in the same district he once taught because he misses teaching young people. He recently coached his grandson to a fourth-place finish in the 2018 California High School State meet in the boys' 800-meter run.

Historical Contexts

My opening question: "What brought you to Silver Creek High School?"

"That's an interesting story," he began. Those four words were the beginning of a 24-minute account of the social, cultural, and historical aspects of his life that I was not yet aware of. Mr. Poynter made it very clear that he never talks about himself, but he explained this one exception, "You have this paper to write."

He began with his parents' immigration to California. "Remember we [when I was in high school] talked about Africans and how African-Americans came to California." In the early 1900s, his father had been in one of the first waves of African-Americans who migrated to Pasadena, California to escape from "The Ku Klux Klan Country" in Decatur, Tennessee.

In contrast, Robert's mother was from Georgia. She and her older sister immigrated on the same train with Mallie Robinson. "You know who that is?" asked Coach. Deductive reasoning based on the time period and the surname "Robinson" suggested that Mallie was the

mother of the famous Mack Robinson and Jackie Robinson. Mack, the older brother, was a silver medalist in the 200 meters behind Jesse Owens in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Jackie Robinson, the younger brother, was the first African-American to play Major League Baseball when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Mr. Poynter continued, “We were all family friends.” His mother, aunt, and Mallie left Georgia for the same reason; the depression forced them to move west.

Racism. The subject of racism came up repeatedly. Most of Mr. Poynter’s experiences in dealing with racism occurred when he was in college, but it was a constant throughout his life. He spoke of all the places he could not go as a Black child, “Even in California.” He then reminded me of our Black history class in high school and how it taught the difference between overt and covert racism in the 1970s. He spoke about civil rights and how we, as Black people, did not gain freedom until the 1960s.

For reference, Mr. Poynter arrived at SJSU in the fall of 1958. When asked what the culture was like in San Jose in the late 1950s, he answered, “San Jose was one of the most racist places at that time. They lynched a man in San Jose in that park downtown.” I later did some research to verify this statement and found there was a lynching in downtown San Jose in 1933.

The discussion also sparked memories of racism and prejudice concerning housing. When Mr. Poynter and his friend arrived at SJSU, there was difficulty finding adequate housing. As he explained, “In San Jose, you couldn’t find housing, so they had what they called redlining. If you were African-American, and you try to find an apartment, they would give you an excuse that it was just taken.” It was extremely difficult even for Black athletes. Bud Winter, Mr. Poynter’s coach at SJSU, was “pretty adept” at using his business connections to secure housing for Black athletes.

Before 1968, Black athletes were denied housing everywhere, including on and around campus. Many of the athletes slept in equipment sheds until better accommodations were found. A well-known football player at SJSU leased a home on Fifth and St. John's Streets, which became the home of all Black athletes recruited for SJSU. That is where Mr. Poynter and many other athletes lived from 1955 to 1962. "My friend and I stayed there. We rented a room for 25 dollars a month." Many of the Black athletes had to work odd jobs or receive grant-in-aid to pay the rent. Securing rent money was often difficult, but the athletes always had a place to sleep at the "Good Brothers" house.

Coach Poynter explained that was how things were in San Jose, and there were very few African-Americans at SJSU. "We were a minority in a majority, and sometimes you would be the only one [African-American] in the class, and you had to learn how to navigate an integrated environment." When he became a teacher, Mr. Poynter was prepared because, as he said, "I understood all those things that people go through in an integrated school."

Civil rights. As Robert Poynter recalled, during the civil rights movement, James Brown began making music about being "Black and Proud," and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the leader and face of the movement. "There was an emphasis," Coach says, "Blacks were beginning to start a different kind of movement." He called it a "refreshing time because a lot of Blacks were unified and trying to achieve rights." He remembers growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, when African-Americans were not full citizens of the United States. The Voting Rights Act signed by President Johnson provided some measure of relief in the Southern United States, but there were still many places one could not live at or visit due to racism.

This affected Coach Poynter as well. He had already discussed the "Good Brothers" house, so the civil rights era was necessary and a "rallying point for all of us." It was not until

the mid-1960s that, according to Robert, one of the first integrated housing sections opened up around the college campus. As athletes came to SJSU, they moved into apartments owned by an alumnus. Since 1955, the alumnus owned a clothing store in the downtown area of San Jose with rooms built over the store.

It was not until my senior year in high school that I understood Coach Poynter's contributions to San Jose receiving the name "Speed City." Coach Poynter himself was nicknamed "Bullet Bob." He elaborated, "That all happened in college. My friend and I stayed at the 'Good Brothers' house, and everyone had a nickname." Coach chuckled. "In fact, sometimes you didn't even know their real names. You would call them by their nickname."

One of them was "Shorty Man." He said, "You know who Huey Newton [is, of the] Black Panthers, right?"

I gave Coach a look and said, "The founder of the Black Panther Party, Huey?"

Coach replied, "Yes, well, his brother, Melvin Newton, was one of my roommates, but we called him 'Shorty Man.' My friend gave him that nickname because he was short."

Mr. Poynter said he knew the family well. Huey visited the "Good Brothers" house often. He would frequently "stay up" in Oakland, California and attend a couple of Black Panther Party meetings. "We would stay at their parents' house, and they would treat us like we were like family. They would give us money and care packages to take home because they knew athletes were starving."

Their family was from Louisiana. Huey was knowledgeable, but "hotheaded." Coach and Melvin often attempted to keep him out of trouble because Huey would fight over the smallest issues.

"Did Melvin run track?" I asked.

Mr. Poynter answered, “No, he was just smart.”

Living in the “Good Brothers” house was like being in a fraternity. Melvin and another person from Oakland helped Mr. Poynter tremendously by teaching him how to study properly and conducting study groups. “I’ve never done that before, where I worked in a group,” said Coach. He deviated in his interview to recall when I was in high school and how he would always emphasize the importance of involvement in school activities.

The civil rights movement made Robert more aware of who they were as people and where they needed to be. He talked about the issues Black people face today. Tracing the historical treatment of Blacks back to the slavery period reveals a consistent attack against the Black male. Mr. Poynter observed that, during and since slavery, to control Black people, the men must be controlled, and men are controlled by being denied an education and a means to provide for their families. He is convinced that those in control of the economic, political, and social powers control the Black male. He states, “If you look at the dynamics of the African-American family, the female or daughter was to receive the education and the male or son must go to work to assist the family financially.”

Mr. Poynter is concerned about what that does to the family. He clarified that he is not sexist, but the male dynamics are missing from the family. “Look what’s happening in our society today, where a lot of our males are in prison.” He added, “We didn’t have that problem at Silver Creek, because I was kind of like that person that some people never had: the only father figure they ever had.” When it comes to rearing Black males, Coach thinks the mother can only do so much. He believes there is a systematic attack on Black males; many are uneducated, incarcerated, or not contributing anything of value to society.

Black Lives Matter (BLM). One question posed to Mr. Poynter concerned the differences in the struggles Blacks faced during the civil rights movement and the current struggles with BLM. He immediately reciprocated with a question of his own. “Do Black lives matter?”

I remarked, “All lives matter.”

Coach rebuked my answer. “No, they don’t matter. If they did, we would not be doing what we [Blacks] do to each other every day. Look at the news.” He talked about the killings in Chicago, Illinois, and even cited the number of killings in the city where I work. “How can we say Black lives matter?” He observed that BLM is predicated on the Black community’s relationship or lack thereof with the police. Robert has the passion and understands the reasons for BLM, but was uncertain of the movement’s authenticity. The police departments around the nation are under fire for the questionable shootings of unarmed Black boys and men. The problem Poynter sees is the individuals behind the movement. He wonders if some of the Blacks are in it for the right reasons.

He added, “I don’t see one thing about the civil rights movement that compares to Black Lives Matter.” He stated that the civil rights movement based its connection through the church. It was about gaining the rights and freedoms afforded to all Americans by the constitution. “I have no idea what BLM is based on.”

Family

Robert Poynter was an only child, but had a wonderful extended family filled with aunts, an uncle, and a grandmother who helped raise him. He lived in the southern part of Pasadena, which was the more impoverished region. Coach Poynter’s father was one of the area’s few

African-Americans who graduated from high school. He states, in those days, “They [White people] didn’t expect African-Americans to accomplish much academically.”

Even though his father had a high school degree, which was monumental, he could only find work as a janitor. On the other hand, Robert’s mother was a nursemaid, which meant she took care of people in their own homes. Because his mother had to be away from the family, it made life difficult for Robert, especially since she was only home once a month. Robert was predominantly raised by his father. His “dad was a quiet man and mentally very smart.”

“The point is, I’m influenced by a male, a strong male and I think that’s where I learned my values.” His father did not say much, “but it’s not what you say; it’s what you do, because kids observe you and they take on those mannerisms.” Eventually, due to the lack of physical and emotional closeness, his parents divorced while Robert was in community college.

Athletics

Athletics were essential to Robert’s maturation. He grew up in a competitive neighborhood where everyone participated in all kinds of sports and everyone wanted to win. Of course, when you have role models such as Mack and Jackie Robinson to follow, being competitive was just one of the expectations of his community. As he stated, “We wanted to be around all these Black people that I saw as role models. Mack Robinson was a family friend. So was Jackie Robinson. He [Jackie] dated my aunt.”

Integrated schools were a familiar setting for Robert during his childhood, where multiple ethnicities were represented: Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and some Asians. Most of his early track races were held on the streets, and he soon realized he was fast enough to pursue the sport further.

Junior high school in Mr. Poynter's day was very different than it is today. His junior high school had a four-year path, and the last two years were in high school. He said the hero of the town at the time was a person named Dick "Dickie" Howard. Robert was beyond thrilled when he finally beat him and became the fastest runner in the city.

Coach Poynter spoke reverently of Dick Howard, who became the 1959 national champion in the 440 hurdles and won a bronze medal on the 1960 Olympic team for running the 400-meters hurdles. It was with a somber heart that Robert informed me that Dick Howard either "Wound up getting killed or committed suicide."

He remarked that it was not commonplace for people from his neighborhood to venture outside of the community. Track and field allowed him to travel and experience new places. As time went on, he became a capable sprinter and received attention from prospective colleges. This was toward the end of the 1950s, when colleges actively recruited Black athletes. He won the California State title in the 200 meters in 1955 and 1956, his junior and senior years in high school. Bud Winter, the head track and field coach for SJSU, attended the same state championships and wanted Robert to attend SJSU.

Robert was a good student and had the grades to attend one of the colleges of his dreams: the University of Southern California (USC) or UCLA. Unfortunately, most schools did not expect Blacks to be academically successful, so he never saw a counselor who would ensure he took the appropriate courses. Because of this, he reluctantly attended Pasadena City College like his childhood idols, Mack and Jackie Robinson. Mr. Poynter made sure I knew they were all in the Pasadena City College Hall of Fame. He spent two years at PCC, where he competed in track and field and once won the California Community College State Championship in the 200

meters dash. To save his college eligibility, he decided not to compete for PCC and instead joined a track club.

Robert was accepted into California Polytechnic State University, but a friend of his was accepted into SJSU and asked Robert if he would like to join him. Robert had never heard of SJSU, let alone knew where San Jose was, but he said it could have been Harvard for all he knew because he did not see the difference between the two schools. They arrived in San Jose on a Greyhound bus, walked with all of their belongings from downtown to SJSU, entered Bud Winter's office, and said, "Here we are Coach."

Ray Norton and Robert Poynter became the top two world leaders in the sprinting events and were invited to the largest track and field competition in the nation, the Penn Relays, where they left with numerous medals and awards. That was how San Jose earned the nickname "Speed City." Notables such as Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Lee Evans continued the tradition. Robert continued his athletic career and became an All-American athlete and runner-up in the 1959 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Track and Field Championship in Lincoln, Nebraska. He made the USA team that competed against the USSR during the Cold War. He was also a member of the Pan American Team in 1959, where he won a gold medal competing in the 4 × 100 meters relay.

Olympic Associations

Mr. Poynter hesitated when the Olympics were mentioned. He told me, after his success the year before in the 1959 Pan American Games, he had a strong chance of participating in the 1960 Olympics, but failed to make the team because "I strained a muscle in the Compton Invitational they had down in Southern California," which forced him to the sidelines. He

informed me that athletes today can audition for an Olympic team up to five times, but back in his era, it was “One and done.”

In 1984, one week before the Olympic trials in Los Angeles, I came down with a summer flu. I ran three brutal days with a fever that peaked at 102 degrees and missed making the Olympic team by one meter. The devastation was heart-wrenching, but unlike Mr. Poynter, I had the chance to make the team four years later.

Olympic Mentees

Coach Robert Poynter had outstanding success in providing the track and field community with excellent athletes. Some of the athletes he trained became Olympic gold medalists, including Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner), Millard Hampton, and me. In 1976, he served as Bruce Jenner’s sprint coach as he prepared for the Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada. Mr. Poynter was the sprint coach at SJCC and had a significant role in training me as a track and field athlete.

In my opinion, the most critical aspect of training for any athlete in any sport is the foundational training: the initial three to four months at the beginning of one’s training season. Having a strong foundation allows an athlete to recover from minor injuries quicker and sooner when one has multiple races in a single day or over consecutive days. Again, this is only my opinion.

Although Coach Poynter was not my primary coach, he was instrumental to my success in winning five community state titles in my two-year stint at SJCC. He provided the physical and psychological foundations for many of us who were fortunate enough to be coached or mentored by him. However, Mr. Poynter mentored and coached only one athlete to win the Olympic gold from the age of fourteen years old: Millard Hampton.

Millard and I were on the same high school team. He was a senior, and I was a freshman. He was the accomplished sprinter on campus while I was the shy freshman attempting to become a high jumper.

Coach Poynter would say, “Millard had a much harder life than you.” Although I disagreed, he would elaborate, “You have a strong family. You know a big family around you and a lot of support.”

Everyone I have known who has been a mentor or a coach always had that one individual that captured his or her attention. Millard Hampton was it for Mr. Poynter. He believes God brought him into Millard’s life. Mr. Poynter mentored and coached Millard throughout most of his athletic career, including four years of high school and two years of college before Millard left for UCLA. He believes that although many of us had fathers in the home, he was there to be the father figure we needed outside the home. He was just that for Millard.

Millard went on to win the 1974 100-yard dash in the California High School State competition and decided to attend SJSU. Coach Poynter disagreed with the move, but did not voice his judgment.

One day, after church, he pulled into a gas station that he had never been to before and found Millard working there. Coach Poynter said Millard looked awful, and he asked him about his scholarship at SJSU. Millard was silent and mortified. Coach Poynter knew something was wrong, but did not want to push the issue. He recruited him to attend SJCC, where he coached at the time. Millard accepted the offer. Mr. Poynter believes this is because “I was like a father figure in his life, in all of your lives.”

Millard's choice to run for Coach Poynter led him to win two Olympic medals and sparked a chain reaction. Many athletes began attending SJCC, restoring the school's track and field program to its former glory.

Silver Creek High School

Mr. Poynter began his teaching career in Silver Creek High School during the 1970s, after a friend convinced him to return to San Jose to find a job. It was October—more than a month into the school year. The principal at the time was a dedicated sports fan and sought to hire the best coaches he could. Coach remarked, “It was like a college system.” He stopped during our interview to remind me that Alan Hopewell, the assistant principal, was a former Green Bay Packer. “Most people didn't know that.” He sat in his interview with both the principal and assistant principal, and they informed him he would be teaching all of the history components: US history, world history, and African-American history in addition to being the Black Student Union advisor.

Mr. Poynter looked at me and asked, “What is the problem I had with that?” He explained he was a physical education major with a minor in sociology. He knew nothing about teaching the subjects requested by the administration, especially Black history. “I knew nothing about us.” His family never spoke of the struggles of being Black in America.

Our parents didn't talk about it. My parents didn't at all, because it was hard. You think about all the things they went through; they don't want to talk about it. It took my Aunt to be 90 years old before she started talking about stuff in her past...what they had to go through” (R. A. Poynter, personal communication, October 15, 2018)

He had to learn how to teach African-American history while he was teaching it. “I'm African-American, right here, and we got 12 percent African-Americans at Silver Creek.” The

pressure of every Black student wanting to be in his class because he was a Black male role model, whether he wanted to be or not, gave him considerably more determination to succeed.

School culture. The school motto in 1969 was “We lead. Others follow,” which was developed by another one of my mentors, Stan Dowell. As an accomplished artist, the school board commissioned Stan to illustrate the motto he wrote. The artwork depicted four profiled faces from different ethnic groups, side by side.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated only one year before Coach Poynter began teaching at Silver Creek, and so the civil rights movement was still fresh on the minds of Black Americans. It was a time when “It was cool to be Black.” African-American history was an elective that everyone wanted to take, and Robert felt it was essential for African-Americans to know more about their heritage. To his amazement, Black students weren’t the only ones to enroll in his class. He also had Hispanic students. Teaching Black history to students of different ethnicities was a significant opportunity. He did not want this class to be one of memorizing dates or events because, as a sociology major, he enjoyed a more dynamic teaching environment.

The first questions he asked the class were “What are you doing with your life?” and “What have you ever done in your life?” His philosophy was that many people could tell you what they are doing, but not where it comes from or what their goals are. His lectures covered many different scenarios about real issues; some scenarios were fictional while others were from the news headlines. We as a class had to think critically and debate the arguments from both sides of an issue.

Within the first few weeks of the Black history class, Mr. Poynter showed us a documentary called *Losing Just the Same* (Moore & Landau, 1966). It concerned the reflections

of an African-American family's struggle to ensure their son's aspirations to graduate from McClymonds High School in Oakland during the late 1960s. Robert said, "The film tells about all the barriers that he faces...gets to the end, and he [winds] up barefooted in juvenile hall." Robert showed this film for a particular reason. He wanted us to know that pursuing success comes with a host of obstacles that we must navigate to see our goals to fruition, or we will fall for the traps and lose just the same.

Robert said he already understood what his students were going through because of his own experiences. "You know it's kinda funny. I won a whole bunch of awards, but the one that probably meant the most to me was being voted teacher of the year three times" (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

Myself. I asked Robert if he remembered meeting me for the first time 45 years ago, when he realized my potential, and if he predicted the impact he would have on my life.

He began, "You like a lot of people...I thought you had potential." He had to guess that he remembered the first class I took with him. He certainly remembered my older brother, who was two years ahead of me and ran track with Stan Dowell. Robert said he looked at all of his students differently. "You were quiet...I saw you as a leader." He then repeated the school slogan, "We lead. Others follow." He believed that about me. "It did not shock me that you have the success that you have." What did surprise him is that I was pursuing my doctorate.

I later asked him to describe our relationship. As with some of the tenets of the instrumental approach, Coach Poynter set goals for us to connect to the school. He said, "I forced you guys to do things you didn't want to do because it was good for you." On the other hand, he also used the developmental approach by opening up the school gym on Sundays so we could play basketball. As he says, this kept students busy and off the streets while he supervised

and worked on his upcoming lessons. Colleagues would sometimes ask how he dealt with all of those “brothas.” And he would say that they never bothered him because he knew all of our parents.

Robert said he chose me to be a leader as he had in the past with other young African-American males and females. He explained, “You know I’m not one to always talk a lot of stuff, but I expect you to do something.” That is why we created the yearly talent show. “That was a learning experience.” Most people assumed it was simply about singing and dancing, but it was also an opportunity for myself and others be involved in something.

Some people believed the BSU was a racist organization, but, Robert said, if you looked at the demographics of the BSU, we were an inclusive environment of all cultures. He wanted all students to be involved in school activities—to have a focus. Mr. Hopewell, now promoted to the principal, was instrumental in bringing the BSU to Silver Creek High School. Robert did not know what a BSU was, let alone how to lead one. But he knew he needed leaders and so recruited myself and others as the BSU leadership. “All of you guys who are doing good today, you were the leaders, [you were] picked by me” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

I asked Coach Poynter whether or not his ability to connect with others was necessary. He made it clear that not connecting with students is a common mistake. He explained once more that not every personal connection has to be verbal. “You do it by your actions.” When leading by one’s actions, the message is delivered without preaching to the students. Mr. Poynter never realized the impact he had on anybody, including me. He remarked that was not his goal. Robert had always hoped his students and athletes would listen to what he said or remember how he modeled good citizenship, but “My personality is kind of quiet,” he said.

He asked if I remembered a particular maxim that he often said to us. Unfortunately, I could not recall it because, over the years, he has dispensed so many words of wisdom. But the statement he referred to was “I want all of you to be rich because I would never be poor.” In other words, as long as the individuals he mentored or coached did well in their lives, he was rich with pride. He expected that I would excel in whatever I chose to do.

College. Another subject we covered regarded his conversations with students about attending college. Mr. Poynter believes college is not for everyone. Those who have the knowledge and ability to attend college should go, but those who desire to go directly into the workforce and make a living should. “If a person wants to be a plumber, great. We need good plumbers.” We agreed that every student must learn the basics and finish high school. He believes the problem in society today is the lack of high expectations for our children, especially Black males.

Researcher’s Recollection

Coach Poynter was the assistant coach in charge of all the sprinters when I was a high school freshman. I was a field event person whose forte was the high jump, so I did not have the chance to know him at the time. When I finally entered one of his history courses, I found Mr. Poynter to be the perfect teacher. I never heard him yell or become loud in his classroom or on the track, and he was one of the most successful track and field coaches in the area. He was a calm, rational man who always made us contemplate what we were doing and what we sought to accomplish.

His guidance through high school and beyond taught me much about how to treat others and myself. He was a philosopher of life both in and out of the classroom who always stated that, if you want to gain the respect of your students, you must respect them first. He often

reminded us that living in the neighborhoods of where he worked was to his advantage. He was able to spend quality time with those he coached, taught, and mentored after school and on the weekends at track meets, in the school gym, and in his home to plan for BSU activities.

It was not until my senior year in high school that I learned Robert Poynter was one of SJSU's original "Speed City" track and field athletes. The nickname "Bullet Bob" alone speaks volumes of his capabilities as a runner. I finally asked him why he never told us of his prowess as a highly-decorated athlete, and he replied, "That was my life then. My life now is to help and elevate those around me." His father also taught him that one should not to brag about one's accomplishments.

Even after I left high school to focus on my athletic career, Coach Poynter never asked me about my travels around the world or how I fared in my competitions—only if I had yet obtained my college degree.

Life's Lessons

Mr. Poynter believes he inherited his values from his father. "The point is, I'm influenced by a male. A strong male and so I think that's where I learned my values." His father never said much, but Poynter believes actions speak louder than words. "Kids will observe you and take on those mannerisms, as I did."

I remembered his message even as I attended UCLA, the college of my choice. He remarked, "That's why I always wanted you guys to run outside of San Jose. To experience people and athletes from other places."

After 45 years of communication with Mr. Poynter, I have come to realize what he has contributed to my life. Through his advice, lectures, and conversations about family, school, and community, I have captured some of the essences of Mr. Poynter's philosophy. His philosophy

was simple; model good behavior, because children see what you do—not always what you say. He was a child from Pasadena and raised in a strong family structure with respectable values. They were not necessarily educated, but had an unbreakable sense of family and community. The neighbors often knew who your family was and would call them before you came home, if necessary. He believed it was essential to live in the community where you worked; many teachers today live outside the towns in which they teach.

Mr. Poynter employed many effective strategies when providing a positive high school experience. He would often say his job was to promote a positive image. Many of the students called him “Pop,” in reference to him being a father figure. For some of them, he was their only adult male connection. He toiled relentlessly to instill in all of us boys, especially the Black youths, a sense of community—one where we protected and learned from each other. Mr. Poynter also desired for his students to become involved in school activities.

Silver Creek High School had a cadre of role models and mentors. We (Black males) saw Mr. Poynter as both. He is a man of many admirable qualities that I have attempted to emulate as an educator. He was our Black history teacher, one of our track and field coaches, and a father figure to many.

Coach Poynter stated, “When Black boys come to school, they do not have good Black role models out there. There are leaders, but they are not positive leaders.” His primary goal was to ensure that African-American males were active in all manner of school activities. He has seen this improve the lives of many of the students he coached and mentored.

Bert Bonanno

I passed by two of my rival high schools—Mount Pleasant and James Lick—as I drove down White Road in San Jose to interview Bert Bonanno at his home. I pulled up to a beautiful

redwood house representative of those one might find in Lake Tahoe, California. My heart raced as I approached the door and rang the doorbell. The last time I saw Mr. Bonanno in person was five years ago at his wife's funeral. He opened the door, greeted me in his Bermuda shorts, polo shirt, and running shoes. "Come in," he said with a chuckle. He remarked how I had never seen this home before.

He gave me a tour of the house, beginning with a room filled with many artifacts and furniture he had collected throughout his travels. Among them were a painting by Marc Chagall and a desk that he bought in Paris over 50 years ago. Another room featured all of his sports memorabilia. Many of the pictures were of individuals from the 1968, 1972, and 1976 Olympics, including gold medalists Tommie Smith, John Carlos, Millard Hampton, and Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner). We finally visited his newly-completed backyard, and then returned to his living room for the interview.

Biography

Bert Bonanno was born and raised in Pittsburg, California, near the San Joaquin River. He lived with his parents and two brothers and grew up in a diverse community that included Italians (such as himself), "Afro-Americans" (as he puts it), Mexican-Americans, and some Caucasians. He considered his neighborhood safe. "You could ride your bike to the theater, leave it unlocked, and it would be there upon exiting the movie." This image of a perfectly safe neighborhood instilled him with fear of the unknown world beyond as he approached the end of high school.

Because he was respectable in the industrial arts and won awards from Bank of America, he received a scholarship to the University of California, Santa Barbara, which he attended with his cousin. His mother was thrilled at the prospect of Bert being the first in the family to attend a

university, only for Mr. Bonanno to later decide that he had enough of UCSB and drove back home to Pittsburg to enroll in East Contra Costa Community College (now Apple Valley Community College). One day, as he rode the bus to college, he encountered the director of counseling, who knew him and set him up in a program and informed him of the ins and outs of college life. One of Bert's first courses was a physiology class with a professor who later became his mentor. He followed Bert throughout his time at the college to ensure he was on the right path.

Another fateful bus ride led to him reading about business administration and deciding to take a class. Had it not been for that course, he would never have met his wife of 58 years. She sat behind him in class and remarked that he needed a haircut. He recalled vividly, "Here is a White girl from Pleasant Hill with blue eyes, blonde hair, a pink blouse, and a black skirt." They eventually dated, married, and had two children.

He transferred to SJSU and switched his major to physical education after taking a sports technique course with Bud Winter, the head coach of SJSU's track and field team. Bud saw great potential in Bert and, after Bert completed college, he asked him to be his assistant coach and manage the freshman team. Bert spent two years in this position. It was also during this time that they won the national championship as a freshman team in 1961-62. These two years of success ended when Bert became homesick. The school superintendent at the time was an Olympian and offered Bert a job at Central Junior High School. Mr. Bonanno, in his "get them" attitude, provided a list of non-negotiables. They were accepted, and he became the coach.

In 1964, Bert and his family moved to Mexico City. Bert became the coach for the Mexico team preparing for the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. In 1969, Bert had the choice to take over for the great Bud Winter as the head coach for SJSU, or to interview for the

head coaching position at SJCC. Bert chose the latter because he did not like the direction SJSU's administration was taking them. He remained as the head coach until 1976, when he became the same school's athletic director.

He served as the head coach for the Peru Olympic team in 1972, the US coach for the Pan Pacific Games in 1981, the head coach for the 1989 Indoor World Championships, and hosted the Bruce Jenner Invitational Track and Field Meet from 1977 to 1996. He retired in 2003 after 33 years in the college system.

Historical Context

1968 Olympic Games. There was a terrible sense of unease among the International Olympic Committee regarding the boycott by the Black athletes during the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968. Racial tensions had not risen to this degree in the Olympic Games since the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Nazi Germany. At the forefront of the 1968 Olympics were Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Lee Evans. Bud Winter was the coach for all three men at that time. Bert was Bud's assistant coach some years before, but they had always maintained a good relationship. Bert was already in Mexico when Bud and his family arrived. According to Mr. Bonanno, Bud had not truly realized his athletes would make a stand at the Games.

Dr. Harry Edwards was the architect of the boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games. His movement was intended to expose the injustices and brutality against Blacks in the United States. Bert believed the boycott was wrong at the time, but has since changed his mind. He disagreed with the movement "only because I was not sure how young men running in the Olympics is enough to bring light to the injustices." As Bert and Bud sat in the stands to watch the Olympic finals of the men's 200 meters, they both worried about what was to come during the medal ceremony. He remembers vividly, after the medals were awarded, the famous, gloved

fists rising in the air from Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Bert and Bud could only stare at each other as the crowd spewed profanity and racial epithets towards both African-American competitors. According to Bert, the next day, both Tommie Smith and John Carlos left Mexico City because the Olympic Committee declared their protests were a disgrace. They both wondered if Lee Evans intended to protest.

They contacted Lee the day of his finals of the 400 meters. He cried in the back of a bus, two days after Tommie and John exited Mexico City, because the great Black athletes made a pact to protest the Games, and he was unsure whether he should honor that pact or compete. Both Bert and Bud convinced Lee to compete because he worked all his life for this opportunity, and if he withdrew, it would haunt him forever. Bert told Lee to compete and do whatever he wanted afterward—meaning protest in some fashion. Lee ran, broke the world record, and received his gold medal shoeless and wearing black socks.

Bert chuckled and said, “Everyone thought the black socks was his way of protest, but people didn’t know that he wore black socks all the time.”

Racism. Being an Italian American, Bert had a different experience with racism than Black people did back then. He recalled a time in high school when he fell in love with a beautiful Afro-American girl. He told me, “In those days, that was a no, no okay.” He says he did not really care, but nothing ever came of it, so I did not push the issue.

In another instance, when Bert returned home to Northern California after the 1968 Olympic Games, he could immediately feel the tension between White and Black people more severely than ever before. As a teacher in Pittsburg High School, none of the Blacks would answer him when he took attendance. The Black students had mixed feelings because of the recent actions of the Black athletes protesting at the Olympics. As Bert said, “There had been a

transition of feelings between the Afro-Americans towards some...a lot of Whites.” He always told his athletes to treat people the way you would like to be treated. “That’s cut and dry.”

He recalled another incident on a plane sometime during the 1960s. While waiting to depart, the FBI approached the plane door and asked if there were any Afro-Americans onboard. There were none, but the incident shocked Bert all the same. He realized that any racism he experienced as an Italian was nothing compared to being Black.

1972 Olympic Games. In 1972, Bert was awarded the honor of being one of Peru’s coaches for the 1972 Olympic Games held in Munich, Germany. Bert poignantly remarked how those games could have been drastically different had it not been for the massacre of 11 Israeli team members who were taken hostage and killed by a terrorist group calling themselves Black September. Ironically, this massacre began on September 5, my 13th birthday. Coach Bonanno blames it on the relaxed security, which he saw firsthand as the Peruvian coach. It was undeniable, he said, how the Germans “screwed up,” and he does not think the German officials will ever admit to it. Mr. Bonanno remembered entering an enormous parking garage underneath the athletes’ dorms and how the guards did not check the cars that came and went, despite that there were guards all around.

Another major flaw was that the athletes, coaches, and dignitaries were not required to wear their credentials around their necks and keep them visible at all times. Coach Bonanno realized this when he and his team arrived at the stadium early only to find that he had left his credentials back in his room. The official shrugged it off and handed Bert a replacement. Bert then had two credentials. He imagined what might have happened if someone else had two as well and gave the second one to someone who might try to disrupt the Games.

Even as they entered the stadium, no one inspected their credentials. Most credentials are marked with particular colors and numbers to denote where one could or could not go. Bert said, “I felt sorry for them [the German officials].”

Family

Bert grew up with his mother, father, and two brothers in a diverse middle class neighborhood. Bert’s father was a shift worker for Shell Chemical, and he would work with him during the summers, digging ditches. It was a terrible job, but his father insisted he needed the experience.

Olympic Associations

Bert was fortunate enough to be a coach for numerous national teams—including Mexico’s, Peru’s, and the United States’—and he also led an international team. In 1964, he received a call from the Mexican Olympic Federation, inviting him to be one of the coaches for the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. This was followed by a telegram from General José de Jesus Clark Flores, vice president of the International Olympic Committee, who sent the official invitation to be one of the coaches for the Mexican team. Bert and his family spent three-and-a-half years in Mexico.

Following the Olympic Games, he returned home and eventually became the head track coach for SJCC.

Olympic Mentees

Mr. Bert Bonanno has had a considerable influence in the world of track and field. He has been a school coach, a sports administrator, a track meet promoter, and an Olympic coach. He met Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner) in Munich, Germany at the 1972 Olympics and

invited him to visit San Jose and train with the city's great athletes in all of the individual events of the decathlon. Jenner won the gold medal four years later, in the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Coach Bonanno knew Millard Hampton as a youth in San Jose. Similar to Coach Poynter's story, Coach Bonanno found Millard working at a cheap gas station on a cold night, depressed and wearing a flimsy baseball sweatshirt. They spoke, and Millard told him about SJSU changing his major on top of some personal family issues. Bert went home and returned to give Millard a heavy jacket to keep him warm.

Soon after, Millard transferred to SJCC, where Bert was the head coach and Robert Poynter was his assistant coach. The transfer roused a major controversy; SJSU accused Bert of tampering with their scholarship athlete. Coach said, "The San Francisco Chronicle, which was a big newspaper at that time, also accused me of stealing." Bert advised Millard to avoid answering any questions unless absolutely necessary. Millard went on to win a silver medal in the 200 meters dash, and a gold medal in the 4 × 100 meters relay in the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada.

Bert was also associated with three-time Olympian athlete, Ed Burke; silver and bronze Olympic medalist, Ato Boldon, from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; and myself. Bert was the reason I decided to postpone my scholarship to UCLA and enroll in SJCC. He did not convince me to attend SJCC, but he did ask me to consider whether or not I was academically prepared for UCLA. Recalling what Millard had gone through with both SJSU and UCLA, I believe he did not want me to repeat his mistakes. Besides, Mr. Bonanno was a more direct, "in your face" type of man. Of course, the one athlete who Bert had the greatest affinity for and mentored since he was in junior high school was Eddie Hart, the 1972 Olympic gold medalist as a member of the 4 × 100 meters relay team in Munich, Germany.

Bert met Eddie in the early 1960s at Central Junior High School. Eddie was a timid child, but, after completing a sprint test for his PE class, Bert realized how fast he was and knew he had to convince him to compete on the track and field team. It took some coaxing and a little “blackmail,” according to Coach, but Eddie finally began practicing with him.

Eddie told Bert one day that his father did not believe he was practicing late every day, so Bert decided to give him a ride home to speak with Eddie’s father. As they passed through a well-known Columbia Park Projects in Pittsburg, California, they turned a corner, and all Bert saw was 10 Black children staring at him. Eddie rolled down his window and told the boys, “He’s White, but he is alright.”

As time passed, Eddie became much faster and enrolled in Contra Costa City College, and then the University of California, Berkeley. Eddie made the Olympic team in 1972 and instantly became a favorite to win the 100 meters dash. Unfortunately, he was denied the chance because of a miscommunication regarding the change of the start time for the quarterfinals. Most pundits were quick to blame Eddie’s Olympic coach, but Bert insists it was neither Eddie’s nor the coach’s fault. Nevertheless, Eddie was devastated and stayed in the dorms with Bert and the Peruvian team.

“That’s enough about Eddie,” Bert said. I interpreted this to mean that was enough about the 1972 Olympics, because he discussed Eddie further.

Bert and Eddie have talked approximately every two weeks or so for the last 50 years. They meet often, and Eddie once invited Bert to a program he was in charge of at Pittsburg High School. Little did Bert realize that, not only was he the guest speaker, but he was being inducted into the Pittsburg High School Hall of Fame. He loves attending events and seeing all of the old athletes he coached or mentored over the years.

San Jose City College

Myself. During the interview, questions arose regarding Bert's recollection of meeting me for the first time, making connections with me—particularly as an African-American—our conversations concerning which college to attend after SJCC, and whether or not he was aware of the impact he had on my life.

I first asked if he remembered when we met. Bert answered honestly, "I thought that you were naïve and a little bit backward." He had the impression that I was overconfident, which surprised me because I had always considered myself to be humble. But Bert assured me that pride is not a negative quality; we all have egos, and he suspected I had some major decisions to make for my life, but was too prideful to let anyone know.

Coach Bonanno believed I had the potential to become a great athlete, but also that I lacked guidance. He recalled a day when he watched me practice, and he "remembers distinctly that your hurdle spacing was off," and that I would lose my temper and slam the hurdle to the ground. His immediate concern was that I could have broken my hand.

Coach Bonanno's psychoanalysis was correct. I was hiding some internal pain.

During those days, I still lived with my older brother, who was enjoying his first years with his wife, and I felt I was in their way. On and off, I would stay on their couch, while at other times I would park my car in front of the college and sleep in the back seat. Fortunately, I secured a job at a local pizza restaurant to earn money to help my brother pay the bills and occasionally rent a motel for a few nights. Therefore, I needed to excel in track and field—on top of maintaining my grades and holding a job—to earn my scholarship to UCLA. Strangely enough, neither of my coaches were aware of my plight.

Bert remembers a day while I attended SJCC and walked into his office. He greeted me, “Mr. Phillips, what can I do for you?” It was obvious to him that I was not ready to be addressed as Mr. Phillips. Many times, I would stop by Coach Bonanno’s office to check in or say hello. On that day, Bert said, “I’ve been following you, so don’t screw this up, Andre.” He said that he saw my future—not all of it, but enough to know I would be okay.

Bert mentioned the homecoming honor that Millard and I both received on February 27, 2018, at our alma mater, Silver Creek High School. The coordinators of the event invited many of our teachers and coaches. Bert remembers how, as a high schooler, I dominated the competition with a fun-loving smile. “There’s something about the way you stand,” Bert said, referring to seeing me on stage at that celebration. He calls it a position of power with love. “I was like a little kid. I was so excited to see you and Millard. You see, that kind of stuff you can’t buy.”

I then asked Bert if he believed it was essential to connect with those he coached and mentored, especially African-American males who may not have had that guidance at home with a male figure. His response was what I had expected. Bert said it was essential to connect, but he did not do it out of obligation; the connections happened naturally. He also believes that everyone should be treated differently—on his or her own merits—but with dignity. Because most of his coaching and mentoring was done from the 1960s through the 1970s, a time when racial tensions were high, Coach says, even if someone feels uncomfortable with him being White, there is no reason to panic. He has learned to be a good listener. Bert also knows he does not have all the answers. Coach looked at me and said, “If I could learn something from you, that’s even better. That’s some of the things you’ve taught me in observance of you.”

When asked if he knew the impact he has had on my life over the years, Bert reflected that, every time he sees me smile more than usual, he knows he was the one who caused me to attend SJCC instead of UCLA. When he thinks of me, he says to himself, “If I had a small amount of cause and effect to see what you’ve accomplished and whatever I delivered, I don’t know what that is. All I know is ‘Did I make a difference?’” The short answer is unquestionably “Yes.” He made a difference in my life.

When it came to our futures and which colleges we, the athletes, would attend after our two-year stints at SJCC, Bert brought us into a large room and said, “Let’s be progressive” and discussed all of the options. Coach always said to be selfish and not worry about your friends or family when you decide to take control of your education and athletic career. I was at the stage in my life where I could make career decisions, and they were my choices to make. Mr. Bonanno, who is never lost for words, said,

Fate plays a funny and interesting part in success. What does that mean? I am so proud of you, Andre. To see what you’ve accomplished. The decisions you have made. To put you at the level that you are. What your ambition is for the future. I know it hasn’t been easy. I know you are challenged quite often. I know you taught yourself to stay under control and not to overreact.

That’s important. (Bonanno, personal communication, 2018)

Bert finished by reminding me how fortunate I am to have had the coaches and mentors that I did, such as Stan Dowell, Robert Poynter, and Frank Slaton.

Researcher’s Recollection

My communications with Mr. Bonanno over the years have been invaluable. Earlier, I mentioned that, while attending SJCC, I would stop by his office to say hello. Often, I visited

only for the occasional story or two about his travels, or for another dose of his advice, which always made me consider what he had to offer. Sometimes, Bert would show me an article he was in or the program for the upcoming Bruce Jenner Indoor Invitational that he promoted for. Other times, Bert and I would talk about school, track, and family; I always loved hearing about his wife and his kids.

Approximately five or six years after I transferred from SJCC to UCLA, I traveled to Rome, Italy for a track meet. Surprisingly, so did Mr. Bonanno, though only to observe. We ran into each other near Rome's famous Spanish Steps, and we hugged as if it had been years. He recalls going home and telling his wife that he saw me.

Sometime after I turned 40, as I went through a pending divorce, it dawned on me that I needed to visit Bert. At the time, I lived in Manteca, California. I drove to San Jose, straight to SJCC, and into Bert's office as I had done years before. He was surprised to see me. Despite keeping my emotions and problems close to the vest, Bert knew something was wrong and invited me to lunch. The most incredible thing about that afternoon was that he told stories and made me laugh. He knew I might have wanted to talk, but did not force the issue. Instead, he let me slowly explain my problems and then offered some words of wisdom. My spirits lifted after that day, and I made decisive moves to further my life goals.

Life's Lessons

The lessons that I have learned from Mr. Bonanno are about life itself. He always said the one thing that motivated him to continue onward or to push those he coached and mentored was to never become content with your life. "The worst thing you could ever be is contented." He says a cow sitting in the pasture all day and night is contented. Bert saw his future, wanted more, and went for it.

Stan Dowell

On January 27, 2018, I received a call that I had dreaded for months. It was from Stan Dowell's wife, telling me she did not think Coach Dowell had much time left. Tears welled up in my eyes as I called my school district director to inform him that I needed to go to Alabama. The next call was to my wife, and then I made reservations for a flight.

Early the following day, January 28, I boarded the plane, arrived in Mobile, Alabama, rented a car, and drove to the city of Foley, hoping I was not too late to say my goodbyes. Stanley L. Dowell passed away six days after his 88th birthday—the day after I arrived to see him—on January 29, 2018 at his residence in Foley, Alabama. He spent his last moments with his wife, his daughter, and me: his athlete, mentee, and friend. His wife and their four children survive him.

This section was written with the use of artifacts, letters, articles, and remembrances of Stan Dowell.

Biography

Stanley L. "Coach" Dowell was born in Williams, California, just north of Sacramento, but was raised in Woodland, near Williams. He graduated from Woodland High School and then attended Sacramento City College, where he competed in track and field, javelin-throwing, and running the 400 meters. Stan served in the army during the Korean War at Schofield Barracks in Oahu, Hawaii, where Coach trained and competed with the boxing squad. After exiting the army, he graduated from SJSU with a commercial arts degree and a minor in physical education.

He met his wife from Santa Cruz, California at SJSU and married her in 1960. They celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary before his passing. Stan dedicated 30 years of his life to teaching in the San Jose East Side Unified School District. He taught art in his early career at

Overfelt High School in San Jose and later focused on physical education at Silver Creek and Independence High Schools, where he lived out his passion for coaching track and field.

He was awarded the California High School Coach of the Year award and was runner-up for National High School Coach of the Year. He retired from teaching in 1989, yet continued to coach and travel the world via Saudi Arabia's national track team. Stan concluded his coaching career at the University of Southern Alabama. He continued to paint, draw, and exhibit his art throughout his life. Depictions of the early American West were his favorite. His passion for life, track, and art touched many lives, and he mentored students to achieve art awards and track scholarships. He produced two Olympic gold medalists who have been his lifetime friends: Lee Evans in the 1968 Mexico Games, and me in the 1988 Seoul Games.

Historical Context

1968 Olympics. Although Stan coached Lee Evans in high school, he had to relinquish those duties to his former coach, Bud Winter. However, Bud would occasionally seek out Stan's advice because he knew Lee's temperament and his most effective workouts. Coach Dowell remained especially close to Lee and his wife throughout Lee's college career.

Coach and I had many discussions over the years about the Black athletes in the 1968 boycott and the role that Lee played. Nobody was certain whether or not Lee would participate in the boycott with Tommie Smith and John Carlos. After Tommie and John raised their gloved fists during the medal ceremony and Lee wore his black socks and lowered his head on the medal stand during the national anthem, Coach was worried for all of them. Lee's wife was terrified for their safety, so Stan and his wife invited Lee's wife and son to stay with them until Lee returned from the Olympic Games, an offer that they accepted.

Family

Stan's father was born and raised in Montana, near a Native American reservation. Coach's father would tell stories of hearing the Native Americans play their instruments during the evenings. Stan's mother was born and raised in Williams, California. His father met his mother in Williams after driving a friend to California.

When Stan Dowell was born in 1930, only 851 people inhabited the city of Williams. He grew up with his parents and two brothers as the youngest child. His father worked for the state of California for what we now know as Caltrans. The father received a promotion, and the family moved to Woodland when Stan was in high school. Stan's mother was a housewife and the more outgoing of the parents. His father was a quiet, hardworking man, but he knew how to discipline his sons when necessary.

Athletics

Stan often told me he was not the fastest runner, but he always did his best. He competed in track and field in high school, City College, and at SJSU with a scholarship from Bud Winter. Coach threw the javelin and ran the 400 meters.

Olympic Associations

Although Stan was one of the most respected track and field coaches in Northern California, he did not coach any US national teams. However, he was the head coach of the Saudi Arabian national team for two years in the late 1990s. Additionally, he trained numerous athletes who participated in national, Olympic, and world teams.

Olympic Mentees

Stanley Dowell coached in San Jose for over 30 years and trained hundreds of high school athletes. Two of them became Olympic gold medalists: Lee Evans and myself. On

reflection, it is difficult to determine which of us was closer to him. Lee and I were in the Olympics 20 years apart, Lee in 1968 and me in 1988. But it is safe to say that Coach had a deep affection for both of us.

Researcher's Recollection

Coach Dowell was charismatic and passionate about track and field. His reputation in San Jose was that of the “meanest coach on the face of the planet.” I learned this from my older brother, who was on the track team when I was in eighth grade. Stan was one of the physical education teachers, and in the 1970s, PE was a requirement for all four years of high school. My first encounter with Coach Dowell was during my freshman year as one of his PE students. The experience seemed like meeting a drill sergeant, especially when he commanded all of us to fall into formation on the school's blacktop for calisthenics.

This strategy for structure and classroom management came from his two years serving in the Korean War, where he was a boxer. His demeanor was one that few people challenged, whether you were a student, staff member, or parent. Most students could not understand his passion as a physical education teacher, but I tolerated it since my father had a similar comportment. So, I decided to audition for track and field as a high jumper in my freshman year. But something happened during my sophomore year that forever reshaped my life as a student and athlete.

In 1975, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) eliminated the 180 meters low hurdles and replaced it with the 300 meters low hurdles. Coach Dowell believed I would be great at running over the barriers, despite that I was only a high jumper. Yes, I would practice running with my teammates, but that was simply to get into shape; I had never hurdled before or competed seriously in track and field. Perhaps Coach Dowell recalled my competitiveness in

PE, where I would always make my way to the front when running the mile or in some of the short sprints. He said, years later, that he saw something in me, a skinny five-foot, eight-inch, 135-pound freshman. Throughout the year, during our home track and field meets, he expressed his desire for me to run the 300 meters hurdles. I always conveniently missed the start of the race. My excuse was that I was high jumping.

Coach Dowell finally approached me before I could high jump during a home track meet one day, yelled, “You are running those hurdles today,” and walked me over to the starting line. Strangely, he began speaking to me more like a father, and said, “I want you to try this race, and if you don’t like it, you don’t have to hurdle again.” Not trusting me, Coach Dowell stayed near the starting line until the gun went off. I was anxious about many things before the race began: how to use the starting blocks, hoping I would complete the race without hitting a single hurdle, fearing I might fall, and not wanting to lose.

The gun went off. I ran, I won, and I did not like the race. I let my coach know. He smiled calmly and said, “That’s your race.”

Our relationship changed from that day onward. The yelling decreased, I became one of his adopted sons, and he became my coach.

We became more than coach/athlete, mentor/mentee, or pseudo father/son; we had an incredible bond throughout the 44 years he was in my life. When I was a sophomore in high school and one of ten children, we could not afford to purchase track shoes for me. Coach Dowell was generous enough to find a pair or two and give them to me. Later, I discovered that these shoes once belonged to the great Lee Evans and John Carlos. Coach Dowell would ask Lee or John for some old footwear, patch them up if needed, and donate them to those of us who needed shoes. Occasionally, his wife told me, Coach would buy some with his own money.

In 1979, I left Northern California for UCLA, but still kept in touch with Coach. One day after my junior year in college, I called him to complain about the workout regimen that I was receiving from the UCLA coach because my improvement in the 400 meters hurdles was dismal at best. I did not know how Stan would respond, and so was surprised when he trained me himself. For weeks, I would implement the new conditioning regimen after running the mandatory workouts by the UCLA coach. Waiting until everyone had left the track, I would return and complete the second workout. Throughout the year, I improved my 400 meters hurdles performance by over one second, breaking a UCLA school record and earning an individual national championship in the NCAAs.

Coach Dowell and I always kept in touch, and I often sent him postcards from my travels in Europe. One note from Zurich, Switzerland in 1985 reads, “Hey coach, my first races weren’t as I expected, but I think as soon as I get rid of the jet-lag, I’ll do better.” Another from Cologne, Germany, says, “Coach, things are going well for having injuries in the early season. I won both of my races here 47.69 and 47.84. In Cologne, Germany now, heading for Bern, Switz. Just wanted to keep you informed.”

Life’s Lessons

Most of Coach Dowell’s life lessons were learned in track and field. Stan would write workout instructions with messages such as, “Not winning is worse than enduring the pain in the daily workouts, so pain is necessary, not an option!”

Frank Slaton

Biography

Frank Slaton was born and raised in East Oakland, California in 1948. He was a football and track star at Castlemont High School and eventually received a football scholarship to attend SJSU. While there, he ran track and field under the tutelage of Bud Winter.

In 1972, while Frank was enrolled in California Polytechnic State University to earn his teaching credential, he visited one of the rival high schools in San Jose to speak with a friend. The conversation somehow led to Coach Slaton deciding to look for a teaching job when he earned his credential. The friend told Frank that the East Side Unified School District in San Jose was currently hiring. There was an influx of African-American students enrolling at the time, but not enough Black teachers, especially male ones. Frank interviewed and was offered a job at Piedmont High School even though he was only one week into his student teaching. Frank told me, “That’s how desperate they were to get some African-Americans, especially males.” Frank stayed at Piedmont for four years until a vacancy opened up at Silver Creek High School in the PE department due to Stan Dowell moving to the new high school, which was built to alleviate the overcrowding students.

Frank met his wife that same year. She taught at the same school and married him seven years later. They have two daughters who have been successful in their own right. Frank continued teaching and coaching at Silver Creek High School, taught his final four years at Evergreen High School, and retired in 2003.

Historical Context

Civil rights. Frank was very forthcoming when we discussed civil rights, racism, and the effects it had on him growing up in the 1960s. In the fall of 1968, when I was a sophomore,

Tommie Smith and John Carlos made history at the Mexico City Games, but Frank informed me that meetings were held all over the United States before the Games regarding the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR). Dr. Harry Edwards had finished competing and was then a sociology professor at SJSU. Coach Slaton remembers taking some courses from him. This movement was not contained to just track and field, but to basketball and other sports as well.

Later that same year, while Frank practiced with his team, they all received word of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Everyone was in shock. Frank's assumption was, if not even Dr. King was safe, then no African-Americans were.

In Frank's junior year playing football, the Black athletes met with their coach to prepare to face Brigham Young University (BYU). The Black football players were concerned because BYU was a Mormon-owned college, and the Mormon doctrine stated that Blacks could not enter Heaven. The Black athletes decided they probably would not play during that game. The coach understood.

Meanwhile, the White athletes held their own meeting and decided that politics had no business entangling with sports. This was one year after Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in the Mexico City Olympics. The White athletes gave the coaches an ultimatum. If the Black athletes boycotted, so would they. There were four times as many Whites on the football team than Blacks.

The Black athletes boycotted the BYU game and immediately lost their athletic scholarships. However, money from the general fund was returned to the Black athletes to cover their expenses. Coach says this was "To appease the White athletes." The head football coach was fired. His replacement invited the Black athletes back onto the team. Frank said, "It was the only move he could have made, or SJSU would forever try to get African-American athletes for

football. It was not the same.” Only two of the White athletes sided with the Blacks when the others voted to take away the Black athletes’ scholarships.

Racism. Just like Robert Poynter, Frank also experienced the difficulty of securing housing near the campus because of the color of his skin. “We would go to an apartment that listed a vacancy, only to find out when you arrive, now it is not.” He recalled that a race riot broke out at his alma mater, Castlemont High School, after he left East Oakland in 1966, back when the Black Panthers had a stronghold established there. He remembers they had to corral all the White students into the gymnasium until their parents came for them. White parents pulled their children out of Castlemont High School, which rose from 60 percent Black to 95 percent Black.

Family

Frank lived with his parents in a modest, three-bedroom home in East Oakland, and he was the eldest of three children. As the only boy, he was fortunate enough to have his own room. Coach Slaton’s father graduated from McClymonds High School and competed in football and track and field. Frank’s mother also attended McClymonds High School, but did not graduate on time. She enrolled in a continuation school and received her diploma the year after Frank graduated from high school.

Frank’s father worked two jobs—one at the Simmons Mattress Company, and the other at a local gas station. He later found a partner with whom he began a side business in upholstery. Frank’s mother was a homemaker and worked just as hard to ensure the family was exactly that: a family. One reason she stayed home was because she had chronic asthma and could not be in a room with any smoke without immediately suffering an asthma attack.

The neighborhood that Coach Slaton lived in was one where every family had a set of parents. He does not recall ever seeing “A single mother trying to raise five or six kids by herself.” He remembers going on small family vacations, such as when his grandmother bought a tent for them all to go camping in. His father did not attend the camping trips until a few years later because he was always working. Frank says, “I feel fortunate. I really do, [because] Mom and Dad, you know, did a great job.”

Athletics

Frank and his sisters participated in various sports. His sisters ran track, but not in school; those were the days before Title IX, the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which declares that no one can be excluded from participating in any educational program receiving federal money based on sex. His sisters ran with a local track and field club near their home.

Frank’s track team often competed against SJSU’s. In 1966, Frank received a football scholarship at SJSU and played running back. He ran track just as a means to avoid playing spring football. In those days, freshman could not participate in the varsity squad. In 1968, as a member of the 4 × 100 meters relay team, they took second to USC in the NCAA outdoor championships, hosted in Berkeley, California. The USC relay team included O.J. Simpson, Earl McCullough, and Lenox Miller.

Olympic Mentees

My track and field season ended disappointingly in my junior year of high school. I suffered a hamstring injury in the final two weeks of the track season, causing me to take a stand-up starting position at the CIF High School Track and Field Championships. In the finals of the 300 meters hurdles, I placed a disappointing fourth in an otherwise successful season. Ironically, the 1977 championships were hosted at UCLA, where I would eventually compete

and graduate. That victory was my first major championship, and it would not have been possible without Coach Slaton.

When Frank first arrived at Silver Creek, he worried it would be difficult following in the footsteps of two of the school's previous coaches: Stan Dowell, who left for Independence High School, and Robert Poynter, who transferred to SJCC to coach his pupil to win an Olympic gold medal. As Frank described, "It would be like somebody on the college level taking Nick Saban's place." But having good relationships with the other track coaches made the transitional year much easier.

Silver Creek. Coach Slaton did not think about whether or not he was a mentor or a role model. As he said, "I tried to lead by example."

Frank was determined to graduate from high school, and he used his athletic abilities to earn a living after graduation. As a coach, he taught his athletes that, if they had even a modicum of academic or athletic talent, they could attend college. He said, "They may even be the first in their household to attend college. It is all about planting a seed."

When Frank began work at Piedmont High School, he felt, as an African-American male, that it was essential to make connections with the African-American students. He wanted them to know that the world is more than East San Jose. He desired for them to not only broaden their horizons and become successful, but also, after becoming successful, to reach back and pull up someone else. Frank explained, when you are in education, "What you end up doing is planting [the] seed." Not every seed will be rooted, but he hopes that, in time, a light will shine and his students will remember what he said years ago.

Frank only recently began considering the impact he may have had on former students. He mentioned how, as he attended the San Jose Jazz Festival over the years, he would see some

of his former athletes and students well into their 40s and 50s. He discovered, after conversing with these individuals, that some of us listened to him.

Frank and I used to discuss which college I might attend after high school, but he was concerned about my maturity level. I was clearly not a worldly person. Coach recalled, on a trip to Chicago in my senior year to compete against the best athletes in the nation, a thunderstorm raged while we slept. Frank reminded me, “You damn near jumped into my bed. You were so scared.” So, when we met with the UCLA head coach in my parents’ living room, Frank believed I was not yet ready to join the Bruins. He said during the interview that attending SJCC was a smart choice. After all, he knew Bobby Poynter was there.

Researcher’s Recollection

In the fall of 1976, when Coach Slaton first arrived at Silver Creek High School, I was not thrilled to have a new coach for my senior year. During the previous summer, I discovered that Stan Dowell was moving on to a newly-built high school a few miles away that was still in our district. Because the new school accepted only freshmen and sophomores, transferring as a senior was not an option.

As track season neared, I chose to visit the new high school and continue training with Stan Dowell. This continued for approximately two weeks, when my principal discovered this and called me into his office. He politely told me that he could not allow me to continue training under another coach due to CIF rules and that I should give Coach Slaton a chance.

Coach Dowell agreed. He wished me good luck. Amazingly, Frank was patient in dealing with my dilemma and only wanted the best for me and my athletic career. He turned out to be a perfect coach.

Over the years, I have seen Coach Slaton a few times per year at various events, including as a guest at my wedding. As mentioned earlier, I always have and will continue to enjoy my conversations with Frank.

Life's Lessons

The greatest lesson that I have learned from Coach Slaton is to lead by example. As an African-American male, husband, and father, his only concern was to live as such. He taught me that the world is always bigger than your surroundings; venture out, but do not forget to reach back and bring someone with you.

Table 3

Research Participants: Theme Information

	Robert Poynter	Bert Bonanno	Stan Dowell	Frank Slaton
Race and Ethnicity	Black	Italian	White	Black
Birth Decade	1930s	1930s	1930s	1940s
Place of Birth	Pasadena, CA	Pittsburg, CA	Williams, CA	East Oakland, CA
Family Dynamics	Pseudo single parent with strong patriarch & extended family	Two parents	Two strong parents	Two parents with strong male influence
Athletics in High School & College	High school & college Track & field 100 meters dash 200 meters dash	High school football	High school & college Javelin 400 meters dash	High school & college Football Track & field 100 meters dash
Olympic Association	1959 Pan American team member	1968 assistant Olympic coach for Mexico Head coach for 1972 Olympics (Peru team) Coach in 1981 Pan Pacific Games	1996-1998 head coach for Saudi Arabia's national track team	None

		Coach for 1989 Indoor World Championships		
Olympic Mentees & their Events	Millard Hampton: 200 meters, 4 × 100 meters relay Bruce Jenner (Caitlyn Jenner): Decathlon Andre Phillips: 400 meters hurdles	Eddie Hart: 4 × 100 meters relay Bruce Jenner (Caitlyn Jenner): Decathlon Millard Hampton: 200 meters, 4 × 100 meters relay Ed Burke: Hammer throw Andre Phillips: 400 meters hurdles Ato Bolden: 100 meters, 200 meters	Lee Evans: 400 meters, 4 × 400 meters relay Alice Brown: 100 meters Rochelle Stevens: 400 meters Butch Reynolds: 400 meters Andre Phillips: 400 meters hurdles	Andre Phillips: 400 meters hurdles

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey Data

The purpose of the attitude survey was to ascertain how I (as both participant and researcher) felt during three specific eras of my life: as a teenager, as a college student and Olympic athlete, and as an educator. The 24-question survey was divided into these three sections. I responded to each question that best described my feelings regarding my academic achievement and my adult relationships in and out of the school setting.

I responded to questions pertaining to my attitudes and beliefs regarding school, discipline, and attendance. The survey reflected a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = strongly agree). The attitude survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. (Appendix A).

Note. Some questions in the attitude survey were difficult to answer due to the nature of the questions and the eras which they concerned. For example, a question under the heading of “Adult Relationships” during the collegiate and Olympic years such as “I have a positive adult male role model at home” would be difficult to answer because I lived alone during this era.

The attitude survey was designed to determine whether or not mentoring programs are warranted for ninth grade high school males—specifically, African-American males.

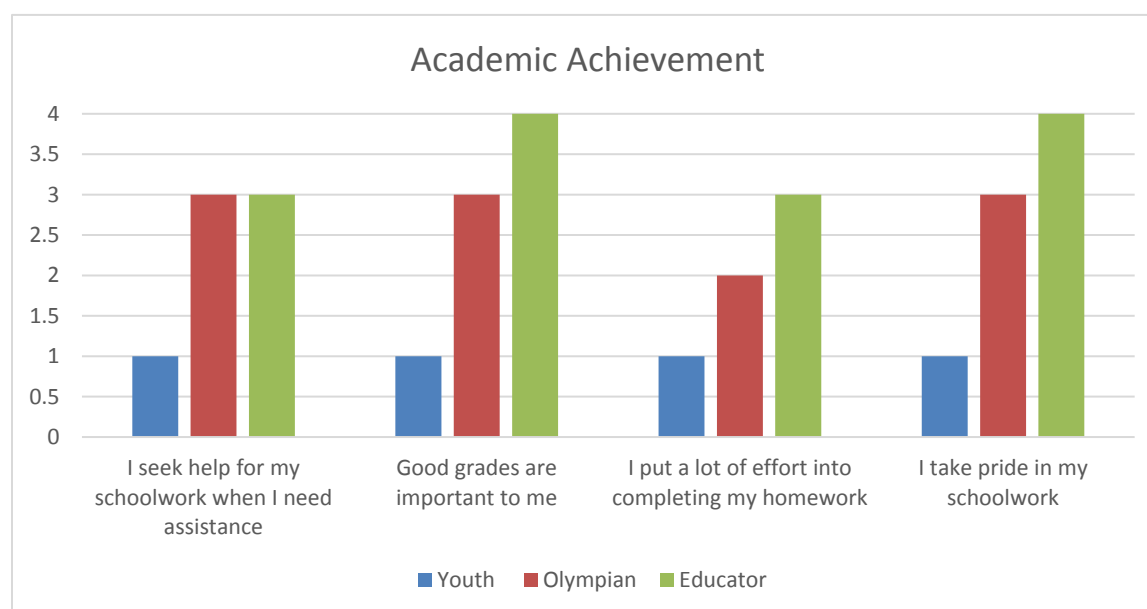
Attitude Survey Results

Survey questions 1-4 in Table 4 below focused on my academic achievement through seeking help for schoolwork, the importance of good grades, my homework, and pride in my schoolwork. The data reflects that I sought help equally as much during my collegiate and Olympic years and as an educator.

Good grades and pride in my work were less important to me during my youth and my collegiate and Olympic years, but are a greater priority as an educator.

Table 4

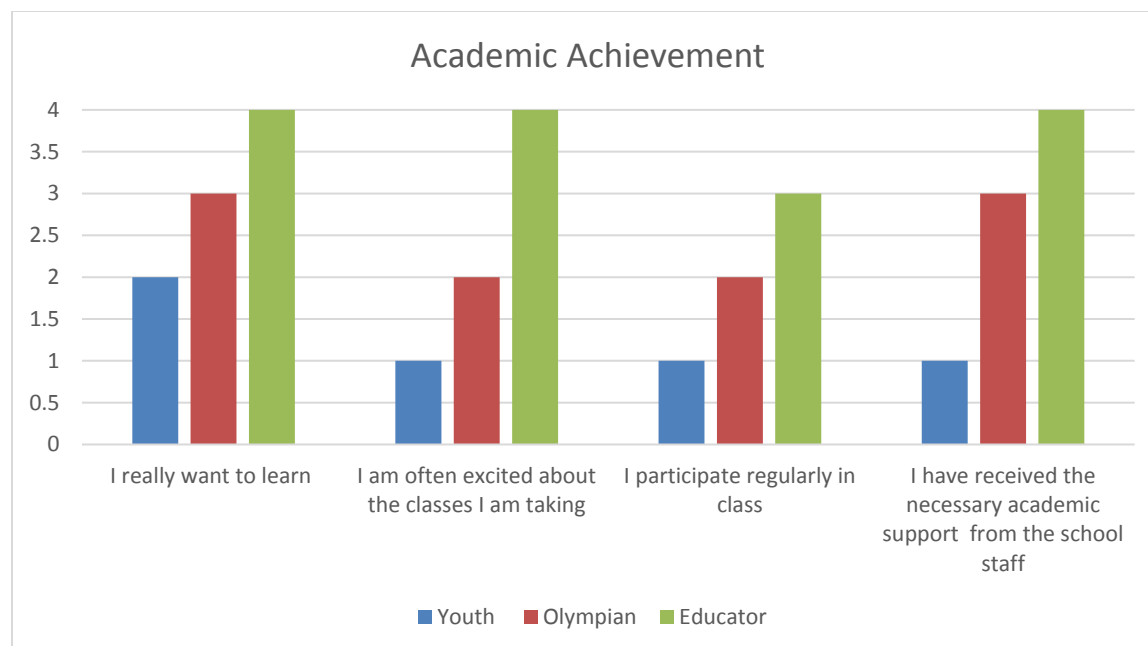
Survey Questions 1-4



Survey questions 5-8 are shown in Table 5. These questions focused on my desire to learn, my interest in my classes, and the amount of academic support I received. The data from these questions reflects a similar pattern to that from the previous section.

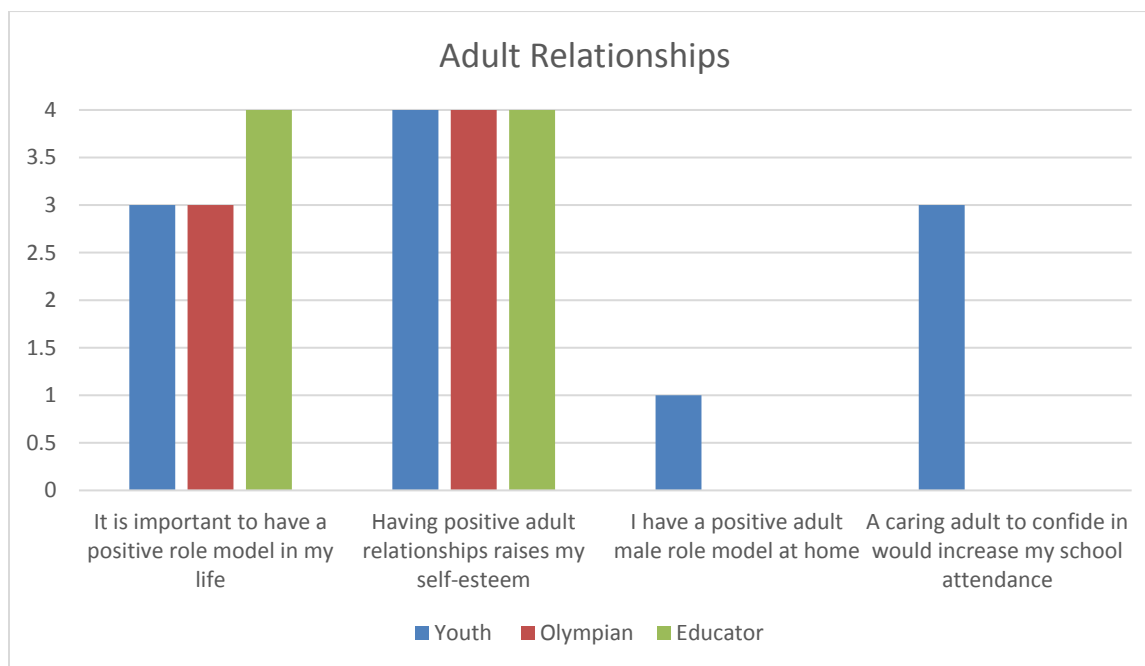
Table 5

Survey Questions 5-8



Survey questions 1-4 in Table 6 below centered on the adult relationships in my life and the characteristics of the male role models associated with these relationships. As previously mentioned, questions three and four are not applicable because of my living conditions during my collegiate and Olympic years and as an educator. What is important to note is the relative importance adult relationships have to me.

Table 6

Survey Questions 1-4

Questions 5-8 in Table 7 focused on adult relationships from the perspectives of need, care, treatment, and understanding. As previously mentioned, the responses to these questions were only applicable to my youth.

Table 7

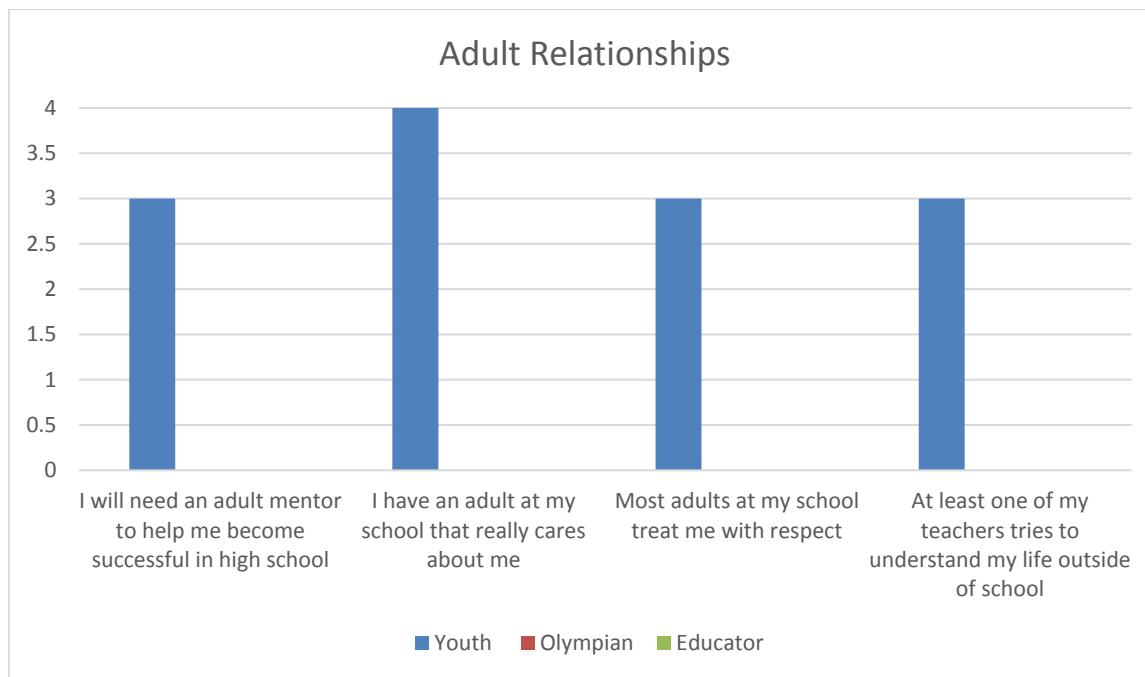
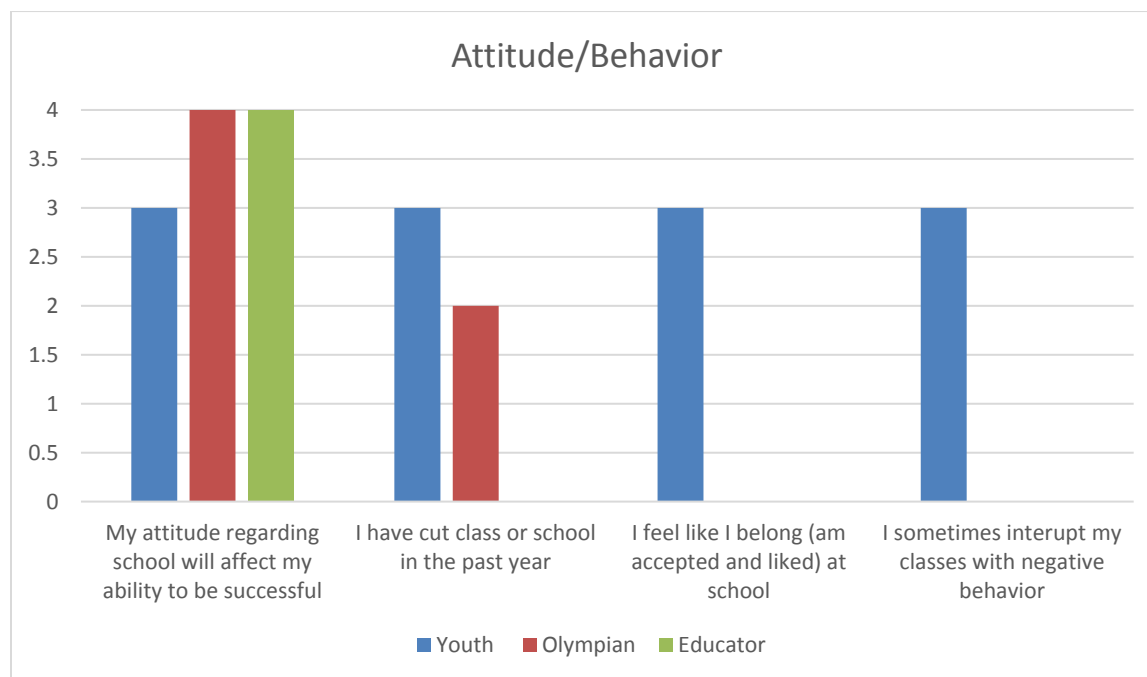
Survey Questions 5-8

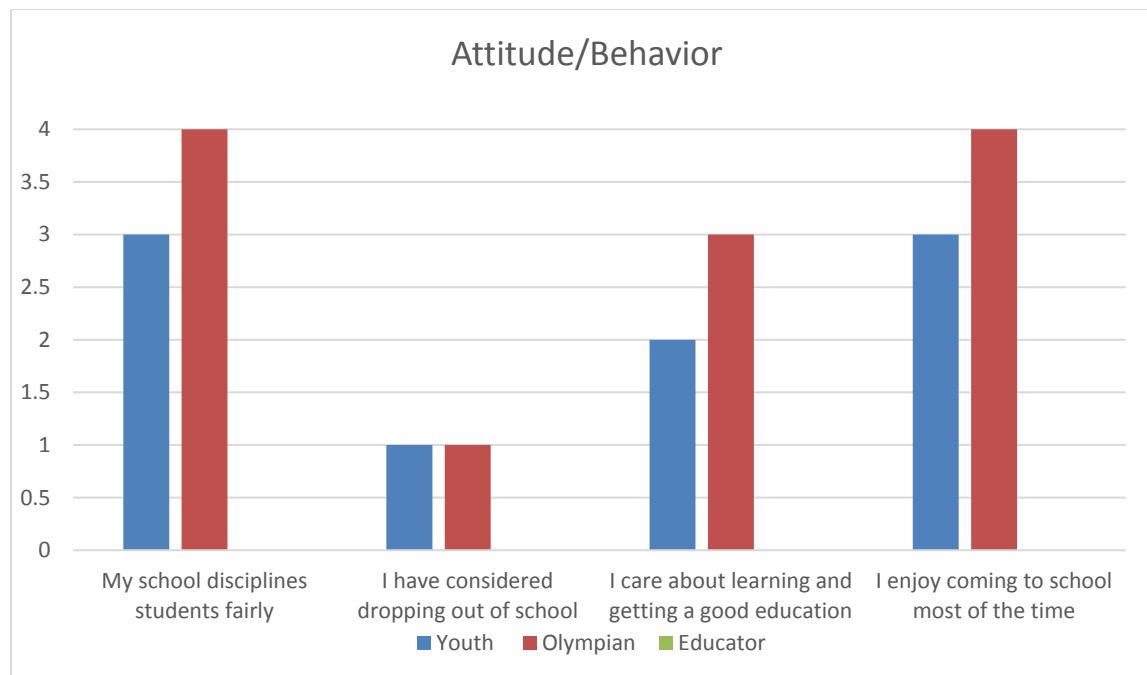
Table 8, shown below, identifies information regarding my attitudes and behaviors toward schooling and reflects only limited applicability.

Table 8

Survey Questions 1-4

Survey questions 5-8 in Table 9 below focus on my attitudes and behaviors regarding discipline, school connectedness, and my sense of the importance of education. What is most notable here are the significant scoring differences between the question about dropping out and the other three questions.

Table 9

Survey Questions 5-8**Summary**

As the data reflects in the tables above, academic achievement was a lower priority in my youth and collegiate and Olympic years when compared to my life as an educator. Having positive role models has been an invaluable benefit in all eras of my life, but was especially crucial in my development as a youth. Finally, I was always aware of the correlation between schooling and success through all three eras of my life.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses primarily on my mentors' stories and the individual influences they have had on me since my teenage years. The men who defined their lives as athletic coaches found themselves using their talents and experiences to reshape students' lives through the relationships they built over the years in the athletic world. Similar themes emerged from the interviews, assisting me in explaining the unique relationships these men have had with myself and others. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and quantitative data was collected via the attitude survey.

The rich narratives presented in Chapter 4 portray the lives of the men whom I—and many others—have considered mentors since my youth. Mr. Robert Poynter, my high school social studies teacher, utilized his quiet nature and athleticism to become an exceptional teacher and philosopher.

Never one to stagnate, Mr. Bert Bonanno used his position as the SJCC athletic director to motivate himself and others to better themselves. Mr. Stan Dowell, my high school and Olympic coach, exemplified learning life's lessons through sports. Using his art to promote diversity, he elevated all students both culturally and socially. And Mr. Frank Slaton, my senior high school track coach, always led by example. Individually and collectively, all of their experiences, influences, and approaches affected the way I have lived my life and, as a result, influenced how I have mentored and continue to mentor others.

Summary of the Study

This autoethnography was designed to answer the following questions.

1. What motivated my mentors to support me in my academic, athletic, and educational careers?

2. How have relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth throughout my life?
3. Through the lenses of the developmental and instrumental approaches to mentoring, what have I learned about how to mentor African-American male youths from my own relationships with adult mentors?

Research Question One

What motivated my mentors to support me in my academic, athletic, and educational careers? As revealed in Chapter 4, each of my mentors arrived at their respective roles through a variety of paths. Mr. Robert Poynter's route included his parents' journeys to California. His sprinting ability garnered him an athletic scholarship to SJSU, and a friend asked Coach Poynter to return to San Jose for possible occupations. The administration at Silver Creek High School took a chance on Robert and offered him a job.

Both of Robert's parents moved out west to California to escape the racial or economic issues of their home states. In the early 1900s, Robert's father was in one of the first waves of African-Americans to head west to escape the "Ku Klux Klan Country" of Decatur, Tennessee.

In contrast, Robert's mother moved for financial reasons. She was from a migrant family and left Georgia on a train to California to find better economic opportunities. Both of Robert's parents settled in South Pasadena, where Robert was born in 1937.

Robert discovered his competitive nature at an early age while racing in the street against the neighborhood children to determine who was the fastest. All of the children at that time wanted to be like their idols, Mack and Jackie Robinson, and, as time progressed, Coach Poynter's ability to run became more apparent than ever in junior high school. In 1955 and

1956, he won the CIF Track and Field Championship in the 200 meters dash. After high school, Robert spent two years at PCC before entering SJSU, where he became a track star.

After competing for the SJSU track team, Robert was drafted by the army, married his wife, buried his father, and obtained his teaching credential. Mr. Poynter's teaching job came by way of a friend's suggestion. Robert interviewed with the principal and assistant principal for a job teaching all of the history courses for Silver Creek High School. Eventually, Alan Hopewell, the assistant principal during Robert's hiring, was elevated to principal and asked Coach Poynter to become the BSU advisor.

Mr. Bert Bonanno's life was considerably different. He and his parents were from Northern California, he attended SJSU, began coaching there, and was later hired as the coach for SJCC. In Chapter 4, Bert discussed being born and raised in Pittsburg, CA, a safe and diverse community at the time, where one could leave one's bike outside of the theater without fear of it being stolen. The neighborhood was home to Blacks, Italians, Hispanics, and Whites.

Bert received an academic scholarship to attend the University of California, Santa Barbara, but returned to Pittsburg after just one day and enrolled in East Contra Costa Community College before later transferring to SJSU. While attending SJSU, Mr. Bonanno took a sports technique course with Bud Winter, a famous track and field coach, and switched his major to physical education. Bud offered Bert a coaching position because he saw his potential. After two years at SJSU, Bert became a coach at Central Junior High School in Pittsburg.

In 1964, Bert became one of the coaches on the Mexico national team that would eventually compete in the 1968 Olympic Games. In 1969, Bert had the opportunity to take the reins upon the retirement of Bud Winter as head track and field coach at SJSU, but declined to become the head coach at SJCC.

There are similarities and differences between Robert Poynter's and Bert Bonanno's methods of motivating and supporting me over the past 45 years. In terms of their demeanor, Coach Poynter was a quiet man, a trait he inherited from his father. Some would suggest that I, too, am a quiet individual.

Bert, on the other hand, was more outgoing and preferred the limelight. If Bert intended to accomplish a goal, everyone knew it. Similarly, I was tremendously dedicated to competing in the Olympics after falling short in 1984.

Both Robert and Bert applied philosophical approaches in communicating as a coach or as a teacher. They spoke directly and methodically. Every word they chose had an overt or covert meaning. This was probably why these two men were able to coach together at SJCC. My own communication style can be a bit strategic, where I think—and sometimes overthink—about an issue before verbalizing my stance on it.

In contrast, Stan Dowell had a boisterous, verbally passionate demeanor in regards to teaching and coaching. From a novice's perspective, one might assume that Stan is mean-spirited. Most individuals who have known me at any point in my life would probably agree that I did not inherit Stan's boisterous nature.

Stan Dowell grew up in a small, Northern California town, received an athletic scholarship to SJSU, secured his first teaching job at Overfelt High School, and then moved to Silver Creek High School. He was born in Williams, CA, where he lived until moving to Woodland, CA, during high school because his father received a promotion. After high school graduation, Stan attended Sacramento City College, where he competed as a member of the track and field team, as a javelin-thrower, and as a runner of the 400 meters dash. Coach Dowell

transferred to SJSU on a scholarship offer from Bud Winter, majored in art, and minored in physical education.

Stan received his first teaching position as an art instructor at Overfelt High School in San Jose, CA, where he also coached track and field. In the fall of 1969, when Silver Creek High School was built, he and many other good coaches were hired for the new school. It was there that I met both Stan Dowell and Robert Poynter.

Robert Poynter, Bert Bonanno, and Stan Dowell all attended SJSU. Some differences between them were distinct. Stan was content with coaching track and field on a high school level for 30 years, but was not satisfied with athletes failing to live up to their potential. Bert, on the other hand, was less concerned with keeping one job and more concerned with moving “up and around the ladder,” away from coaching.

Frank Slaton’s path to Silver Creek was similar to Robert Poynter’s. Coach Slaton was born and raised in East Oakland, attended SJSU on a scholarship, and then worked at Silver Creek High School and Piedmont High School. Frank was raised with both parents and two sisters in East Oakland. His father worked multiple jobs while his mother was a homemaker battling chronic asthma. He attended Castlemont High School, where he competed in football as a running back, and in track and field as a sprinter.

Frank’s first glimpse of SJSU was when he and his track team would compete against the SJSU freshman track team. SJSU eventually offered Frank a football scholarship, where he also competed on the track team. In 1972, while attending California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, he worked towards earning his teaching credential. A friend informed him that teachers were needed in the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, and, due to the rising number of Black students enrolling, there was a need for African-American male teachers.

Frank was hired at a rival high school, where he spent four years teaching PE and coaching track and field. Piedmont was also where he met his wife. Stan Dowell's transfer to Independence High School left an opening at Silver Creek, and Frank was offered the position.

There could not have been a greater dichotomy between Stan Dowell and Frank Slaton. Stan motivated others through his tough bravado, while Frank—as with Robert—was a quiet man. Stan was the sort of coach who pushed athletes to their breaking points. Frank pushed hard, but strived for a healthy balance.

Regardless of their respective paths, these men all arrived in San Jose precisely when I needed them. Coach Poynter and Coach Dowell supported me during my early adolescence. Mr. Slaton arrived towards the end of my youth. And I met Mr. Bonanno as a college freshman.

Mr. Poynter worked as a teacher, coach, and BSU advisor. Coach Dowell and Mr. Slaton were both teachers and coaches. Mr. Bonanno was the athletic director. And I have served as a teacher, coach, and now school administrator.

I also volunteer several times each year for track and field events across the country to inspire young student-athletes to consider an educational path that includes track and field. My colleagues would suggest that I was soft-spoken as a teacher and made an effort to provide philosophical instruction for my students, just as I learned from Robert Poynter, Bert Bonanno, and Frank Slaton.

Regardless of how my mentors arrived in San Jose or what direction their respective supervisors provided, it is evident from the interview data that their mentors, families, academic paths, and historical contexts were instrumental in shaping their lives. Through the dissertation process—including a review of the literature, an analysis of the data, and my personal reflections—it is clear to me that I have inherited the characteristics and qualities of my mentors

and their families in addition to the values relevant to the eras through which I lived. And now I use what they have taught me to support, coach, and mentor my own mentees. In essence, the baton continues to be passed.

The interviews reveal that each of these mentors were taught the value of commitment through the influences of family, the civil rights movement, or both, and this inspired them to assist the students and athletes in their charge.

In Mr. Poynter's case, it began with his awareness that he "didn't know anything about us" when tasked with teaching the Black history course (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). While growing up, his family never spoke of any racial injustices that his parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles may have experienced because it was too difficult to relive. As he remarked, "At times, it is better to forget the past and forget the pain," (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

There were times when my family and extended family shared Mr. Poynter's sentiments. But there were other times when my parents and grandparents spoke openly about how racism affected their lives. My father was from Arkansas, and would occasionally tell stories of the racism he had to endure. But the time it took to tell these stories reminded me of something Coach Robert said: "It took my aunt to be 90 years old before she started talking about stuff in her past [and what] they had to go through," (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

However, once Mr. Poynter decided he should teach, he resolved to do his best. He had to learn how to teach the Black history course and what it meant to be the advisor of the BSU. Coach Poynter decided that his teaching style would incorporate both history and sociology. Robert's life experiences made him an exceptional teacher.

Mr. Bonanno entered my life with a different mindset toward coaching and mentoring students. He firmly believed that “The worst thing you could ever be is contented,” (Bonanno, personal communication, 2018). His chosen allegory was of a cow living contentedly in its pasture. Coach Bonanno had a way of motivating and warning people simultaneously, as he did for me during a visit to his office at SJCC: “I’ve been following you, so don’t screw this up, Andre” (Bonanno, personal communication, 1978). He went on to say that he had seen my future, and that I would be okay.

Stan Dowell’s method was to relentlessly push his athletes until their breakthroughs, especially if he saw the raw potential in them. As outlined in Chapter 4, Coach Dowell saw my talent as a high jumper and insisted that I had the potential to be a great hurdler, leading me to compete in my first hurdle race. As much as I despised the decision at the time, I have thanked Coach Dowell repeatedly for over 40 years. Stan also used slogans to motivate me in athletics and in life. His favorite was “Not winning is worse than enduring the pain in the daily workouts, so pain is necessary, not an option” (Dowell, personal communication, 1987).

Frank Slaton used his love of family to lead by example. His parents raised him and his sisters with respect and did everything they could to support their athletic endeavors. As he states, “I feel fortunate, I really do, [because] Mom and Dad, you know, did a great job” (Slaton, personal communication, 2018).

For Frank, leading by example sometimes meant standing up for a cause he believed in. In 1968, when Frank Slaton was a junior, he and the other Black football players boycotted the game against BYU because of the Mormon Church’s racist doctrine towards Blacks. Although the White athletes voted against the boycott, the Black athletes still refused to play and consequently lost their scholarships. Although the Black players were later financially

compensated and invited back on the team by the new head coach, the relationship between the White and Black athletes was never the same.

Similar to Coach Slaton, I am grateful to have had and continue to have the love and support of my family. My parents also raised us to be respectful and to do our best. My father taught me to judge everyone as an individual. As for standing up for causes, the most important one to me has always been racial equality. I am a firm believer that the freedoms granted to us by our Founding Fathers under the Constitution are truths to be held as self-evident.

Research Question Two

How have relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth throughout my life? It has been by my mentors' relationships with others and their life experiences that determined how they have influenced my life.

Mr. Robert Poynter was my social studies teacher, BSU advisor, and coach. Robert had a uniquely difficult upbringing where his parents were married, but estranged. He was an only child whose mother lived away from home for the better part of each month working as a nursemaid, leaving most of the childrearing to his father and extended family.

While in high school, Robert took what he believed were the correct classes, only to realize afterward that they were not. The schools back then had such low expectations of Black students that Robert's counselor never ensured that he took the college-transferable classes.

In Chapter 4, Mr. Poynter discussed many race relations issues that he experienced growing up in Pasadena and as a college student in San Jose. As stated earlier, his family did not often dredge up stories of the racial inequalities they had suffered because it was too painful to remember the past. He reminded me that, even in California, there were places where Black people could not go. Even SJSU's campus housing was guilty of this during the 1950s and early

1960s. Most Black athletes had to sleep wherever they could, including in equipment sheds, until a former football player at SJSU opened up the “Good Brothers” house for Black athletes to live at while attending school.

Robert told me that, in the 1960s, “Blacks were beginning to start a different kind of movement.” He called it a “refreshing time because a lot of Blacks were unified and trying to achieve [human] rights,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). This was a time when he personally knew Huey Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther Party, and his younger brother, Melvin Newton, from the “Good Brothers” house.

With all of his life experiences, Robert has affected my life and a host of others in a positive manner. The success of his mentoring was due in large part to his demeanor, which he said comes from his father: “The point is, I’m influenced by a male, a strong male and I think that’s where I learned my values,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). His father did not say much, “but it’s not what you say; it’s what you do because kids observe you and they take on those mannerisms,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). I believe that is true of Robert as well. He never raised his voice even when his athletes, mentees, and students were incorrect in our actions and decisions. Coach said he believes in mutual respect. He always stated that, if you want the respect of your students, you must respect them first, a sentiment that I wholeheartedly agree with.

Regarding education, Robert conceded, “not all students belong in college,” and for those whom “college is not the best fit, that they find a career to add to this society”—but he was also the one who always instructed us to “Finish what we start,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). Robert had a difficult life—receiving his college degree after high school, attending City

College, transferring to SJSU, enlisting in the army, and returning to SJSU—but he finished what he started.

During my early collegiate and Olympic years, I often returned to San Jose from my world travels to visit Coach Poynter. His first question was always “Do you have your degree?” (Poynter, personal communication, 1983).

Bert Bonanno affected my attitudes, confidence, and sense of self-worth much differently than Robert Poynter did. Mr. Bonanno believed in accomplishing one’s goals while treating others with respect. He often taught his athletes to “treat people the way you would like to be treated. That’s cut and dry,” (Bonanno, personal communication, 2018).

Bert believed that he, as an Italian-American, had an easier upbringing than most people in other minority groups. Even still, he believed that the overt racism against Blacks was unjustified. This is why his philosophy of treating others how you wish to be treated was immutable. Bert instilled confidence in those he coached and mentored by creating goals and teaching us to always move forward and never be complacent or content with where we are.

Stan Dowell motivated his track and field athletes through intense competition. He grew up in a traditional household with both parents and was the youngest of the three boys. His high school and college careers involved competing in track and field, including a scholarship to SJSU. Coach Dowell was drafted into the army for two years in the mid-1950s, where he fought on the boxing team. Upon receiving his first teaching job, he ran his classroom and his sports team military style. Coach Dowell influenced my life in a multitude of ways. As a youth, when I needed the structure and the confidence that I could be a good athlete, he provided the intense physical workouts that gave me the mental strength to persevere through all areas of my life.

Frank Slaton is the epitome of leading by example. In Chapter 4, he spoke about his parents and two sisters. Coach Slaton's father worked two jobs, and his mother was a homemaker. Frank could not recall seeing another family in his neighborhood that did not have both parents in the household. His brand of leadership by example has allowed students to see what he has become.

Frank explained, when you are in education, "What you end up doing is planting [the] seed" (Slaton, personal communication, 2018). Not every seed will be rooted, but he hopes that, in time, a light will shine and his students will remember what he said years ago. Coach Slaton taught his students that the world is far more than the east side of San Jose, and that you do not have to be the best athlete in the world to receive a scholarship for a good school. Even if you do not receive a scholarship, simply making the team grants you the opportunity to be the first to preregister for college courses.

My colleagues, students, and athletes would agree that I, too, try to lead by example in the manner that Frank Slaton did. Many of my students and athletes come from similar backgrounds, which allows them to see firsthand a path to success in school, athletics, and life.

Research Question Three

Through the lenses of the developmental and instrumental approaches to mentoring, what have I learned about how to mentor African-American male youths from my own relationships with adult mentors?

Through the lens of the developmental approach to mentoring, I have learned of several significant contributions to my life. The relationships forged with my mentors were established at the onset of our first meetings. I felt that my emotional wellbeing manifested through self-esteem, school connectedness, and resilience. As discussed, these factors were a primary focus

for my mentors, and they would occasionally embed a skill or goal necessary for my growth as a student-athlete. These key lessons were molded into my life as a result of my own contextual experiences (family, athletics, racism, and the historical eras through which I lived) and through the examples of my mentors. What follows are the insights derived from the developmental approach: building a relational foundation, strengthening emotional wellbeing, and embedding skills and goals.

Although Mr. Poynter and Mr. Slaton were both my track and field coaches—Poynter later in my collegiate and Olympic years and Slaton during my senior year in high school—both men strengthened their relationships with me through fun, recreational activities and casual conversations. Coach Poynter, as a teacher and BSU advisor, would open up the gym on weekends to allow students to play pickup games. As the BSU advisor, he would collaborate with the students to seek out activities, such as talent or fashion shows to build positive relationships. He would also open up his home for the BSU officers to plan projects. In his own words, “Most people thought it [the talent show] was just about singing and dancing. It was a way to get me and the others connected to something,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

Mr. Slaton, on the other hand, exemplified more of the developmental approach and, similar to Coach Poynter, he was quiet and gentle when regarding the emotional wellbeing of his students and athletes. He began as a new teacher and coach at Silver Creek High School in the fall of 1976 after transferring from a rival school. Coach Slaton’s transition was much smoother than I had anticipated, given my initial disappointment that Stan would not be my coach during my senior year. Although Frank never addressed this directly, he sensed my distress and waited patiently for me to adjust to having him as the new coach.

He proved his talent to the track team by outrunning all of us in the 50-yard dash, and he earned our respect by first respecting us. His actions inspired our trust in him and confidence in ourselves; building up my self-esteem allowed me to reconnect to track and school.

Coach Poynter was the father figure that many of us needed, even when the goals and tasks he set for us were inconvenient. As he said, “I forced you guys to do things you didn’t want to do because it was good for you,” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018). This was evident during one of his history courses. At the start of the class, he would always ask his students, “What are you doing with your life?” and “What have you ever done in your life?”

In contrast to the developmental approach to mentoring, the instrumental approach prioritizes being goal-oriented or goal-directed. The initial goal is not to build a friendship, but to achieve a specific purpose and only occasionally make time for fun activities and casual discussions. In this approach, the youth’s self-esteem, connectedness, and resiliency are strengthened indirectly. Similar to the developmental approach, I have learned these lessons through my own experiences in addition to the examples set by my mentors. The next section will discuss goal-directed activities, the importance of recreation, and how all of this connects to the youth’s wellbeing.

When I think of the instrumental approach to mentoring, two names come to mind: Stan Dowell and Bert Bonanno, for very different reasons. Stan Dowell was the ultimate goal-directed individual, but all through his sport of choice: track and field. From the moment he realized I had the talent for hurdling, he prioritized setting goals and teaching skills that would enhance my running ability.

He would sit me down, and we would choose a goal for a particular race or the entire year. We set these goals based on my abilities as a hurdler and his skills as a coach. The next

step would be backward mapping the end goal to the current date and schedule the necessary workouts to complete that goal. This was far different from Bert Bonanno's style of goal-setting.

Mr. Bonanno's method of collaboratively setting goals was to sit down with me and discuss a task, skill, or goal to accomplish. The pros and cons for the different scenarios were always vetted. Subjects varied from achieving a certain hurdle time to a focusing on a major in college. As the years went on, our conversations turned to marriage, children, and careers. Even during my interview with Bert, we discussed my advancement in education and the importance of maximizing my years in service before retirement.

Each coach contributed to a variety of aspects of my life, helping to shape me into the person I have become. Whether through the developmental or instrumental approaches, each coach used their unique sets of skills and knowledge acquired throughout their lives to advance the wellbeing and goals of their student-athletes. It is largely through my mentors' involvement that I have become a better human being. And, as I continue to reflect, I wonder how I will influence others' lives—even through this dissertation.

Quantitative Data—Research Question Two

How have relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth throughout my life? This research question is utilized twice in this study.

Initially, it was used in the previous discussion regarding qualitative data. Secondly, it is used in this discussion to analyze the data from the attitude survey from a quantitative perspective. The data was reviewed to determine my feelings about academic success, the nature of my relationships with adults, and my attitudes and behaviors regarding school.

The survey data pertaining to academic achievement revealed that I cared less about my grades in my youth and in college compared to during my career as an educator. The data

showed the same results in regards to the amount of effort put into my homework and the pride taken in my schoolwork. Additionally, regular participation in class was less crucial to me than the notions of desiring to learn, being excited about my classes, and receiving academic support during my college years and as an educator.

When reviewing the survey data regarding adult relationships and my attitudes toward school, only three questions were applicable for all three eras of my life. However, it should be noted that the most significant data indicated the importance of having a mentor. As stated in Chapter 4, some questions were not applicable to certain times of my life, such as “I have a positive adult male role model at home” and “At least one of my teachers tries to understand my life outside of school.” During my collegiate and Olympic years, I lived alone or with a spouse. Additionally, UCLA was a large university with large classes, many of which had up to 500 students per lecture, making it difficult to become close to the professors.

Implications for Practice

Research suggests that mentoring programs and relationships affect students’ life choices. The mentoring programs discussed have a greater chance of success if the relationship between the mentor and mentee lasts longer than six months (Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Frank, 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Karcher, 2005).

This research attempted to determine the degree to which adult mentors have a positive influence on the attitudes, confidence, and school connectedness of African-American teen males. Additionally, this study used a reflexive investigation of my life experiences with adult male individuals over a 40-year span to determine their influence on my life and the choices that I made.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The limitations of this study include relying on my own experiences and those of a small sampling pool. As such, the experiences and perspectives yielded from this study may not produce generalizations.

Delimitations

One delimitation of this study is in narrowing the scope of variables to a single gender and grade level (adult males, ninth grade, and African-American high school males) to reduce biases within the study. Another delimitation is in the use of a purposeful sampling of my own mentors.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study utilized a reflexive investigation of my life as a mentee and of my mentors' motivations to support me throughout my journey as a teenager, as a college student and Olympian, and as an educator. The objective of this study was to develop an understanding of the relationship between adult male mentors and at-risk African-American high school males. There is no doubt that at-risk students face a different set of issues than non-at-risk students, such as poverty, school violence, limited parental involvement, and lack of self-esteem, to name a few (White, 2009). Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, my recommendations are as follows.

1. I could interview other Olympic mentees mentioned in this study to compare their relationships with our mentors. Our mentors have all known or worked with each other in a coaching capacity. Robert Poynter coached with Stan Dowell, Bert Bonanno, and Frank Slaton, and they all attended SJSU at overlapping years.

2. A researcher could conduct a case study analyzing the relationships between teachers/athletic coaches and African-American male students/athletes over the course of at least one year to determine whether or not the data would reflect increased academic achievement, school connectedness, and/or self-esteem.
3. A researcher could initiate a mentoring program based on both developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches for at-risk African-American ninth grade males. This could ensure that each mentee has a uniquely-tailored program to match their individual needs. With the developmental approach, the mentor and mentee could build a trusting relationship with each other before practical goals are incorporated (Karcher et al., 2006; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). In contrast, students who may rely on a more goal-oriented approach could focus on their goals until such time that more interpersonal aspects are incorporated into the relationship (Karcher et al., 2006; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).
4. A school district could partner with Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS) to develop a comprehensive or alternative high school that would provide a combination of school-based and site-based mentoring programs with an emphasis on African-American ninth grade males (Karcher et al., 2006). Ideally, such a school would incorporate both developmental and instrumental mentoring approaches. The partnership with BBBS could offer easier access to the mentees because BBBS is now a school-based and field-based mentoring program (Karcher et al., 2006).
5. A researcher could conduct a comparable longitudinal study of the differences between same-ethnicity mentorships and different-ethnicity mentorships under the same conditions. This method could also be used to compare and contrast various female mentorships.

Conclusions

This study was designed to answer three questions. First, what motivated my mentors to support me in my academic, athletic, and educational journeys? Second, how have relationships with my adult mentors influenced my attitude, confidence, and sense of worth throughout my life? Third, through the lenses of the developmental and instrumental approaches to mentoring, what have I learned about how to mentor African-American male youths from my relationships with my own adult mentors? This chapter provided the discussion and implications for the results of this reflexive investigation.

As for the first research question, all of my mentors saw potential in me. As Robert Poynter said, “You were quiet...I looked at you as having potential...as a leader” (Poynter, personal communication, 2018).

Bert Bonanno initially believed I was naïve and needed guidance. As I matured over the years and made responsible decisions, he saw the rise in my confidence. During my interview with Bert, he commented on my confidence during a homecoming event for Millard and myself at Silver Creek High School, “There’s something about the way you stand” (Bonanno, personal communication, 2018). He called it a position of power with love.

Frank Slaton believed in leading by actions rather than by words. He always mentioned planting seeds in the minds of his students and athletes.

Stan Dowell is no longer living, but he is the man with whom I have had the most contact for over 40 years. I remember him saying that there was something special about me; he somehow knew in my first year of high school that I would be a world-class athlete.

When asked about the impact my mentors had on me, not all of them had realized the lasting impact until years later. Most would say they were only doing their jobs, but, as Bert

Bonanno said, “If I had a small amount of cause and effect to see what you’ve accomplished and whatever I delivered, I don’t know what that is...all I want to know is did I make a difference?” (Bonanno, personal communication, 2018).

The second research question requires mention of a contextual component presented in the narrative and in the tables in Chapter 4. The survey questions pertaining to me having a positive role model “at home” during my collegiate and Olympic years and now as an educator were not applicable. As mentioned, I lived alone in college, and with my wife as an educator.

Academic achievement was a lower priority in my youth and in college, and, had it not been for my mentors, my path could have been easily diverted. As an educator, and currently as a principal, it is clear that I earned the grades that I earned at the time and the lessons were revealed later.

Having a positive role model in my life was always important to me. Even if I was unable to articulate this during my youth, I always wanted to be in my mentors’ presence and achieve the goals we discussed. That alone is undeniable evidence of the life changing impacts my mentors had on me.

The survey reveals that I was always aware of the correlation between schooling and success. My mentors influenced my attitude, which now includes my beliefs about mentoring the youths whom I currently serve. I have long contemplated how my mentors’ attitudes and beliefs have shaped my own, and finally being able to understand this through the data from research question two inspires me to continue making this the impetus for addressing my life’s “cause.”

As noted in Chapter 4, an interesting response was tied to my reflection on “dropping out” of school. As educators, we often encourage our staff members to ensure that every child

has at least one adult male in his or her life to help them make the right decisions about the myriad paths before them. I asked earlier in this dissertation why I was the only one of my siblings to achieve this kind of success. I now know it was largely because of my mentors.

As for the final research question, it must first be determined whether or not my mentors consciously decided to incorporate the developmental or instrumental approaches in mentoring myself and others. As stated in Chapter 1, no official names for these mentoring styles existed when I began high school in the fall of 1973. However, these two styles have been credited in literature in creating the “longest, strongest, and the most successful matches” between mentors and mentees (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010, p. 17).

Another factor to consider is whether or not my mentoring relationships occurred naturally, as two-thirds of all mentorships do (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005). But, regardless of how naturally my mentorships began, what matters most is their longevity. These men have been constantly involved in my life for over 40 years.

Mr. Poynter and Mr. Slaton both applied what is now called the developmental approach to mentoring. Although they were my teachers and coaches from my youth, they began their relationships with me by building mutual trust before incorporating goals beyond the classroom. Their communication styles were calm and sometimes allowed for choice.

In contrast, Mr. Bonanno and Mr. Dowell applied the instrumental approach by setting goals to be completed, however differently they did so. Bert wanted these objectives to encompass all aspects of one’s life, from athletics to lifestyles to career goals, and he was willing to speak with us for as long as necessary to learn our individual goals. Stan Dowell was similar in that he would also sit you down and provide you with a variety of athletic goals to agree on. He would create a timeline, backwards map each goal, and begin the work.

I am fortunate. Regardless of whether or not my mentors were familiar enough with any formal research to knowingly employ either the developmental or instrumental approaches, they all directly or indirectly improved my self-esteem, connectedness, and resilience, shaping me into the man I am today. They all worked in their own ways to ensure, regardless of the lane I was in or would be assigned, that I was positioned to be a champion.

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APPENDIX A

Attitude Questionnaire

We would like to get your honest opinion about the following statements which includes four sections that ask about: 1) how you feel about academic success, 2) the nature of the relationships you have with adults, 3) your general attitude and behavior about school, and 4) demographics (personal background). This information will help to gather data on whether mentoring programs are warranted for more African-American males in high school.

This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Thinking about how you feel about your educational success in high school, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Academic Achievement	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. I make sure that I seek help for my schoolwork when I need assistance.	1	2	3	4
2. Receiving good grades are important to me.	1	2	3	4
3. I put a lot of effort into completing my homework.	1	2	3	4
4. I take pride in my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
5. I really want to learn.	1	2	3	4
6. I am often excited about the classes I am taking.	1	2	3	4
7. I participate regularly in class.	1	2	3	4
8. I have received the necessary academic support from the school staff (teachers, counselor, administration) to be successful.	1	2	3	4

Thinking about how you feel about your relationships with adults, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Adult Relationships	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. It is important to have a positive role model in my life.	1	2	3	4
2. Having positive adult relationships raises my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
3. I have a positive adult male role model at home.	1	2	3	4
4. A caring adult to confide in would increase my attendance in school.	1	2	3	4

5. I will need an adult mentor to help me become successful in high school.	1	2	3	4
6. I have an adult at my school that really cares about me.	1	2	3	4
7. Most adults at my school treat me with respect.	1	2	3	4
8. At least one of my teachers tries to understand my life outside of school.	1	2	3	4

Thinking about your overall feelings about school, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Attitude/Behavior	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. My attitude regarding school will affect my ability to be successful.	1	2	3	4
2. I have cut class or school within the past year.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel like I belong (accepted and am liked) at school.	1	2	3	4
4. I sometimes interrupt my classes with negative behavior.	1	2	3	4
5. My school disciplines students fairly	1	2	3	4
6. I have considered dropping out of school.	1	2	3	4
7. I care about learning and getting a good education.	1	2	3	4
8. I enjoy coming to school most of the time.	1	2	3	4

Please answer these questions to gather general information about you.

Demographics

Your age	13	14	15
I live at home with (<i>circle all that apply</i>)			
mom dad sister(s) brother(s) grandma grandpa			
aunt uncle guardian other _____			
Do you qualify for a free lunch at your school?	No	Not Sure	
Yes			

Thank You

Your participation in this survey is much appreciated.

For more information on this survey and/or the compiled results, please contact
Andre L. Phillips at andre.phillips@eagles.cui.edu.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for the Researchers Youth Mentors

1. Do you remember your initial meeting with me? What were your thoughts?
2. Describe the relationship you had between you and your mentee in high school.
3. Was it essential for you to connect with your mentee? Why or why not?
4. Did you realize the impact you had on your mentee? If yes how so?
5. Describe some of the programs and activities you suggested to the mentees and what you perceive the results to be.
6. What was your recollection and thoughts of the Civil Rights Movement? Did it change your outlook on how you mentored me, your researcher?
7. Prompts: What was your recollection and thoughts of the social, political, cultural, and economic context of these times?
8. How have you shared your upbringing with your mentees? Tell me how that conversation would sound.
9. Tell me about any advice or recommendations that you have given to me (and other mentees) about connecting to high school and beyond.
10. What motivated you to continue to “push me” during these challenging times?
11. Describe conversations that you have had with me (and other mentees) regarding college (specifically, their desire to go to college).
12. Is there anything else you would like to add or share that we have not discussed?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

Assent to Participate in Research

(Interviews)

September 24, 2018

You are being invited to participate in a research study about The Influence of Adult Mentors on my Life: An Autoethnography.

This study is being conducted by Andre Phillips, a doctoral student from Concordia University, Irvine in California as partial fulfillment of the doctorate dissertation requirements. There are no known risks if you participate in this research study, and there are no costs to you for participating.

The information you provide will provide the research to determine the effectiveness and impact of adult mentorship may have on African-American males in high school. As part of the study, we will be making an audio recording of the interviews that will take approximately two (2) to four (4) hours to complete, including any follow-up interviews.

The research study is an Autoethnography, which means there is a chance of being identified with your participation in the study. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect these records. Should data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By signing this form, you voluntarily agree to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular questions you do not wish to answer for any reason, and you may do so. You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher, and the interactions that will take place between you and the researcher may be recorded. Again, you may stop the interview process at any time. If you agree to participate, please sign below to give your consent to participate in the researcher's study.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Mary Hopewell, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair, at 510 501-6447

I agree to be audio-recorded Please initial _____

I do not agree to be audio-recorded Please initial _____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the audio-recording as indicated above.

Name of Participant

Date

Participants Signature

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Name of Researcher

Date

Researcher's Signature