

# **STRATEGIC MENTORING AS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACH FOR MENTORING FATHERLESS BLACK BOYS**

**Dr. Quintin L. Robinson**, Professor  
*Southern Connecticut State University*  
**D. Yan Searcy**, Assistant Dean  
*Southern Connecticut State University*

## **Abstract**

*Most Black males will spend the larger part of their young lives without a father in the home, or without the support and guidance of an adult male role model. Those who are fortunate to have an adult male take an interest in their lives have the possibility of making positive strides and noticeable developmental changes both academically and socially. In order for mentoring relationships to bear fruit, the process should be strategically planned from start to finish and the child's mother should agree to the relationship and they should be included from start to end. When thinking about mentoring it should be a strategic process. Unstructured relationships end abruptly and the mentee gains almost nothing from the experience. Strategic mentoring has open communication, stated goals, timelines and trust between the child's mother is established before the mentoring relationship officially begins.*

## Introduction

Discussions in the popular media regarding the academic and social troubles of Black males have captured the interest of politicians and educational leaders alike (Brown & Davis, 2000). According to Cross, Slater and Murrell, most Black males disengage from the academic process at an early age and they move from grade to grade and often continue to behave in accordance to the negative stereotypes that label them as hopeless individuals (2000, 2002). The resistant low overall academic performance of Black males has enticed our social and intellectual appetite; yet, little is understood about steps that should be taken to redirect these individual (Davis, 2003). When compared with their White peers, Black males lag significantly behind in both grade point average and performance on standardized tests (Noguera, 2003). Countless reports, along with other quality-of-life indicators, suggest that Black males are a population in trouble (Noguera, 2003). The low academic performance for Black males as a group in American schools has been categorized as a pervasive “failure to thrive.” As result of their poor academic performance, they are more likely to be classified as “incompetent” or suffering from learning disabilities (Hopkins, 1997; Noguera, 2003).

In (1997), Hopkins reported that Black males were at the very bottom of virtually every academic indicator at disproportionate rates. In (2000) Ferguson reported that Black males in California schools placed below the national norm in reading, language and mathematics in all grades. In (2003), Davis explained that the rate of school attrition, and the poor overall academic performance and college enrollment of Black males was seen in part as a function of Black males’ inability or disinterest in fulfilling their roles as conventional learners in structured school settings. In (2006), Jackson and Moore reported that Black males were overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in gifted programs and advanced placement courses. Negative indicators describing the depressing academic performances of Black males and their inability to actively engage as productive members of society have become so commonplace that it has led many to assume that the majority of these young men will always be failures in social contexts and in the academic arena (Noguera, 2003).

### *A Historical Perspective*

According to Patterson (1999), the holocaust of slavery initiated an assault on gender roles, particularly those of fathers and husbands, which left deep scars in the relationships between Black men and women and negatively impacted the family structure. Because of slavery, a large number of Black fathers lost control of their families not because of incompetence at parenthood, they lost control because they were removed from the presence of their children and they were not allowed to be supportive loving fathers (Akbar, 1984, 1991; Grier and Cobbs 1968). During slavery Black men were prevented from exercising moral agency to participate in the parenting process, and after slavery they were not encouraged or rewarded for doing so (Franklyn, 2000). The influence of slavery, economic changes, cultural changes and public policy has directly impacted the Black male’s role as responsible fathers. However, decades of established research show that slavery alone is not the sole reason for the existence of single mother household and the negative perceptions that are commonly held against Black males.

In 1948 Frazier’s work established the research-based pathological model of African-American society and culture. He argued that family disintegration was “due to the natural impulses of the Negro” and not due to the family separation of slavery (Frazier, 1948). He further argued that the absent father seen in Black families in the last century has been a result of a “natural organization” stemming from the uncontrollable natural urges of Black males to flee the family and an inheritance of “matriarchy” from African nations. His work represents a shifting position that forces many to think of the differing reasons why Black males have not excelled and established themselves as strong contributing members of society.

### *A Population in Trouble*

National averages indicate that only slightly more than half of Black males who enter the ninth grade are likely to receive their high school diploma. For those who do complete high school, they are largely uninterested in or unprepared to consider college as a viable resource for the future (Orfield, Losen, Walk & Swanson, 2004). College enrollment for White males between the ages eighteen to twenty-four was 43.6 percent, while the rate for Black males was 35.5 percent (Hale, 2001). The number of Black males who attend and graduate from the nation’s colleges and universities is steady in decline and now at a critical and disturbing point (Akbar, 2002; Trent, 1991). If this downward trend of Black men in college enrollment continues, by the year 2070, Black males could possibly disappear altogether from higher education (Cross & Slater, 2000). Black males who do not complete a high school education or obtain a college degree are likely to have fewer employment opportunities, and they will earn significantly less than those who do complete their educations (Hale, 2001).

Reportedly, Black males suffer a rate of unemployment more than twice that of White males. Unemployment for Black males between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five is 50 percent, and the number earning at the poverty level has tripled over the last 25 years, which makes the situation even more depressing (Brown & Jones, 2004; Cross & Slater, 2000; Hale, 2001). Black males are often defined as an “endangered species” expected to perform poorly in school, dropout, and disregard higher education as unimportant (Noguera, 2003). Many are destined to be unemployed and financially destitute for the best part of their lives (Hale, 2002). Despite the best efforts of school administrators and community leaders, a large population of Black males replay the same sad statistics of low school performance and social incompetency year after year (Jones, 2004). To identify why they are not successful in their role as contributors of society, it is important to examine the family structure as a possible dynamic. Understanding this dynamic might help to understand how we begin the process of addressing their inability to fulfill their role as meaningful contributors towards society.

According to Grall, (2009), forty-three percent of American children grow up without a father in the home. Ninety percent of homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes (Sowers, 2010), while eighty percent of rapists who are motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes (The Furthering Fathering Corporation, 2015). In the Fatherless Homes Breed Violence report conducted in (2015), it was reported that children from fatherless homes represent the highest percentage of suicides, runaways, behavioral disorders, rapists, high school dropouts, chemical abusers, juveniles and prison inmates. In addition, a report by the United States Department of Health and Human Service (1996), reported that Black males are more likely than White males to live in a home without a father, while less than forty percent of Black males live in two-parent family homes (Demo & Cox, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). In (2010), Payleiter reported that eighty-five percent of children who exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes, which represents fourteen times the average.

According to Cabrera and Peters (2000) the rate of fatherless families has doubled in the past 15 years, and the proportion of single mother homes is expected to continue to exceed 50%. However, when young men and boys have the opportunity to associate with their fathers or responsible adult male mentors they are exposed to a wider range of positive outcomes which include improved academic achievement and fewer behavioral and emotional problems (Coley 2003; Stewart 2003). Despondently, millions of young men and boys across the nation are forced to construct the meaning of fatherhood and how they are expected to perform and function in society with no starting frame of reference from fathers or responsible mentors. This leaves them confused with how to place themselves in their communities, their schools and in society (Hunter et al, 2006). Because of this, most of society has come to see Black males as victims of a broad cultural stereotype; while a large population of fatherless young men and boys continue to see themselves as equal participants in their own educational and social failure (Davis, 2013).

#### *Dreams*

Young men and boys without fathers have an understanding of how valuable fathers and mentors can be in their lives. In various interviews, young men openly talked about having someone they could copy as an example of how they should conduct themselves. Some of the young men spoke about their mothers and how much they respected and admired them, but they also added that they would appreciate an adult male who would involve themselves in their lives. In a conversation, a young man shared that his mother had announced she had a boyfriend; he explained that he was happy for his mother and he wished her the best with this new relationship. He went on to say, “*I secretly hoped my mom’s boyfriend would be there for me too, because I needed someone like him to help me with everything.*” Not having an adult male to help with the “little things” that take place in their lives directly affects how a young man participates in life, learns to think about himself and makes decisions. Some of the young men shared that they admired various adult males from a-far and they used what they saw in these adult males to motivate themselves.

Black males living without fathers were asked if they could fashion themselves after anyone who would they choose and why. One young man explained that he wanted to be like his older brother, he stated, “*my older brother is the man I wanted to be like, he is a good role model.*” Another teen shared that he wanted to be like his uncle, while another young man admitted that he wanted to be like his cousin. He went on to explain that his cousin was currently in jail for dealing drugs, but he wanted everyone to know that it was his cousin who taught him that working hard and loving his family was important. He further explained that everything he knows about being a man he learned for his cousin. He shared that he did not like drug dealing, but his cousin was the only adult male who paid him any attention, it was important for him to share that he had someone in his life he could identify with. Though these conversations, it became clear that the young men gained a sense of confidence when they had someone present in their lives who supported their dreams of becoming an independent man. Others shared that they were anxious to find someone they could model themselves after.

Young men have expressed that they want fathers or adult male figures in their lives; therefore, making it clear that motherly love alone is not able to provide young men with the support they need to become confident,

strong men in the future. To better prepare young men and boys to function as contributing members of society, single mothers and adult males, who can serve as potential mentors, should collaborate in an effort to define a strategic approach to address social and personal needs of these individuals. This report aims to better understand why motherly love alone is insufficient for the academia and social success of fatherless young men and boys. With this understanding, an effective, strategic mentoring process should be considered as a meaningful solution to appropriately address and change social and educational outcomes for Black males living without a father in the home. To move this discussion forward, this report focus on the following questions:

- How can we effectively respond to the social and emotional needs of Black boys and young men growing up without fathers in the home?
- In what specific ways can strategic mentoring provide the support and the guidance needed to improve social outcomes for fatherless boys and young men?
- What are key components of “strategic mentoring” and how might they encourage single mothers to feel confident allowing their sons to engage with potential adult male mentors?

### The Value of a Mentor

It was Malcolm X who said, “...all of our experiences fuse into our personality. Everything that every happens to us is an ingredient.” Which leaves one to conclude that there is an actual need for caring, responsible adult males who are willing to acknowledge that young men and boys need their experiences and their personal ingredients for what it means to live and function as a responsible, productive man in the future. Adult males have an uncanny ability to connect with young men and boys in ways single mothers might not be able. This gives them the skill to create positive learning opportunities that can change a young man’s self-esteem and create positive outcomes that might not have occurred otherwise. Having the inside knowledge of what men need to feel sturdy comes for years of practical experience. Real-life experiences give same sex mentors the power to open the mind’s door and make way for exciting possibilities for young men and boys in need of support. The direction and guidance from a same sex mentor can turn depressing statistic around, change attitudes and add new fixtures to human structures that are crumbling from the inside out.

Baseball great Alex Rodriguez understands what a caring, responsible mentor can do to change a life. He shared the story of a young man who was not reaching his potential, falling in his role as a responsible student and ruining his chances at success towards a life that had the potential to be filled with promise. After a structured meeting with Rodriguez, the young man changed his attitude regarding school and made a complete turnaround that got his name on the school’s honor roll. A strategically planned visit with a concerned adult male a young man can identify with can increase self-confidence, improve understanding of why working hard towards academic success is important, and it can give hope where hope has started to fail. Rodriguez, as responsible mentor, who saw a need and he responded with a strategic plan that made a difference. Sharing life experiences with young men and boys can do more for them than a mentor could possibly imagine. However, there must be a willingness from the mentor to actively engage in the process. The sharing of knowledge and how the mentor begins the process must be connected to a strategic plan.

Young men starting on life’s journey should be accompanied with experiences from individuals who are a representation of themselves. Experiences are something to build on and they represent the foundation that individual starting out towards manhood can use as a platform for growth. Constructing a foundation on nothing equals a foundation built on sinking sand. Shared experiences can steer an individual away from negative influences and turn a doubtful mind in a new direction. But there must be someone willing to share experiences for success and offer the necessary ingredient for life. A mentor can teach an individual to take himself serious and he can assist a young man towards repairing that part of his heart that has destroyed in the wake of struggling to recover from the absents of his father. If young men and boys are not being infused with real life experiences they will be forced to make decisions without a point of reference, which can lead to the downward trend some Black males are experience.

Successful mentorship can only be accomplished if an adult male is prepared to see mentoring as a personal responsibility. If mentoring is seen as a personal obligation the mentor will take up the challenge and commit himself to escorting a fatherless young man or a boy into manhood. An adult male explained, “*I never been a mentor to*

*anyone, but I will be happy to do that job if someone asked for my help.*” Some adult males limited themselves from taking on the role as a mentor because they wait for potential mentees to “ask for help.” The inability of an adult male to recognize that young men and boys are in need of mentors is what results in the disparaging cycle that defines Black males in a negative light.

All too often, some young men and boys exhibit behaviors that suggest they accept the discouraging rhetoric that leaves them dismissed in their own communities. However, the role of a mentor is to see a need and willingly act on that need, but most adult males sit back and wait for someone to ask for their assistance. If adult males were to inform themselves on the depressing statistics that looms over our future men, they would be compelled to do what they could to change outcomes for these individuals. It could be argued that we are living with a generation of young men and boys who lack the capacity of understanding personal responsibility and take ownership of their behavior. It could also be said that they lack the ambition to push themselves to be succeed. Action plus knowledge combined with a personal responsibility can bridge the divide and foster new beginnings for young men and boys looking for guidance. Until adult males are willing to envision themselves as mentors and not publically deny their responsibility, some young men might continue to be characterize as failures in the social and educational arena.

#### What Young Men Have to Say About Mentoring

Young men were asked, how important a father or a mentor is in their life? One young man responded, *“a father is very important, he has a unique bond with his son and he makes up one half of what the child becomes.”* Another young man explained, *“a father in a boy’s life is more important than I can express,”* he went on to add, *“there are lessons in life that can be taught by a female, but they have greater value coming from a man.”* Other responses included, *“very important,”* and *“real important.”* Comments by the young men help us to understand that when fathers’ involvement themselves in positive activities with their sons, those activities can result in positive social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment in the child Adamsons and Johnson (2013). Finally, one young man explained, *“A father is very important, there are some things you can learn from your father that you may never learn otherwise.”* Without hesitation, young men are able to clearly articulate the value of a father. If the father plays his part, he can create a strong confidant man in the process. In conversations; a young man shared, *“I always wanted to go live with my father because I needed someone to discipline me,”* he went on to add that his mother could not do the job. When asked why his mother was not able to do the job he commented, *“a mother and a father are different...they just are.”* Marsiglio and Stewart (2000, 2003), explain that the quality of interactions between a father and son is particularly important for a child’s well-being.

The role of the father becomes more significant as the boy begins to challenge authority and makes attempts at finding a place for himself in society. A fathers’ presence and involvement with his children can have positive consequences for both the child and the father (Marsiglio et al. 2000). A young man explained, *“before dad left there was order in our house because he was the leader and I respected that, when he left I became more rebellious and no one could stop me.”* A responsible father trains his son to respect authority and teaches him why this is important. A young man shared that he had spent time in juvenile hall, when asked what happened, he explained that he had refused to listen anyone and there was no one to tell him to stop. I asked if his mother was present in his life, he indicated that his mother was present in his life. I asked if he respected her as an authority figure, his response was “no.” He shared that he felt that she did not really understand what he was going through. Another young man shared, *“having a father is important because when he tell you to turn the game off, you turn it off.”*

Whether the father acknowledges his role and takes on the responsibly as an educator and a guide for his son or not, his son sees him as someone special. The gift of a father can provide a large part of what a young man or a boy needs to enable him to navigate difficult situations. Equally, not having a representative to help shoulder the burden of becoming a man can be a frightening discomfort that may slowly bind a young man and drive him in the direction of an early demise of his character and his self-confidence. As a young man matures, he needs the support and the guiding hand of someone who represents what he can become. A mother is wonderful example of everything that is beautiful, but a young man explained, *“my mother could only do so much for me, after a while I started hanging out with guys on my block because they understood me.”* Knowing someone who symbolizes the competence to help overcome challenges and fears that young men and boys face, offers a peace in the mind that young men and boys need as they embark on the journey towards manhood.

#### *Affirmation*

Young men were asked to discuss fears they might have and to explain how those fears get in the way. One participant shared that he feared his father would never affirm him. He went on to explain that he remembered his father being both verbally and physically abusive before he eventually walked out on the family. He also shared that

he had not seen, nor heard from his father in years; nonetheless, he acknowledged that he thinks about his father almost all the time. Now at 19, he feared his father, whom he explained he needed in his life, would never give him the affirmation he needs at this time in his life. Someone in the group asked the young man if he could tell his father anything, what would he say. At this point others in the group, along with myself, would not have been surprised if the young man had a few choice words for his father to make up for the obvious pain he has experienced over the years; nor would we have been shocked if he had expressed a deep disappointment for the carelessness his father had towards him and his brothers and sisters. However, without hesitation the young man quickly responded, *"I would tell my father I love him."*

The need to be affirmed is real, but most individuals fail to acknowledge or recognize this as a significant factor that can influence and change lives. Bornstein (2015), and Theokas et al., (2005), explained that a young man's experience of connection with his father can be crucial towards his feelings of belongingness and feeling valued, which in turn can directly affect how a young man will perform in school, in society and his role as a future man. Young men and boys should know someone is standing behind them to give them a slight push that affirms them. Most young men without fathers never have this show of support from an adult male. When asked, in what specific ways a father is important a young man responded, *"He is a role-model, disciplinarian, caretaker, support-system and a teacher."* Another response included, *"He is important because he shows me how to be a man, how to play sports, and how to work on cars and many other things he knows I will need in life."* Another young man mentioned, *"A father teaches compassion, discipline and various life skills that a mother, for example cannot teach a guy."* Another young man explained, *"A father is a big influence in a boy's life."* Finally, one young man shared, *"A father teaches his son things only a man can relate to and undergo."* Young men and boys know that having a bond with their fathers holds something magical towards the success of their lives. They see a father as a lifeline they can grab hold of and used to direct them to a place of safety.

Lerner (2004) and Lerner et al., (2015) suggest that the personal strength a young man has, should be aligned with the strength of a same sex mentor. They advocate that this relational developmental alignment approach is what builds strong individuals and contributes to their positive development. At present, there is a poor show of support from adult males willing to serve as mentors; as a result, most young men and boys never find the statement of encouragement and this creates an intensification of loss that invades their lives and take them down unexpected roads that can lead to troubling consequences. Instead, the need to be affirmed is manifested in destructive unhealthy ways, which unfortunately leads to outcomes that affect their lives and destroy possibilities for a life that could be filled with promise. Without the support, they need in their lives some young men and boys turn to bullying, being difficult with their mothers, acting out in school, going in and out of unhealthy relationships, resorting to violence to confront situations, they associate with gang, abuse drugs and they go in and out of the juvenile hall. These are not the behavior or the sort of lifestyles these individuals envisioned for themselves, but these are the options that present themselves when a young men or boys do not have positive examples to follow.

A young man recently released from prison explained that he would have never gone down the road he did if his father was around. He went onto say, *"my mother tried with me, but there was something about her voice that could not stop me, I know my father's voice would have done the trick."* He shared that he thought about his father the entire time he was imprisoned and what he could have done to make him a stronger man who respected authority. If fathers who have walked away from their sons, or refused to do their part to guide their sons into manhood only knew the damage they have done, they might go back and do their job with enthusiasm. Better yet, if adult males who could serve as mentors were aware of the good they could do for fatherless boys they might be more eager to step up and serve as mentors. When asked what a father does to strengthen the life of his son the following responses were given, *"a father teaches his son how to be a man,"* another participant explained, *"a father does things on purpose so his son can copy him,"* another young man shared, *"the father lives a certain way and he expects his son to follow his way,"* while another responses included, *"the father provides knowledge and understanding,"* *"he lifts his son up,"* and *"he shows the boy how to be a man by telling him things."*

When young men were asked if their mothers could fill the gap of a missing father they responded was and affirmative, no. When asked to explain why they felt this way one young man shared, *"because she is a mother not a father, they have different rolls,"* another response was, *"a mother cannot be both a good woman and a man, boys need men to look to,"* another participant added, *"there are some things a mother can't teach a boy to do,"* while others shared the following, *"There are simple lessons in life that cannot be taught by a woman,"* *"she is a woman, a man's journey won't be like hers, the same goes for her,"* *"...it is hard for a woman to relate to the things we as men face in our lives, it is not like a woman's journey,"* and finally, a participant explained, *"a mother can do things, but only to a certain degree."* When single mothers understand the intrinsic need for their sons to be affirmed in the absent of their fathers, they may be more willing to connect their sons with adult male mentors who are better equipped to fill gaps in their son's lives.

The young men I spoke with explained that it is the father who provides them with the coolness to walk into a room filled with men and know they belongs there. Then again, in the absence of a father young men have expressed confidence that a same sex mentors can offer support that elevates the sadness that impulsively weighs on them from time to time. In agreement, Bowers et al., (2014) and Dubois and Silverthorn, (2005) suggest that connections with mentors have been shown to increase positive development by promoting positive emotional, educational and behavioral outcomes among adolescent males. Participants were asked if a young man or boy does not have his father is it important for him to have a same sex mentor. The response was an affirmative, "yes." When asked to expand their response the following information was shared, "*a guy will respond better to a same sex mentor,*" another participant shared, "*people tend to rely on people who experience the same things they experience,*" another young man responded, "*a positive male figure is better than no one at all,*" while another participant shared, "*another guy can give a guy what he is missing in life,*" a young man shared, "*a mentor can help raise a young man to become a better person,*" he went on to add, "*being fatherless has its disadvantages.*" Another response included, "*a guy mentor can help a kid stay on the right path,*" a final comment was, "*a male mentor can teach a guy skills he needs to know,*" Responses given by participants indicate that same sex mentorship can in fact offer comfort, add balance and provide an individual with the guidance needed in the absence of a father.

#### Mentoring: An Approach to Building a Safety Net

A mentor can teach skills towards becoming the man that a mother might not have the ability to teach. Young men being raised without fathers shared that it is the little things they miss out on that creates the disappointment they experience. A young man talked about showing up to his baseball team meetings with his mothers, but all his friends were there with their fathers. Another young man shared that he was criticized by friends for not being good at sports, but he said the only reason his friends are good at sports is because their fathers had been coaching them since they were six. He went on to share that no one ever coached him, what he learned he learned on his own. Another young man shared that he was being bullied at school and his mother threatened to call the principal; but he knows this action could be more detrimental than being bullied. He shared that what he needs is someone to teach him how to take a hit so he could defend himself the next time the bully comes around. It is the little that things eat at a young man that manufactures the frustration he is forced to live with in the absence of a father. Mentors can help resolve these issues and teach skills that build confidence.

Young men were asked if they would recommend single mothers find mentors for their sons, the responses strongly favored single mothers reaching out to find mentors for their sons. A young man stated, "*it would be good because it would provide another perspective for the kid from a male's point of view,*" another participant shared, "*it is important for a boy to get into manhood the right way, a mother cannot get him there,*" another young man shared, "*it would be less stressful for the mother if she found a mentor for her son,*" one young man added, "*It would play out better in the long run for the kid,*" he went on to say, "*the only role models boys have are on TV, having a real mentor will teach him how to get through struggles.*" Other comments included, "*nobody should do it alone,*" the young man went on to say, "*boys suffer from lacking a male influence in their lives.*" Another response was, "*guys with a mentor can learn great life lessons on manhood that a mother cannot teach them.*" Finally, a young man shared, "*a mother cannot teach a boy certain things, a mentor can impact a boy's life in a good way.*" It becomes clear that same sex mentors can serve as meaningful examples to young men and boys and they have the ability to offer advice on becoming a man. A single mother shared that after her son's father walked out on the family she would go to her son's coach for help. She explained, "*I let the coach talk with my son when I needed him to be accountable. I do not don't know why, but for some reason my child just will not hear me when I try to give him directions.*" The presence of an adult male can give hope which can change a young man's disposition.

Young men with absent fathers were asked if they had given thought to having a same sex mentor. Responses generated indicate that they have thought of having a same sex mentor. On response included, "*I wanted someone when I was in high school,*" another response was, "*I am always looking for a role model who will share knowledge with me,*" another participant shared, "*I always thought it would be cool to have someone who genuinely cared about me and was there like a dad.*" Finally, a young man explained, "*of course, I always wanted someone to play football and basketball with and to go to games with.*" In the absence of a father young men think about mentors filling gaps in their lives. A single mother shared that her son had suddenly become angry and difficult to communicate with. She stated that she strongly believed the change in his behavior occurred as a result of his father unexpectedly leaving the home. She shared that he was generally a good child, but now he was difficult to be around and she did not know how to give him the help he needed. When the child's father is absent or unavailable the child is inevitably robbed of important moments that could shape his life. In the absence of the father, a mentor could serve as a responsible and reliable substitute father figure for the child.

Balancing a mother's perspective with that of a father or a mentor provides for a richer more detailed understanding for a young man or a boy. However, in order for a father or a mentor to effectively influence a young man or a boy he must first be a man of good character and he should, without reservation, painstakingly assume full responsibility as a confidant disciplinary and the administrator of moral codes. When an individual is emotionally and physically accessible to a young man or a boy he contributes to the child's cognitive growth and he dynamically increases the individual's intellectual and social functioning (Holborn and Eddy, 2011). When a safe and responsible linking is confirmed the child has a higher probability of recognizing how he should perform as a man. This knowledge allows the child to avoid struggles associated with "trying to get things right" on his own. A father teaches his son to practice responsible behavior that allows growth in areas frequently overlooked by mothers. Some mothers coddle their boys which teaches them to lean on women instead of learning how to take responsibly for their future wives and children. A young man explained,

*"I love my moms, but she messed me up man." He went on to say, "she did everything for me; but she didn't teach me that I had to give something back. I think she tried to make up for my pops not being there, you know giving me everything. I know she meant well, but I didn't learn much about being a man; I expect women to do everything for me now, this is just the way I am."*

This behavior represents a number of young men being raised by single mothers who are not taught the codes of man. How a young man learns to respond to women and take responsibly for his behavior directly affects how that individual will ultimately understand how he is expected to contribute to his family in the future. There are many young men who have lost their way and they spend the best part of their lives running from their mistakes. An adult mentor can support efforts towards increasing self-confidence and teaching young men and boys how to build stronger more productive relationships with men and women in the lives.

Moral codes of manhood taught by mentors can help young men develop a strong foundation that can sustain them for the future. A father prepares his son for his role as a man by taking personal weaknesses and turning them into strengths. He teaches his son to stay in the contest until his inner strength has been fully applied. Young men growing up without fathers to enforce these codes can find it difficult to focus on what is important. Without examples to follow they stumble in the dark and blame others for their inability to be make positive strides. A young man shared that his mother had insisted he call a male who was in route to their home for dinner. She demanded he call the driver and ask if he needed directions. The young man did not want to make the call but his mother pressed the issue. An adult male in earshot of the conversation pulled the young man aside and suggested, *"If the driver needs help with directions he will call."* He added, *"...men do not need other men holding their hands."* What a mother can contribute to her son is invaluable, what a mentor can contribute to a fatherless boy or young man can also be invaluable. If young men and boys are expected to be successful, confidant men they should see examples of what is expected of them. Some single mothers grab a hold of their sons and guide them without considering that there might be codes that define how men should conduct themselves.

#### Unstructured Mentoring/Strategic Mentoring

With the ongoing strife and problematic social and educational issues facing Black males, there is more of a need for same sex mentors who are willing to involve themselves in the business of influencing and changing lives. However, the mentoring process should not be conducted as an unstructured random process. Mentoring should be a deliberate, well organized process designed for long term growth with measurable outcomes. Over the years I have witnessed the transformation of lives, character building and motivated, goal driven individuals because of a mentorship that was strategically planned. When the mentorship is constructed for strength at the beginning it makes for a responsive collaboration that maximizes intended objectives and sets the mentorship in the right direction. Too much time has been devoted to unstructured mentoring that in effect goes nowhere. There is a need for mentoring that is structured and includes full participation and coordinated efforts from adult males who are concerned with reconstruction fatherless young men and boys into strong, confidant men.

Mentoring and what it can do to improve social and educational outcomes for fatherless young men and boys should be considered valuable and significantly important. However, the mentoring process is only meaningful if the mentee actually benefits for the interaction. As the mentoring process takes shapes the mentee should feel empowered, and long after the planned interaction has ended the mentee should have the capacity to move forward with a sense of self-worth and a new set of interpersonal skills. The mentor should appreciate the satisfaction of having served in the capacity of a substitute father and a friend. If the relationship finishes out as one-sided process



or if either of the parties feels as if he did not benefit for the relationship, then the mentorship should be considered a failure. If this is the case, it is clear that the mentorship was not strategically planned. If we take what we know about unstructured mentoring and put it side by side with structured mentoring it becomes obvious that they serve the process in exceptionally different ways.

When a potential mentor makes plans to freely and honestly mentor a young man or a boy he is making an investment in the future. His actions basically provide a unique opportunity to positively add to the wellness of a generation of future men through the transformation of one life at a time. The thoughtfulness of taking on the responsibility, as a mentor is what defines new beginnings and creates progressive pathways for individuals in need of the benefits that result from a strategically crafted mentor relationship. What a caring considered minded mentor can do is manifested through confident attitudes, high school graduations and young men and boys who experience a renewed sense of self confidence; not only in social setting, but in school and in their home life. They cause an individual to appreciate the full implications of committing oneself to gainful employment and seeing himself as an individual who can move into the future with strong possibilities of successful, meaningful life. Additionally, they can trigger healthier attitudes concerning relationships, fatherhood, family and the importance of preparing oneself for what might come next in his life.

Structured efforts towards mentoring ask questions before the relationship begins and during the mentorship, has defined procedures and an organized program that demands the mentor to give more than small pieces of broken time that disguises itself as mentoring. The richness of a strategically planned mentoring and the intensity required to move the process forward is what separated it from unstructured mentoring. What structured mentoring does is meritoriously changes how participation unfolds and it increases the effectiveness of how the mentor will interact with the mentee, which is rare in unstructured mentoring. According to Anderson and Shannon, strategic mentoring should be comparable to the relationship a father would have with his son (2010). This implies that the process should embody rigorous guidelines that add uniformity, consistency and a true sense of usefulness. These procedures added as part of the mentoring process can take longer to implement, but in the end they have a wider impact that produce positive long-term effects not often achieved in unstructured mentoring (Friday and Friday 2002).

If the mentoring is going to be successful and have clear levels of growth the mentor must take an intentional common sense approach that will result in the successful evolution of the proposed interaction (Carroll and Barnes, 2014). A common-sense approach is the mentor building a connection with one mentee at a time and cultivating the achievements that spring from the relationship. Multiple relationships with mentees diminish the strength of the relationship and open doors to complications that disrupt the natural flow that should exist in a mentorship. As we think about mentoring and what it can do towards renovating a life, it should be thought of as a carefully calculated process intended to uplift and enthusiastically encourage everyone taking part in the union. If the mentorship is strategically planned it will make for an organized engagement that pays multiple dividends for both the mentor and the mentee.

Strategic mentoring makes mentoring relevant, thoughtful and transparent. It demands that the engagement begins with a plan long before initial contact is made with the mentee. More importantly, during the initial stages of the mentorship, the mentor is obligated to communicate his intentions with the child's mother; accordingly, she must be encouraged to articulate her plans for a successful implementation of the relationship. Including the mother allows her to feel comfortable with the relationship, which makes her more inclined to commit to the various stages of development. Regularly with unstructured mentoring the mother is not given an opportunity to provide input and the mentoring becomes a secret, private affair between the mentor and the mentee; which should never happen. Broken relationships with the child's father and a lack of trust deter mothers from getting involved with mentors in the first place. In conversation, a single mother stated, "*no one knows my son better than me.*" She went on to add, "*I know what my child needs!*" Strategic mentoring is designed to value the mother's input at the very start.

Including the mother in the mentoring process gives her an opportunity to use her intellect to inform her instincts before she formally gives permission to move the process forward. Unstructured mentoring overlooks this crucial aspect and consistently moves the mentorship forwards without consent or instituting clear levels of trust. Failing to institute trust at the very start confirms that mentorship will fall apart. If the relationship is going to take root and prove meaningful over a long period of time, trust must be at the front of the mentorship (Friday and Friday, 2002). Unstructured mentoring generally starts without ever building a foundation of trust. According to Moon without trust, planned mentoring cannot be attained (2014). Trust requires that consistency and reliability are included and shared as part of the action plan. These critical elements compel the mentor to commit to actionable results that support the mentee while adding value to the life of the mentorship (McBurney, 2015). Actionable results include decisively responding to the mentee with outlined learning objectives, clear goals, planned alternatives, researcher activities and a guarantee of following through with a preplanned timeline.

*Including mothers in the mentoring process*

Mothers have a natural connection with their sons and they can offer insight into a history of behaviors and give personalized directions that can strengthen the interaction between the mentor and the mentee. Overlooking the mother and what she can contribute to the mentorships is unfair, irresponsible and discriminatory. If single mothers are expected to turn their sons over to mentors and trust in the process, they must be allowed to participate in the process. Establishing a collaboration with the mother can shape the process and ignite a more responsive detailed working relationship with the mentee. It establishes the first line of trust needed to successfully build on the mentoring. Starting real communication with the child's mother should precede the desire to move forward with the mentorship. It is essential that the mother trust the mentorship and is given the opportunity to evaluate the mentor and question his intentions and his plan for the success of the relationship. Allowing this level of autonomy gives single mothers a valid reason to invest in the process and it creates a feeling of satisfaction that comes with knowing her values are represented.

Unstructured mentoring fails to take the appropriate steps towards moving the mentoring process forward, nor does it adequately benefit those participating in the process, and there is no broad understanding of how the relationship should be cultivated for future growth. Strategic mentoring is constructed on the present, but organized with future growth in mind. As we think about strategic mentoring there should be an inclusive understanding of what it is and how it should advance overtime. Strategic mentoring should be defined as a dependable, orderly process that requires formal engagement with definite intent of actively seeking a common sense, trustworthy approach that enhances the integrity of the mentorship. Hadidi, Lindquist and Buckwalter (2013), suggested that strategic mentoring is a formula driven practice that makes the mentoring process sensible. Credibility garnered from strategic mentoring permits it to stand as a conformation that anticipated goals will be given the opportunity to take root.

Strategic mentoring requires an authentic interest linked to fixed goals that propels the mentorship in the appropriate direction. An appropriate direction includes: improving social and educational outcomes, creating opportunities that build a young man and a boy's mental aptitude by providing relevant tools that increase knowledge and boost specific social and learning skills. They should also, teach leadership, improve self-worth and create occasions where the individual can independently display the ability to think on his own. Straus, Johnson, Marquez and Feldman, suggest that the mentor should approach mentoring with an open mind and a willingness to conscientiously achieve goals that define strategic mentoring as meaningful (2013). Unstructured mentoring does not require a focused assurance, nor is the mentee expected to show signs of specific growth over a long period of time. Effective mentoring should inform, in specific ways, explicitly how the mentorship has been administered, how it should evolve and what precise results should develop from the interaction. The effectiveness of strategic mentoring is manufactured on dependability, uninterrupted communication, relationship building, manageable timelines that advance the mentorship purposefully and specifically, it should include the child's mother as a partner in the relationship.

Strategic mentoring, among other things, can assist towards distinguish the emptiness felt by young men and boys living without a father in the home (Carroll and Barnes 2015). However, if the mentoring relationship is not deliberate and if the mentor is not personally motivated it is likely the process was manufactured on a defective premise, which suggests that plan was never established at the start, and the process was casually started by a mentor who was ill prepared. Strategic mentoring requires that goals are clearly defined and incorporated as part of the plan of action. More importantly, it requires that all parties' work collaboratively to fully realize the success of the relationship. Therefore, the mentors should commit to working with mothers to cultivate a unified collaboration that places the needs of the mentee above personal interest which is a common characteristic of unstructured mentoring. Including the mother can spark interest and accelerate the advanced achievement of defined goals. When a commitment to working together is forged, the following must be instituted to facilitate desired objectives:

- The potential mentor must agree to take part in advance training to support efforts towards a well-organized mentorship. Also, he must agree to a follow-up training once the mentorship is in action.
- Before the mentor makes contact with the mentee, he must agree to meet with the mother and he must pledge to maintain contact with the mother throughout the duration of the mentorship.
- Before the mentorship is confirmed, the mentor and the mother must commit to the mentorship thoughtfully and enthusiastically without reservation.

- The mentor and the mother must agree that they will be held accountable for their actions and how they engage with the mentee.
- The potential mentor must develop a timeline and the timeline must be shared with the mother. The timeline should include the respected start and end date of the mentor relationship.
- The mentor should agree to mentor only one mentee at a time. If plans are made to mentor more than one mentee the mother must be notified.
- The mentor should research the literature with intent to explore innovative methods to improve the mentorship.
- The mentor must pledge to see the mentorship through.

Agreed steps towards the development of a deliberate mentorship must be acknowledged before the relationship can be position into motion. Strategic mentoring considers the significance of the relationship and demands that verbal and written agreements are instituted. It requires the mentor to have a genuine interest and plan that is built on longevity.

Strategically planned mentoring increases the effectiveness of the relationship and helps towards the construction of a solid foundation for the future. It provides light and creates a pathway for productivity. How it is approached can open doors and encourages relevant thinking that adds to its overall effectiveness of the mentoring. Unstructured mentoring begins and ends without structural footing and the success that should emerge from the collaboration is not associated as part of the process. What little mentoring that does occur is not taken serious which results in the mentor abandoning the relationship.

Unstructured mentoring fails to ask the mentor to make a promise of seeing the process through, which must happen if the mentoring is to be successful. The apparent differences between strategic and unstructured mentoring is what makes strategic mentoring a rational solution as we think about the future of mentoring.

The randomness, the uncertainty and the lack of organization associated with unstructured mentoring makes it difficult to appreciate. Mentoring should be a premeditated, structured process that focuses on the mentee. There should be accountability measures that advance the process and make it relevant. Measures of accountability hold mentors responsible and assess the use of goals and determine application. They provide all parties with appropriate questions that should be asked throughout the mentoring; unstructured mentoring has no such measures. According to McBurney, the absence of measures causes unstructured mentoring to frequently fall into traps that perpetually derail the process (2013). Factors that derail unstructured mentoring include:

- The mentor agreeing to the relationship, but never scheduling firm regular meeting dates and times to connect with the mentee. This threatens the relationship until it inevitably falls apart.
- A lack of trust between the mentor, the mentee and the mother but the mentor pushes forward and never builds layers of trust.
- The mentee helplessly depends on the mentor, but the mentor does not encourage the mentee to think for himself. Instead, the mentor looks to controls the mentee.
- The mentor does not generate actionable conclusions that help the mentee move pass threatening personal issues.
- The mentor working harder than the mentee at retaining the relationship, but he does not know how to communicate this to the mentee, which results in the mentor walking away from his responsibilities.

#### *Communication*

Strategic mentoring focuses on communication and an intent to build on that communication. It suggests that the mentor should be able to communicate a feasible plan of action to work with the mentee. In unstructured mentoring, it is not required that the mentor have existing knowledge of how the relationship might progress or experience on how to effectively communicate. Young men growing up without fathers have expressed a desire to be

in relationships with adult males they can talk with. When young men were asked what they liked about mentoring one young man stated, *"I like the times when we just talk."* Communication binds a relationship and facilitates the building trust. McBurney suggest that it should be the first step to move strategic mentoring forward (2013). When an adult male builds a mentoring relationship, he should concern himself with establishing open lines of communication. The value of effective, strategic mentoring can only be realized when both parties understand the value communication.

Without communication mentoring becomes insignificant and it offers no value. Young men and boys involved with a mentor are looking for opportunities to share thoughts with someone who will actively listen to their concerns. A young man wrote, *"It wasn't until I had someone to talk with that I realized how much built up frustration I had; I always had to figure things out on my own."* Another young man explained that he had a texting relationship with his father. He shared that, every once in a while, he got a text asking how he was doing, otherwise he did not hear from his father. A young man shared that he walked off the job because of an ongoing dispute. In his mind, he felt that quitting his job abruptly taught his boss a lesson. However, long after he walked off the job he discusses the situation with an adult male who provided an alternative ending to the situation. After evaluating the new information, the young man replied, *"...I wish I knew all this before I quit."* He went on to add, *"I have not been able to find a job since I quit."* What results from communication can make an important difference towards finding resolve and giving the mentee the confidence to look inward for strength when addressing challenges. Unstructured mentoring falls apart quickly and almost never allows effective communication to take root.

### *Style*

Unstructured mentoring relationships are not dependable or promising, because they do not lend themselves to any particular style of mentoring. Structured mentoring requires the mentor to determine an operational style that will assist towards advancing the mentoring. According to McBurney, the mentor should determine exactly what style of mentoring fits the mentee before advancing onward (2015). Style adds to the dependability of the relationship and creates a formula for the structured component of the relationship. Unstructured mentoring lacks dependability because the mentor often fails to employ an appropriate style. A 15-year-old currently being mentored in an unstructured mentorship was asked how he felt about the relationship, he shared the following response: *"I like having a mentor, but I do not see him that much."* He went on to add, *"when I do see him we might do something cool, but I never know when he is going to show up or what we are going to do; he does talk with me much."* The individual style of the mentee should be well aligned with the style of the mentor—there must be goodness of fit. When there is goodness of fit, the ongoing, mutual relations between person and context will promote positive interaction (Lerner et al., 2015). Not adopting or understanding the urgency of developing a style of mentoring limits the success of the relationship.

Style constructs itself on understanding the individual's educational performance, emotional issues, social and community influences, stressors and personal factors that cause the mentee to devalue himself and experience poor self-confidence (McBurney, 2015). Developing a style of mentoring also includes valuing contributions the mother might want to share regarding how to work with her child. What develops from this knowledge impacts the reliability of the relationship and makes for a purposeful interaction. A style of mentoring has an affirmative pattern of productivity and impacts how the mentee connects with the mentor which in turn increases the dependability of the relationship and helps towards avoiding everyday barriers that plague unstructured mentoring and limits its effectiveness. Strategic mentor requires the mentor to take appropriate time to construct a style of mentoring. Employing a style of mentoring is essential for an upbeat tone that will predict the strength of the relationship.

To develop a style, the mentor should have a genuine interest in understanding the mentee holistically. Not developing a style of mentoring indicates a lack interest, which is one of the many factors that lead to the sudden departure of a mentor. A young man was asked to explain his experience with his mentor. He shared that he enjoyed the mentorship, *"...but the guy showed up a few times then he just stopped calling and coming around."* If the mentee carries the weight of not having a father through every stage of his development, imagine how the mentee might feel if his mentor quietly slips away only after a few short visits. Unstructured mentoring ends abruptly without proper notifications, which leaves the mentee wishing he never involved himself in the first place. The sudden, unexpected loss of a mentor is destructive and complicate for anyone who finds comfort in the interaction. Style requires a plan that binds the mentor to a structure that he can invest in. The lack of attention to style development is a fundamental dynamic that makes unstructured mentoring problematic and unproductive. Each step of the mentorship should be carefully planned and designed for success, which starts with developing an effective style of mentoring.

### Conclusion

Some single mothers see themselves as the keeper of their sons and they do their best to raise their boys to be contributing members of society. As a result, a majority of these mothers are not finding or utilizing adult male mentors to help with the social and personal development of their boys. More mothers might be open to mentoring relationships if clear conceptual foundations of mentoring is established, along with an appropriate needs analysis at the very start of the conversation (Anderson and Shannon, 2012). Not only does strategic mentoring utilize these processes, but also strategic mentoring can help improve self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-worth, which is important towards giving young men and boys a new frame of reference (McBurney, 2015). Strategic mentoring requires that all parties are included at the beginning of the relationship, which builds trust and guarantees the success of the relationship. Also, the mentor should clearly understand the purpose of the relationship and be committed to working collaboratively with the mother towards a successful mentoring experience for the mentee. According to Carol and Barnes, (2015), the mentor should show an active combination of professionalism and support for the mentee that advances throughout the relationship. Failure to dedicate appropriate time at the front of the mentoring process can result in a short-lived unproductive mentorship experience that yields little or no affirmative results. Excluding the mother's input and neglecting deep rich conversation on why the relationship was started in the first place can dangerously slanted the mentorship for failure.

Strategic mentoring matters because it allows trust to take root and guide the process. In addition, the mentee is paired with a mentor who is committed to the success of the relationship. When selection, communication, trust and personal commitment are considered at the start of the relationship, there is a high level of certainty that the mentee will benefit from the relationship; after all, the objective of the relationship is for the mentee to grow from the experience. Strategic mentoring requires that the relationship is strategic at the very start. Trust that makes up the relationship is supported by the mother, the mentor and the mentee. Understanding the difference between unstructured mentoring and strategic mentoring can make an important difference if the relationship is expected to grow and benefit the mentee. When the mentor is committed to supporting the mentee, the process will start with a thoughtful plan that takes every possible aspect of the activity under consideration. Which requires constructing a solid foundation, that will have a meaningful effect on the scope and depth of the relationship. As conversations increase regarding mentoring and the overarching effects it can have on improving the lives of fatherless young men and boys, strategic mentoring should be at the center of the conversation. Not only can strategic mentoring change the way a mentor relates with the mentee, but it can change a single mother's view on the process and give the mother reason to think differently about the value of engaging her son in a meaningful mentoring relationship with a responsible, concerned mentor.

## References

- Adamsons, K; & Johnson, S.K. (2013). An updated and expanded meta-analysis of nonresident fathering and child well-being. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27(4), 589-599.
- Akbar, N. (1984). *Chains and images of psychological slavery*. Jersey City, NJ: Mind Productions.
- Akbar, N. (1991). *Visions for Black men*. Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions.
- Barton, A., Drake, C., Perez, J., St. Louis, K., & George, M. (2004). Ecologies of parental engagement in urban education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(4), 3-12.
- Biddulph, S. (2003). *Raising boys*. Sydney: Finch Publishing.
- Bornstein, M. H. (2015). Children's parents. In M. H. Bornstein & T. Leventhal (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science: Vol. 4. Ecological settings and processes in developmental systems* (7th ed., pp. 55–132). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Bowers, E. P., Johnson, S. K., Buckingham, M. H., Gasca, S., Warren, D. J., Lerner, J. V., & Lerner, R. M. (2014). Important non-parental adults and positive youth development across mid- to late adolescence: The moderating effect of parenting profiles. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 43, 897–918.
- Carroll, A., & Barnes, E. (2015). Strategies for enhancing diverse mentoring relationships in STEM Fields. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 13, 58-69.
- Cabrera, N. & Peters, H. E. (2002). Public policies and father involvement. *Marriage and Family Review*, 29(4), 295-314.
- Cross, T. & Slater, R. (2000). The alarming decline in the academic performance of African-American men. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 27, 82-87.
- Coley, R. L. (2003). Daughter-father relationships and adolescent psychosocial functioning in low-income African-American families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65 867–875.
- Davis, J. E. (2003). Early schooling and academic achievement of African American males. *Urban Education*, 38, 515-537.
- Demo, D. H., & Cox, M. (2000). Families with young children: A review of research in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 876–895.
- Drew, J. M. (2011). *Where were you when I needed you dad?* Newport Beach: Fideli Publishing Inc.
- DuBois, D. L., & Silverthorn, N. (2005). Characteristics of natural mentoring relationships and adolescent adjustment: Evidence from a national study. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 26, 69 –92.
- Elium, D., & Elium, J. (2004). *Raising a son*. Berkley: Celestial Arts.
- Elliot, S., Powell, R., & Brenton, J. (2014). Being a good mother: Low income, black single mothers negotiate intensive mothering. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(3), p. 351-370.
- Father and Child Development and Clinical Perspectives edited by Stanley H. Cath Alan R. Gurwitt John Murder Ross Psychology Press 1994.
- Hall, M. (1997). Fatherless Homes Breed Violence. *Fathering Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.fathermag.com/news/1780-stats.shtml>
- Frazier, F. (1948). Ethnic family patterns: The negro family in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 53(6), pp. 435-438
- Franklin, N., & Franklin, A. J. (2000). *Boys into men: Raising our African American teen sons*. New York: Penguin Putman.
- Friday, E. & Friday, S. S. (2002). Formal mentoring: is there a strategic fit. *Management Decision*, 40(2), p. 152-157.
- Grier, W., & Cobbs, P. (1968). *Black rage*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hadidi N., Lindquist, R., & Buckwalter, K. (2013). Lighting the fire with mentoring relationships. *Nurse Education*, 38, 157-163.
- Holborn, L., & Eddy, G. (2011). *First steps to healing the South African family*. A research paper by the Institute of Race Relations sponsored by the Donaldson Trust. Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Hurd, N.M., Zimmerman, M. A., and Xue, Y. (2009). Negative adult influences and the protective effects of role models: A study with urban adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(6), 777-789.

- Hunter, A. G., Friend, C. A., Murphy, S. Y., Rollins, A., Wheeler, M. W., & Laughinghouse, J. (2006). Loss, survival, and redemption African American male youths' reflection on life without fathers, manhood, and coming of age. *Youth in Society*, 37, 423-452.
- Johnson, W. (1998). Paternal involvement in fragile, African American families. Implications for Clinical Social Work Practice. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 68(2), 215-232.
- Lerner, R. M. (2004). Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Bowers, E., & Geldhof, G. J. (2015). Positive youth development and relational developmental systems. In W. F. Overton & P. C. Molenaar (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science*. Vol. 1: Theory and method (7th ed., pp. 607– 651). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118963418.childpsy116>
- Margo, R.A., 2004. The north-south wage gap before and after the Civil War. In Eltis, D., Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R. & Lamb, M. (2000). Scholarship on fatherhood in the 1990s and beyond. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 1173-1191.
- Frank D. Lewis, F. D., Sokoloff, K. L. (Eds.). *Slavery in the development of the Americas* (pp. 324-352). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- McAdoo, H. (1998). *Black Families* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- McBurney, E. (2015) Strategic mentoring: Growth for mentor and mentee. *Clinics in Dermatology*, 33(2), 257-260.
- Moon, T. M. (2014). Mentoring the next generation for innovation in today's organization. *Journal of Strategic Leadership*, 5(1), 23-35.
- Murrell, P. (2002). *African-centered pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Patterson, O. (1999). Liberty against the democratic state: On the historical and contemporary sources of American distrust. In M. E. Warren (Ed.), *Democracy and trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Payleitner, J. (2010). *52 Things kids need from a dad: What fathers can do to make a lifelong difference*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publications.
- Perkins, W. (2000). Matriarchy, Malcolm X, and Masculinity: A Historical Essay 107, *Black Sons to Mothers: Compliments, Critiques, and Challenges for Cultural Workers in Education*, pp. 15-34.
- Rolfe, A. R., (2014) Taking Mentoring to the next level in organizations. *Training & Development*, 41(2), 26-27.
- Sonke Gender Justice Network. (2012). *Absent fathers in South Africa*. Retrieved from [www.men-care.org](http://www.men-care.org)
- Sowers, J. (2010). *Fatherless generation: Redeeming the story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Stewart, S. D. (2003). Nonresident parenting and adolescent adjustment: The quality of nonresident father-child interaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24, 217–244.
- Straus, S. E., Johnson, M. O., Marquez, C., & Feldman, M. D. (2013). Characteristics of successful and failed mentoring relationships: A qualitative study across two academic health centers. *Academic Medicine*, 88(1), 82-89.
- Grall, T. S. "US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau," Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2007 (November 2009): 1-12.
- The Furthering Fathering Corporation, (2015, January 8). Retrieved from <http://furtheringfathering.org/fatherhood-stats.html>
- Theokas, C., Almerigi, J. B., Lerner, R. M., Dowling, E. M., Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., & von Eye, A. (2005). Conceptualizing and modeling individual and ecological asset components of thriving in early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25, 113-143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0272431604272460>
- United States Census Bureau. (2002). *Statistical abstract of the United States, 2002*. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing office.
- U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports by T. S. Grall. Custodial mothers and fathers and their child support: 2007. Issued November 2009. Retrieved from [www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/source07.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/source07.pdf)
- United States Department of Health and Human Service. (1996). *Trends in the well-being of America's children and youth: 1996*. Washington, D.C.: DHHS.

Walters, G. D. (2015). Someone to look up to: Effect of role models on delinquent peer selection and influence. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 14, p. 61-75.