The University of Chicago

The Importance of Male Mentoring Programs for Male Youth:

A Comparative Study of Chicago and Washington D.C.

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Abstract

Mentoring programs exist across the United States to provide navigation and guidance for developing youth. Mentoring as a practice can either consist of a one-on-one mentor to mentee relationship or a group mentoring method where one mentor oversees a group of mentees.

I researched ten male-to-male mentoring programs in Chicago and Washington D.C. to understand their mentoring practices and to compare them both within their own city and between the two cities. I conducted qualitative interviews with mentors and scholars on fatherhood from the Chicago and Washington D.C. areas to understand how their mentoring practices vary. This study discovered what certain programs believed to be the most effective means of mentoring, who these programs cater to, and how the youth benefit from mentors. Through my qualitative interviews, I have concluded that these male mentoring programs are not limited to but can especially benefit underserved populations. This is possibly of particular benefit to youth growing up without resident fathers in their lives.

This study concludes with a discussion of the positives and negatives of one-on-one and group mentoring programs in Chicago and Washington D.C. This study also demonstrates how these programs can be better used to benefit the population that they serve. Aa a result of my findings, I recommend the implementation of fatherhood initiatives to aid the most vulnerable population targeted by mentoring programs. Additionally, I recommend the utilization of school spaces to increase accessibility and publicity for mentoring programs. Future directions include studying other underserved populations around the nation to understand how mentoring programs operate within those areas. Furthermore, a longitudinal cohort study could be initiated that follows the mentees' lives to further understand the positive impacts of male mentoring programs.

Disclaimer

This paper focuses specifically on male mentoring programs and their male mentees between the ages of 6-17 in Chicago and Washington D.C. The majority of the programs in both Chicago and Washington D.C. are either male-specific or co-ed, thus they were more accessible to contact and conduct research through.

Chicago and Washington D.C. are comparable metropolitan areas regarding the vast socio-economic gap between the more affluent and impoverished areas. I focused my study on the West and South sides of Chicago and the Southeast quadrant of Washington D.C. areas of relatively extensive poverty and high youth crime. I had previously been exposed to both of these cities before my research started and had experienced first-hand the comparable youth violence and family structure among the areas. While these two areas are predominantly African American, the point of this paper is not to focus on one race, but rather the youth population and the effect mentoring programs have on them. With the large African American population in these two cities, I decided to use some literature that focused just on African American youth; however, my research included not just this population but all populations within these cities.

A huge problem in both Chicago and Washington D.C. is the amount of youth violence that occurs. Through my research, I have confirmed that this youth violence is committed disproportionally among male youth rather than female youth. Thus, I decided to use the abundance of male mentoring programs to address the positive effect they can have on the youth male population.

Through the qualitative interviews conducted, the mentors from programs throughout both Chicago and Washington D.C. expressed that the majority of their mentees grow up in mother-headed, single-parent households. Due to this fact, I generally focus on the effect that this family structure might have on the developmental process for the male youth. This, however, does not mean that all of the male youth in the mentoring programs I interviewed did not have a resident father in their life.

I regularly reference youth as being "at-risk." An at-risk youth is a child who might not be as likely to transition into adulthood successfully because of crime, academic success, job preparedness, or their ability to be financially independent.

The following study has its limitations because I did not interview the male youth themselves to understand what they view as their needs in terms of fathers. The perspectives I share come from those of the mentors and experts in the field of fatherhood. The opinions and discussion that follow stem from those who have experience interacting within the youths' lives.

Although there are many other avenues that I would have liked to explore, such as mentoring programs for female youths, how different family structures might affect the mentoring process, and interviewing mothers and the mentees within the programs, I believe that expanding the scope of this thesis to include the aforementioned would have made this paper too broad.

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"A lot of people just think we can set kids up with a mentor at the ages of thirteen to fifteen and they will be going to college in three weeks. It doesn't work like that."

Kevin Drewyer, Chicago Hope Academy

I.   Introduction

"A mentor is not an exact replacement, but someone who can provide good nurturing, good guidance and fill some sort of void, if you would, in terms of lessons and models" asserted David Bowers of 100 Black Men in Washington, D.C. He continues, "Some stuff is kind of universal and can be helpful whether you come from no parents, one parent, or two parents. That being said, if you are a young male and you don't have a male role model in your home, a nurturing, loving male presence in your immediate family, the ability to find a caring adult male who pours into your life is certainly helpful." This represents one male mentor's personal experience and views on the impact he and his organization are having on young adolescents' lives. Male mentor programs exist all around the nation and work in different capacities to assist and guide youth males through the most critical developmental years of their lives. This paper attempts to understand and demonstrate how much of an impact these programs can have on youth males who reside in disadvantaged communities.

The questions that I plan to answer are: How male mentoring programs benefit and help to guide and support at-risk youth in the Chicago and Washington, D.C. areas? What specific tactics do male mentors of the various mentoring programs use? and How do these methods compare, both within their own city and between the cities? For the context of this paper, I am referring only to male youth because male youth between the ages of 15-24 are primary perpetrators of crime and violence in distressed communities, as well as being the most likely victims of homicide and shootings (Shukla, 2001). Additionally, I am focusing solely on male mentoring programs or male components of co-ed mentoring programs to examine how father or male absence in the family affects young males. I recognize that father absence also affects female youth as well, but male youth is the focus in this paper. Within the communities examined there is a large proportion of non-resident fathers within these households (Appendix A & B). Mentors do not replace fathers but are more likely to support male youth when a father is missing from their life or if their father's expertise in parenting is limited or nonexistent. I frequently discuss instances where fathers are not present in the male mentee's life based on the accounts and information collected from the interviewed mentors. Mentees without a father can benefit greatly from mentors, however, such persons are not the only type of children that can benefit from mentors. Some of the programs that I interviewed contain both female and male youth participants. However, I will examine how the mentors affect the male youth in their programs and document their specific mentoring practices employed therein. I chose to conduct my research in Chicago and Washington, D.C. due to the high number of mother-headed, single-parent households in those cities (Appendix A & B), the amount of youth violence in both cities (Appendix C & D), and my familiarity to both cities. I have experiences that I have gained from growing up and living in Washington, D.C., as well as spending my collegiate years volunteering in Chicago. The male-specific mentoring programs within Chicago and Washington, D.C. employ experienced male volunteers to help guide the lives of at-risk male youth. Participants in these programs have had little to no continuous contact with older male figures throughout their lives. The study of these programs is important to help understand the impact a male role model can have on a young male's life.

I split the project into three stages. The first component gathers mentors' perspectives on the direct impact mentors and mentorship have on youth males in the South and West sides of Chicago. I also inquire about the mentors' engagement practices and the structure in which they occur. For the second part, I again conducted interviews with male mentoring programs, but this time in Washington, D.C. Lastly, after learning about both cities mentoring programs and how

they approach mentoring, I compare the cities based on mentoring program size and their mentoring practices. I found many similarities, while simultaneously unique aspects, among the various mentoring programs in both cities. Each mentoring program has a different mission and I use their mentoring foci to structure my discussion on the benefits of male mentoring for at-risk youth males. The qualitative data acquired, and the comparisons made between both cities, helped lead to the creation of two proposed policies. These policies can be implemented into each city so that the disadvantaged communities can benefit from the value of male mentoring programs.

II. Background

In the United States, 53% of African American, 27% of Hispanic, and 20% of White families with kids under the age of 18 reside in single parent, mother-headed families (Historical Families Tables, 2018). The South and West side areas in Chicago and the Southeast quadrant of Washington, D.C. contribute to some of the greatest amounts of violence and the lowest socio-economic status in their cities (Appendix C, D, E, & F), as well as the highest prevalence of mother-headed, single-parent households within the two cities. In the South and West sides of Chicago, neighborhoods often exhibit a 30-70% prevalence rate of mother-headed, single-parent households (Appendix A). Likewise, Washington, D.C.'s prevalence rate in the Southeast quadrant of the city 15-60% (Appendix B). These neighborhoods present a great need for mentoring programs due to the amount of youth who participate in violent activity, have been arrested, or might not have the supervision of both parents.

In 2018, Chicago released 20 years of arrest data through the Freedom of Information Act (Sweeney & Fry, 2018). This report identified that almost 33,000 of the 133,000 arrest records in the gang database were juveniles ages 17 or younger. These statistics are not a proxy for criminal conviction; however, they show the number of youths interacting with law enforcement. Although it is problematic if any of these 33,000 juveniles were truly participating in gang activity, a greater challenge is that this record will follow them for the rest of their lives. The staggering number shows the amount of youth who have been arrested. In the annual Chicago Police Department Report of 2018, 7,704 of the 85,663 reported arrests, or 9.0%, were juveniles (Chicago Police Department, 2019). Percentage-wise, this is down from 2017 when 8,812 of the 83,454 arrests, or 10.6%, were juveniles (Chicago Police Department, 2019). Although youth gang violence is not as prevalent in Washington, D.C., the percentage of arrests who were juveniles was 5.6% in 2017 and 5.7% in 2018, at 2,982 and 2,719 arrests, respectively (Metropolitan Police Department, 2019). These numbers demonstrate the large amount of juvenile crime that exists within both cities. Although there are no specific statistics dedicated to separating youth violent crime by gender, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reports that male youth were responsible for 78.8% of all youth violent crimes in the United States in 2018 compared to 21.2% for female youth (OJJDP, 2018).

Individuals who are involved in gangs or have been arrested likely are prime candidates for those who can benefit from male mentoring programs. However, this is not the only population that exists within mentoring programs. Rather, youth who are at-risk in these communities make up the majority of those involved in mentoring programs. If it were not for these programs, these at-risk youth might have otherwise been engaged in criminal activities or have had increased interactions with law enforcement. This population highlights those that are possibly the greatest impacted by the benefits of mentoring.

Within the aforementioned communities, male youth struggle in their daily lives without the presence of father figures in their often-violent environment. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African American males between the ages of 15 and 24, "particularly among those living in low-resource, urban neighborhoods where rates of interpersonal violence are highest" (Hall et al., 2008, 382). For youth trying to find an identity without the benefit of a role model, their identity is influenced and shaped by the communities they are subjected to (Manning, 1988). The challenge lies in figuring everything out on their own. Most of these youth have to protect not only themselves but also their families in their neighborhoods. In these distressed neighborhoods, the young men can get swept up in the negative cultural norm without anyone guiding them positively.

This can lead these youth down paths from which it is almost impossible to escape from. Addressing the importance of male mentors within these communities as viable options for all young males is crucial to changing the cultural norm and diminishing the existing brutality in two cities that are afflicted with violence.

Mentoring programs provide guidance and support for at-risk youth. These programs all have different missions and operate on various scales. For instance, some mentoring programs will be based out of schools or churches, others provide assistance to a specific neighborhood or a whole region. While every child can benefit from mentoring programs in some capacity, young males who grow up in disadvantaged communities or live in single-parent homes can benefit greatly from a positive male role model. These role models can act in several different capacities including as a tutor, someone with whom to play sports, or just a person who is there to listen. Additionally, mentoring programs can either be established to have mentors work one-on-one with their mentee or in a group setting. Each of these structures has unique benefits. This study researches the benefits of particular male mentor programs. An additional area of exploration of this study looked at the tactics the mentors use to guide their specific population of mentees.

III.   Literature Review

Childhood Development

The youth and adolescent years are one of the most critical timeframes in life. Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist and theorist of the 20th century, developed an eight-stage psychosocial theory of development. Erikson's theory addresses conflicting ideas within various age frames. During the youth and adolescent years of ages 12-18, Erikson explained the importance of adolescents developing a sense of self through the conflicting ideas of identity vs. role confusion. These crucial early adolescent years of development encompass a search for identity, a mastery of childhood problems, and the readiness to confront challenges within the adult world (Manning, 1988). As adolescents grow, they have an overwhelming concern for how they appear in the eyes of others compared to what they feel they actually are, particularly as they search for an adult identity (Manning, 1988). Research has shown that as adolescents search for their identity, their effort involves "the ego's ability to integrate the demands of the libido, the abilities developed out of natural capacities, and the various opportunities offered by available social roles" (Bernard, 1981, 349). Additionally, vocational identity has been shown to play a more central role with identity formation in males than females, which may be a function of the identity formation process reflecting the cultural expectation of autonomy and personality differentiation (Bell A. P., 1969; Bernard, 1981; Matteson, 1975). This demonstrates the importance of male development at this point in their lives.

Thus, with adolescent years being such a defining time for identity, adolescents must have supportive parents and role models in their lives. A study conducted by Douvan and Adelson (1966) showed that adolescents who were autonomous and self-directed, or who had achieved identity, had parents who were consistent and supportive. However, adolescents who were rebellious or had not achieved identity, had permissive parents (Bernard, 1981). The lack of supportive parents within an adolescent's life then jeopardizes their progress towards figuring out their identity. Permissive or absent parents leave individuals with a sense of not knowing who they are, where or to whom they belong, stemming from either difficult social circumstances or the inability to deal with various situations (Manning, 1988). In particularly aggressive communities, the challenge of growing up without a father as a role model puts an adolescent at a great disadvantage. The troubles that youth experience are magnified without a supportive father, which can be evidenced by higher rates of dropout from school, violence, crime, incarceration, early paternity, and problematic masculine identities (Hunter et al., 2006).

Effects of Violence on Male Children

The areas of study within Chicago and Washington, D.C. are comprised of a predominately African American, urban population (Appendix G & H). The South and West sides of Chicago and the Southeast quadrant of Washington, D.C. make up the majority of violence for the two cities (Appendix C & D). African American male adolescents are exposed to an overwhelming amount of violence as victims and witnesses within the South and West sides of Chicago (Voison et al., 2016). One study found that "low-income young men, who may lack other, more mainstream ways of affirming their identity or achieving a socially recognized manhood may use force, fights, and other forms of violence, experimentation with drugs, or acting recklessly to gain prestige within their peer group and to affirm a sense of self" (Barker, 1998, 439). Without proper guidance,

young men can be exposed to the wrong crowds that promote toxic behavior. This is especially true among ethnic minorities who are more likely to witness and experience violence (Stevenson et al., 2002). Young adolescents must learn how to defend themselves as a "rite of passage" to make it to adulthood (Voison et al., 2016). This "rite of passage" can lead male youth who perceive danger to carry weapons when they feel isolated to manage the tension inherent in violent contexts and the lack of support from the family (Stevenson et al., 2002). Ethnic minority boys are more likely to be viewed by others as threatening compared to ethnic minority girls. (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Stevenson et al., 2002). Therefore, these minority male youth report more discrimination (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). One might then expect the ethnic–racial socialization messages from parents, such as how to navigate one's neighborhood or school, to differ between boys and girls. The possibility exists that the parents might anticipate their differential experiences in external contexts (Hughes et al., 2006). With the high number of mother-headed, single-parent households in these communities, male youth are potentially growing up without a consistent male role model in their lives. This is in no way the fault of mothers, but this scenario results in a lack of resources and supervision that comes with being a single parent of any gender, especially in low socio-economic neighborhoods. There is a greater risk of poor parenting practices and a lack of emotional cohesion due to the challenges that come with living in distressed communities. The result is an increase in youth males' exposure to community violence and aggression (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004).

It is important to note that not all youth who have been exposed to violence during their development have negative outcomes. One must understand the environment that surrounds each youth and how that might vary in development and experiences. Youth who experience differences in subjective responses to danger can help to explain why some youth who live in the same neighborhoods filled with violence might respond differently to others who live with the same contextual risks (Hall et al., 2008). Young adolescents' perceptions of their environment and the risk of violence is likely a more powerful predictor of the behavior that these youth exhibit than is their actual exposure to risk (Griffin et al., 1999).

Researchers showed that parents can adapt their parenting strategies "to limit the influence of the neighborhood on their children" based on the experiences, effects, and direction for intervention in urban families (Horowitz et al., 2005, 357). Within the Chicago and Washington, D.C. communities, gangs flourish in and control several of the blocks and neighborhoods. These gangs bring violence to the communities that is hard to avoid. Likewise, gun violence in Washington, D.C. is on the rise (Hermann et al., 2019). To combat this, families must try to develop behaviors to shield their children from some of the violence and other traumatic exposures (Horowitz et al., 2005). The absence of a father within these youths' lives leads to psychological pain that affects all areas of their daily lives (Barker, 1998). Properly functioning families, in which the parents and extended family have an impact on the children's lives, have been proven to be a promising factor in protecting youth from exposure to violence (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004). In a study on community violence and violence perpetration, the research found that "family functioning has an effect in that youth from struggling families are at a greater risk for exposure to community violence regardless of overall community risk" (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004, 445). When children are growing up and cannot experience the important influence of a father figure, the "symptoms can manifest in a sense of 'futurelessness' characterized by children's belief that they will not reach adulthood, and difficulty with close interpersonal relationships as they hesitate to establish bonds that they fear will be broken" (Bell & Jenkins, 1991, 178).

The Influence of Fathers

The low number of resident fathers in the low-income areas of Chicago and Washington, D.C. presents a difficult situation for the young adolescent males growing up within these communities. A youth's identity is a culmination of their culture's values, religion, and ideology for something or someone to trust like the significant adults in their life (Maier, 1969; Manning, 1988). The adolescent youth must then rely on other means for gathering parts for the creation of their identity. Young males growing up without a father in their household "sometimes strongly identify with the sometimes-exaggerated cultural stereotypes of masculinity" (Barker, 1998, 439). The increased masculinity is a leading driver of violence in these communities as "to demonstrate toughness is better than fear in the public arena of adolescent identity politics" (Stevenson et al., 2002, 474). Without a father figure helping to advise and role model for a young man in the prime of learning "who and what his purpose is, leads these adolescents to believe that the perception of weakness may increase their vulnerability to becoming victimized" (Barker, 1998, 439). Those who are naturally afraid and cautious may have increased chances of survival in more dangerous neighborhoods even if timidity may inhibit one's identity of being portrayed as more threatening and masculine (Stevenson et al., 2002). This concept was deemed by Grant et al. as the phenomenon of "avoidant coping" (2000). The absence of a father to help validate their son's development and identity can, unfortunately, let male youth become overly aggressive and endanger their well-being, and the well-being of others (Stevenson et al., 2002). With the reputation of someone's masculinity on the line, a young adolescent can escape to outlets that strengthen their credibility among their peers, and this sometimes involves gangs. Gangs provide an outlet for youth to receive attention and deference (Johnstone, 1983). As youth interact with others during their daily lives, they are easily influenced by their peers. When positive relationships among family members are weak or absent, youth are at an increased risk to be negatively influenced by their environment (Slovak et al., 2007).

Research conducted on the effect of exposure to violence and the absence of a father shows that these children and adolescents struggle in school and develop aggressive behavior (Geller et al., 2012). Additionally, growing up around violence has been shown to lower self-esteem and cause a decline in cognitive performance (Bell & Jenkins, 1993). In these communities that are already deprived of resources for schooling, the violence affects the youths' physical and emotional states. In a study conducted on father incarceration and child-development, the results suggested that "paternal incarceration has significant and damaging consequences for the socio-emotional well-being of young children" (Geller et al., 2012, 71). The damage was also shown to have caused a significant increase in aggressive behaviors (Geller et al., 2012). If youth do not have a positive male role model to help combat the violence that goes on in their lives, they are likely to also partake in violent behavior. Likewise, even if the youth does have a father, but the father displays violent behavior, the youth is more likely to engage in the same behavior (Slovak et al., 2007). One study concluded that children who have had fathers convicted for violence tend to be convicted of violence themselves (Farrington, 1998).

In a study conducted by Hall et al. (2008), they found that the fear of potentially lethal events among African American youth was negatively correlated with family support and positively correlated with anger. The youth that admit fear of lethal events within their communities are those who are "most at risk to experience life-threatening harm" (393). Using the support of one's family might be used as a coping strategy. Examples could include reaching out to family for additional support or when family members provide increased supervision of their

youth to keep them safe. This puts male youth who are part of mother-headed, single-parent households, who live in particularly violent neighborhoods, at risk for not having the accessibility to such coping methods. The role of a father is so important, not only to help raise his son and help teach him his own values but also as a second support system in cases where the mothers might be overburdened by various circumstances, such as other children to look out for or her own occupation.

The literature has shown that the qualities and circumstances that exist within the Chicago South and West side communities and around Washington, D.C. place resident urban youth at a disadvantage when considering the influences that shape their identity. To combat these circumstances, the communities must make a fundamental change to stress the importance of a strong family dynamic where possible. In the context of this paper, the family dynamic being referenced is a mother-father relationship. The family has the most prominent, persistent, and proximal effect in the developmental influence of children (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004). In a qualitative study performed by professors at UNC-Greensboro about youth reflections on the meaning of the loss of fathers, Hunter et al. (2006) showed that children believed there are some things "only a daddy can teach you" (431)—yet if their dad could have taught them anything he would be there (Heller et al., 2017). The positive effects of a father must be stressed within the lives of children growing up in masculinity driven violent neighborhoods. Research shows that organizational structure and stability must exist to help protect children from exposure to violence (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004). Redirecting efforts towards the strengthening of families and improving parenting skills can help reduce youth involvement with violence (Bell & Jenkins, 1993). The focus should switch towards mentoring youth and promoting positive outcomes through the cohesion of families, and such a focus should be in particular on fathers (Jekielek et al., 2002). Creating programs that emphasize increased family emotional cohesion, as well as the involvement of fathers and male mentors, is the first step to reducing the perpetuation of violence among the youth of violence-plagued communities (Gorman-Smith et al., 2004).

Success of Mentoring Programs

In one study looking at the effects of mentoring programs for disadvantaged youth in Chicago, the University of Chicago Crime Lab found that "participation in the [Becoming A Man (BAM) mentoring] program reduced total arrests during the intervention period by 28-35%, reduced violent-crime arrests by 45-50%, improved school engagement," and in the first study with follow-up data, "increased graduation rates by 12-19%" (Heller et al., 2017, 2). The study consisted of three randomized control trials that looked at the effect of mentoring programs. The first two randomized control trials dealt with the Chicago-based mentoring program called Becoming A Man. The first trial offered male youth the opportunity to participate in twenty-seven one-hour long sessions once a week during the school day. Within the sessions, the youth gathered together in groups and met to talk about their day and engage in group activities that simulated emotions that youth would feel in everyday scenarios. For instance, youth are split into two groups and told to extend their arms out chest high and extend their index fingers. Then the two groups race to lower a 10-foot plastic pipe to the ground, but all fingers must be touching the pipe at all times. The activity sparks frustration and blame for group members as upward pressure on the pipe leads to the pipe rising instead of falling. This forces the youth to "recognize that each of them contributes to the problem" and must coordinate to fix it (5).

The second trial was offered between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years at a local public school. The curriculum was extended so that the providers could go more in-depth with lesson plans and addressing issues. The program followed similar activities as the first trial. As youth went through the program, BAM stressed that situations require processing before committing actions. The program did "not tell youth that they should never fight, but rather helped them learn to distinguish between when they should versus should not fight" (38). It is imperative that the reasons underlying the decrement in violent acts via these mentoring initiatives must be understood, as well as the "surrounding perceived emotional, cultural, gender, and ecological demands that influence their self- and other-perceptions" (Stevenson et al., 2002, 474). Through this study, Heller et al. (2017) concluded that their results suggested that automaticity might help explain elevated rates of dropout and crime in distressed urban areas. Automaticity, in this context, describes the concept of youth acting without realizing and examining the special circumstance in which they are. The youth who participated in this randomized control trial gained knowledge of mentoring groups and benefited from a decrease in automaticity, allowing them to avoid conflicts with law enforcement and increase engagement in school (Heller et al., 2017). The results from this study on mentoring programs show how much these programs can benefit the male youth population in disadvantaged communities.

IV.   Methods

The data for this comparative study was collected through interviews conducted in academic settings, over the phone, or in person. A sample interview consisted of asking about the background of the mentor and their male mentor program, as well as learning about what mentoring tactics they believe work best (Appendix I). To better understand fatherhood and mentoring programs within the urban communities of Chicago and Washington, D.C., I chose to focus my interviews on individuals who were either academic scholars on fatherhood, worked within mentoring programs, or have acted as mentors more informally within youths' lives. I conducted personal interviews with seven individuals from Chicago and seven individuals from Washington, D.C., all of whom hold mentoring rolls in some capacity. All interviewees and their organizations can be found in Table A.

In the Spring of 2019, I was enrolled in a research-focused practicum on Gun Violence in which knowledgeable individuals and leaders in their respective fields, such as policing, community outreach, crime lab analysis, and mentoring, were invited speakers. Each individual was interviewed by members of the class. I was able to collect information regarding my specific research project from six of the invited individuals. Although these interviews did not specifically pertain to fatherhood and mentoring, each interview contained aspects that lead to a better understanding of the community of Chicago as a whole and allowed me to develop a proposal to look into male mentoring. From this class, I was able to interview Demeatreas Whatley, Jennifer Maddox, Harold Pollack, Miguel Cambray, Jadine Chou, and Alex Kotlowitz (Table A). These interviews helped to focus my research into a more specific direction and provided me with a better idea of how to compare the Chicago and Washington, D.C. communities.

I then decided to focus on contacting mentors and programs within both areas. The strengths that come with interviewing individuals working firsthand as mentors allowed me to understand what mentors believe are the best methods for helping guide kids. The personal stories that each mentor provided described their experiences with the young adolescents in these communities. This data allowed me, as an outsider, to understand and appreciate how impactful mentors can be. The weakness that comes with only interviewing mentors, besides Professor Waldo Johnson, is that bias may come with their experiences. Although their perspectives are extremely informational, experiences shape the way individuals emphasize subjective anecdotes and tell stories. Given their work, each mentor believes that the methods they use work best for their respective communities. I use this data to compare the mentoring methods and reasons why different communities and programs mentor in different ways. This project could be improved with the interviewing of the mentees or even the mothers; however, I decided, for the scope of this study, to focus solely on the stories of mentors. By interviewing mentees, I could have also gained important information about their firsthand experiences growing up and their time with the mentor programs. However, due to the vulnerability of the youth population and the recommendations of some mentors, I decided to exclude mentees from my research. Many of the mentors believed that it would be difficult to find youth whose parents would allow them to participate in such research. My efforts were thus directed at the mentors of the population.

Chicago Interviewees

I interviewed six mentors in Chicago who represent five different mentoring organizations, as well as one scholar on fatherhood.

I first interviewed Professor Waldo Johnson, an Associate Professor at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and scholar on fatherhood. My first interview occurred in April of 2019. At this time, my interview consisted of talking about fatherhood within the city of Chicago, specifically pertaining to African American youth. Professor W. Johnson explained the premise of the Fathers and Sons Communication Study (FSCS) he was conducting. The study helped to look at family dynamics between father/son and mentor/mentee dyads. Professor W. Johnson's knowledge of these relationships became the starting point for my qualitative research. I followed up with him in November of 2019 and discussed the results of the FSCS. In December, after the study was submitted, Professor W. Johnson and I went over the final results of his study and the path of my paper. Professor W. Johnson also discussed his older study, the Chicago Parenting Initiative Evaluation Study, which focused on young fathers in Chicago. This helped me learn the impact of male support services for the physical and psychological well-being of young fathers.

I interviewed Vondale Singleton, who is the founder of Culturally Helping And Making Positive Success Male Mentoring (CHAMPS). Singleton grew up without his father in his life and his mother died at an early age of a drug overdose. His life story was extremely fascinating and highlighted the time in his life where he could have benefited from a mentor. As he moved in and out of prison, his life eventually turned around with the help of a mentor. Through this positive influence in his life, Singleton created CHAMPS. He was able to take his experiences and help create a program to help young adolescent males who are experiencing some of the same issues within his community.

With the help of a classmate in my Public Policy Practicum class on Gun Violence, I was able to submit questions to help interview Rueben Johnson. R. Johnson is a Youth Development Coach at UCAN Chicago. UCAN Chicago is a fairly large mentoring program within the Chicago area. It was interesting to hear what R. Johnson finds to be the most effective means of mentoring. R. Johnson focused on making himself equal to the kids rather than a superior figure. This insight was extremely rewarding in helping to diversify mentoring methods.

I traveled to Chicago Hope Academy (CHA) to interview Kevin Drewyer and Charles Landrum. CHA is a rigorous prep school on the West Side of Chicago. A large number of their students are on financial aid. Drewyer holds an administrative position at CHA, as well as acting as a football and rugby coach. Landrum acts as a teacher and pastor at the school. Landrum was in a gang at one point as his uncle was the founder of the Vice Lords, a prominent and still existing gang in Chicago. Both Drewyer and Landrum work in various mentoring capacities. They were able to share valuable stories and methods that they use to relate to their students. The most beneficial part of the interview was their insight into the underlying problems within the culture and how the parents guide their children, as well as how important mentors' influence is in these adolescents' lives.

I interviewed Sheldon Smith, the director of the Dovetail Project, and attended a class at which he spoke about the work he has done in the Chicago area. The Dovetail Project is a program designed to help educate young adolescent fathers on felony street law, life skills, and parenting skills. This program aims to promote a desire for young adolescent fathers to stay in their children's lives. Smith grew up without a father in his life and struggled with having a positive role model. At age 16 he went to jail for armed robbery. This was a turning point in his life when he realized that he had the potential of being a better individual. He created the Dovetail Project to help bring fathers and children together. His stories showed the problems fathers face within the Chicago area that causes them to become absent in their children's lives. With his mentoring work on staying involved in fatherhood, the Dovetail Project has been able to demonstrate the importance of fatherhood.

I interviewed Marshaun Bacon of Becoming A Man (BAM) over the phone. Bacon's insight into the creation of BAM and how BAM operated supplemented the existing quantitative data

showing that these mentoring programs do, in fact, work. Bacon is currently helping to set up more BAM programs across the nation, including one in Boston and, most recently in Seattle.

Washington, D.C. Interviewees

I interviewed seven individuals in Washington, D.C. who represent five different mentoring organizations.

My interview with Daon Johnson was one of the most passionate conversations I had. D. Johnson had a special passion that drove him to become the director of mentorship at Mentoring to Manhood, a program for male mentoring within a larger network called Community Youth Advanced. As Program Director, he was able to provide specifics on the scheduling, as well as unique aspects of his mentoring program. D. Johnson stressed the importance of creating a rite of passage for young men to complete so that they might feel better integrated with society.

David Bowers is the Mentoring Chair of 100 Black Men DC. Bowers grew up in a nurturing environment that allowed him to remain motivated throughout high school and college. In high school, he was involved with a male mentoring program in Washington, D.C. called Concerned Black Men, which I tried unsuccessfully to contact several times. This was his first exposure to mentoring, which followed him to college as he became a mentor in Charlottesville while attending the University of Virginia. Bowers then pursued mentoring as a profession and quickly became the Mentoring Chair for 100 Black Men. He provided oversight of the entire program and the demographics of youth enrolled in his program. He offered a very unique perspective on mentoring in the Washington, D.C. area as someone who has been involved in mentoring his whole life.

I interviewed Cameron Miles who is the director of Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood (MMTH) from the Washington, D.C and Baltimore area. Although this program is geographically furthest from my intended point of study, MMTH mentors young teens from the Washington, D.C. area. Miles discussed the importance of group mentoring that takes place at MMTH. He talked about the struggles that youth in his program go through and the importance of not allowing failure to be an option. His key insights on group mentoring allowed me to understand a different dynamic of mentoring.

From Big Brothers Big Sisters, I interviewed both the Senior Program Manager Rukia Malipula and one of the mentors Daniel Zaglama. Big Brothers Big Sisters provides mentoring for both girls and boys, however, Malipula focused on their male mentoring program in specific and was able to provide valuable insight into the process of securing mentors. She stressed what they look for when interviewing potential mentors and how they ensure consistency among the volunteers. Malipula also introduced me to Zaglama who has worked as a volunteer mentor at Big Brothers Big Sisters for a couple of years. It was very useful to hear his perspective of physically mentoring a young male. Zaglama talked about the daily schedule with his mentee and the obstacles he has faced.

Finally, I interviewed Jason Slattery, the Director of Mentoring, and Marika Jones, a mentor, from the DC Dream Center, a Christian-based mentoring center in Southeast D.C. Slattery provided me with the story of how the DC Dream Center evolved as well as his life story with mentoring. He provided additional insight into the process of hiring volunteers and his thoughts on how to strengthen the availability of mentor programs and the work they do. Jones complemented Jason's thoughts on the specific role a mentor plays in his mentee's life.

Table A: Interviewees

Name:	Title:	Type of Interview:	Date:
Demeatreas Whatley*	Cure Violence Outreach Worker, Former Gangster Disciple (Chicago)	In Person^	April 9, 2019
Jennifer Maddox*	Chicago Police Department Officer, Member of Future Ties (Chicago)	In Person^	April 16, 2019
Harold Pollack*	The University of Chicago SSA, Co-Director of UChicago Crime Lab (Chicago)	In Person^	April 16, 2019
Miguel Cambray*	Director of Career Pathways for READI, Heartland Alliance (Chicago)	In Person^	April 23, 2019
Jadine Chou*	Chief Safety and Security Officer at Chicago Public Schools (Chicago)	In Person^	May 7, 2019
Alex Kotlowitz*	Author of *An American Summer* (Chicago)	In Person^	May 9, 2019
Waldo Johnson Jr.	Associate Professor at The University of Chicago SSA, an expert on Fatherhood (Chicago)	In Person In Person In Person In Person	April 26, 2019; November 13, 2019; December 5, 2019; February 5, 2020
Vondale Singleton Sr.	Founder of CHAMPS Male Mentoring (Chicago)	Phone	May 1, 2019
Reuben Johnson	Program Supervisor of Violence Intervention and Prevention at UCAN Chicago (Chicago)	Recording	May 13, 2019
Kevin Drewyer	Director of Real Estate Ventures at Chicago Hope Academy, Varsity Sports Coach (Chicago)	In Person	May 22, 2019
Charles Landrum	Head Pastor of Harvest House Church in Austin neighborhood, Chicago Hope Homes (Chicago)	In Person	May 22, 2019
Sheldon Smith	Founder and Executive Director at the Dovetail Project (Chicago)	In Person# Phone	November 6, 2019; February 3, 2020
Marshaun Bacon	Mentor at Becoming A Man (Chicago)	Phone	February 14, 2020
Daon Johnson	Director of Mentorship at Mentoring to Manhood (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	December 2, 2019

David Bowers	Mentoring Chair at 100 Black Men DC (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	December 3, 2019
Cameron Miles	Director of Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	January 9, 2020
Rukia Malipula	Senior Program Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	January 10, 2020
Daniel Zaglama	Mentor at Big Brothers Big Sisters (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	January 13, 2020
Jason Slattery	Director of Mentoring at DC Dream Center (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	January 22, 2020
Marika Jones	Mentor at DC Dream Center (Washington, D.C.)	Phone	January 29, 2020

[*] Interviewees who helped influence and focus my topic

[^] Interviews that occurred during PBPL 26302—Public Policy Practicum: Interview Project on Gun Violence, a University of Chicago Public Policy course; Spring 2019

[#] Interview that occurred during PBPL 25860—Crime, Justice, and Inequality in the American City, a University of Chicago Public Policy course; Autumn 2019

V. Data and Analysis

Chicago Mentor Programs

My interviews in Chicago led me to identify three reoccurring themes between the outlets: the importance of fatherhood; developing an identity; and interpersonal consistency. Throughout these interviews, I use the term 'youth' to reference when mentors are talking about the male youth population that they serve.

Importance of Fatherhood

Each of the men who I interviewed in Chicago had a unique perspective on fatherhood, but the underlying message was always the same: these kids need a father-figure involved in their lives. The impact that fathers have on a child's life, especially a son's life, is very important. In the Chicago area, the multitude of mother-headed, single-parent homes is evidence of the few households that contain resident fathers. Although this is not precluding male involvement in children's lives, as there are households that could have non-resident male influence, the most consistent type of father involvement is missing. This leaves mothers with requirements of work, cleaning, and guiding their children to navigate the neighborhoods. In R. Johnson's work at UCAN, he deals with a lot of kids who are navigating their lives living in single-parent homes. When talking about overcoming that disadvantage, R. Johnson (personal communication, May 13, 2019)[1] said, "Every parent plays a role, so when you're missing that you're missing out on a lot. I think the answer depends on the situation. It depends on the kid and who they are with, and who they are missing." It is argued that when a youth remains unsupervised either due to lack of care, or the inability of the parent to watch them due to extraneous circumstances, the probability that they engage in violence is increased: "youth who are likely to be engaged in violent activities as perpetrators are much more likely to be youths who are unsupervised which means in households where they do not have their dads" (W. Johnson, April 26, 2019). A father or male figure is necessary to give the youth growing up in these communities the role modeling needed to move away from this behavior. With the increasing amount of gun violence and gang activity in Chicago, the presence of a father is important. Singleton (May 1, 2019) stated how much family matters to these kids: "I like to say the problem starts from the family of origin. If the family isn't there on this arduous road then these problems are bound to happen at a very high rate. That's why I'm a miracle because statistically, I was supposed to be dead or locked up by the age of 18." The opinions that both R. Johnson and Singleton have about a male youth's family, and in particular their father, is supported by the research of Douvan and Adelson (1966) where they demonstrated that autonomous adolescents had supportive parents and adolescents without supportive parents were not. Likewise, Hunter et al. (2006) showed that without a supportive father antisocial outcomes like violence, crime, and early paternity are all increased.

When a father is absent, a mother has to not only be the single source of income, but they have to take on every other role of providing physically and emotionally for a child. The burden that falls on a single mother is often too much to efficaciously parent the children. The aid of mentoring programs becomes the perfect support system. Mothers are assisted with the guidance

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[1]All proceeding direct quotations from interviews are cited with dates.

of positive male role models. In the Fathers and Sons Communication Study, Professor W. Johnson found that the mothers still want the father to try and have some impact on the kids' lives:

> When moms found out about the study, they wanted to get their son's dad involved even if the father and she do not have the best relationship. They realize that as their sons begin to get to adolescent age, they move out to the streets and navigate the neighborhoods and so having their dads involved to kind of educate them about navigating the streets can be really important (November 13, 2019).

The presence of a male role model in these communities can completely change a son's perspective and behavior within his neighborhood. Having a grown man who has gone through much of the same experiences is extremely valuable to the youth.

I learned the importance of having a father figure in these children's lives through the negative experiences some of these mentors had with their fathers. Singleton, in particular, was extremely passionate about the role of a father in these kids' lives. He had specific traumatic experiences growing up with the older males in his life. Children learn from their role models' lives, whether positive or negative. The environment that youth are brought up in plays a large part in their decision making. Singleton (May 1, 2019) discussed the experience of his father justifying his involvement with guns, drugs, and violence:

> I was 5 when my father first started selling drugs on the South Side of Chicago in the Ida B. Wells housing project, 514 E 36th Street, apartment 202. I remember it vividly. I remember my dad put the gun and the drugs under the mattress and said, "Son, don't touch this, the reason why I'm selling these drugs is to take care of you. This is my means of providing for you because if I have drugs, I have to have a gun because the gun is my protection of someone else taking my drugs."

The problem here reaches beyond just the negative influence of Singleton's father. The toxic lifestyle engulfs impoverished communities. The lifestyles that children grow up in and experience normalize the violent and drug-present culture. Having your role model teach you that guns, drugs, and violence are the way to navigate and survive the environment sends the wrong message. This experience that Singleton had supplements the study conducted by Gorman-Smith et al. (2004) where they show the effects of family functioning and the increased risk for community violence among struggling families. Smith (November 6, 2019) of the Dovetail project argued the importance of "having a real-life conversation to get to the real talk about what is going on in the father's lives." By addressing the negative culture that some fathers partake in, the Dovetail Project attempts to mentor these fathers so that they can be better role models for their kids. Smith believes that "If you really want to help fathers stay in their children's lives, you need to learn how to best keep those fathers from the streets." Teaching fathers the importance of fatherhood helps to limit the broken trust that exists in many of these relationships. Singleton (May 1, 2019) says, "These kids, when they were 5 had their fathers tell them they are gonna come by and do X, Y, Z. But now these kids are sitting by the window and the father ain't show up. And the father doesn't show up week after week until the father finally shows up and says 'oh I'm sorry, something came up. You know I've got stuff to do.'" These experiences help to explain what Bell & Jenkins (1991) termed as 'futurelessness', in which male youth eventually develop symptoms from not having a father that lead to a sense of thinking that they will not amount to anything other than what they

currently see. Limiting this behavior of fathers in these communities will help to strengthen the bond between fathers and sons.

Without a father, one yearns to find a replacement—whether it be an uncle, a coach, or the streets; "Most people would say their fathers are their first heroes. Not Batman, not Superman, but their father-man is their first hero. The streets become a surrogate father; they go to what's close, what's available because they are still trying to figure out who they are" (Singleton, May 1, 2019). The void that exists without a male role model in one's life will eventually be filled by whoever or whatever embodies those characteristics. Landrum (May 22, 2019) demonstrated this:

> It's weird because guys who are a couple of years younger than me look at me as a father because that dynamic is missing so much so in our community… Having that hands-on, face to face interaction and trying to be consistently viewed as that person who is from here, still here, but not of the bad parts.

Landrum shows that even an individual like himself can be a positive influence on men who are almost the same age as him and have not had that presence in their life. Professor W. Johnson conducted another study in which he was interested in seeing the rate of involvement with father figures in adolescents' lives in Chicago:

> It was a weekend focused on trying to prevent these young males from becoming young fathers…we allowed young men to participate but they needed to bring with them the adult male in their lives who they thought had the most influence. The interesting thing about it was that when the weekend came up, all of the youth brought along with them the adult male, but even among the ones where the father lived with them those were not always the people that they brought (W. Johnson, April 26, 2019).

Due to the environment in the South and West sides of Chicago, a strong discord exists between the involvement of their fathers and youth. Without positive father figures, youth males have to grow up struggling to find their identity on their own. Mentoring programs allow for a positive influence to help guide the youth to find their place in society.

Developing an Identity

The second theme that appeared within the data was "developing an identity." With all of the interviews, the mentors discussed the struggle that youth in their programs have with developing an identity. In most cases, due to the lack of supervision, the youth develop their identity through their experiences of peers rather than through their parents. With the absence of resident fathers, the mothers are strained and cannot properly parent, as discussed earlier. This leaves the male youth figuring out their identity themselves with whatever means are accessible. Singleton (May 1, 2019) claims that the absence of a father in the households contributes to the issue of youth being involved in gun violence:

> I'd say 90% are living and going through the South end and West sides of Chicago without fathers inside the home. That's a problem, to begin with. No father means no strong male figure in the home to balance out the family. The moms are working

one, two, three jobs to take care of multiple siblings with no man. Right there, you have situations where there is a break down in identity. So, where does a young man go to find his identity? They go to the streets, to what's close to what's familiar, to what they see. It's what's available at a particular time. When you break down the layers of Chicago and you look at gangs and territories and how all of that started, it started because there was no father in the home that was consistently supporting those young men.

Growing up without a father, children and adolescents do not receive the lessons a father figure normally teaches to his children. The child has no prosocial supports in developing a prosocial identity. The male youth then end up falling into antisocial traps due to the missing knowledge and balance from a father's parenting. The culture that has developed and persisted almost makes kids entry into the gangs inevitable, "Where does a young man go to find his identity? They go to the streets, to what's close to what's familiar, to what they see. It's what's available at a particular time" (Singleton, May 1, 2019). In these communities that breed gangs, violence is a daily experience within a child's life. Matteson (1975) explains that one's identity is formulated through their cultural expectation of autonomy. In the case of these male youth, the cultural expectation that sometimes surrounds them is the ever-present gang culture. How can one expect a kid not to gravitate towards the one constant thing that they know in their life?

According to Landrum (May 22, 2019), youth experience a lack of identity that can make mentoring more difficult:

Some of the obstacles, of course, are the fatherless-ness and the lack of identity. So, you just aren't speaking to an issue when you're talking to these kids. I worked at a youth program and thousands of kids would come, and I'd have hundreds of conversations up against a person who has zero identity. You are up against an ingrained mentality of a person who has zero identity. So, when you say, "pull up your pants and stop sagging" and they respond, "why do you care?" You have to teach that having someone see your underwear is unprofessional. "Well, why do I want to be professional?" Because one day you want to have a job and be successful. Most of their families are on public assistance or selling drugs or something. So, you are literally peeling an onion when talking to these kids.

The existing baggage that a lot of the mentees carry with them can stem from no adult figure being there to guide from an early age. When a societal norm becomes a child's belief that they have no future beyond what they see during daily activities, their motivation to do something else with their life dwindles without proper guidance. Additionally, the male youths' ability to know of what else they could potentially do is probably not developed either. Chicago Hope Academy strives to create a different environment for these kids every day in hopes to create a different outlook on life. Horowitz et al. (2005) showed that if one can limit the influence of the neighborhood on a child, they are more likely not to mold into the cultural norm.

Drewyer told me a story about a high school senior. Drewyer described the senior as a smart kid, a great athlete, and ready to graduate from Chicago Hope Academy. Drewyer (May 22, 2019) displayed disappointment and hopelessness as he told the story:

I'm just thinking of *Student 1* here. Last day of final exams, the kid got up and walked out of the exam. He's now going to flunk and not get a high school degree. Smart kid too. What causes a kid to do that? To get up and throw in the towel three hours from graduation. I said to Bob [Founder of Chicago Hope Academy] "These kids are afraid to try because they don't have enough people in their lives that have gone successfully into society and integrated." Most of the people the children are brought up around have a similar life…If he passes high school, first you get some parents that don't encourage their kids with succeeding because the more they succeed, the worse they as parents look. Some of the parents are not that encouraging. And then the kids catch on with how shitty their parents have been. Some of the kids are not afraid to fail, they are afraid to have an opportunity to succeed because then if they don't make it, they tried and then they failed. If they don't try, they don't fail. They are fine and just where everyone else expects them to be. I think it's really fearful for these kids to try and step their best foot forward and try to succeed. That road…They don't know where it goes. It's frightening. It's like sailing off into the Atlantic Ocean and thinking the water drops off the edge of the world. They know where they've been, and they like it there. They are perfectly comfortable there.

Drewyer's expressions turned to a state of hopelessness as he discussed parents talking their kids out of trying to be successful and make something of themselves. The challenge of creating an identity falls short with the lack of positive motivation from parental figures. The use of mentor programs to help guide this youth population and validate their success is needed to create a better sense of identity.

The lack of any or minimal consistent, positive influence when youth are growing up in these rough environments almost justifies their actions if they follow the societal norm. Male youth who have weak positive relationships have an increased risk of being affected by their environment (Slovak et al., 2017). To combat this, mentoring programs must try to create those strong bonds with the kids to give them something to aspire to be. A common trait of identity that was mentioned was the youth's lack of fear. Landrum (May 22, 2019) stated that "a lot of these kids have no fear. They don't fear going to jail. They look at their lives with no hope and view jail as being no worse than what they are in now. It could be even better—Jail is three hots [meals] and a cot." Everything about gangs, gun violence, and drugs is normalized when a child views the lifestyle of the streets as the only way they can live their life. Adolescents in the South and West side communities end up using violence in their lives because that is what they know:

A lot of the kids I work with really don't fear anything. The trick or idea is to give them something to live for…I think a lot of adults try to take what these kids are feeling and validate that. I always say that kids who we work with aren't different from the youth in, say, Lakeview (a more affluent neighborhood on the North side of Chicago). Our youth were just taught a different way of handling their anger or solving conflict (R. Johnson, May 13, 2019).

It is not always the fault of the kids for having a flawed or undeveloped identity. Without the presence of a strong, positive male role model to help guide the youth in a masculinity-driven

society, the kids resort to what they know and grow up around. The environment and culture of these neighborhoods validate their actions and infects the other youth growing up around them.

Consistency Through Mentor Programs

The third major theme that evolved from the data was consistency through mentor programs. For adolescents who have sought help from mentoring programs, they have been able to rely on positive role models through troubling times in their lives. Mentoring programs allow youth to find guidance, a way off the street, and escape violence. Through interviewing mentors, I have focused on individuals who have committed their lives to provide support in troubled areas of Chicago. Each interviewee spoke of explicit instances with youth and how their consistent presence has helped to influence their lives.

When talking to Singleton (May 1, 2019), he attributed his entire life's work to the male mentor in his youth life:

> In 1998, I called Steven Ray Robinson during my senior year of college and asked him "how do I pay you back sir for what you have done for me?" He said, "the way that you pay me back is the same thing I did for you but for someone else." So, I took those words as gospel to me to create a movement on how to pay this man back because you've got to understand something—a kid growing up on the South Side of Chicago is already difficult enough. But a kid growing up on the South Side of Chicago whose mom is addicted to drugs who dies on him at age 14 who didn't even see his 8th-grade graduation is even more difficult. So, you're listening to a voice of trauma, of pain, of struggle, of adversity, of obstacles. […] What excuse will someone who has been in my situation have if I overcame all of that? But it wouldn't have been possible without a mentor, someone coming alongside and guiding me down the right path. I am really grateful through his mentorship that I was able to come full circle and create the CHAMPS Male Mentoring program.

Most of the individuals I interviewed had similar experiences of being a mentee at one point in their lives. They each considered the mentors one of the most influential individuals throughout their development. Likewise, these mentors view themselves as being the most important influence on their mentee's lives. Their work extends to such a wide range of kids, those who are involved in gangs at various levels and those who are not, but this diversity only improves mentoring tactics.

R. Johnson (May 13, 2019) found that he had the greatest success with 'mentoring' by working with all kids: "If I am going to hang out with a kid and he is hanging out with his friend, I am going to hang out with them both whether they are risk-averse or not." A mentor's job is not to just focus on one child and be a consistent presence in their life. A mentor's job is to positively impact the community that their mentee engages with. Their presence in a community helps to spread awareness to the youth population and creates a more profound impact on their mentee's life. Jekielek et al. (2002) proved that by promoting positive outcomes within the youth being mentored and their community, these mentoring programs can have the greatest effect. R. Johnson has adopted this strategy and believes that this can have the biggest impact on a male youth's life.

Mentoring has the greatest effect on the adolescent's life when a sense of trust can be established through continuous interaction. At UCAN, R. Johnson described the mentor's job of trying to act more like a friend rather than an adult figure to gain a greater level of trust. R. Johnson

(May 13, 2019) told the story of a young man who was "shot four times trying to make some money for the family while out hustling." The young male had lots of problems with R. Johnson at the beginning of their relationship, but, after a year of his mentor's continued support and presence, he finally opened up.

The violent communities desensitize the youth's mental state, making the mentor's job of reversing their ideals and providing extensive guidance extremely tough. The youth growing up without positive role models in these communities need mentors in their lives to look out for them, be there for them, and help guide them away from the otherwise inevitable. Landrum (May 22, 2019) stated it as:

> You asked, "how do you deal with someone with the mentality of no hope?" And the way that I deal with that is that you have to show them that they have value. You have to invest in them. Kids aren't stupid. They recognize if you're spending time with them. You begin to start opening that up. In the case of rugby, I used to think that yelling at me meant you cared because normally people just ignore me. And you can't fake it. A lot of people want to help but you don't have the time to help. If you don't have the time, you can't just pop up once a week. […] If you get close to a kid, it will be a couple of weeks and then they will start acting weird. Like they go back to where it was at the beginning. In their minds, this is getting good, so this has to come to an end. They think you're going to bail on them and give up and it's this way because of a lot of times, people do. You work with this kid and you get him somewhere and then they start pushing away and then if you let them go, they're gone.

Just as any child growing up deserves respect and attention, those growing up in a toxic environment plagued with violence, drugs, and guns deserve even more. Consistency in the mentee's lives becomes one of the most important aspects of the mentor's job.

Even with the successful impact mentor programs have had on the Chicago communities, there are still flaws within the system that cannot fill the void of a consistent, strong male figure in some youths' lives. Kevin Drewyer (May 22, 2019) explained the influence of race with mentoring the youth on the West side of Chicago:

> This is really an African American community that would best be mentored by African American men. As much good as Hope is doing, people are hesitant about it. It's white guys coming in trying to help the black kids. There is a different perception of white men coming in and reaching down to these kids and being condescending. There is much more validity and better reception to African American men mentoring. Unfortunately, it puts a ton of pressure on the African American community that is trying to help save these kids and their own homes.

With so many single-parent, mother-headed households in Chicago, children are not receiving consistent support from a father figure. Although sons growing up in mother-headed homes might have contact with non-resident fathers, the male youth are lacking a consistent presence of a father, leaving them to figure some things out on their own. Mentoring programs are an answer, but not the full solution. With such limited resources, such as males that positively represent their communities who want to spend their lives mentoring kids, mentoring programs can only affect

so many kids. There needs to be a structural change of culture within the community itself so that the next generation mentors by example. A conclusion to a study on mentorship states, "The focus should switch towards mentoring youth and promoting positive outcomes through the cohesion of families, and in particular fathers" (Jekielek et al., 2002). Mentors can help facilitate this change by switching the societal norm that currently exists to allow the next generation of youth to grow up in a healthier environment.

Marshaun Bacon of Becoming A Man described the effect of what a consistent mentoring program can do for male youth. Bacon (February 14, 2020), who got involved with BAM early on with the launch of the program, explained their curriculum and success:

> There are four pieces that lead to our success. There is the safe space that the BAM counselor creates—the check-ins and being able to allow the students to be vulnerable. There are the group games that we do with the kids, as well as discussions and education. The curriculum and the core values play a huge part in what is relatable to the kids so that they can internalize everything. Lastly, they get pulled out of school once a week for a consistent program. We look at these notions of manhood and masculinity that they face and help to decide what fits for [the youth] from a value perspective. We look at integrity, self-determination, positive anger-expression, accountability, respect for womanhood, and visionary goal setting.

BAM has shown through its organizational structure and consistency how it helps to develop and protect young men from violence, as well as increasing school engagement and graduation rates (Heller et al., 2017). As Gorman-Smith et al. (2004) describe, the organizational structure in youths' lives helps to contribute to positive outcomes and navigation of youth violence. The quantitative studies that have surrounded BAM reveal the success that the mentoring program has had and shows promising results for other mentoring initiatives that can follow a consistent pattern for supporting male youth.

Washington, D.C. Mentor Programs

My interviews in Washington, D.C. allowed me to find three reoccurring themes between the outlets: filling the absence of fatherhood (i.e., closing the gap), pairing similar interests, and coming together as a group.

Closing the Gap

The first theme from the Washington, D.C. mentors was Closing the Gap (i.e., filing the absence of fatherhood). The mentor programs in Washington, D.C., acknowledge the disadvantage that exists among youth with and without fathers. A major focus of the mentoring programs is to try and "close the gap" that is created so that every youth in their programs are on equal footing with guidance. Without a father in a male youth's life, they are lacking a figure to model their life on. D. Johnson (December 2, 2019) described the difference between youth who do and do not have a father in their household: "We talk about the difference between the young man that doesn't have a father and one that grows up in a nuclear household, we call that a gap…I would say for the young men who do not have a father that lives in their house, one of the greatest ramifications

is a sense of modeling and identity." D. Johnson mentions the guidance that fathers provide with molding an identity. When young men in this environment do not have strong, positive fathers to base their character and actions on, they generally lack a moral compass to help them decide between right and wrong.

Fathers are such an important part of a young man's development, not just for a sense of modeling and identity, but also for emotional development. Young boys look up to both their parents but can better relate to their fathers because of their gender (Bernard, 1981; Matteson, 1975). They look up to their fathers for acceptance and approval that they are hopefully going to become the man that their dad is. D. Johnson sees this problem and acknowledges that although a mentor cannot fill the gap of not having a father, they can be the older man to whom the mentee looks up to:

> Along with identity, I think this goes with how men are wired. When men really father there is an affirmation component that I think a man brings to the table that a female typically does not bring. And I think all of us as men, even me, a 50-year-old male, we long to be affirmed by other men. We seek that affirmation just so someone can pat us on the butt and say good-job and we seek that from another male. Because then it confirms our manhood and lets us know that we are okay. Along with the identity and the modeling, I think that affirmation is also a critical component (D. Johnson, December 2, 2019).

The affirmation that D. Johnson is talking about is lost in the gap when there is no father or male role model in a male youth's life. It is so important that as kids are growing up there is someone of the same gender providing them behavioral structure. By having mentors focus on closing the paternal gap in these male adolescents' lives, the mentors are able to shape the young boys' actions, especially as one's identity is most often exaggerated through cultural stereotypes (Barker, 1998).

David Bowers recognizes the special need for a connection between male youth and male role models. Without the presence of a caring, older male figure in the lives of youth males, there is an inherent part of their nurturing process that is missing:

> When we deal with young men who don't have a father present in their life, the mentoring program takes on extra significance in their life…The ability to have someone who can in some way provide some of that type of exposure, nurturing dynamic in their life is a good thing. So obviously, a mentor is not an exact replacement, but someone who can provide good nurturing, good guidance and fill some sort of void, if you would, in terms of lessons and models. Some stuff is kind of universal and can be helpful whether you come from no parents, one parent, or two parents. That being said, if you are a young male and you do not have a male role model in your home, you know a nurturing, loving male presence in your immediate family, the ability to find a caring adult male who pours into their life is certainly helpful (Bowers, December 3, 2019).

Mothers in these communities can nurture and guide their children. However, a father figure can be more helpful because these violent communities are driven by masculinity. Stevenson et al. (2002) proved that male youth growing up without a father present in their lives are more likely to be overaggressive. Over aggressiveness is exactly what mentors like Bowers and D. Johnson are

trying to prevent in Washington, D.C. Male mentors act as the type of figure that can help prevent violence and over aggression in the youth's life because of the fact they are older males that show interest in the youth's life. The nurturing male presence for a youth male completely transforms how they shape themselves and act.

Like-Minded Individuals

The data then pointed to the theme of like-minded individuals being able to play an impactful role in youths' lives. The ability to connect mentors with specific interests to mentees who share those same interests can have a profound effect on the fruitfulness of their relationship. At the DC Dream Center, the relationship between the mentor and mentee starts upon a volunteer's interview with Jason Slattery:

> We meet with prospective mentors and mentees and getting to know each of them as people. In a sense, I am really like a matchmaker attempting to match personalities. My hope and intentions and my prayer, asking God for help, to find good matches for our mentors and mentees. If you meet a child who has gone through domestic abuse. I am trying to think who might be someone that can be really sensitive and step into this role (Slattery, January 22, 2020).

Each male youth that enters a mentoring program is different—some will come from better backgrounds than others, some will have experienced traumatic episodes, and some will have only their mother in their life. Slattery makes it his job then to most accurately pair a mentor with what the mentee needs. Mentees are most likely at a fragile state in their lives. With the proper mentor, one who holds the same interests, one who likes the same food, or one who carries a certain personality trait that the mentee might need, the relationship between the two can blossom into a trusting connection. Rather than locality and upbringing being the only common trait between a mentor and mentee, Slattery (January 22, 2020) believes that common personality traits will lead to a stronger relationship: "It's really meeting with folks and figuring who is perfect and matches with one of the mentees personalities…I would consider it more art than science."

Similarly, Big Brothers Big Sisters requires a rigorous interview to ensure that the mentor will be a fit for a mentee in their program. For a lot of these male children in their program, there has been a lack of consistency throughout their life. Rukia Malipula (January 10, 2020) stressed that by also connecting a mentor and mentee through similar interests, their relationship will be more consistent and that is really what the child needs:

> Consistency is the key to make sure that this child is okay. We always try to match kids with similar interests. Do not change yourself, be yourself. In the first few weeks, the kids are going to test you. The kids will think 'Let's see how long [the mentor is] going to last because my daddy was there when I was born and now, he's not. Same with my uncle. Same with my mommy's boyfriend who was playing daddy with me. Same with any older male that has been in their life. He's gone.' They are going to test you.

It is important to understand that when dealing with male youth in distressed communities the thing that can help them the most is having someone who they can talk to about anything and who

will give them the proper attention. Most of the male youth within these programs come from single-mother homes. Malipula discusses the hardships that these children face with what she termed "the multiple sibling effect." She stated that "people don't know how much stress there is. Every child needs one to one attention at one point in their life. The quietest kid normally suffers" (January 10, 2020). What Malipula is describing is the effect that occurs when a family has multiple siblings who take away their parental figures' time and attention from one another. Without this attention, male youth rely on other means to seek advice from and to model behavior off of. In distressed communities where some mother-headed, single-parent households have two, three, or four kids, the effects are heightened. Finding a like-minded mentor for these male youth to converse with, play with, and learn from can help mitigate these effects. By finding individuals that have similar interests, the mentees are potentially more likely to reach out for support and display the "coping strategy" discussed earlier (Hall et al., 2008).

When mothers and parents come to the DC Dream Center, they express what they want for the child. Slattery (January 22, 2020) states, "Our parents are really humble and really want their kids to be part of this project. They will come here and spell things out for us and tell us that they really want another presence in their children's life." Through male mentoring programs, male youth can be paired with a mentor that they can connect with on a deeper level in hopes of developing a consistent, trusting relationship to model their behaviors after.

Taking Action Together

Two of the programs in the Washington, D.C. area stressed the importance of a group mentoring model to bring kids from multiple neighborhoods together. At Mentoring Male Teens, Cameron Miles (January 9, 2020) stressed the importance of bringing the young males together to change the perception and feelings they have towards one another outside of the program:

> Group mentoring is part of the goal because so many young men are killing one another we want them to learn how to get along with one another. So, by having a group process, young men are interacting with each other who are not from the same neighborhood, so the hope is when they see each other away from the program they are like, 'hey, we are in the same mentoring program' so there should be no beef. That's where it starts from my humble perspective.

Miles uses the growth and development of male youth from all areas in the program to try and spread the message of peace among them outside of the walls of the program. On the first Saturday of the month, Mentoring Male Teens comes together and focuses on tutoring for all the kids to improve their education and involvement with schoolwork. On the third Saturday of every month, they bring all the teens together and arrange to have a special guest role model come speak with the boys. The intention here is again to promote the inclusion of one another and show the male youth that they are not alone in this developmental process.

Likewise, Mentoring to Manhood's director D. Johnson explained that it is important to show the male youth that their development is a group effort and not an individual one so that they can rely on one another. As a young man completes high school, D. Johnson puts on a Rite of Passage ceremony in which the boys together go from being a boy to "being held accountable to conduct their lives as men" (D. Johnson, December 2, 2019). The ceremony is anchored in what D. Johnson calls the "principles of manhood" and the ceremony causes the young men to vow that

they will live their lives in those principles, which now give them something to anchor their life on.

> The ceremony is a bunch of boys in a large auditorium. When we get to the rite of passage part of the ceremony, we have all the boys who are 18 and older come sit on the stage. Then, to the seniors, we tell them one at a time to step forward and bring any of the males in their family that are adults and the mentors in our program forward to then circle around the boy. We then tell him to kneel and ask him if he vows to abide by the four principles: to accept responsibility, to reject passivity, to lead courageously, and to lead eternally…We do that with each individual boy and then by the end of the program we have each boy on the stage with all the men (D. Johnson, December 2, 2019).

This ceremony that D. Johnson describes is the "calling card" of their program and brings together all of the boys one last time and pushes them to manhood together. After the boys have met every Saturday with each month being a different theme, the young males together graduate on to manhood with principles that anchor their life.

These programs find significance in not only having mentors to help guide young men but also having the young men be guided together to try and demonstrate to the male youth that they are not alone in this process. A process that brings together these boys, in some sense, helps to promote the "avoidant coping" strategy as deemed by Grant et al. (2000). By having these male youth come together, they can all learn together. Thus, the boys have a greater chance of becoming more cautious about using violence, realizing that they do not have to act like the typical masculinity driven man in their respective communities.

Comparing Mentor Programs

Through my qualitative research, I have concluded that there are three similarities that exist among the programs in Chicago and Washington, D.C.: lack of resources; lack of advertisement; and emphasis on active consistency from the mentors. The differences between the programs and approaches in the two cities derive from the type of mentoring and where the best mentors come from.

Similarities

Almost every program that I studied has a lack of resources in some capacity, whether it be volunteers to mentor, mentees themselves, space to mentor, or money to fund the programs, which often rely on private donations. Given that the research was all conducted in low socio-economic status areas, there is an even greater disadvantage for the male youth who can participate in mentoring programs. The disadvantaged communities generally lack resources, which can discourage kids from joining the programs due to diminished accessibility and the possibility of the mentoring programs not having enough capacity to accept every kid, leaving some on waiting lists.

Furthermore, besides the mentoring program's presence on the internet through a simple Google search, there are almost no means of advertising for the programs other than by word of mouth. When talking with the Director of Mentorship for all of the programs, they mainly stated

that the mothers of mentees in their programs are the biggest advocates for them, meaning that the mothers who have children in the programs do the most amount of publicizing for the mentoring initiatives. Some of the programs mentioned that a few of the young men receive recommendations to join the programs either through the court and criminal justice system or by the principal of their respective public school. Without these programs being advertised on a greater scale, they will never fully achieve the outreach potential that they are capable of.

In the same way, there is no general recruitment of mentors, which can limit the amount of youth that the program can mentor. Generally, the mentors either grew up having a mentor themselves, living in the same community that the program caters towards, or are just individuals who have a passion to make a change in the lives of disadvantaged youth. The mentors that I talked to started participating either by knowing someone involved in a specific program or by completing a Google search about volunteer opportunities. The lack of publicity might be advantageous because then the individuals who are attempting to become volunteer mentors are truly passionate about the cause if they are making the effort to conduct the necessary research to get involved. However, I believe that with more advertising, individuals who do not know about the existence of such programs might become willing to commit their time to help male youth navigate their pre-adolescent and adolescent years, and thus, allow for more mentors within the system.

On the same note, the mentors that do choose to volunteer within these programs must fully commit themselves to the program, as well as the male youth. The most important aspect of mentoring stated by every program that I talked to was consistency. The majority of the mentees just assume that the mentors will be in and out of their lives in a couple of weeks, based on their previous life experiences. In order to fully gain their trust, mentors must demonstrate full commitment and interest in their mentee's life regardless of the challenges they face while mentoring. But it is not just consistency that is required. Sheldon Smith (February 3, 2020) said it the best when he explained that one cannot just be consistent: "I could be your mentor for ten years, but does that mean I was active? Does that mean I was calling you? Met with you? Invested time into you? It just means that I was a mentor for ten years. And so, part of mentorship is that you have to be an active body for an individual who needs someone in his life." This nuance is extremely important to show the young males that the mentors are there every step of the way to help guide and navigate them through their developmental process. To ensure the greatest success with mentorship pairings, mentoring programs need to only accept volunteer mentors who embody these principles.

Differences

Each program had its own ideology with how-to best mentor male youth; however, the greatest difference was between individual one-on-one mentoring and group mentoring methods for the best success. From these conversations, I do not believe that one is better than the other. I do believe, however, that they could complement one another, albeit if the programs have enough resources to do so. Most mentoring programs, and all but one that I interviewed, use either one method or the other. Individual mentoring is beneficial because a positive role model becomes completely present and focused on one male youth's life. The mentor can get extremely close with the mentee, learn about his problems, issues, and what makes him happy. They are able to take their mentee out for a meal and help him with his homework, all while providing life advice. The one thing missing, however, is helping the male youth learn to interact with other male youth. It is

easy to help talk them through situations with their peers from the past and future but is not as impactful as it would be if a mentor helped facilitate interactions between boys in neighboring communities.

Similarly, group mentoring programs have their benefits but fall short with their lack of personal attention given to each individual boy. Group mentoring programs focus a lot on teamwork and problem-solving. These programs draw in groups of male youth from various areas and backgrounds and force them to go through developmental programs together. If some of these boys are involved in conflict outside of the mentoring program due to their neighborhood differences or something that happened in school, they are now forced to work through these problems with one another at their mentoring program. Heller et al. (2017) has shown through their quantitative study on Becoming A Man that group mentoring programs are extremely beneficial for helping mitigate youth violence by promoting the idea that children from a neighborhood three blocks over are not any different than themselves. This promotes cohesion of the community and forces male youth to come together.

There were also some differences between Chicago and Washington, D.C. programs regarding where the best mentors for the male youth come from. The Chicago programs that I interviewed were generally smaller neighborhood programs, with the exception of UCAN. The mentors involved in these programs were mostly local adult males who either grew up in the neighborhood or were part of the programs themselves when they were younger. On the contrary, the Washington, D.C. programs were generally bigger programs, with Big Brother Big Sisters being a nationwide mentoring program. These programs had volunteers that stemmed from all different types of communities, including mentors who were not the same race as the mentees or who grew up in completely different socio-economic classes.

From the interviews, I understand the reasoning behind the differences in mentor populations. Generally, if you can have individuals from the same community mentor the youth, they often stand to have the greatest chance of relating to young males on a deeper level. They have either been in the program themselves or have experienced the everyday struggles that these youth experience. Mentors who have developed in these communities can provide the youth with personal anecdotes of how they navigated school, the streets, and their lives. In the case where there might not be enough of these individuals, it makes sense to allow volunteers from outside of the community to mentor. Nevertheless, as long as the mentor is able to be an active, consistent figure, he has the opportunity to change and positively impact his mentee's life.

VI.   Policy Recommendations

Every child and adolescent regardless of race, gender, and socio-economic status should have the ability to receive proper guidance in his or her life promoting the importance of school and discouraging violent behaviors to prevent them from a life of crime. Currently, there are limited programs to educate young fathers about the responsibilities of fatherhood, and in cases where the father is not present at all or in a beneficial way, male mentor programs to provide a positive role model for the lives of male youth, particularly in distressed communities. These two problems create obstacles for male youth seeking guidance from and modeling their lives after positive male role models, causing them to succumb to their sometimes-violent environments.

Introduction of Fatherhood Programs

To combat the problem of fatherlessness that causes male youth to grow up without a positive male role model in their lives, cities and communities with high rates of mother-headed, single-family homes should implement initiatives that follow a curriculum to promote the responsibilities of fatherhood. The Dovetail project, created by Sheldon Smith, is the perfect example of a program that can be implemented in even higher capacities to provide the opportunity for more young fathers to receive information and support on how to understand the importance of their presence in their children's lives and to be better dads.

I also recommend creating, alongside this implemented policy, a standardized program in which fathers have to apply for enrollment to promote competition and a strong desire to participate in the curriculum. The Dovetail Project has graduated 20 classes consisting of 521 total fathers in the city of Chicago (The Dovetail Project, 2019). The program itself is privately funded and has raised over $700,000 in funding from donors, corporate sponsors, and private foundations (The Dovetail Project, 2019). With the private donations and $100,000 of yearly grants from the respective municipalities, these programs could graduate four classes of 25-30 fathers every three months, following the curriculum of the Dovetail Project with a couple of personal changes. The money involved would help pay for the meeting space and fund the individuals leading the program.

The curriculum as it stands now consists of three four-week programs. The first block is dedicated to teaching the young fathers about interacting with law enforcement and their rights; the second block develops financial literacy and life skills to promote attractiveness for jobs; and the final block focuses on basic parenting skills. Based on evidence from other programs, as well as extensive literature on this topic, I recommend changing the program to shorten the first and second blocks to three weeks each so that half the program could be dedicated entirely to promoting better fatherhood practices. This would stress the values and themes I have learned from my interviews with mentors, including the promotion of an active, consistent and positive presence in their child's life and emphasis on the importance a father figure has in a child's development. All three of these blocks help promote fatherhood so that a young father can navigate his own environment, provide for his children, and develop the necessary tools to be a positive role model.

To implement a fatherhood initiative like this, one must understand the stakeholders that would be involved. It is important to understand the needs of the families in the respective communities including fathers, mothers, and children. Additionally, the city would have to recognize the importance of programs like this not only for the next generation but for their city's environment. Other stakeholders include private donors, sponsors, the spaces the programs can

operate out of like schools, and the individuals that devote their time to lead this initiative. Through a fatherhood initiative, the community members would understand the importance of fatherhood and how these types of programs can provide young men with the necessary tools to be better fathers, ultimately trickling down to reduce youth violence within the communities.

Continued Support of Male Mentoring Programs

When male youth do not have a positive male role model in their life, whether it be due to a father's death, absence from the family, or negative parenting practices, male mentoring programs can be of great benefit to help fill what is missing in the child's life. Currently, all of the mentoring programs that I have interviewed have been privately funded and have either not had enough resources available for their mentors and mentees or have had trouble with the publicity of their programs. To combat these problems, I propose that cities allow youth mentoring programs to operate out of the local public schools if they do not already do so. This would serve several purposes. This would allow programs to utilize existing space without having to worry about extra facility costs. Schools would be an easy venue to advertise such programs while also providing greater accessibility to more programs across the cities that could otherwise originally pose as an obstacle for certain youth. By having local public schools be used as facilities for mentoring programs, it would increase the availability of mentor programs, especially for youth who are living in mother-headed, single-parent homes, by increasing access in their respective neighborhoods (Appendix A & B). The problem that this possesses is that there would need to be an increase in volunteering to be a mentor for youth. With the implementation of this suggested policy, these expanded programs have the ability to promote themselves to adults within the area and for past members of the program to come back to be mentors.

To implement a program like this, the schools, its staff, families, children, mentors, and the community members within the school district would have to be taken into account. The public schools would have to agree to keep their facilities open a couple of hours longer as often as the programs would like to meet. This would likely increase the number of tax dollars that the districts direct towards public school funding and would require tax-payer support. Additionally, the families, children, and mentors would have to believe in the positive benefits of these programs and support their presence in schools. Widespread acceptance could lead to the introduction of both male and female after school mentoring programs in the future.

VII.   Areas for Further Research

I have developed further areas of interest and questions from the qualitative research I have conducted for this project. From a qualitative standpoint, I would have liked to look at more distressed communities to figure out how mentoring programs in their areas operate to have additional comparisons. Some of these communities could include Los Angeles that has programs such as Homeboy Industries, which is a faith-based gang-intervention program, or Baltimore, a city whose murder rate and youth violence are similar to, if not greater than both Chicago and Washington, D.C. Additionally, alongside looking at these other cities, it would be fascinating and informative to interview the mothers whose children participate in the programs, as well as the children themselves. The mothers would be able to speak on how their children have changed, the benefits and issues with mentoring programs, and specifics from an outside perspective. Interviewing the children in the program would require approval due to them being a vulnerable population. The youth, however, could provide insight into their personal experiences with the programs and provide feedback for what they believe does and does not work.

From a quantitative perspective, this research has allowed me to develop the idea of a study to track the effects of male youth who are enrolled in male mentor programs in distressed communities. A study could be set up to follow male youth who are and are not involved in male mentoring programs of the individual one-on-one and group variety. Here, the study could track involvement in school, extracurricular activities, run-ins with law enforcement, and future job stability. This would be a cohort study that would follow the youth longitudinally from a defined age through when they become adults, taking into account the years involved in mentoring programs. Certain aspects of their life would have to be controlled for, such as socio-economic status, number of siblings, the community they are growing up in, and the involvement of parents in their lives. This study would likely demonstrate the positive effects of male mentoring for male youth in disadvantaged communities.

VIII.   Conclusion

Male mentoring programs in the Chicago and Washington, D.C. areas vary both between each other and their respective cities in size, structure, and delivery methods of mentoring. Between the Chicago mentoring programs, there is a focus on the individual, consistent mentoring programs to help male youth develop a positive identity, mostly among mentees who do not have the presence of a resident father in their lives. The Chicago neighborhoods where these mentoring programs operate, in particular, are violent neighborhoods that pose threats to developing male youth. These mentoring programs provide positive male role models who take an active presence in male youth development to help promote successful growth and life choices.

The mentoring programs of Washington, D.C. demonstrated a different approach of both individual and group mentoring, where the programs stressed the importance of matching their mentors to mentees of similar interests to help try and close the gap of fatherlessness or positive role models within the male youths' lives. The Washington, D.C. mentor programs that were researched spread out across much of the city, rather than in particularly 'rough' neighborhoods, but represented greater accessibility for the male youth. The variability of the type of mentoring programs allows for a greater range of options for the male youth of Washington, D.C.

The personal stories I heard in each interview demonstrate the positive impact male mentoring programs can have on male youth and the specific qualities each program tries to focus on in both Chicago and Washington, D.C. A common theme that each mentor I interviewed stressed was the number of their male mentees that did not have a present father in their lives. Although children without fathers in their lives are not the only ones who can benefit from mentoring, a strong focus should also be placed on the male mentors themselves to promote the influence of a positive father-like role model in the male youths' lives. At the vulnerable age of adolescence, children are shaping their morals and identities after the role models within their environment and its cultural expectation. With the absence of a positive male role model in the male youths' lives, they are more likely to succumb to their negative environment and the consequential actions of their peers. Male mentorship has been proven to fill this void by promoting a positive outlook on the youths' future and, in these particularly distressed communities, can help demonstrate how much more there is to life than their current environment of drugs, violence, and gangs make it out to be. The consistent presence of a positive male role model helps to cultivate a trusting relationship that can help youth remain in school and prevent them from getting in trouble. Through the development of a policy that implements programs to incentivize positive fatherhood and male mentoring in distressed communities like the areas of Chicago and Washington, D.C., young males could have the opportunity to develop in a more nurturing environment where a positive male role model is guiding and influencing them towards a better future.

IX.　References

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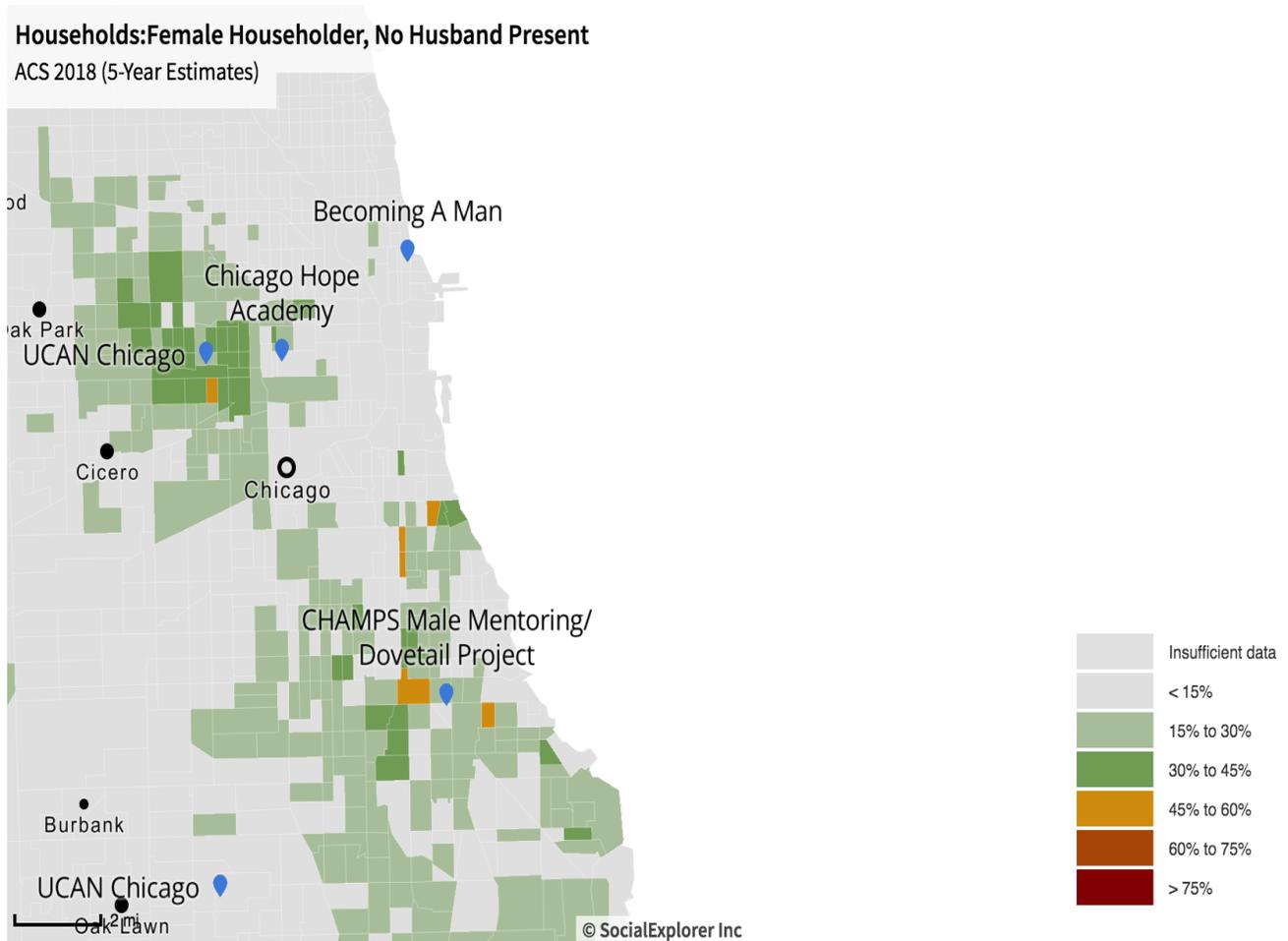
X.   **Appendicies**

Fig 1. Distribution of female-only households with children under the age of 18 in Chicago based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).
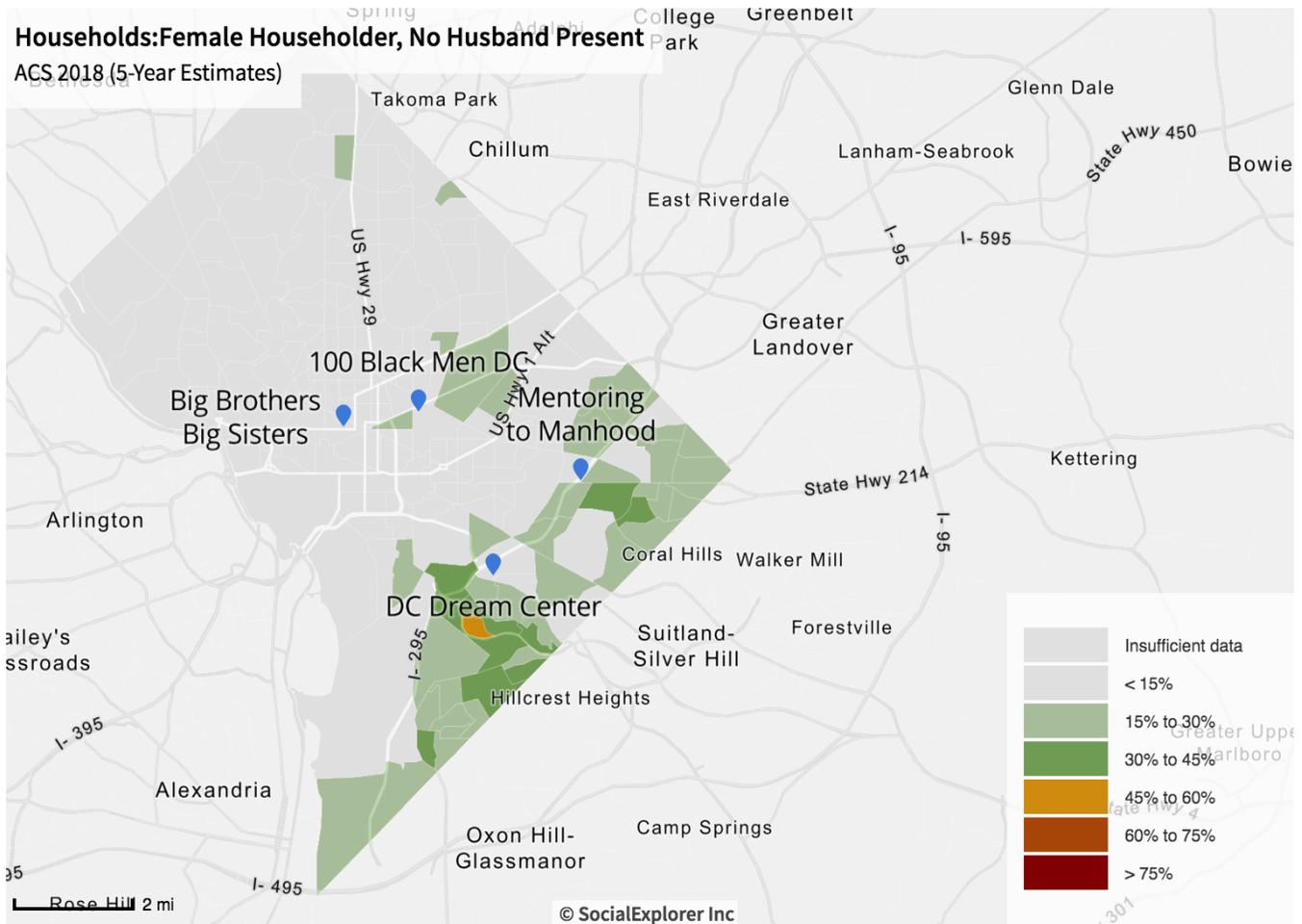
Appendix B

Fig 2. Distribution of female-only householders with children under the age of 18 in Washington, D.C. based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).
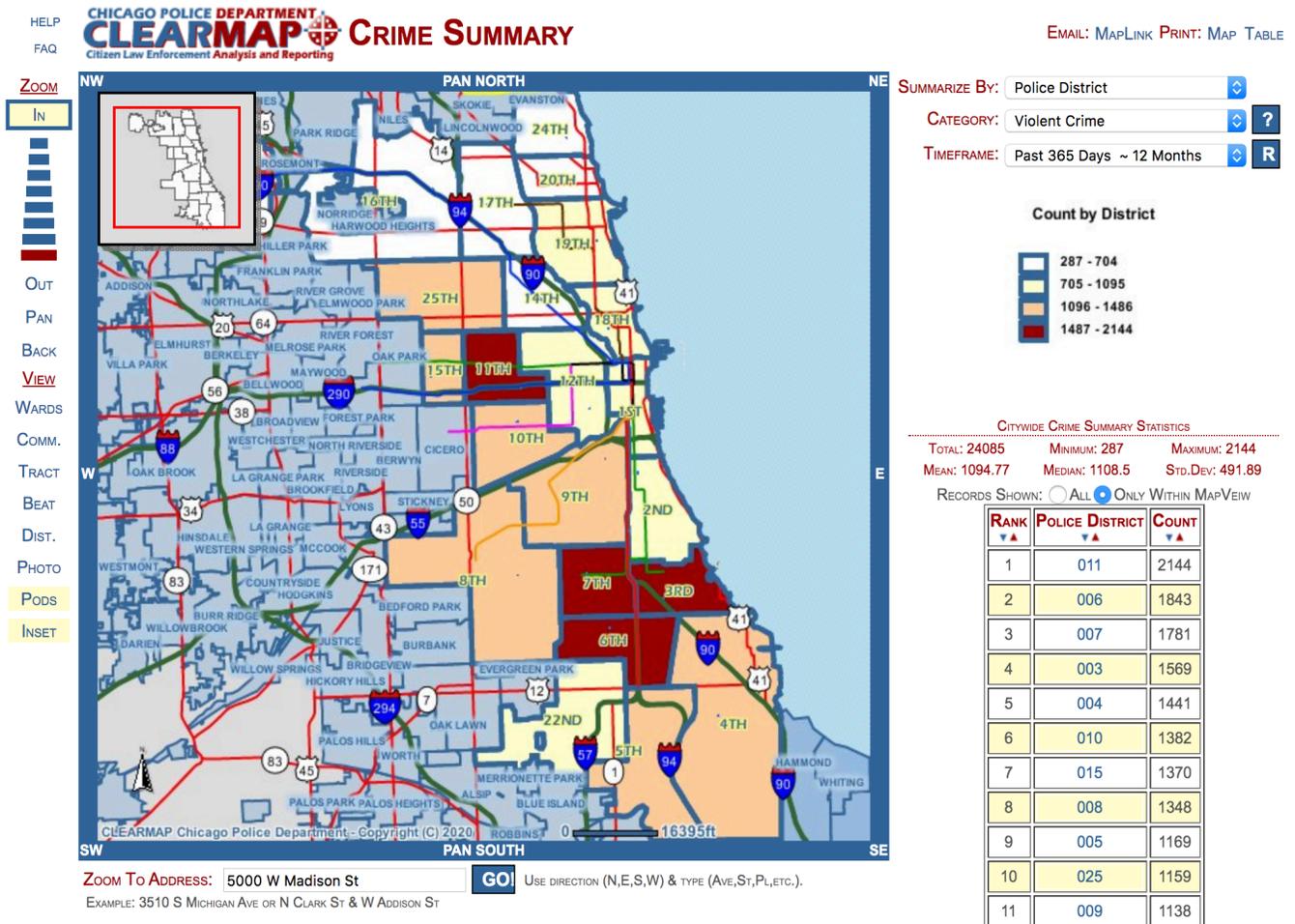
Appendix C

Fig 3. Distribution of violent crimes in Chicago by police ward in the past year (Chicago Police Department, 2019).
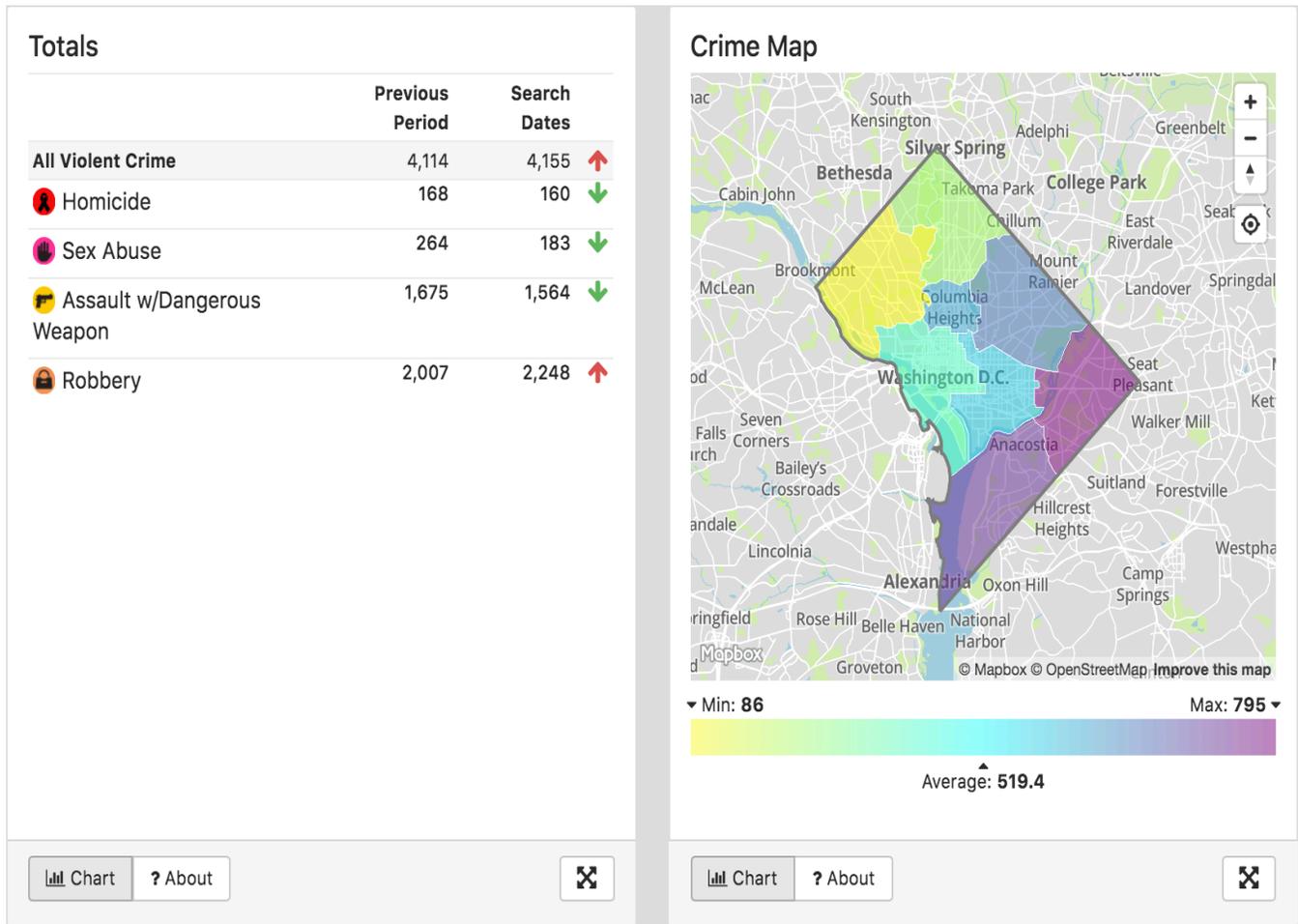
Appendix D

Fig 4. Distribution of violent crimes in Washington, D.C. by police ward in the past year (Metropolitan Police Department, 2019).
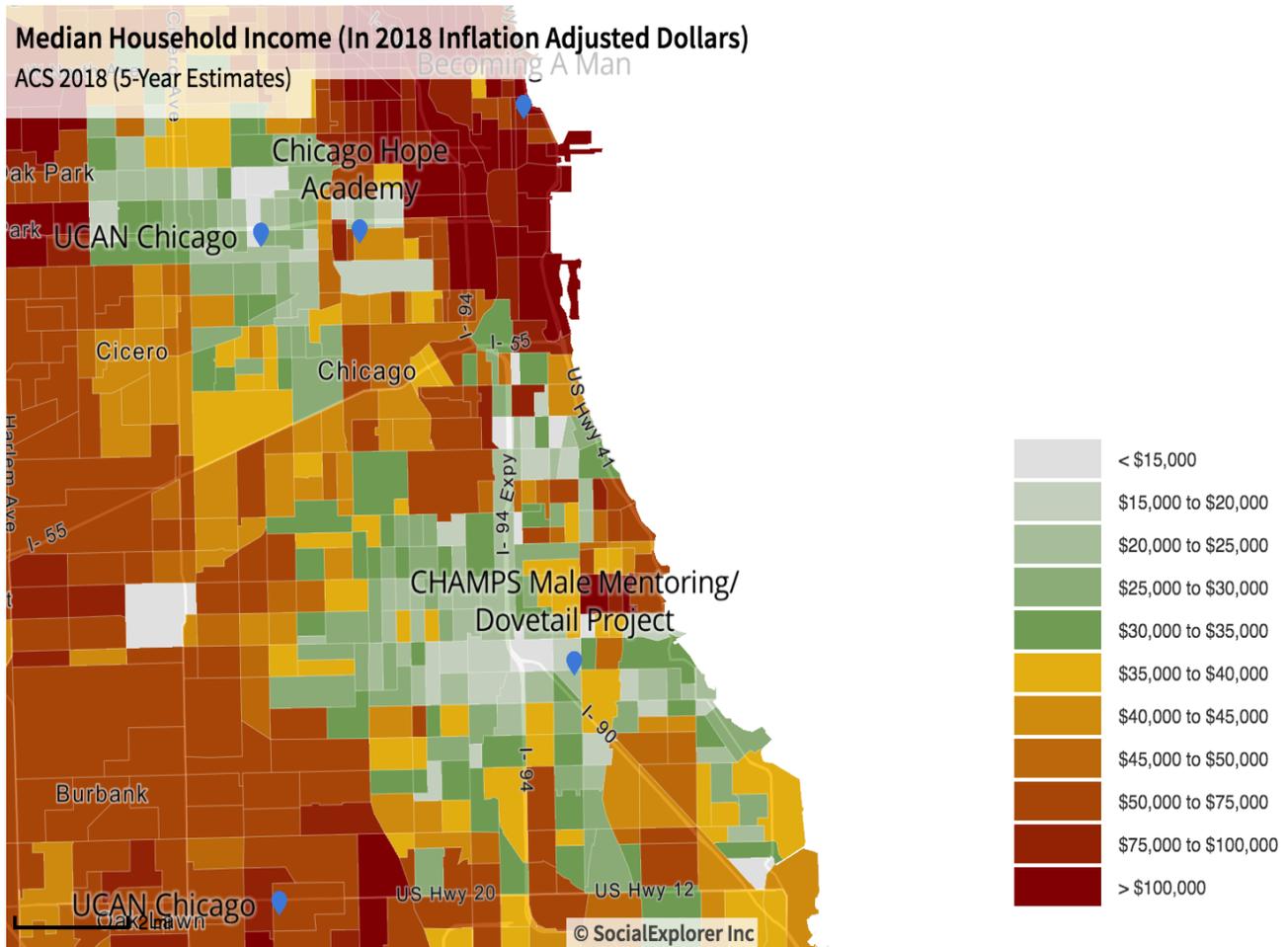
Appendix E

Fig 5. Distribution of median household income in Chicago based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).
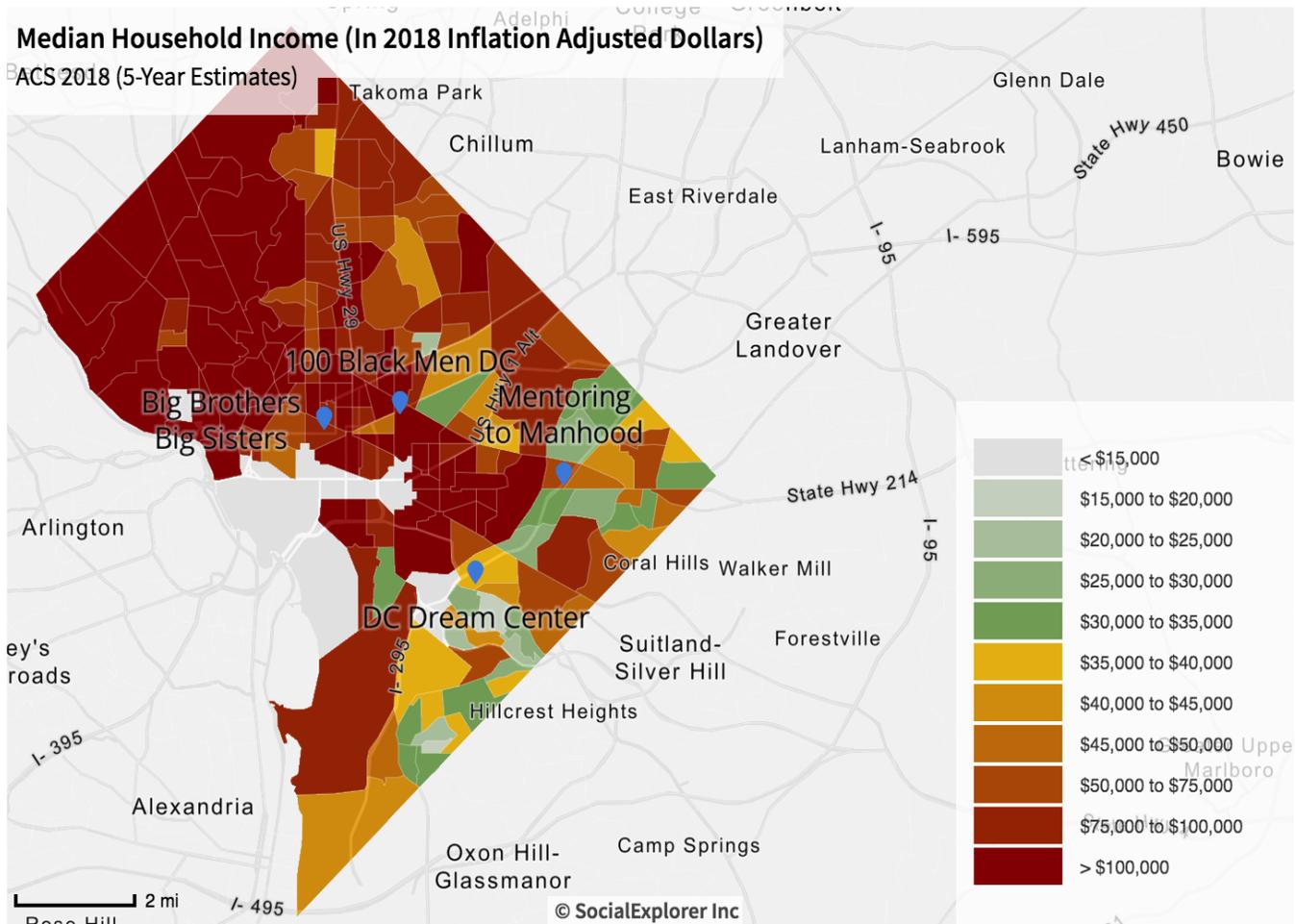
Appendix F

Median Household Income (In 2018 Inflation Adjusted Dollars)
ACS 2018 (5-Year Estimates)

Legend:
- < $15,000
- $15,000 to $20,000
- $20,000 to $25,000
- $25,000 to $30,000
- $30,000 to $35,000
- $35,000 to $40,000
- $40,000 to $45,000
- $45,000 to $50,000
- $50,000 to $75,000
- $75,000 to $100,000
- > $100,000

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Fig 6. Distribution of median household income in Washington, D.C. based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).
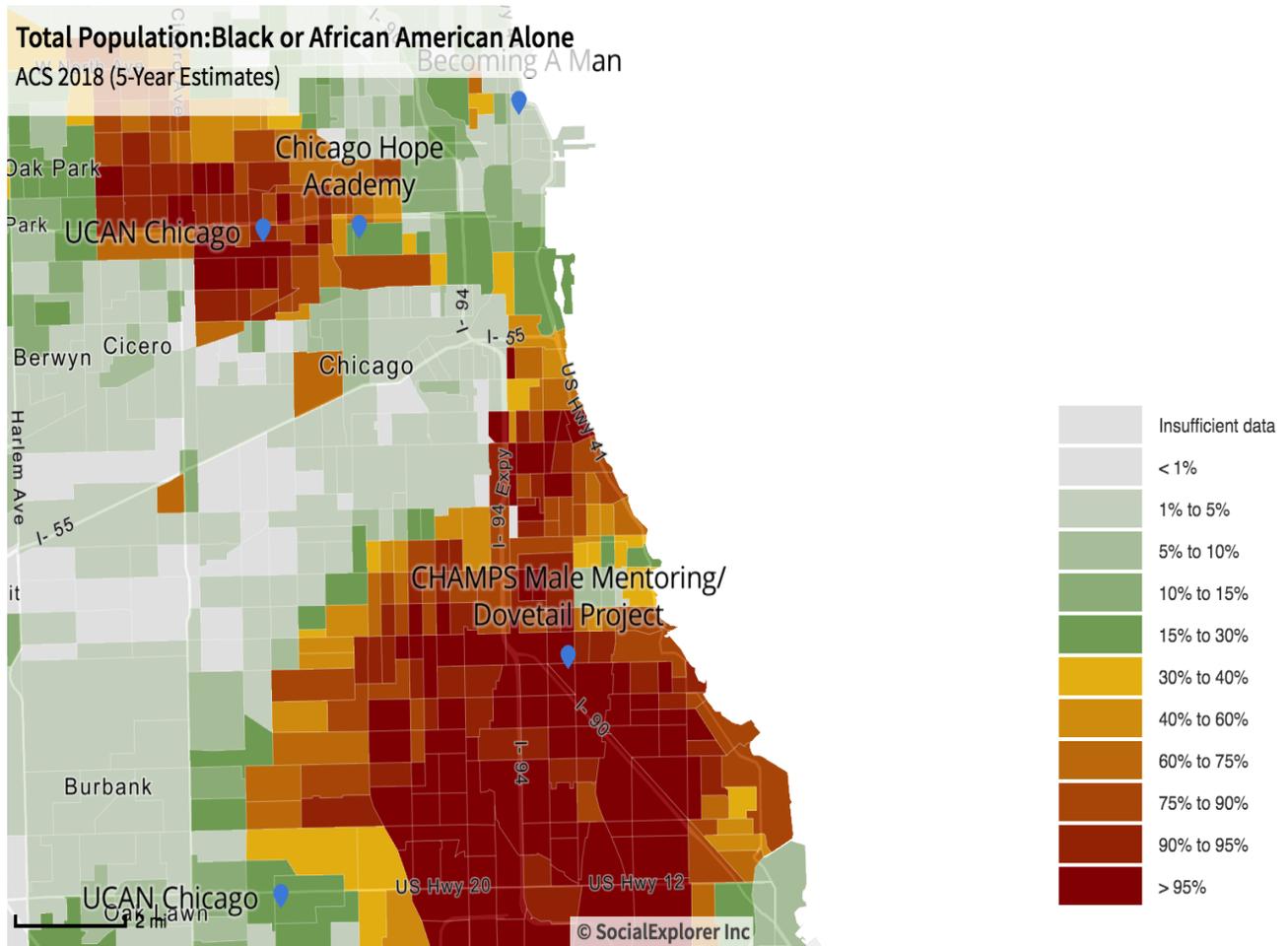
Appendix G

Fig 7. Percentage of Black or African American population alone in Chicago based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).
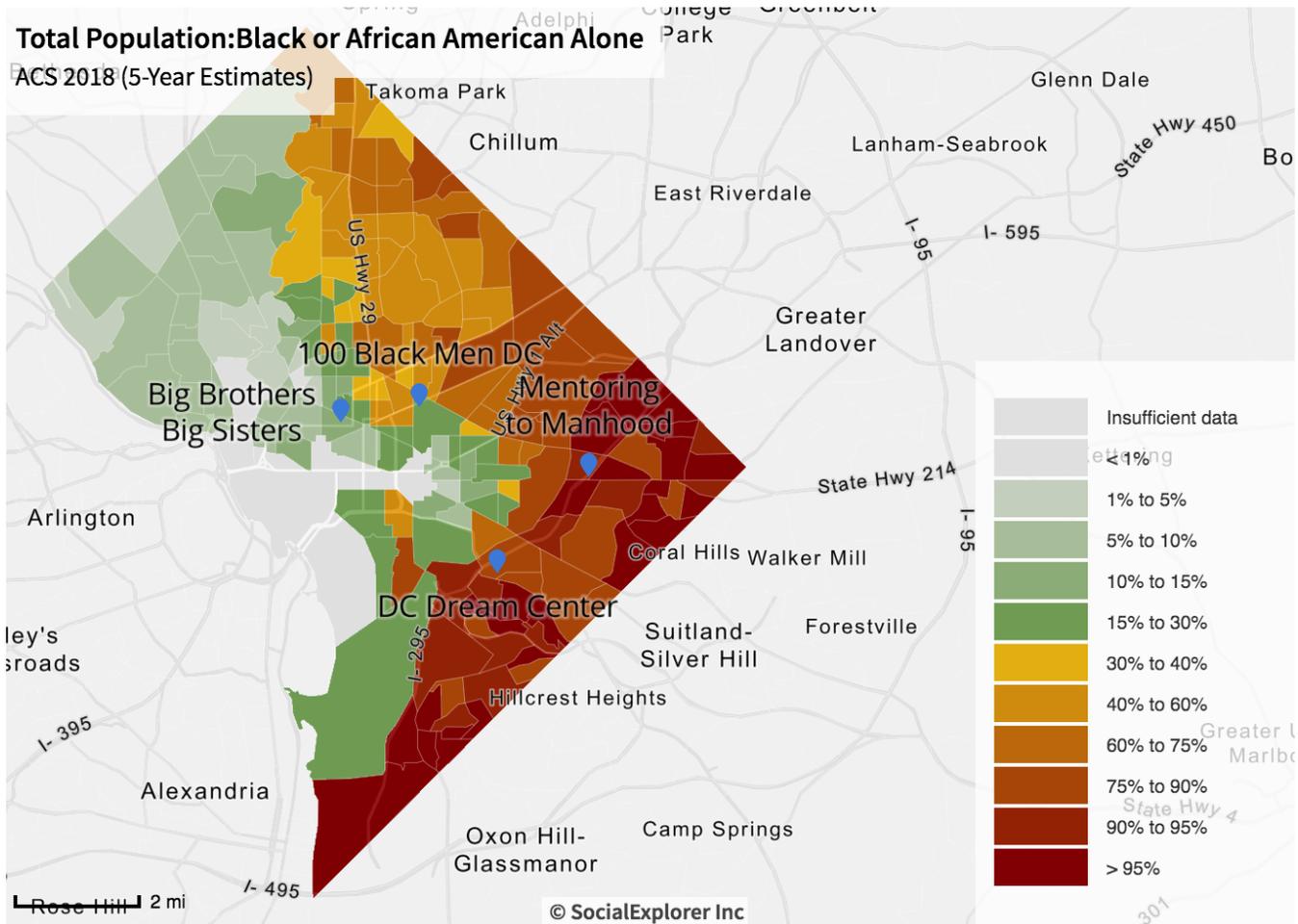
Appendix H

Fig 8. Percentage of Black or African American population alone in Washington, D.C. based on the 2018 census tract (Social Explorer, 2020).

Appendix I

Sample Interview:

1. Could you please provide some background about [Specific Mentoring Program] and what your role is at [Specific Mentoring Program]?

2. How did you get involved with mentoring?

3. From your perspective how and why can male mentoring programs help at-risk male youth?

4. What tactics do [Specific Mentoring Program] use to connect with male youth and help act as role models within their lives?

5. From your perspective what is the most important aspect of male mentoring?

6. What are the family dynamics that exist with the male youth in your program? How can they benefit from mentoring?

7. How do mentors hear about your program?

8. How do the mentees hear about your program?

9. Do you know of anyone else from your program or other mentoring programs that might be willing to talk with me about this topic?