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# The Effect of a Dropout Prevention Program for Black High School Males in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District

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THE EFFECT OF A DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR BLACK

HIGH SCHOOL MALES IN THE CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN

SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Jeanette Willis who transitioned this life in January, 1986 during my senior year at Spelman College. On her deathbed I promised her that I would complete my undergraduate studies and make her proud. I never knew at that time that I would also obtain my terminal degree. I just hope that she is smiling down on me and that I have made her proud.

I also dedicate this work to all of my CTAG sons who have managed to succeed despite facing seemingly insurmountable odds. I, just like them, have come to realize that there comes a time in our lives when we may make decisions that aren't always the best at that given time; nevertheless, we press on. No matter how disastrous the stumble may be as we journey through life, it does not relegate us to permanent failure. Failure is not final; neither does it deter us from pursuing our God ordained destinies. His design on our life was not predicated on our perfection. To my CTAG sons, remember that we are resilient, we are strong, we are the talented tenth, and we press forward….*ALWAYS FORWARD*!

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Without the unwavering guidance of Dr. Frederick M. Hampton, my graduate advisor and committee chair, I would never have completed this dissertation. I sincerely acknowledge the years and years of patience that you displayed when I chose to climb the career ladder and place this dissertation on the backburner. I appreciate the tears that you made me cry when you held the reflective mirror up to me and caused me to do internal soul searching about whether I wanted this or not. I truly appreciate the nonstop support you provided when the entire rug was pulled from under my feet as I was right in the middle of the dissertation process. Your daily messages were often the only thing that kept me going. You never gave up on me. You pushed, you pulled, you called me names, but you never gave up on me. Your UFO was finally identified and yes, she got her ……………! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being my mentor, my advisor, my committee chair and my friend.

Finally and most importantly I give honor to God for His faithfulness. My faith has been the anchor that has kept me stable throughout all of life's storms and challenges. I have always been confident of this very thing, that He, who began a good work in me, would continue His work until it was finished. I thank God for finishing this work in me and I look forward to the next season of God's work.

THE EFFECT OF A DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR BLACK HIGH

SCHOOL MALES IN THE CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

ABSTRACT

There is a new endangered species in this country – the black male. The

education of the black male in the United States has recently garnered much-needed

national attention. Two national reports in 2010 have heightened the awareness of the

fact that the black male student is not successfully navigating our public school systems,

often dropping out. Unfortunately, it now appears that this chorus of pessimism has

entrenched itself in the minds of black boys, teachers, and even parents. At the very

least, there are economic and moral reasons as to why we must help our black male

students graduate from high school. The future of an entire race hangs in the balance of

this crisis, as well as the economic devastation that results from the numbers of black

males that are not becoming productive, wage earning citizens – but rather populating our

penal system in disproportionate rates.

This study will examine the effectiveness of a targeted intervention for this

targeted population. The first cohort to participate in this intervention graduated June,

2011 after having participated for four years while in high school.   This study is

comprised of a mixed method research design, as there will be a clear quantitative data

analysis comparing pre-intervention data to post-intervention data. Complementing that

analysis will be documented anecdotal interviews with some of the students in this initial

cohort. The quantitative analysis will show whether the intervention was effective or not,

while the documented *voices* of the participants will reveal salient themes or variables

related to the intervention. If confirmed that the fundamental logic of this type of

program is sound, then the information will prove to be invaluable for districts across the

nation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In January 2010, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) unveiled its

long anticipated Academic Transformation Plan (ATP) entitled *Whatever It Takes*. This

ATP was a comprehensive urban school reform agenda for a district that had been

suffering from abysmal graduation rates, and marked student enrollment decline. At the

time of the creation and unveiling of the plan, CMSD had a 54.3% graduation rate as

reported by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). This rate is representative of the

2008-09 school year, as the reported graduation rate lags one year behind real time data.

This data point was a major catalyst in initiating the creation of the reform plan. CMSD

had a student enrollment of approximately 46,697 students during the 2010-11 school

year. It was the second largest school district in the state of Ohio, following closely

behind the Columbus City Schools, with approximately 51,352 students in 2010-11,

according to ODE data. The ATP is driven by research and best practices in student

achievement and in school reform initiatives calling for fundamental system-wide

changes. Hess (2004) argues that true reform will only come about by those who will

challenge the status quo and address fundamental systemic issues. It would be

considered a systemic issue for CMSD when addressing the fact that dating back to at

least the 2005-06 school year, the black male population has been the largest subgroup

enrolled in the district, yet has had the worst graduation rate of any subgroup during that same time period as documented by ODE longitudinal data.

CMSD is a school district located within one of the poorest large urban cities in the United States. The 2010 U.S. Census data shows that Cleveland is second only to Detroit with an alarming 35% of its residents living below the poverty line (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). Several studies have confirmed that conditions of poverty have a profound impact on student achievement. In their compilation of these studies, Duncan & Brooks-Gunn (1999) posit that poverty has also been linked to a greater likelihood of adolescents dropping out of high school. While there are significant challenges to all students in urban communities, male students are affected in disproportionate ways which dramatically impact their ability to graduate from high school (Payne & Slocumb, 2011). For those that don't graduate, they join an already less skilled workforce which is hampering the economic vitality of the city of Cleveland.

This phenomenon is not unique to Cleveland. Ohio State Associate Law Professor and author, Michelle Alexander (2010), points out in her book, *The New Jim Crow* the disturbing parallel that exists between the numbers of black people that are under correctional supervision as compared to the number of slaves in 1850. According to the Pew Center's 2009 report on American Corrections, there were one in eleven black adults under correctional supervision at year end 2007, which was approximately 2.4 million people as compared to approximately 1.7 million adult slaves, ages fifteen and older according to the 1850 Census. Alexander (2010) further elaborates that more black men are imprisoned today than at any other moment in our nation's history, and more are

disenfranchised today than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified which prohibited denial or abridgement of the right to vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Loury (2009) deduced that according to the 1870 census, there were then approximately 1,083,484 black men in the United States over the age of twenty, as every state then had a voting age of twenty one and no state then allowed women to vote. This phenomenon could be considered an indirect manifestation of disenfranchisement as black males continue to drop out of school, thus leaving them with few options of enfranchisement. Multiple national reports such as the Schott Foundation's: *Yes We Can* report and the Council of the Great City Schools report, *A Call for Change*, both address the state of the black male in terms of the staggering dropout rate. One report has even deemed this phenomenon a "national catastrophe."

It is clear that CMSD is attempting to affect the overall graduation rate with its comprehensive reform plan. It is further noted that the first goal of the ATP is "To graduate all students ready to compete in the 21st century global economy." One very strategic way to address this goal was to intervene with the targeted population that presented itself as most at-risk of not graduating – the minority male. This study will examine the effect of such an intervention – The Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Program.

Statement of the Problem

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District's graduation rate for the class of 2008 was 53.7% as reported by the Ohio Department of Education. Unfortunately, the graduation rate for the districts' black males for that same year was merely 27% (The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). According to that same report, authored

by Holzman (2010), the graduation rate for black male students for the nation as a whole in 2007-08 was only 41%. By an easy comparative analysis, it is evident that CMSD faced incalculably greater challenges with graduating its black males. This general problem has inherent importance to not only the school district, but also to the city, region, state and ultimately the nation. Former Ohio Governor Strickland stated in a speech as he unveiled this CTAG initiative, "When one of our 9th grade boys drops out of high school, he drastically increases the probability of earning low wages, restricts his own employability and damages all self-esteem. Some will pass through the revolving doors of the criminal justice system; others – under prepared and under developed – may fall prey to even more adverse outcomes" (Strickland, 2007). According to The PEW Charitable Trusts 2010 Report, young black men without a high school diploma are more likely to be found in a jail cell than in the workplace. Over one million of the students, who enter ninth grade each fall, fail to graduate with their peers four years later. Furthermore, on a national scale, about 71% of all students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma, but barely half of African American and Hispanic students earn diplomas with their peers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

Interestingly, Balfanz and Legters (2006), report startling findings that ninth grade serves as a bottleneck for many students who begin their freshman year only to find that their academic skills are insufficient for high school-level work. Up to 40% of ninth grade students in cities with the highest dropout rates repeat ninth grade; only 10 to 15 % of those repeaters go on to graduate. Unfortunately, many students are not given the extra support they need to successfully make the transition to high school, and as a result,

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over one third of all dropouts are lost in ninth grade according to Editorial Projects in Education (2007).

Black dropouts are often detached from the school culture and incapable of achieving an adequate level of comfort and success (Brooks-Williams, 1987). America's public school system was not created for minority and low income students and has not been very successful in educating them adequately (Fine, 1991). Although the phenomena of the dropout crises have been researched for decades, Bridgeland, Dululio, and Morison (2006), Montecel, Cortez, and Cortez (2004), and Orfield (2004) suggest that the general public remains unaware of its detrimental effect. Michelle Alexander (2010), posits that it is not only the dropout crisis that plagues urban black males due to bad schools, but other urban ills such as broken homes, poverty and drugs have created - "the Other America." In major urban areas, a large number of working-age black men have criminal records, and are thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives. They are denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement: the right to vote, the right serve on juries, and the right to be free from discrimination in employment, housing, and public benefits. They have been branded "criminals" and "felons" and now find themselves either locked up or locked out of society (Alexander, 2010). Black males, in particular, face enormously dismal prospects when they do not complete high school. More than one-third, or 37% of black male dropouts between the ages of 20 and 34 are currently behind bars, which is three times the rate for whites in the same category. This exceeds the share of young black male dropouts who have a job which is approximately 26% (PEW Charitable Trust, 2010). Thus, as adults in their twenties and early thirties, when they should be launching careers, black men without a

high school diploma are once again, more likely to be found in a cell than in the workplace.

In our post industrial society, a college education can be seen as the gatekeeper to the middle and upper class. A report from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, shows the historic absolute and relative decline of the earning power of those who do not receive high school diplomas (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010). The abysmally low high school graduation rate of black male students relegates them to a lifetime of below-average earnings. Projecting present trends into the future provides a dismal picture of increasing educational disparities, damaging the overall potential of our local and national economies.

The cycle presented here for black male student dropouts is vicious. With no high school diploma, they are relegated to minimum earning power at best, which often leads to crime, drug use or trafficking, which in turn leads to incarceration, thus leading to either being locked up or locked out for most – if not the rest, of their lives. Thus it can clearly be stated that interrupting the dropout cycle of black male students is more than purely an educational mission or even an economical mission, but rather a civil and human rights mission.

Purpose of the Study

The high school dropout rate for black males has steadily been increasing in alarming numbers. The reasons are many, yet it appears that few in the right position are willing to demand accountability by the nation's leaders, the collective educational system and the communities they call home. It's true that every school district in the country struggles with a seemingly endless series of budget cuts; however, those budgets

mean little if students are not attending class nor graduating. This study will focus on the dropout rates of black males at the high school level; specifically, it will focus on a dropout intervention that CMSD has had in place over the last four years. This study will examine the effect that this program had on the factors that influenced persistence and ultimately graduation of black males. If evidence is provided that would assert effectiveness, then the success factors identified through this study will provide policy makers, funders, and school personnel with strategic foci necessary to combat this epidemic.

Significance of the Study

School performance and academic achievement of black males in particular has been an area of concern in both educational and public forums. On June 14, 2011, leading educators, researchers, and policy experts gathered in Washington, D.C. for an achievement gap symposium sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), to confront the crisis facing black boys.   At the symposium, Marian Wright Edelman, president of the CDF stated that "...when a black boy born in 2001 has a one-in-three chance of going to prison in his lifetime, we need to invest in education programs and supports that we know can help young black boys stay out of the cradle to prison pipeline and stay in the pipeline to college and a productive future." (Children's Defense Fund, 2011). The significance of this study is justified by symposiums like this, in that it examines the effect of a targeted intervention for a targeted population – the black male. This study is such that any meaningful result would be of value to school districts that wrestle with the same abysmally low graduation rates with their black male student population. Implications regarding strategies that worked for black males could possibly

assist districts in creating and implementing similar strategies for other minority, at-risk male groups.

Background of the CTAG Program

In 2007, Governor of Ohio, Ted Strickland launched an initiative to address the dropout crisis amongst black male students. The Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Program was placed in 33 targeted high schools throughout the state. Most of these high schools had been categorized as persistently lowest achieving schools within their respective districts. Cleveland's Ginn Academy was permitted to participate, as it was a high school solely dedicated to serving at-risk male students, yet it had not graduated its first class, so its graduation statistics could not be included as a metric.

Governor Strickland allocated twenty million dollars in his state biennial budget to address the scope of the dropout crisis of males, with a special focus on black males. This allocation, for two years, came with the hope that respective districts would sustain the programmatic efforts once the state funding ceased. While this was truly a targeted intervention for a targeted population, the comprehensive goal was to increase Ohio's overall high school graduation rate. Successful navigation of the ninth grade was identified as being critical because of the fact that this is more than likely the first time that the student had to earn credits in order to promote to the next grade. The major emphasis of the program was on the 9th grade minority male. The CTAG Program identified its potential participants from targeted male students in 8th grade that exhibited early warning risk factors that could lead to dropping out of high school. The risk factors identified by the governor's office were:

1.   Failure in two or more core classes

2.   Absent 36 days (20% of school year) or more

3.   Overage for 8th grade (indicating possible retention)

4.   Received 5 or more days of out-of-school suspension (indicating behavior issues or disengagement)

The program was designed as a model of shared responsibility where everyone in the community played a role in developing these young men. The plan was to provide the building blocks to socially construct hope by providing mentors, personal attention for academic learning, social service intervention to improve attitudes and behavior, family support, and exposure activities to expand the background knowledge of the students. Without a strategic plan to intervene, many of the targeted students would not graduate from high school, or even be promoted to the 10th grade.

CMSD provided an aggressive and strategic network of supports to its targeted 9th grade male students during the 2007-2008 school year. They ensured the appropriate intervention assistance by hiring Linkage Coordinators for each eligible high school. A Linkage Coordinator is primarily a mentor, motivator, advocate and life coach, hired to monitor and ensure that the academic, social and emotional needs of the targeted 9th grade male students were met. These Linkage Coordinators were not necessarily certificated educators, and may not have college degrees. They did undergo all screening protocols required by any employee of the school district, and must have had experience in areas relating to youth development. They "linked" students to additional social and academic services within the school system and community at-large. The CTAG Program provided for tutoring, book clubs, credit recovery, parent engagement, and college or career exposure opportunities. Another aspect of the CTAG Program in 2007

was the professional development for teachers in the area of culturally relevant

curriculum and pedagogy. The primary goals of the program were to provide a firm

foundation around targeted academics and extracurricular interventions; to increase the

number of targeted 9th grade male students who will gain the number of credits to

progress to the 10th grade and develop their skills to pass all five parts of the Ohio

Graduation Test (OGT). Ultimately, the program provided their students with the

individual attention and high expectations they needed to stay on track for high school

completion and possibly college.

Once the state funding was depleted after the initial two years, CMSD remained

committed to the vision of the governor and continued the CTAG Program. The support

for this program then came from a private partnership with The Kaiser Permanente

Foundation for the 2009-2010 school year. That support continued, as well as funding

from Ohio's portion of the federally funded Race to the Top Grant which was awarded in

the 2010-2011 school year. The CMSD class of 2011 contained the first cohort of the

CTAG Program, thus the timeliness of this study.

Overview of the Methodology

This study used mixed methods research. Morgan (1997) explains that the two

research perspectives can be combined, and he identified four general ways of doing so.

The combinations are based upon two factors: which one is primary and which is

secondary, and which one is used first and which is used second. This study will be

qualitative primary, quantitative first, which is the third of Morgan's four combinations.

The researcher began by collecting quantitative preliminary data as a basis for collecting

and interpreting the primary qualitative data.   Consequently, qualitative research goes

beyond the relational or causal aspects examined by a quantitative design toward the human interpretation of a social problem, thus achieving a more comprehensive understanding of evidence together with human experience. (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007).

The quantitative methodology for this study was an ex post facto research design which used a causal-comparative approach to examining the effect of the CTAG Program. A comparison was made between the CMSD class of 2011, which contained the first CTAG cohort and the graduation class of 2007, which represents the last graduating class before the implementation of the district-wide intervention. A more specific comparison of the black male graduation percentages for each of these classes was also done. The causal analysis was done of the CTAG cohort's statistics relative to their encounters with the early warning risk factors that were associated with dropping out of high school.

The qualitative methodology provided valuable insight into components of the CTAG Program that the participants felt were most significant in contributing to their success. Through individual interviews with a sample of participants, a phenomenological approach was used to share the perspectives of the individuals concerning the issues that they experienced (Creswell, 1998). With regard to the *silent epidemic* – dropping out, this phenomenological form of inquiry was optimal in exploring the unique perspectives of the participants.

Research Questions

The four quantitative research questions were as follows;

1.   Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the graduation

        percentages of black males in CMSD?

2.   Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the cumulative grade

        point average (GPA) of black males graduating from CMSD?

3.   Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the attendance of black

        males during their senior year?

4.   Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the discipline of black

        males during their senior year?

The qualitative research question was as follows:

1.   What made the CTAG Program most impactful to the participants' success and

        why?

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

        The most relevant limitation of the study is the timeframe by which the

intervention operated and the impact that other factors could have contributed to the

students' ability to overcome the early warning risk factors. The time span of four years

allows for the attrition of key staff members. Examples of such attrition include

administrative turnover and teacher reassignment. Another limitation of the study is the

consistency level of the funding of the program, which directly impacts the level of

implementation supports. While the Linkage Coordinators were consistently funded

through the entire four years, the level of funding for other aspects of the program was

reduced by varying degrees. The researcher chose to impose certain delimitations on the

study itself.   While the CTAG Program is branded as a program for minority males, the

researcher chose to focus this study specifically on the black male student. This

narrowed the scope of the study by addressing a targeted population. The final analysis and summary of this study should not be taken indiscriminately as having implications for all categories of ethnic minority male groups within the CMSD.

Definition of Key Terms

Attendance: Daily attendance is electronically maintained for all students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. For purposes of this study, the attendance was represented by a percentage. The percentage was calculated by dividing the students' actual days in attendance by the actual number of days the student was enrolled. This study did not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.

CTAG: "Closing the Achievement Gap". A program created by Former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, under the close advisement of Former State Senator C.J. Prentiss in 2007 to address the dropout epidemic with minority male students.

Discipline: Out of school suspension and/or expulsion due to infractions as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct provides guidelines that indicate that these suspensions may be for up to 10 school days for behaviors that present "clear danger of injury to the student other students or school personnel, or prevents the orderly operation of classes or other school activities." These violations are identified as Level II or III offenses. There are also Level IV offenses where up to 10 days of suspension may be imposed pending an expulsion determination by the Chief Executive Officer.

Dropout: A student that does not graduate with their 9th grade cohort by the end of the summer of their fourth year in high school or a student that withdraws from the school

district without leaving any information relative to continued enrollment in another educational district or entity.

Graduation: The completion of the required 21 Carnegie Units and passage of all five sections of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). These requirements existed for both the 2007 and 2011 graduating classes in the state of Ohio.

Polyphonic Voices: Collection of student voices to understand personal insights and experiences.

Phenomenological approach: A method of studying an experience from the perspective of the individual and thus describing it rather than trying to explain it.

Silent Epidemic: A term coined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the dropout problem in America's public schools.

Urban: Characteristic of a city as distinguished from rural, suburban or metropolitan areas.

Urban Schools: Public agencies in metropolitan areas with higher percentages of economically disadvantaged, non-English speaking, minority, and low-achieving students.

Summary

When a student drops out of school, everyone shares in the cost. In this introductory chapter you have been introduced to the framework of the *silent epidemic*, particularly for black male students. The problem, as well as the significance of the study, has been clearly articulated. Background information on the intervention program that was studied has been shared. An overview of the types of methodologies used has been rationalized. The upcoming chapters will go deeper into this evolutionary process

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of dropping out, realizing that it is not a static event. The literature review takes an in-depth look at the factors that contribute to the process, as well as into the interventions that can be used at preventing the same. Programs that have shown to increase achievement and/or prevent dropping out are also examined.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In almost every category of academic failure, black males are greatly

overrepresented (Dallmann-Jones, 2002). In order to provide strategies to address the

academic achievement of black males, it is important to have a concrete understanding of

a variety of constructs that potentially thwarts this achievement. Finn (1989) asserts that

dropping out, absenteeism, disruptive behavior in class and delinquency are frequently

exhibited simultaneously. Along with these factors, there are also early warning signs

that could lead to dropping out, which have been defined as the foundation of the CTAG

Program. This research will focus on meaningful solutions rather than operating from a

deficit model paradigm. This review of literature will help equip policymakers, school

administrators, advocates, activists, teachers, parents and students to enhance the learning

experiences of black male students in high school.

Programs Similar to CTAG

According to the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse

(WWC), there were only eight programs at the time of this study, which had conducted

enough research to merit inclusion as a program having demonstrated positive effects.

Two of those programs were very similar to the CTAG program. Both, the Achievement

for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS), and the "Check & Connect" programs received positive effectiveness ratings by the federal government as dropout prevention programs.

The ALAS program was originally created as a dropout prevention program for high-risk middle or junior high school Latino students, particularly Mexican American students from high-poverty neighborhoods in Los Angeles (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). ALAS, which is the Spanish word for wings, provides student-level supports and also builds bridges between homes and schools for middle and high school students. The program utilizes counselors who provide a set of coordinated supports for students and parents. The counselors monitor students and report to parents about attendance and truancy on an as-needed daily basis, and convey a personal interest in students through myriad ways, including positive reinforcements and group bonding activities (Jerald, 2007). The counselors also follow up with teachers to keep them informed about how the students and their parents came to a decision on how to address a particular problem, and then provides parents with direct instruction and modeling on how to play a part in their child's schooling as well as handle adolescent behavior (Jerald, 2007). According to the ALAS Program website, the program is based on the premise that the school context and all of its complexities are inextricably bound to other contexts of influence on youth achievement. A central assumption of the model is that each context needs individual reform to increase its positive influence on youth. Additionally, barriers which reduce or prevent communication and coherence between contexts must be bridged.

The research-based Check & Connect intervention model provides trained monitors to small groups of students. The monitors closely follow tardiness,

absenteeism, behavioral referrals, and academic performance and meet with individual students each week, staying in touch with students' family members about progress. The personalized attention often involves arranging for transportation and community services. Intensive interventions such as Check & Connect can cut dropouts by as much as half, but they are even more effective when implemented with school wide reforms (Jerald, 2007). Interventions that have the capacity to be oriented around individual student needs, and that work in tandem with school wide interventions able to adjust around grade-level needs, hold promise as an effective combination.

While the two aforementioned programs were the only two programs like CTAG that were endorsed by the WWC there are other documented programs similar in scope with promising results. The Brotherhood Program, created by a Chicago Public School System counselor is an after school counseling program that assists with students' developmental challenges. The Brotherhood also has a male mentoring component grounded in an Afrocentric model that promotes collaboration, leadership and student advocacy (Wyatt, 2009). The program incorporated the principles of the American School Counselor Association's National Empowerment Theory and the Nguzo Saba – the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The program improved student academic achievement and fostered personal and social growth as well as aspirations of success (Wyatt, 2009). Dr. Wyatt (2009), recorded anecdotal data from present and past participants of the Brotherhood. A 12th grade participant of the Brotherhood Program indicated that "The Brotherhood …allows everybody to come together no matter where you come from." An alumnus of the program was quoted as saying "…the Brotherhood was a nurturing

program as well as a sanctuary from a very turbulent and sometimes harsh environment on the south side of Chicago."

The Benjamin E. Mays Institute (BEMI) builds on the ideals of mentoring to counter the effects of academic underachievement among adolescent black males by building a model that is Afrocentric. It uses prosocial modeling by emphasizing cultural strength and pride while providing single-sex instruction in a dual-sex educational environment. BEMI participants were from a large urban middle school in Connecticut. The conceptual framework of the BEMI program is based on the Afrocentric paradigm of Sankofa – "go back and fetch". It also incorporated principles from Nguzo Saba, namely Kujichagulia (self-determination), and Ujamaa (cooperative economics). The Afrocentric framework was applicable to the mentoring program given that Sankofa's philosophy creates linkages between teachers, students, and their ancestral wisdom while pointing them to the future. Building on these principles, the BEMI sought to impact self esteem, responsibility, vision for success, self-discipline and motivation for the mentees. The program was shown to be effective in increasing academic achievement, and also in impacting the lives of the students who were a part of it (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, and Boyd, 2009). While the study on the effectiveness of the BEMI was confirmed through a quantitative study, there was no anecdotal evidence by which the middle school black males who participated, could have voiced their opinions and perceptions.

Early Warning Signs to Dropping Out

In order to increase the numbers of students who graduate and not dropout, educators must know the warning signs that alert them to students who could potentially fall off the path to graduation. The earlier the signs are recognized, the sooner

interventions can be implemented to deal with the specific problems that may prevent students from staying on course. Dropping out of high school is not a static event, but rather a process that usually begins years prior. Students that are having some sort of trouble in school usually send strong signals. Additionally, these signals are observable in the standard data that school districts keep on their students, thus making the creation of at-risk profiles fairly simple. Tracking and analyzing this basic data on which students are showing early warning signs of dropping out is the first step toward an effective dropout prevention strategy. According to a study conducted by Karl L. Alexander, a sociologist at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the predictor that is most indicative of dropout is whether a student has repeated a grade in elementary or middle school (Viadero, 2006). Most recently there have been major studies done by the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Center for Social Organization of Schools at the Johns Hopkins University. These researchers have discovered that to identify who is most likely to drop out, schools need to identify students who; 1) receive poor grades in core subjects; 2) possess low attendance rates; 3) fail to be promoted to the next grade, and; 4) are disengaged in the classroom (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). These are considered better predictors of dropout than fixed status indicators such as gender, race, and poverty, although background factors are indeed often associated with dropouts, including being born male, economically disadvantaged, African American, or Latino (Jerald, 2006; Rumberger, 2004).

One of the strongest predictors of dropout involves two eighth-grade factors: attending school less than 80 percent of the time and receiving a failing grade in math

and/or English during eighth grade (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Some students drop out not because of the cumulative effects of poor academic performance, but because of an unexpected event. A student may have become a parent, been arrested, started using drugs, or had a serious personal problem at home and be forced to dropout, despite having previous success in school (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). Other school performance measures related to dropping out have included being overage for grade level, having disciplinary problems in school, truancy, and spending little time on homework (Barro & Kolstad, 1987; Pallas, 1986).

Interventions Supporting Student Success

There is no one intervention that has shown to be all encompassing when attempting to interrupt student failure. Various interventions have been shown to mitigate failure for a multiplicity of student subgroups. The CTAG Program has its foundation in three particular student supports. Providing dedicated mentors for the male participants; providing myriad exposure field trips; and providing culturally relevant teaching strategies to teachers are the three cornerstones of the program's original framework.

Mentoring

Mentoring has been defined as the positive relationship with, and contribution by, a non-parental adult to the life of a young person (Baker & Maguire, 2005; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006). Mentoring is often used as a deterrent to dropping out, and although anecdotal evidence supports the positive role of mentoring on academic achievement, these results are not consistent (Gordon et al., 2009). In urban schools, there are so many variables that contribute to dropping out. President Obama is quoted in a speech he made

regarding the dilemma with urban America, when he was then Senator Obama (2007) as saying;

> "What's most overwhelming about urban poverty is that it's so difficult to escape - it's isolating and it's everywhere. If you are an African-American child unlucky enough to be born into one of these neighborhoods, you are most likely to start life hungry or malnourished. You are less likely to start with a father in your household, and if he is there, there's a fifty-fifty chance that he never finished high school and the same chance he doesn't have a job. Your school isn't likely to have the right books or the best teachers. You're more likely to encounter gang-activities than after-school activities. And if you can't find a job because the most successful businessman in your neighborhood is a drug dealer, you're more likely to join that gang yourself. Opportunity is scarce, role models are few, and there is little contact with the normalcy of life outside those streets."

Through the lens of urban poverty one can see the advantages of having an educated, employed, male in your life serving as a role model and mentor. One can begin to overcome some of the obstacles that derail normalcy of life, which in some respect, begins with a high school diploma. Above and beyond income, early academic achievement, and having a learning disability, Blum (2005); Clark, Shreve, and Stone (2004) proposed that a lack of solid adult/student connections may lead students to lose interest in school. School disengagement or lack of connectedness is a variable that also leads to dropping out. Students who are connected to at least one caring adult in school are less likely to dropout.

Mentoring programs represent a form of early intervention that pairs students with respected role models. The nurturing relationship between the student and the mentor can be structured using activities that include individual discussions, tutoring, leisure activities, and cultural awareness sessions, all of which promote personal development

and resilience (Day-Vines, & Day-Hairston, 2005). Mentoring programs have proven to provide benefits to youth and are expanding rapidly in schools (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006).

In the case of black male students, some researchers like Associate Professor Gilman Whiting of Vanderbilt University believe that only a black man can teach a black boy how to become a black man, thus justifying the need for more black male mentors. Whiting (2009) unapologetically proposes that it is only a black man who can fully model the attitudes and behaviors of successful black manhood. Empathy is greatest when people share similar race and gender backgrounds and experiences. Realistically speaking, it is only a black man who can honestly say to a black male child or teen, "I've been there; I've had that happen to me for similar reasons; I share your pain." However, it must be noted that black females, as well as males and females from other racial groups, have been able to successfully rear and educate black males (Carson, 1999; Suskind, 1998).

Wyatt (2000) suggests in her dissertation, that an Afrocentric approach to mentoring black males works better with that population. Her study explored the effectiveness of such, and concluded that the most significant effect occurred on the self-concept of the black male youth. This significance suggests that the intervention of adult black male mentoring not only improved academic achievement but also communal responsibility.

More cities have begun to respond to the plight of black boys and the need for positive role models. One of the most visible national mentoring groups for black males is 100 Black Men, Inc. Nevertheless, there have been few documented efforts by school

districts to address the mentoring component of ensuring academic success for black males. The absence of a college degree should not be a barrier to being a mentor in a school district. Kunjufu (1989) posits that mentors merely need to have strong character and a commitment to the task. Challenges often arise for school districts that try to employ personnel for the sole position of mentoring, as their primary mission is to employ certificated personnel, primarily degreed, as dictated by their collective bargaining agreements or human resource policies. Those employed without degrees are usually support staff including laborers, cleaners and bus drivers. These are often positions that students don't revere or aspire to attain, despite the positive attributes that these adults display - honest hard work, citizenship, and work ethic. Frequently, the male modeling that takes place in the homes for many urban black males is the case of the single mother providing a succession of "daddies" and "uncles" through a child's life as they often press suitors into this role (Hale, 2001).

Mentors create meaningful personal bonds with their mentees as well as help them see attainable futures. The mentor's hindsight can become the mentees foresight, as they endeavor to move from their existing realities to a preferred future status. Dr. John Seita, a former delinquent who "beat the odds", stressed the importance of searching for talent in at-risk youth, building relationships, and providing an opportunity to turn things around (Seita, Mitchell, & Tobin, 1996). Mentoring can help at-risk youth develop their identities and decision-making skills (Ferguson & Snipes, 1994). When mentoring at-risk youth in particular, one cannot work in isolation. To be most effective, the mentor needs to work with the child, as well as others in the child's environment. The mentor must make connections with the parents, teachers, and other social service agents.

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Examples of these include social workers, corrections officers, medical professionals, faith based leaders and even the police, as all of these agents are instrumental in helping to develop youth – particularly those at-risk of dropping out.

Mentoring can be compared to the sociological concept of human social capital, which refers to connections within and between social networks. Putman (2000) speaks of two main components of human social capital that are salient in the construct of mentoring: *bonding social capital* and *bridging social capital*. Bonding social capital refers to the value assigned to social networks between homogeneous groups of people and bridging refers to that of social networks between socially heterogeneous groups. One illustration of this concept would be that criminal gangs create bonding social capital with its members, while bowling clubs, mentors, and church choirs create bridging social capital by which the gang members or potential gang members can "bridge" out of that cycle and begin to interact with people that may not be from the homogeneous group of gang members. Ultimately is can be argued that mentoring can have a number of positive effects on developing healthy psychological development (Rhodes, 2002).

Within the past two decades, there has been an increase of programs that claim mentoring as either their major thrust or one of their primary modes of intervention. Mentoring is now a component of many programs aimed at meeting the specific needs of disadvantaged youngsters. Many of these youth are often considered at-risk of dropping out of, or pushed out of school due to abusing alcohol, drugs, and other substances; engaging in criminal activity; becoming teenaged parents; or falling victim to serious mental illness. Most of the programs blend academics, moral development, citizenship, child rearing, social/personal skills, and career/vocational exploration and training. Some

target specific risk factors, like those listed above or even target specific populations (Guetzloe, 1997). Researchers Balfanz and Legters (2006) emphatically suggest that some high schools are "dropout factories" and once they are identified then they must be transformed or replaced. They also suggest that we must get beyond the whole-school reform, and provide mentors or additional school supports for that subset of students who are at even greater risk.

Exposure Field Trips

Exposure field trips are designed to help broaden students' view of the world and expose them to possible career, college and life options that they may not have considered. They also expand their knowledge of activities and resources that are available outside of their communities. Field trips or exposure trips further enable students to enhance their learning opportunities and provide them with experience that cannot be duplicated inside the classroom. Education scholar Robert Marzano (2004) posits that academic background knowledge is acquired and enhanced through "direct experiences." These experiences or field trips allow for students to process and store information that will be readily accessible in their memories when it needs to be recalled. This type of experiential learning is costly, thus most public schools have minimized this aspect of budgets.

In their research with talented but troubled youth, McCluskey and Treffinger (1998) found that education happens not only at school, but within an "ecosystem of learning" in the home, at the computer, on athletic fields, and in museums, theaters, and a variety of other places. Urban youth often do not have opportunities to see the world outside of their neighborhood due to fear of gang violence and turf wars. The routinely

used concept of having a six block radius of awareness restricts their perspective on life and limits their ability to dream of conditions beyond their current environment. An important part of the process of exposure trips is the idea that experiential learning brings an element of "surprise" into the experience, that is, the degree to which it does not easily and immediately confirm an individual's prior expectations (Sheckley & Keeton, 1997). In Sheckley and Keeton's (1997) model, they hypothesize that without strong opportunities for reflection on the exposure, learners will be inclined to merely incorporate the experience into their existing models of meaning. But with structured opportunity to reflect, describe, discuss, and construct meaning from the experience, learners have the potential to develop more complex understandings and more wide-ranging intellectual functioning. To maximize the students' learning from exposure trips, students should research the history or historical events about the place they will be visiting. They should also write reflections and incorporate aspects of their academic curriculum into the reflection, as it relates to the exposure trip.

Exposure trips broaden the lives of students, provide them with valuable cultural experience, and give them a story of background knowledge (Polochanin, 2008). Knowing that students have different learning styles may imply that some students don't learn well in a traditional classroom. There are myriad reasons as to why some students need more than what a traditional classroom can provide. Some reasons may include the fact that students have learning disabilities, problems focusing, or are hands-on learners. A school career devoid of cultural experiences such as field trips can have broad implications. In a 2006 interview, the Harvard University Economist Ronald Ferguson pointed to "differences in life experience" as a key determining factor for learning gaps.

"Achievement gaps are not facts of nature," he said in the Harvard Education Letter, "We've got to figure out how to get all kids the kinds of experiences that really maximize access to middle-class skills. That's the challenge" (Polochanin, 2008).

Azzam (2007) identified strategies that could be used to help prevent high school dropout. One of the strategies to engage students was integrating experiential learning into the curriculum by which students could make connections between the world that they live in and the world at large. In a 2002 study done with 45 high school students at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, it was shown that a 5-day immersion experience yielded a lasting impact on retention of knowledge in comparison to traditional instructional deliver of direct lectures and memorization (Handler & Duncan, 2006).

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning is the process of making meaning from direct experience. David A. Kolb helped to popularize the idea of experiential learning, drawing heavily on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. His work on experiential learning has contributed greatly to expanding the philosophy of experiential education. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop. The theory is called "Experiential Learning" to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process, an emphasis that distinguishes ELT from other learning theories. The term "experiential" is used therefore to differentiate ELT both from cognitive learning theories, which tend to emphasize cognition over affect, and behavioral learning theories that deny any role for subjective experience in the learning process (Kolb, 1984).

Another reason the theory is called "experiential" is its intellectual origins in the experiential works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Taken together, Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, Lewin's social psychology, and Piaget's cognitive-developmental genetic epistemology form a unique perspective on learning and development (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy pertains to classroom practices that draw meaningfully on the culture, languages, and experiences that students bring to the classrooms in order to increase engagement and academic achievement for students of color (Au, 2006: Ladson-Billings, 1995). *Culturally responsive teaching* is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching these students more effectively (Gay, 2002). Together, these two constructs help to create what Ladson-Billings (2000) calls the *culturally congruent teacher*.

An increasing body of research shows the importance of addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. Gay (2000) emphasizes, the teacher who attempts cultural relevance needs to act as "cultural mediator," helping students to build understandings of difference. Unfortunately, the cultural foundation of schools in the United States is largely congruent with middle-class; European values (Boykins, 1994). This cultural disconnect often leads to poor self-concepts, discipline problems, and poor academic outcomes for minorities. Teachers unfamiliar with students' diverse backgrounds sometimes misinterpret cultural differences as misbehavior

(Osher, Cartledge, Oswald, Artiles, & Coutinho, 2004). Cultural expressions of certain behaviors, such as movement and speech, may be misinterpreted as threatening to teachers who lack cultural awareness (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). Educational institutions in America often take a one-size-fit all approach to the teaching of all students, including black students, with little regard for cultural or stylistic differences (Williams, 2003). This approach ignores the complexities of how individuals of different backgrounds learn. In the context of the new global economy, countries are encouraged to meet the demands of modernization by thinking globally and acting locally (Walter, 2004). For the black male student, their local context presents countless challenges that require a much more differentiated instructional framework. Teachers of black male students should use instructional techniques that recognize the cultural capital of black males so that they may have the skills and knowledge to make their communities self-determining (McDougal, 2009). Boys tend to have a more kinesthetic learning style, and therefore, respond more positively when being physically active (Dunn & Honigsfeld, 2003). Contrastingly, this need for movement, may not be welcomed or tolerated in a Eurocentric valued classroom, and can lead to discipline issues. This particular disconnect is further exacerbated and often leads to over identification for special education referrals, most often for perceived behavioral issues (Howard, 2001; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is used as an analytic tool to explain and uncover the ways in which the teacher develops cultural knowledge to maximize student learning opportunities (Milner, 2010). Teachers must always be mindful of whom they are teaching and those teachers who create culturally relevant classrooms are those who see

their students' culture as an asset, not a detriment, to their success. The outcomes of culturally relevant pedagogy extend far beyond what might be measured on a standardized exam. Ladson-Billings (2000) proposes that students who experience culturally relevant pedagogy become empowered, as they see their culture in the curriculum and instruction. Cultural competence is helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while accessing the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead (Ladson-Billings, 2000). The thought is that in order to have a seat at the table and to be able to join in the discussions with those in power (Freire 1998), one must deeply understand who those in power are, and they must understand their own relationship to those in power. Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests that culturally relevant pedagogy is more about a way of being than a specified set of practices. It involves a state of being or mindset that permeates teachers' decision-making and related practices. She further suggests that teachers aren't told how to "do" multicultural education, just like no one tells anyone how to "do" democracy – rather it is just consistent with what they believe and who they are.

Simply cajoling teachers to raise their expectations for black children, using phrases such as "all children can learn," is probably a waste of time. Good professional development programs can make a difference for teachers. Ferguson (2003), suggests that teachers who are helped by professional development to improve their classroom practices can have "seeing is believing" experiences that challenge their prior biases. The Harvard professor and Cleveland Public School graduate, suggests that the bottom-line

conclusion is that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors do help to sustain, and perhaps even expand the black-white achievement gap.

Several scholars have argued that culturally responsive curricula has the power to transform the lives of black students in that that will become more motivated and engaged when they see themselves affirmed in the textbook, materials and content (Banks, 2006; Ford, 2005; Gay, 2002).

Summary

Black boys repeatedly comprise the lowest performing group in any given school district, and are at radically higher risk of dropping out than any other subgroup of students. This literature review has examined the early warning signs to dropping out, the interventions that can mitigate those risks and programs that have proven successful at doing just that. While there is still no concerted national agenda to coalesce all of the above, there is a perceived momentum for such. Addressing some of the root causes for this national phenomenon is bigger than any one school district can tackle. Poverty, underinvestment in public schools, low expectations, deficient parenting practices, zero tolerance, lack of exposure and disengagement are but a few of the variables that are pushing and pulling our black males out of school. It is studies like this and others that will showcase potential solution oriented programs worthy of strategic investments to address the aforementioned root causes of the low rates of black male educational achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the researcher describes the method of research, discusses the

process for determining the sample population, and reviews the procedures for data

analyses. The researcher chose to use a mixed methods methodology, as it enhances a

social science study by merging the qualitative and quantitative data (Rauscher &

Greenfield, 2009). Mixed methods research is an attempt to legitimate the use of

multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or

constraining researchers' choices (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It is expansive and

creative rather than limiting. The quantitative analyses will either support or refute the

hypothesis about the effect of the intervention program, while the qualitative analysis will

provide a theoretical frame as well as give "*voice*" to the participants. It is the

researchers hope to illustrate that by narrowing the divide between quantitative and

qualitative research, mixed methods research has great potential to endorse a shared

responsibility in the mission for achieving accountability for educational excellence, not

only to educators, but also to funders and policymakers.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Research

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) formally define mixed methods research as the

class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative

research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. Mixed methods research moves past the traditional paradigm wars between qualitative and quantitative methods by offering a logical and practical alternative (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Educational researchers have had a tendency to engage in polemics and at times, name calling when referencing the two distinct research methodologies. Smith (1983) offers that there have even been times when either side was referred to, in writing, as "bankrupt", "number-crunchers," or "storytellers." The history of this paradigm war dates back to the historical origins of both methods. Present thoughts about the methodology of educational research in particular and of social researchers in general are rooted in the late 19th century. The critical question at that time was whether or not social scientists could and/or should make use of the methodology of the physical sciences to study social and human phenomena (Smith, 1983).

While data analysis in a quantitative study is used to test and validate already constructed theories, it cannot "tell" the whole story, yet it has higher credibility with many people in power and policy making positions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The cultural sciences must be descriptive as opposed to explanatory or predictive and must concentrate on interpretive understanding, or *verstehen* (Smith, 1983), which is the need to "live through", or recreate, the experience of others within oneself.

In this study, the qualitative analyses allowed prominent themes to emerge that added value to aspects of the intervention program that were not quantifiable. This methodology provided a holistic approach to investigating the proposed research problems. Since one of the goals of the research was to understand why certain phenomena existed, it was appropriate to use a qualitative strategy, as qualitative research

attempts to uncover a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Rauscher & Greenfield, 2009). It can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. Finally it can establish how participants interpret "constructs" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which in this study included mentoring, exposure trips and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Professor Howe (1988) implores researchers to forge ahead with "what works" as he seeks to dispel the incompatibility theory surrounding quantitative-vs. - qualitative. The mounting propensity of educational researchers to resist the "tyranny of methodological dogma" is a good thing, as it is high time to close down the quantitative versus qualitative conversation (Howe, 1988). There are valuable tenets with each methodology, and for purposes of this study, each added value. The collection of data using a qualitative design such as interviews uncovered common themes and emerging trends about the phenomenon. Consequently, qualitative research goes beyond the relational or causal aspects examined by a quantitative design toward the human interpretation of a social problem, thus achieving a comprehensive understanding of evidence together with human experience (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007).

With a vision to graduate all students, as described in the CMSD Academic Transformation Plan (ATP), a qualitative case study of a specific dropout intervention is quintessential. This case study provided a panoramic view and detailed description of a single urban district's strategy to address its dropout dilemma. A qualitative case study is a rich concentrated investigation of a single organization, person, or group (Merriam, 2002). The objective of this component of the study was to provide valuable insight into strategies that may be useful to urban school leaders as they develop or redesign

programs to cure the *silent epidemic*. The quantitative perspective of research derives

from a positivist epistemology, which holds that there is an objective reality that can be

expressed numerically (Glatthorn, 1998). Quantitative research design is an excellent

way of finalizing results and proving or disproving a hypothesis. The null hypothesis for

the quantitative portion of this research stated that there is no statistically significant

difference in the graduation percentages of the black males in the class of 2007 and 2011.

The basic design involved two groups differing on the independent variable – CTAG, and

comparing them on dependent variables - graduation percentage, attendance, discipline,

and academic achievement. The class of 2007 is referred to as the control group and the

class of 2011 is the experimental group, although it is more accurate to refer to them as

comparison groups.

Statistics were computed on the comparison groups that described in quantitative

terms the degree to which the variables were related. The purpose of using the *t*-test was

to identify mean score differences on particular variables, given the effect of a treatment -

CTAG.

Phenomenological Approach to Qualitative Research

Phenomenology, as a method, looks at the lived experiences of those who have

experienced a certain phenomenon. The father of phenomenology is German philosopher

and mathematician Edmund Husserl (Lichtman, 2006). The phenomenological approach

to research explains the meaning and perspectives of individuals concerning an issue that

they have experienced (Creswell, 1998). Though many researchers suggest that all

qualitative research is phenomenological as it seeks to explore and understand issues,

Merriam (2002) asserts that phenomenological research designs are unique in that they

emphasize the meaning or structure of a particular experience shared by a group of individuals. With regard to the *silent epidemic*, this phenomenological form of inquiry is optimal in exploring the unique perspective of those who were labeled at risk of dropping out of high school before ever entering high school, yet have direct knowledge of what it took to overcome such a daunting prediction as they are now high school graduates. In order to bring their success to scale it is crucial that we listen to the *polyphonic voices* (Hazen, 1993) of these success stories and gain insight into the reasons they feel made the difference.

Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore challenging structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). With this research methodology it is imperative that the researcher be able to *bracket* – set aside preconceived notions, in order to objectively describe the phenomena under study (Lester, 1999). The researcher conducted individual in-depth interviews with each participant, as well as added an interpretive dimension which enabled the research to be used as a basis for practical theory by allowing it to not only inform, but to also support or challenge policy and action. The interpretive dimension consisted of three stages. The first stage summarized the findings according to themes and topics by mining key issues that were talked about by participants. The second stage allowed the researcher to probe deeper into the study by making interpretations and connections. The researcher related the findings to previous research on the topic, to other documented experiences and to existing theories.   The researcher also made informed speculations in this stage. Finally, the third stage contained recommendations which provided an opportunity to be creative

with the ideas developed through the discussion's section. The recommendations are innovative, thus allowing for myriad uses for practitioners and funders.

Participants for Qualitative Design

The qualitative data is based on interviews with six males that participated in the CTAG Program from its inception in 2007, and then successfully completed all requirements to receive their high school diploma, four years later in June, 2011. A strategic and systemic sampling plan was used for identifying six participants, out of potentially hundreds. In the 2007-08 academic year, CMSD had twelve comprehensive high schools that were chosen by the governor to have the CTAG Program. This decision was based on the criteria set forth by the Governor's Office which indicated that high schools with less than 70% graduation rates were eligible for the program. Although CMSD had other smaller, new and innovative or magnet schools, they each had graduation rates above 70%, thus did not qualify for a CTAG Program. Since the 2007-2008 academic year, two of the CTAG high schools have been closed due to enrollment loss in the school district. Several determining factors went into the formulation of which schools and which Linkage Coordinators would be best suited for participating in this study. The demographics of the high schools, as well as the longevity and placement consistency of the Linkage Coordinators at their respective schools were found to be the strongest determining factors. When examining the geographical and demographical footprint of the district, the researcher found that some schools have very similar profiles. The researcher, having in-depth knowledge of the district, clustered the schools accordingly. There were six clusters or pairings, and one outlier. The outlier school was Ginn Academy which had a unique demographic makeup in that it is was new and

innovative single gender school for males. This school was opened in the fall of 2007 and did not have the graduation trend data required, yet was permitted to participate in the CTAG Program by the Governor's Office since it was comprised of nearly 100% black males. After identifying the clusters of similar schools, which turned out to be six, the researcher examined the respective Linkage Coordinators that served within the clusters. Six Linkage Coordinators were identified as having served the same school and students since the inception of the program. These Linkage Coordinators were all middle aged, black males. They were all fathers, and they all had worked with youth development in some capacity before becoming Linkage Coordinators. Their prior jobs included being a juvenile corrections officer, school district athletic manager, high school counselor, work-study supervisor, substitute teacher, and athletic coach. They were asked, for purposes of this study, to identify one student that had participated in the program at their respective schools. The criteria for the recommended student was that they should have participated in the CTAG program continuously from its inception, overcome the most dire circumstances, and yet succeeded by graduating on time, four years later. "Dire circumstances" was defined to be situations involving dysfunctional homes, single parent households, absent fathers, drug abuse, teen parent, homelessness, foster care, gang affiliation and violence. All of these descriptors were in addition to the four criteria necessary to be eligible for the CTAG Program. All six students were black males that had been identified at the end of their 8th grade year as exhibiting the early warning signs that often lead to dropping out of high school. All six of the young men were from single parent households, being raised by their mother. Two of the young men had mothers that were recovering from substance abuse, and one of the young men had a

mother that is deaf. Two of the students had experienced homelessness and foster care.

Two of the students became fathers while in high school. While their high school

transcript indicates that their grades were tumultuous, they each graduated with a grade

point average above 2.5. Each of these young men graduated in June, 2011 with their

respective class, and four of them enrolled in a four year college in the fall of 2011. The

remaining two enrolled in the local junior college and secured service oriented jobs. Their

in-depth profiles are given in the next chapter.

Individual Interviews

Guided interviews were used with each participant. This type of interview

involved a general set of questions that the researcher used on all participants. While the

general structure was the same, the interviewer varied the questions as the situation

demands (Lichtman, 2006). The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy

was critical to gaining depth of information, particularly when investigating issues that

the participant has a strong personal stake. Personal one-on-one interviews are one of the

best mediums to use to accomplish this type of data gathering (Measor, 1985). The

researcher conducted and transcribed the interviews. These individual interviews assisted

with the study of the experience from the perspective of the individual and were not

concerned with any taken-for-granted assumptions. Each of the selected participants was

interviewed in a private one-on-one session lasting no longer than one hour. The

interviews occurred over the winter break of the 2011-2012 academic year. Each

interview was taped recorded. Each of the six participants was asked the same six

questions for reliability, even though the conversations expanded with some of the

interviewees. The questions used for the individual interviews were as follows;

1. What was your favorite part of the program and why?

2. While in high school, was the curriculum, and the way it was presented, relevant to your life? If yes, in what way; if no, why not?

3. Were the exposure trips (i.e. college visits, spring break trips, plays, dinners, museums, etc) impactful to you and why or why not?

4. What specifically did your Linkage Coordinator do for you that made a difference?

5. Do you think that you would have done as well had you not been part of CTAG? Why or why not?

6. If you reflect back over your four years in high school, what would you consider to have been the single most important CTAG Program element that contributed to your success/graduation?

The goal of these interviews was to learn what the interviewees thought or felt about certain aspects of his participation in the CTAG program. The researcher tried to get the interviewees to reveal their feelings, intentions, meanings, subcontexts, or thoughts on a topic, situation, or group, and serve as the filter through which information is gathered, processed, and organized (Lichtman, 2006).

Data Analysis Procedures for the Qualitative Study

Having chosen only six participants to interview, this portion of the study was small enough to be able to thoroughly analyze.   Since there are no universal rules and standards by which qualitative data must be analyzed, the researcher of this study utilized the "Three C's" analysis process (Lichtman, 2006). The three C's stand for coding, categorizing and conceptualizing. The initial steps in the coding process included going

from the responses to some central ideas of the responses. This was done for each interview transcription. Once the codes had been modified for each transcription, they were then organized into categories or themes and color-coded. Some codes became more salient than others, thus requiring the non-salient themes to be grouped under a general topic. The final step in the "three C" process was to identify key concepts that reflected the meaning, based on the tenets of this study. This analysis examined relations and correlations as opposed to relations and causations between the themes and the participants' success. The researcher acknowledges that the CTAG Program is just one of many potential variables that could have impacted a student's life and contributed to them overcoming barriers to success.

Ex Post Facto Design for Quantitative Research

Ex post facto research is often called causal-comparative research. These studies are designed to determine the possible causes of a phenomenon. The reason they are referred to as ex post facto is because the causes are usually studied after they have had an effect upon another variable (Glatthorn, 1998). Kerlinger (1986) described ex post facto research as a systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they inherently do not have manipulability. As such, ex post facto research is appropriate for descriptive purposes, but the design is not appropriate for the determination of causality (Newman, Newman, Brown, & McNeely, 2005). This type of design is frequently necessitated when the variables of interest cannot be manipulated either due to ethical or pragmatic limitations. In the present study, the intervention had already been in place; therefore, an ex post facto design was optimal.

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Ex post facto research; however, is not without limitation. Kerlinger (1986) identified three major weaknesses for the ex post facto research design. They are: (a) the inability to manipulate the independent variables, (b) the lack of randomization, and (c) the risk of improper interpretation of the results. Despite these limitations, Kerlinger (1986) observed that it is a valuable method of inquiry. Kerlinger posits ex post facto research is more important than experimental research. Some of the most important social, scientific, and educational research problems do not lend themselves to experimentation, although many of them do lend themselves to controlled inquiry of the ex post facto kind (Kerlinger, 1986).

One important source of false value claims for a program being evaluated is statistical conclusion validity (Lindvall & Nitko, 1981), which is concerned with the reasonableness of the evidence for causation. In research, the consequence of false negative results is the incorrect revision of the hypothesis. However, the consequence of those comparable errors in the evaluation of social and educational programs is humanistic and materialistic which may influence the expenditure of lots of dollars, misuse of limited resources, or failure to mitigate key social problems (Lee, 1985).

The unplanned ex post facto design and use of intact groups for no-treatment expectations will always be present in field research in social and educational programs (Baker, 1979). It was the expectation of this researcher to recommend that more confidence in this kind of quasi-experimental design and its potential for cause-effect links and verifiability of results be justified.

Setting and Participants for Quantitative Design

The data for the quantitative study was collected from the Cleveland Metropolitan

School District (CMSD), a large Midwestern urban public school district. The data

represented black males who graduated from CMSD in 2011, and black males who

graduated from CMSD in 2007. These distinct graduating classes represent the purest

cohorts of black males that did and did not receive the treatment of the CTAG Program at

any point in their high school career. The graduates from 2011 could have participated in

the CTAG Program beginning in the fall of the 2007-2008 academic year as ninth graders

entering high school. The graduates from 2007 could not have had any influence or

effect from the CTAG Program, as the program's inception did not occur until the fall of

2007. Prior to the establishment of the CTAG Program, there were no other specific

dropout interventions implemented district-wide, within CMSD. The attendance,

discipline and academic data used for this analysis was collected as a normal operating

standard for this district and was readily available. CMSD is an urban district in northern

Ohio that had 46,697 students during the 2010 school year. Student enrollment has been

on a steady decline as evidenced by the 2004 enrollment of 67,015. CMSD spent

$14,573 per pupil in 2010, compared to $11,115 in 2004. Its student to teacher ratio in

2007 was 28:1 compared to 22:1 in 2008. CMSD had a special education population of

22% in the 2010 school year, which is much higher than state and national averages.

Data Analysis Procedures for the Quantitative Study

Descriptive statistics use collected data and its analyses to test hypotheses or to

answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Descriptive

analyses determine and report the way things are (Gay, 1992). For this study, the

researcher used the *t*-test for independent samples as the method to analyze the collected data. Since the members of the first group – the black males in the class of 2007- are not related to the members of the other group – the black males in the class of 2011, in any systematic way then this statistical measure was most appropriate. The *t*-test for independent samples was used to determine whether there was probably a significant difference between the means of the two independent samples. Using the *t*-test on the independent groups, the researcher analyzed the effect of the independent variable – the CTAG Program - on multiple dependent variables – graduation percentage, attendance, grade point average and discipline.

Limitations and Delimitations of this Mixed Methods Study

A key limitation to this mixed method design was the inability to be able to interview black male graduates from the class of 2007. This limitation does not allow for the comparable qualitative analysis that would complement their quantitative data as it does for the black male graduates of 2011. The other limitation of this multi method design is an ethical one. The ability of multi-method research to identify and combine a variety of discrete data points from different methods, thereby linking information about individuals and groups that could not be linked if the methods were used separately could be considered an ethical dilemma – an invasion of privacy, if not handled discreetly and appropriately. A delimitation in the quantitative design that the researcher imposed is that the effect being measured, relative to the program's impact, is not solely based on the graduation rates of black males within the school district. Graduation rate formulas are fluid, and are changed by the state department of education regularly; therefore an analysis of the graduation percentages represented the fairest and most accurate measure

of high school completion rates. There are; nevertheless, other variables that have consistent measures that were chosen to be analyzed as well, for possible impact that the program may have had on them. A delimitation in the qualitative design is that the researcher chose to interview a small sample of participants. Nevertheless a systematic manner by which these six participants were chosen allowed for equitable representation from across the school district from amongst the research sample.

Summary

A mixed method research design is ideal for this study for a multitude of reasons. The statistics from the quantitative research will be used to add precision to the words and narrative of the qualitative research. The researcher will be able to generate and test a grounded theory and can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions since she was not limited to one method or approach. This methodology will add insight and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used, as well as produce more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice relative to this educational phenomenon that has wide-reaching implications. Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, (1989) note that there are five major purposes or rationales for conducting mixed methods research: (1) triangulation; (2) complementarity; (3) initiation; (4) development; and (5) expansion. This researcher proposed that development – using the findings from one method to help inform the other method- as the rationale for using a mixed methods research design.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research study addresses the problem of abysmally low graduation

percentages and overall achievement of black male students within the Cleveland

Metropolitan School District (CMSD). The goal of the study was to find out if a dropout

intervention program (CTAG) made an impact, and then to hear from successful

participants as to which elements of the program were most impactful.   The results of

this mixed methods research study will be outlined in this chapter. This study on the

achievement of black males used quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data

was used to examine the effect that a dropout prevention program (CTAG) had on factors

that influence persistence and ultimately graduation. This was done by analyzing the

black male graduate pre-intervention data and the black male graduate post-intervention

data. The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured individual interviews.

Six black male graduates that had participated in the CTAG program for its entire four

years were interviewed and asked questions pertaining to the elements of the program

that they felt had the most impact on their success.

Quantitative Data Analyses

The first set of data analyses will refer to the quantitative study which posits 4 questions. The four quantitative research questions were as follows;

1.	Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the graduation percentages of black males in CMSD?

2.	Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the cumulative grade point average (GPA) of black males graduating from CMSD?

3.	Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the attendance of black males during their senior year?

4.	Did participation in the CTAG Program positively impact the discipline of black males during their senior year?

The data analyses of this ex post facto, causal-comparative research compared two groups. The first group consisted of all black males that graduated from CMSD in the 2006-2007 school year. The second group consisted of all black males that graduated from CMSD in the 2010-2011 school year. For purposes of this study, these two groups are homogenous in that they are all black males attending the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. The independent or exogenous variable is the CTAG Program. The four dependent variables are the graduation percentage, GPA, attendance and discipline. Three of these variables; GPA, attendance and discipline are posited to be factors that influence persistence and ultimately graduation.

The analyses of data in the quantitative study did support the overall hypothesis that there was a positive impact on the numbers of the black males that graduated from CMSD in the class 2011 as compared to the class of 2007. There was also statistical support for research question two regarding a positive impact on cumulative GPA,

however; there was not statistical support for the research questions 3 and 4 regarding a positive impact on attendance and discipline.

Demographics of the School District

CMSD is the second largest public school district in the state of Ohio. It is a large urban school district serving over 40,000 students. The ethnic breakdown of the district during the 2010-2011 school year was 69% black; 14.8% white; 12.2% Hispanic; 4% other. The district reported a 100% socially economic disadvantaged population with a 5.5% limited English population and a 22.3% special education population. During the 2006-2007 school year CMSD had an enrollment of 52,769 and in the 2010-2011 school year its enrollment had declined to 43,202. This represents an 18% loss of students. The enrollment of all black males during the 2006-2007 school year was 17,697, or 33.5% of the total enrollment for the district. For the 2010-2011 school year the total black male enrollment was 15,137, representing 35% of the total enrollment (Ohio Department of Education Website). These data indicate that while the district experienced an overall decline in student enrollment during that four year period, the percentage of black males actually increased during that same time when the CTAG Program was in effect, which could be attributed to persistence within the black male student population.

Quantitative Question One: Graduation Percentages

The first quantitative research question sought to disclose whether the CTAG Program positively impacted the graduation percentages of black males in CMSD. Figure 1 provides a comparison chart for the descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies for the black male graduates from each class as well as the number of black males that were enrolled as seniors during each respective academic school year. Six hundred forty

two black males graduated in 2007 and 766 graduated in 2011. In 2007 there were 896 black males enrolled as seniors, and in 2011 there were 1,002 enrolled. This signifies that 72% of the black males enrolled as seniors in 2007 actually graduated, while 76% graduated in 2011. The data analysis does support the first hypothesis in that there was a positive impact on the graduation percentages of black males during the 2007-2011 school years when the CTAG Program was operational. Graduation percentages are not to be confused with, nor interchanged with graduation rates. Graduation rates are calculated by the Ohio Department of Education and are based solely on four-year cohorts. The calculation formula for such rates change regularly, thus would not be reliable statistical measurements.

Figure 1

Comparison of "Black Male Graduates" to "Black Males Enrolled as Seniors" during the
2006-2007 and 2010-2011 School Years
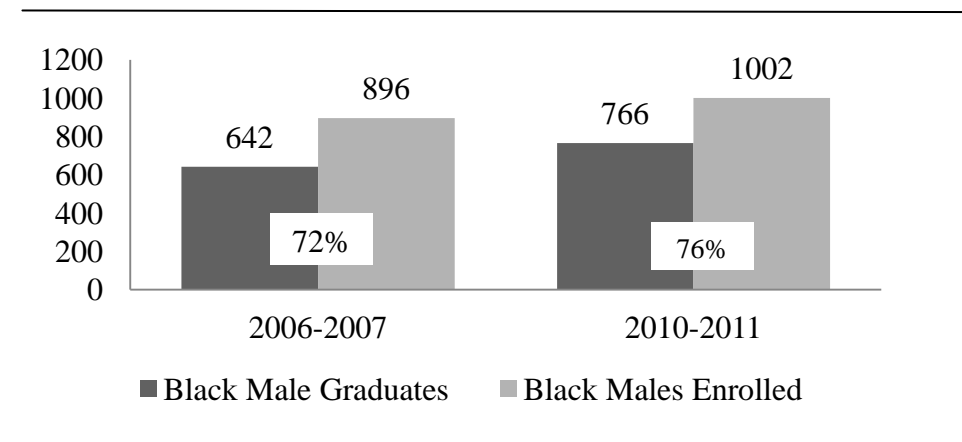
Quantitative Question Two: GPA

To determine the possible impact that the CTAG Program had on the GPA's of black males in the two comparison groups, a *t*-test was run for the independent samples. Table 4.1 shows the group statistics for the dependent variable GPA. This table provides

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useful descriptive statistics for the two groups being compared including the mean, standard deviation and standard error mean. The average GPA for the 642 black male graduates in the class of 2006-2007 was 1.05 with a standard deviation of 1.30. The average GPA for the black male graduate in the class of 2010-2011 was 2.39 with a standard deviation of 0.79.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Variable GPA

School Year	# of Black Male Graduates	Mean GPA	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
2006-2007	642	1.05	1.30	0.05
2010-2011	766	2.39	0.79	0.03

The independent samples test was used to see if the two means were significantly statistically different from each other. Table 4.2 displays the inferential statistics including the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances as well as both equal and unequal variance t values and a 95% confidence interval for the difference in means. The t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean GPA that the black males of the 2006-2007 class had ($M = 1.0517$, $s = 1.30$) and that of the black males in the class of 2010-2011, which had ($M = 2.39$, $s = .79$), $t(1406) = 23.80$, $p = .000$, $\alpha = 0.05$. Even though the F statistic is large, indicating that the variance of the GPA's is very different within the two groups, the t-test still revealed a statistically significant difference; $t(1019.96) = 22.86$, $p = 0.00$, $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, in answer to research question two, it is shown that there is a statistically significant difference between the GPA's of the black

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males in the classes of 2006-2007 and 2010-2011, the four years that the CTAG Program was in effect, and the that the average GPA of the graduates increased during the four years. Upon further analysis of the frequency data, the large *F* statistic exists due to the exorbitant number of GPA's in the class of 2006-2007 that were zero or very close to zero. There were 358 such GPA's.

Table 4.2

Independent Samples Test for the Variable GPA

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
	F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Equal variances assumed	523.17	0.00	23.79	1406	0.00
Equal variances not assumed	-	-	22.86	1019.96	0.00

Quantitative Question Three: Attendance

For purposes of this study, the dependent variable attendance was calculated by taking the students' actual days in attendance and dividing it by the actual days that the student was enrolled, thus producing their attendance percentage. This study did not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. A comparison of the attendance percentage averages for each group was done using descriptive statistics. The data analysis for this variable did not support the hypothesis that the CTAG Program would positively impact attendance, as the average attendance for the post-intervention sample was slightly lower than that of the pre-intervention sample. Table 4.3 shows the mean attendance percentages for each group. The black male graduates in the class of 2006-

2007 had an average attendance percentage of 88.74% with a standard deviation of .088

while the black male graduates in the class of 2010-2011 had a slightly lower average

attendance percentage of 88.53% with a standard deviation of 0.10.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for the Variable Attendance

School Year	# of Black Male Graduates	Mean Attendance Percentage	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
2006-2007	642	88.74%	0.09	.003
2010-2011	766	88.53%	0.10	.004

Research question three queried whether there was a positive impact on the

attendance during the four years that the CTAG program was in effect. While the initial

descriptive statistics show a slight decline in the attendance percentage from 88.74% to

88.53%, an independent samples test provides inferential statistics to more closely

examine the results. Table 4.4 displays the results of the independent samples test for the

variable attendance. First, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was significant

with $p < .05$ denoting that the variances of the two groups are significantly different.

Since the Levene's Test showed that we cannot assume equal variances with the two

groups, we therefore have $t (1400.99) = 0.42$, $p = 0.67$, $\alpha = 0.05$. With a p-value greater

than 0.05 it can be concluded that there is not a significant difference between the

attendance percentages of the two groups. While there was a slight decrease in the

average attendance percentage for the black male graduates in 2010-2011, there are some

salient factors that will be considered as plausible explanations for this in Chapter V.

Initial factors to consider include the fact that the raw numbers of the increased graduates in the class of 2010-2011 must be considered, as well as the fact that part of the CTAG Program included exposure field trips which would have taken the young men out of school on excused absences more frequently.

Table 4.4

Independent Samples Test for the Variable Attendance

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
	F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Equal variances assumed	4.18	0.04	0.42	1406	0.68
Equal variances not assumed	-	-	0.42	1400.99	0.67

Quantitative Question Four: Discipline

This study defined discipline as the number of days a student spent out of school, suspended due to infractions of the Student Code of Conduct. The researcher posited that the impact of the CTAG Program would have caused a decrease in discipline among black males during their senior year. The initial analyses of the data did not support this position. There was an increase in both the numbers of students that received suspensions as well as an increase in the average number of days that the suspensions lasted. Table 4.5 displays the group statistics for the dependent variable discipline. There were 64 black male seniors suspended during the 2006-2007 school year and 95 suspended during the 2010-2011 school year. The average length of days suspended was 5.89 for the class of 2007 and 6.89 for the class of 2011.

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for the Variable Discipline

School Year	# of Black Male Graduates Suspended	Mean # of Days Suspended	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
2006-2007	64	5.89	5.49	0.69
2010-2011	95	6.89	6.06	0.62

Closer examination into days suspended between these two groups reveals that in the class of 2007, 64 out of 642 graduates were suspended which represents 10% of the sample, while in the class of 2011, 95 out of 766 graduates were suspended which represents 12% of the sample. The increase in the numbers of black males suspended rose from 10% to 12%, a 2% increase. However, the numbers of black males graduating overall rose from 72% to 76%, a 4% increase. This infers that the rate at which black males were suspended did not keep pace with the rate at which they were graduating, which is a positive trend worth noting. Other relevant factors that could have contributed to the slight increase in suspensions will be explored in Chapter V.

Table 4.6 displays the results from the independent samples test for the variable discipline. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is not significant with a $p > .05$, thus indicating that the variances for the two groups are not significantly different and can be assumed equal. A t test revealed that there is not a statistically significant difference within the average days suspended that the black males of the 2006-2007 class had ($M = 5.89$, $s = 5.49$) and that of the black males in the class of 2010-2011, which had ($M = 6.89$, $s = 6.06$), $t (157) = 1.06$, $p = 0.29$, $\alpha = .05$.

Table 4.6

Independent Samples Test for the Variable Discipline

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
	F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Equal variances assumed	1.12	0.29	-1.06	157	0.29
Equal variances not assumed	-	-	-1.08	143.90	0.28

Qualitative Data Analyses

Six subjects, all former participants in the CTAG Program, were interviewed in December, 2011 or January, 2012 during winter break of their freshman year of college. Each signed an informed consent form and also received a $50 Visa gift card after the interview. The semi-structured interviews had six questions; however, the researcher did probe deeper in some instances in order to elicit more information and gain a deeper understanding of their perspective. Using the transcribed interviews the researcher employed Marilyn Lichtman's (2006) *Three C's Analysis* process as outlined in Chapter III. The goal was to arrive at common themes or concepts manifested by a "sifting and sorting" type of procedure. Key points were sifted from each transcription. Once all transcriptions had gone through this process, then the researcher sorted statements into codes, always looking for overlap. Common elements were seen almost immediately, yet there were a few outlier codes or statements. After the codes became evident, the researcher then categorized the codes. Five codes emerged as follows; 1) mentor; 2) exposure; 3) paradigm; 4) self-efficacy; and 5) surrogate family/brotherhood. Where

applicable, these categories were then tied back to the basic tenets of the CTAG Program, thus allowing for theoretical validation. In Appendix A the codes and categories are presented for each question asked during the interview. This qualitative data analysis is presented in the same manner as the quantitative data was presented – question by question. The overarching qualitative research question is "What made the CTAG Program most impactful to the participants' success and why?" The six specific interview questions were as follows;

1.   What was your favorite part of the program and why?

2.   While in high school, was the curriculum, and the way it was presented, relevant to your life? If yes, in what way; if no, why not?

3.   Were the exposure trips (i.e. college visits, spring break trips, plays, dinners, museums, etc.) impactful to you and why or why not?

4.   What specifically did your Linkage Coordinator do for you that made a difference?

5.   Do you think that you would have done as well had you not been part of the CTAG Program? Why or why not?

6.   If you reflect back over your four years in high school, what would you consider to have been the single most important CTAG Program element that contributed to your success/graduation?

These questions were designed to gain the participants' perspective into the various components of the CTAG Program in an effort to see which elements were perceived as being the most impactful. The major elements of the CTAG Program, according to its

program design were mentoring, exposure trips and culturally relevant high school curriculum.

The six black male graduates that were interviewed were students recommended by Linkage Coordinators. The methodology used in selecting the recommended students was described in Chapter III. The six young men had all been identified at the end of their eighth grade year as potential high school dropouts due to the early warning signs that they were exhibiting. Upon entering high school, they were connected to the CTAG Program. For purposes of this study, the Linkage Coordinators were asked to identify graduates that had participated in the CTAG Program for all four years, overcoming some of the direst circumstances. These circumstances included, but were not limited to home dysfunction, drug abuse situations, homelessness, violence, poor academics, poor self-esteem, high mobility, and fatherlessness. While the CTAG Program is a high school dropout intervention program, it is worth noting that all of the students chosen by the Linkage Coordinators, not only graduated from high school, but also enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Fictitious names are used for each participant to ensure anonymity.

Demographics of Subjects Interviewed

Subject #1; hereafter, Jamal, concluded his eighth grade year with a majority of failing grades. He lived in a single parent household with his mother. His father was absent from his life; having spent most of Jamal's childhood years in prison. He lived in an area of Cleveland with high crime and drug activity. He reported hearing gunshots at night on a regular basis. He entered high school and was connected with the CTAG Program. He indicated that this is when his transformation began. Jamal graduated in

the top ten of his high school class and is a freshman a prestigious all-male, historically black institution out of state.

Subject #2; hereafter, David, had actually stopped going to school during the second half of his eighth grade year. His family moved a lot and his attendance record was poor. His truancy was not intentional, as he had to care for his younger siblings due to the fact that his mother was battling drug addiction and alcoholism. His father was absent from his life and was never mentioned throughout this entire interview process. Spending most days at the local Salvation Army playing basketball while his siblings were in school caused someone to notice his outstanding basketball skills. He was convinced to give school another try, if nothing else but to play sports. He did enroll in high school and was immediately connected with the CTAG Program. Although his home life didn't improve much and he even found himself living with a variety of people at one point or another, he did graduate and he did pass all sections of the OGT on the first attempt. David graduated with a 2.9 GPA and received a basketball scholarship to a junior college in a neighboring state. He is in his second semester there after having a successful first semester, both academically and athletically.

Subject #3; hereafter, Tim, felt as if he had lost everything when he was a little boy. At age seven, his mother died of cancer and his father couldn't take care for him due to his own problems with alcohol. Tim endured physical abuse by relatives and eventually was remanded to the foster care system. He spent most of his childhood going from one foster home to another, lacking parental guidance and loving support. It was not long before he turned to the streets, as that is where he found love and support. He began selling drugs and staying out past curfew. By eighth grade he was feeling hopeless

and alone. Near the end of his eighth grade year he was violently attacked in the streets

and had his jaw broken. It was at that time that he decided to have a "ruthless mentality."

Upon entering high school he was connected with the CTAG Program. His initial mindset

was one that cared only about himself and he operated in a constant state of pure survival

or self-preservation. His final years in high school were spent living with an older sister

that had a different mother than he had. Tim graduated with a 3.2 GPA and also passed

the State of Ohio Firefighters Certification Test. He enrolled as a freshman at a major

university in the state of Ohio where he is pursuing a degree in business.

Subject #4; hereafter, Brian, grew up in a part of Cleveland that has been

nationally recognized as one of the top ten most dangerous neighborhoods in the country.

The housing projects that he grew up in created a survival mentality in him. Along with

the pressures of the streets, Brian was reared by his mother as an only child. His mother

and father are both deaf and his father was absent from his life. His mother never came

to his school or supported his athletic or academic activities. He learned sign language in

order to communicate with her. His sole life's aspiration was to grow up to fix cars,

many of which he admits that he stole. His middle grade years were tumultuous, his

grades were fair, but his discipline record left a lot to be desired. He attributes the

fighting and school discipline infractions to the street survival mentality that he had to

maintain in order to just exist in his community. Upon entering high school he was

immediately identified and connected with the CTAG Program. Brian graduated third in

his class and is a freshman at a state university in Ohio, having received a full academic

scholarship.

Subject #5; hereafter, Mike, bounced from school to school, never getting good grades and always finding himself in fights. His father was in prison and his mother moved a lot. He was older than most of his grade level peers, which was a result of multiple retentions. Watching his middle school friends move on to high school when he didn't was perhaps his first eye-opener. He became a father while in high school, which created additional stressors in his life. His initial aspirations at that time were to become a rapper or a big gang banger. Upon entering high school in the ninth grade he was connected to the CTAG Program. Mike ultimately graduated at the age of 20 and is attending the local community college and working to take care of his child.

Subject #6; hereafter, Terry, was raised in a single parent household with a recovering alcoholic. His father was absent from his life and his older brother was in and out of the penitentiary. He was teased a lot at school and experienced what he called mental and physical torment. At home he felt his sisters basically ran the house and they, too, tormented him. His grades were poor and his aspirations included smoking weed, drinking and having sex. He had developed a disdain toward females. His goal was to be a thug. His introduction to the CTAG Program actually occurred as he was being called to the office for grabbing the behind of a female classmate. It was during that situation that he was introduced to his Linkage Coordinator. Terry graduated in four years from high school and enrolled in the local junior college and plans to pursue his dream of becoming an actor. He is the father of a baby girl and now says that he understands the sacrifices and struggles that his mother endured on his behalf, while also trying to become whole, herself.

Interview Question One: "Favorite Part of Program"

Question one was designed to seek insight into what the participants considered

their favorite part of the CTAG Program to be, and then compare their experiences to

what the actual program design had intended the major components to be. It was not

surprising to find that the mentoring component of the program was identified by four of

the six participants as being their favorite part of the program. The Linkage Coordinator

appeared to fill a void in these young men's lives.

> *Jamal* stated that "…growing up as young male
> without ever having a man tell you that they love
> you…it kind of made you feel good about yourself
> when my Linkage Coordinator did that. He made
> me feel like his own…and I didn't want to
> disappoint him"
>
> *David* recalled that "…My favorite part of the
> program was….having support from my Linkage
> Coordinator that I haven't had before."
>
> *Mike* felt that "… my favorite part of the program
> was to actually get a male role model in my life to
> keep me pressing forward, not to drop out to be
> another statistic in the world."
>
> *Terry* shared that "…just having someone to talk to,
> my Linkage Coordinator …someone that can relate
> to what I was going through and give me positive
> feedback."

It was also not surprising that exposure trips were listed by three of the six participants as

their favorite part of the program. The exposure trips provided opportunities for

experiential learning, as well as they allowed the young men to see their future

possibilities. The opportunity to travel outside of their immediate neighborhood was

mentioned several times.

> *Brian* informed me that "…without the program I
> may have never stepped outside the state of Ohio.
> Without the exposure trips I would never have been

> the way I am now, I just wanted to stay in Cleveland. Now I can be a renaissance man and do multiple things and help impact people."

> *David* clearly articulated that "...without the exposure trips I would never have known about our history, watching plays or seeing important African Americans that were entrepreneurs. Being able to travel and see things opened up a lot of opportunities for me."

> *Tim* pinpoints that "…my favorite part of the program was the trip to Morehouse. I got to wear a suit and it made me realize that I could be somebody."

What was surprising about the responses to Question one, was that none of the participants identified anything having to do with school, academics, teachers, book clubs or tutoring. While these components of the program more than likely impacted their academic success, they were not seen as being a favorite part of the experience. The other surprising aspect to the responses to Question one was that three of the six participants identified that the "camaraderie", "brotherhood" and "new family" sentiments that were created by being a member of the CTAG Program were their favorite parts.

> *Terry* said that "…I really enjoyed talking to my brothers of the CTAG Program, and I had fun moments with them. I wouldn't change anything…having positive young men and different opinions. It was a great, excellent experience."

> *Brian* informed me that he "…got the opportunity to become a part of a family, like a brotherhood. I got to build friends from different parts of the city instead of just my six block radius that I live in now."

The impact of the "strong bonds", "lifelong friendships" and "brotherhood" may be an unintentional program design element worth acknowledging and honing.

Interview Question Two: "High School Curriculum Relevancy"

Question two was designed to address the school curriculum and its relevancy to students that were already exhibiting early warning signs that lead to dropping out. The cultural congruence of the curriculum and the cultural competency of the teachers is a major component of the CTAG Program design. Four of the six participants indicated that their high school curriculum was not relevant to their life and in fact did not prepare them for college.

> *David* admitted that "…I had one teacher that prepared me for college, but all my other classes and teachers didn't and I'm taking a lot of remedial courses in college."
>
> *Jamal* observed that "...sometimes the teachers would kind of get lost and not know how to teach us at all so the whole subject matter would kind of just get blown over. I don't think a lot of my teachers possessed the tools in order to teach me...or individuals like myself who have a different style of learning."
>
> *Brian* who attends an HBCU recalled that "…it's crazy that I didn't learn this in high school. A lot of my peers in college know about these black successful people and I barely knew anything about them…so I'm catching up. I wasn't encouraged to read books in high school, but now my teachers and advisors are just handing me different things to read and stuff like that. In high school, everything was about the OGT test. They would teach to the test…but in college they're not thinking about an OGT test."

There were two participants that elaborated on particular teachers that they felt were

culturally competent, and upon further probing, they were able to give concrete examples

of how that looked to them.

> *David* remembered "… my English teacher, she
> took the time out to go off course and go back over
> things that we didn't know, and she helped us. She
> had us read a lot of books so we could better
> ourselves."

> *Jamal* similarly recalled "… my English teacher
> was very rigorous. Her class was intense. She kind
> of let us develop our own curriculum…like she had
> her core things, but she would give leeway. Like if
> you were good at rapping, then you could write a
> rap for your paper and you could let other people
> see and know how you grew up or how you lived in
> that paper."

While some participants were able to articulate exactly what they felt a culturally

competent teacher looked like, other participants articulated what they saw as skills that

were lacking in their teachers.

> *Tim* desired that "…my teachers in high school
> should be more enthusiastic and energetic towards
> us learning instead of just throwing it out there and
> like letting us learn it on our own."

> *Jamal* further pontificated that "… teachers who I
> had in high school were not from the inner city and
> not really able to relate to the style in which I grew
> up… they need to tell us that they care. Not only
> tell us, but show us and to be there for us in times of
> need, you know, cause a lot of us come from
> situations where our backgrounds are not the best
> and don't really have that support at home. "

Interview Question Three: "Exposure Trips"

Exposure trips have a more profound purpose than ordinary field trips. The

exposure trip not only builds background knowledge for the learner, but in instances

involving at-risk or disadvantaged students, it allows them to expand their world-view of life's possibilities. This question was designed to gain insight into how exposure trips impacted the participants. All six participants overwhelmingly spoke about how the exposure trips led to feelings of efficacy and empowerment. The action words used to describe their feelings about the exposure trips lend insight into the value of these experiences. The exposure trips "inspired, taught, impacted, helped, developed, and saved" me, are all sentiments from the participants.

> *Tim* emotionally explained that "… during those trips they actually saved me from my life being taken because while I was on those trips I lost two friends and just by me being on the trips kept me from being in the situation where my friends was because nine times out of ten, I was bound to be with my friends that day the incident happened. So I appreciated the trips just for getting me out of here."

> *Terry* solemnly shared that "… if it wasn't for the C-Program and the trips I would have never thought about going to college because of my fear. The CTAG Program taught me how to overcome my fears, and take them instead of them taking you. Those college visits helped me see that I could be here. I didn't think I was smart enough to attend college. I didn't have the right attitude, I was worried about what people thought or said about me. I was scared."

> *Jamal* declared that "…the exposure trips were some of the most intricate parts of CTAG because I had never traveled anywhere. To go to a play or a museum or dinner taught me different etiquettes. To see black males in college gave me inspiration. Going to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia changed my life…completely. To see African American males who look just like me, coming from the same situations as me, was mind boggling.

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Growing up in the inner city, we never see large
amounts of men, black men, going to college."

Just as important as the affective efficacy that the exposure trips created, is the
empowerment feeling that they also created. Five of the six participants expressed
attitudes of having felt empowered after seeing new things and traveling to new places.

Brian affirmed that "Without this program I would
have never thought about college! Without this
program at least 60 or 70% of my life would have
been totally different. It was just so impactful."

Jamal reflected that "… those trips gave me
inspiration to say that I can make it out of this
situation and I can do a lot better for myself. The
Morehouse trip and the Washington, DC trip were
very important and it helped me in my development
as I matriculated through high school."

Interview Question Four: "Linkage Coordinator"

The intent of question four was to delve deeper in the specific attributes that the
Linkage Coordinator brought into this role as a mentor for these potential drop outs.
Linkage Coordinators are full time employees of the school district, hired to be caseload
specific mentors for the young men identified as being at-risk of dropping out. They are
not necessarily college degreed professionals, although most are. They came from
various backgrounds including being law enforcement officers, athletic directors,
entrepreneurs, firefighters, and businessmen. At the time of this study all of the Linkage
Coordinators for CMSD were black males with the exception of one, who was a black
female. Since the study, the black female has re-evaluated her role and effectiveness and
has moved to a different division in CMSD.

It is without any reservation that this question evoked the most emotion and
heartfelt sentiment from the participants during the interview. The fact that all of these

young men grew up without their fathers provides a more lucid understanding into their

responses. Four of the six participants emphatically state that their Linkage Coordinator

became a surrogate father to them and was always there when needed.

> *Terry* recalled that "My father died when I was two.
> I really didn't grow up with a father-figure. My
> Linkage Coordinator was my surrogate father. I
> was lost as a young man on how to be a man. He
> showed me what it was to become a man, how to
> deal with my problems and not run away from
> them. If I needed anything, I always could call him
> up. He was there!"

> *Brian* told me that "He was like a father figure
> because my father wasn't really ever around. My
> Linkage Coordinator was there for life! He showed
> me that he cared. He made me think he believed in
> me. I could always go to him for advice. He
> ultimately helped me change my mindset…my
> thinking."

> *David* avowed that "… he acted like a father to me
> because my father wasn't in my life. He pushed
> me…he also went out of his way… He taught me
> how to tie a tie and how to carry my suit jacket and
> better myself."

Along with the role of being a surrogate father to many of the young men, the Linkage

Coordinator gained a position in some of their lives that evolved into one of pure selfless

love. When talking about the genuine love that these young men felt toward their

mentors, there were instances when the interview had to be paused in order for them to

regain composure.

> *Brian* emotionally shared that "… he could tell me
> different things, and the thing was even stronger for
> me 'cause I could see who he is and how successful
> he was and he was from the exact same place that
> I'm from. He guided me to the water and I felt like

> I wanted to drink it because he showed me that if I drink the water, this is what I can get…how I can become successful and where I can go. That is why I love my Linkage Coordinator…because he showed me so many different things."

> *Terry* also got emotional as he recalled that "…My Linkage Coordinator taught me how to be a strong black man. He taught me how to look at somebody in the eyes when talking to them with confidence… how to sit, how to tie a tie…how to present myself…how to have a firm grip on my handshake. He taught me how to walk with confidence. My Linkage Coordinator was one of the best men I've ever met and I love him, man!"

Along with the role of surrogate father and the sentiment of sincere love for their mentors, question four extrapolated some practical lessons that the Linkage Coordinators taught their mentees. These common themes included work ethic, timeliness, appearance, grooming, goal setting, planning, decision making and resiliency.

Interview Question Five: "Efficacy"

The design of question five was to elicit perspectives from the participants relevant to their power or capacity to produce the desired result - graduation and success beyond. Every participant unequivocally stated that they would not have been able to be as successful as they are now without the intervention of the CTAG Program. The most salient theme that emerged as a potential reason for their feeling of non-efficaciousness was that of despair or hopelessness as they entered high school.

> *David* felt that "… in the 8th grade I think I was going to dropout then because of the situations with my family and the CTAG Program is what made me go on through to realize that there is a way out."

> *Mike* remembers that "…I was 16 coming out of the 8th grade and if I wouldn't have joined the CTAG

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Program I would have dropped out and probably would have been in prison somewhere, probably robbing and selling drugs… The CTAG Program showed me that there's nothing really behind that and you don't have to go that route."

Terry ashamedly admits that before joining the program "I was living a fantasy thug life that I had seen on some South Central, Boys in the Hood type stuff…I was getting high all the time and trying to have sex with girls on a constant basis. The program taught me to get my priorities straight."

Jamal reflected back to his 8th grade year and recalled that "...I had a 0.84 GPA with all F's and one A, and that was in gym class. I was lethargic and didn't really do work in class…and the sad part is that I was in school every day. I just didn't do any work, because I didn't really have the inspiration to, because it was kind of like what is it going to do for my future? I just had to cry and I was like this life is not the way that I want to live, especially if I don't have to!"

Tim also ashamedly admitted that "at the end of my 8th grade year I got jumped and got my jaw broke and that discouraged me from wanting to go to high school. I just didn't care. I had a ruthless mentality. I just cared about myself…if it didn't pertain to me then I really didn't care about it. If it's harming me then I'm going to get them before they get to me."

Brian smiles as he recalls that "...I had never been outside the state of Ohio. I never traveled before in my life. Just growing up in the public housing was nothing around me but guns, drugs, and violence. I had to be tough, I had to know how to fight, how to defend yourself, because if you didn't you weren't going to survive. All I saw was concrete walls!"

While it was clear that these students entered high school with feelings of despair and

hopelessness, it is also clear that the CTAG Program created a social construct of hope

for them and their future.

> David offered that "CTAG offered me
> opportunities… and opened more gates than I think
> I would have been offered."

> *Jamal* beamed as he stated "I changed myself
> around due to CTAG. I would be in jail or prison
> right now or maybe even worse, I may be dead right
> now. Growing up in poverty, and just trying to
> survive, you start doing irrational things in order to
> survive. With CTAG, my high school career
> transformed. I got involved in the community, I
> began to strive for excellence, and I began to dress
> different. Yeah I would definitely say I wouldn't
> have been in the position that I am in now if it
> wasn't for CTAG… my whole personality
> changed."

> *Mike* held that "…without CTAG, I probably
> wouldn't have walked across that stage. I had to
> just look at myself in the mirror and say you don't
> want to be another statistic in the world."

> *Brian* had an epiphany as he recalled that "CTAG
> made me think big! By becoming a part of the
> CTAG Program I knew I could become successful.
> I feel like it's already a success story, and the crazy
> part is, it's just the beginning!"

Interview Question Six: "Most Important Element of the Program"

The final question was designed to have the participants reflect back over their

four years in high school and articulate what they felt was the single most important

component of the program. This was intended to be different from what they felt was

their favorite part of the program as asked in question one; however, the results were very

similar. Of the six participants, three expressed that the Linkage Coordinator was the

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most important element of the CTAG Program; three expressed that the exposure trips were the most important element; and one participant could not identify a single element but rather indicated that the program in its entirety was important.

Regardless as which element was rated as most important, it was evident that the driving factor was that both the trips and/or the mentor changed world-views within these young men. Statements like "my whole personality changed"; "they changed my whole mentality and my whole well being"; "the program taught me about success" and "he ultimately changed my mindset" are great backdrops to their initial statements of "I didn't think I was going to graduate in the first place"; "I should have never made it"; "all I wanted to do was get high and have sex"; "going down the path that I was going down gave me two options, jail or die" or "I had a ruthless mentality".

Summary

In summary, this mixed method research study analyzed two sets of data. The purpose was not to see the quantitative and qualitative methods as dichotomous, but to view them as existing together on a continuum. The quantitative ex post facto data contained a sample of 1,408 black male graduates from CMSD consisting of two graduating classes. The pre-intervention class of 2007 had 642 black male graduates and the post-intervention class of 2011 had 766 black male graduates. The second set of data was qualitative data collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews with six black male graduates from the class of 2011that had participated in the CTAG Program for their entire four years in high school.

The quantitative data supported the hypothesis that the CTAG Program did indeed impact the overall percentage of black males that graduated from CMSD. It also

supported the hypothesis that the program positively impacted the GPA's of the black

male graduates in CMSD. The data analyses for the variables attendance and discipline

of the black male graduates were not shown to have been positively impacted by the

CTAG Program. However, in Chapter V, the researcher will discuss plausible causes for

these scenarios.

The qualitative methodology utilized phenomenological inquiry to obtain

feedback from six graduates that were able to persist despite the early warning signs they

exhibited and the dire circumstances that they had to overcome. Their polyphonic voices

revealed that without the intervention of the CTAG Program, they felt that they would

not have graduated from high school. Their voices also provided evidence that the key

factors contributing to their success were the mentoring and the exposure that they

received as participants in the program. The mentor became their surrogate father,

teaching them things that they felt fathers are to teach young men, and the exposure trips

opened their world-view to offer glimpses of what success looked like. The mentor and

the exposure trips worked in tandem to change their entire paradigm about life.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Improving black male student achievement and increasing their graduation rate

continues to be one of the nation's highest educational priorities. In the preceding

chapter both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed and presented. In this final

chapter, I will draw a few conclusions, provide some implications for practice and

recommend some suggestions for further research. In the final section of this chapter, I

will expand upon the ideas that were studied in an effort to provide further understanding

of the possible effect that targeted strategies have on black male achievement,

engagement and efficacy, as well as provide an interpretation of my results by associating

them with prevalent theoretical frameworks.

Summary of the Study

This mixed methods research study investigated the effect of a particular dropout

prevention program for black males within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District

(CMSD), which at the time of the study was experiencing abysmally low graduation rates

for this targeted subgroup of students. The Closing The Achievement Gap (CTAG)

Program has a framework anchored in mentoring, exposure trips and culturally relevant

pedagogy. The purpose of the study was to examine the programs relationship with the graduation percentages of black males within the district, as well as their attendance, behavior and academic achievement. While the study focused on the first cohort of students that began in 2007 as ninth graders and graduated in 2011, it became evident that the program's potential reached beyond the identified cohort of students. This "bleed through" phenomenon could be considered a salient factor with regard to the tremendous graduation gains that the district experienced amongst its overall black student population during the time that the program existed. This idea is supported by the graduation rate for black students increasing from 60.34% to 75.09% for the 2008-2009 to the 2009-2010 school year (ODE Website: www.ode.state.oh.us).

Ex post facto data was obtained from the school district relative to the black males that graduated in 2007 and 2011. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were done on the data to determine if the dependent variables did indeed co-vary with relation to the independent variable (CTAG). The null hypothesis for the study stated that there was no statistically significant difference in the graduation percentages of the black males in the class of 2007 and 2011 – the four years during which the CTAG Program was in effect. The quantitative research did support the hypothesis that CTAG had a positive correlation with the number of black males graduating and their overall GPA's. It did not support the hypotheses that attendance would increase or discipline would decrease. The quantitative study included the data records of 1,408 black male graduates from CMSD; 642 from the class of 2007 and 766 from the class of 2011. Additionally, a qualitative sample of six provided data attained through interviews with these successful past participants of the program from the class of 2011. The qualitative research question was

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"What made the CTAG Program most impactful to the participants' success and why?" These interviews produced several prominent themes. These major themes are critical when trying to understand what actually made the CTAG Program effective. Four prominent themes were identified and each theme was supported by a powerful underlying message.

Discussion of the Findings

This study did support the hypothesis that there was a positive result on the graduation of black males during the four years that the CTAG Program was in effect. Not only did the percentage of graduates increase, but the retention of high school black males in the school system increased overall; which, diametrically opposed the existing trend of student enrollment declination. The primary reason that graduation percentages were used as data points rather than graduation rates is due to the fact that graduation rates are calculated based on a formula derived by the state department of education and is a measure of a four-year cohort retention. This study supports the notion that while it takes some students, particularly black males, longer than four years, it is critical that they still persist and be celebrated instead of being labeled a dropout or failure simply because they don't graduate within the prescribed four year. During the four year period studied, the district experienced an 18% enrollment loss; however, the enrollment for black males actually increased 1.5% as reflected by the Ohio Department of Education's enrollment data (ODE Website: www.ode.state.oh.us). The relationship that CTAG appeared to have had on the culture and climate within the district is one by which black males and their families possibly felt that school was more inviting, empathetic and strategic to their targeted needs.

Along with graduation and retention rates showing positive trends, the overall academic achievement amongst the high school black males was also trending positively. The GPA's of the comparison groups showed that the black males from the class of 2011 graduated with significantly higher GPA's than those of the class of 2007. There was an excessive amount of students with cumulative GPA's of zero or near zero in the pre-intervention class of 2007. Upon investigation as to possible reasons for this phenomenon, it was discovered that several of the students that graduated during that time did so, only after returning to pass a portion of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), thus not having an official transcript with a weighted GPA recorded during that year. Other possible reasons could include the fact that some special education transcripts only included grades of S or U which would not weigh into a cumulative grade point average. Finally, the school district revealed that it was employing a different student database enterprise back in 2007 which presented challenges in accounting for outlier situations as the ones described here; however, with the new system, the 2011 records accounted for all students more accurately. Nevertheless a frequency summary still confirmed the fact that the overall achievement levels as defined by the cumulative GPA were still much higher for the post-program cohort.

In attempting to understand the dependent variable of attendance and its failure to have a positive correlation to the CTAG Program, the researcher did attempt to gain insight on the situation by seeking the opinions of teachers and administrators familiar with the program and its components. As part of the CTAG Program, the exposure trips were a major component. These trips required students to be absent for periods of a few days at a time if the trip was to a college visit or out of state. Other local field trips

required one day absences from school. These absences would have been recorded as excused, thus not hurting the student's record or prohibiting the student from making up missed work. For purposes of this study there was no distinction made between excused and unexcused absences. The failure to distinguish the types of absences in this study could be considered a research design definition flaw which yielded a false negative result. Some administrators and Linkage Coordinators also felt that young men in CTAG began to actually become more civically engaged and would therefore attend various events around the city during the school day, such as The City Club Speakers Series, NAACP Student Luncheon, symposiums at local colleges, etc. Again, these absences were counted as excused, but proved to be injurious to this study's quantitative data analysis. If there had been a distinction between excused and unexcused absences, the data analysis would have revealed whether there was an increase in absences due to excused reasons or if the students were absent without excuse, for much less ambitious tasks.

The dependent variable discipline, which measured the out of school suspension and/or expulsion days for the black males, also appeared to have no positive correlation with the CTAG Program. Research shows that there may be reasons for this situation. Black male adolescents are more likely to be suspended, and for longer periods of time, as well are expelled more often than any other subgroup (Lee, 1991). Black, urban male teenagers experience disproportionately higher rates of discipline referrals, suspension, and expulsions, which have been attributed to several ecological factors, including cultural incongruence and misunderstandings between the student's culture of origin and school (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). Once again, for purposes of seeking an

understanding of the phenomenon within this study, further inquiry was done by the researcher. Administrators reported that while the actual number of black males that were suspended increased for the class of 2011, it could possibly have been due to the fact that they received suspensions in lieu of outright expulsions, which may have been the discipline default back in 2007. Being mindful that one of the cornerstones of the CTAG Program was professional development for teachers centered on culturally relevant pedagogy, in hopes of creating a teaching staff that is *culturally congruent* to the world view of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). The more *culturally congruent* the staff became, the more empathetic and understanding they became with some behaviors exhibited by black males. One administrator emphatically insisted that he would rather have his boys take a ten day suspension rather than an absolute expulsion. Another administrator recalled a senior that was caught by school security with a marijuana cigarette in his coat pocket. The student was a minority male in his senior year of 2011, and the incident occurred in March of that senior year. The default discipline was typically expulsion and enrollment in some type of alternative school. The young man had passed all five parts of his OGT, had survived being shot while in the 10th grade, and was being raised by a single mother that was in drug recovery. The administrator vividly recalled following through with the standard ten day suspension, and even made the standard recommendation for expulsion, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct; however, found herself advocating for the student to be allowed to return to her school after providing evidence of drug counseling and agreeing to be under the strict supervision of his Linkage Coordinator. The school district's Office of Hearing and Appeals agreed to this request, and the CTAG student returned after spending twenty-two

days out of school. He was able to recover his missed credits and he did graduate and walk the stage with his class in June, 2011. This type of culture shift takes time and strategic effort on behalf of many. Nevertheless, this one young man did not become another statistic in this silent epidemic.

With regard to the qualitative data, the first and most significant theme that surfaced from the interviews was that of having a positive, professional black male mentor called a Linkage Coordinator. This mentor became a surrogate father, and confidant. The Linkage Coordinator was viewed as an advocate who took the time to teach many of the lessons learned during a male's transition into young manhood. One participant stated that his Linkage Coordinator "…showed me what it was to become a man…"

The second theme that became quiet salient was the fact that exposure field trips helped to create a paradigm shift in thinking because the young men were able to see what their future could be as well as see themselves being successful. Not only did the exposure field trips provide new experiences, but in the words of one of the interviewees, "…they actually saved my life…" Their entire world view was broadened and their educational aspirations were expanded. Studies have shown that educational aspirations have been linked to academic achievement (Rojewski & Yang, 1997).

The third theme that surprisingly surfaced for the researcher was the sentiment of comradeship or brotherhood as being a major factor in their success. The creation of a surrogate family of like-minded "brothers" committed to supporting one another, appeared to be very influential in these young men's four years of high school. *Collective identity* (Ogbu, 2004) usually develops because of people's collective

experience or series of collective experiences. A sense of belonging or connectedness is important for all students, but particularly important for black males. This idea supports Finn's (1989) *participation-identification model* which posits that students must identify with school and deem themselves to be a welcomed and respected member of the school community, or else they begin the steady process of disengagement, which can lead to dropping out. These above-mentioned constructs were supported by one of the participants interviewed who felt that "... my favorite part… was the camaraderie … with my brothers of CTAG that I still have a very strong bond with … I feel that I have found lifelong friends."   The CTAG participants also began to become their own peer mentors. At Cornell University, during the summer of 2011, a group of black males formed a group similar to this and called themselves SWAG. SWAG stood for Scholars Working Ambitiously to Graduate. Their mission was to respond to the isolation often times felt by black males on their college campus (Chronicle Online, 2011).

Finally, all six interviews yielded that CTAG instilled within them a sense of academic self-efficacy that led to a sense of hope for the future. The criticality of this final theme is paramount. Educational researchers have historically pointed to low self-esteem as an explanation for academic failure (Coleman et al., 1966). However, dropout intervention programs attempting to address academic failure by improving student self-esteem have not proven to be effective (Finn & Rock, 1997). Researchers Fordham & Ogbu (1986) note weak or insignificant correlations between self-esteem and school achievement among minority youth. Prominent researcher Albert Bandura and his work on self-efficacy rather than self-esteem, helped scholars understand that an individual's confidence in his or her ability to succeed in academic tasks is manifested by that

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individual working harder, setting goals, and being more persistent (Bandura, 1993). It is this researcher's opinion that the CTAG Program's most valuable asset was its ability to deliver this type of academic self-efficacy which is needed not only in preventing dropping out, but in propelling its participants to achieve even beyond expectations. The CTAG Program has the potential to become much more than a dropout prevention program. It can also serve as a segue into post secondary educational opportunities for the most marginalized student – the black male.

When analyzing all of the themes that emerged from this qualitative portion of the study, the researcher developed a construct that she called the "*Black Male Surrogate Familial Structure*" (BMSFS). This structure takes into account the father figure that most of these marginalized boys didn't have in their lives, and replaced him with their Linkage Coordinator - mentor. The BMSFS then took into consideration the "brotherhood" that was created by these like-minded boys who have experienced many of the same challenges in life, thus giving them a kindred affection toward each other. These surrogate brothers became best friends and possibly lifelong supports, as they each continue to persist toward their goals, during and after high school, even when their biological brothers didn't. The BMSFS then acknowledged the exposure trips as the surrogate family's form of a vacation, which is likened to those enjoyed by middle and upper class families that take their children places in order to expose them and broaden their horizons. Many of the CTAG young men indicated that they had never traveled outside of the state and were ecstatic at the chance to do so, much like children preparing for the family trip. It would be posited by the researcher that most of the young men in the program lived with their mother or a maternal figure, thus the BMSFS becomes

gravely significant in a young man's healthy development into a whole man with a hope of having their own family some day.

Implications for Practice

This study shed light on several intangible and un-measurable factors that participants clearly articulated as being the most critical in their success. It is worth noting that not once was a particular instructional model or theoretical framework mentioned as contributing to their dropout prevention and ultimate success - graduation. The non-academic barriers to learning that they had to overcome appeared insurmountable at first glance. This study provides evidence that often with the most marginalized students, there must be a strategic and targeted focus to address their issues in order to affect the academic achievement that is desired. Ultimate accountability for schools and districts is the measure by which they are able to show academic achievement for ALL students. Current education reform often focuses on policies related to teacher effectiveness, funding flexibility, charter schools, testing, common core standards, teacher tenure and school turnaround. While these theoretically affect all aspects of education, there must be recognition of the value of targeting supports in a manner that will address the non-academic needs of our most vulnerable students.

Realizing that most districts are facing budget scrutiny, it is hard for them to justify the expenditure for such things as full-time mentors for black males and exposure field trips for marginalized students. While it was the intent of this study to help put concrete analytics to these intangibles in order to justify their worth, districts may need to strategically seek private partnerships or grants to sustain these critical elements.

The implications of this research extend far beyond funding issues and can actually have relevance within the current school structures. From this study, school counselors can find programmatic elements that would enhance their present strategies, particularly in schools with large numbers of minority students. School counselors could create focus groups of black males and invite them to dialogue about their overall school experience in an effort to build that support or brotherhood that has been found to be so vital. This type of dialogue will not only provide a foundation of support for the students, similar to SWAG at Cornell, but it also affords the counselor the opportunity to become more connected and congruent as he or she builds relationships with the students. Through these relationships, the counselor is better able to assist the males in becoming more engaged in school and activities, thus decreasing their likelihood of disengagement and dropping out.

Recommendations for Further Research

The goal of this study was to investigate the effect of the CTAG Program on four dependent variables. One of the variables that did not show that CTAG had a positive effect on black male behavior during their senior year was the variable discipline. This dependent variable was defined as out of school suspension and/or expulsions due to infractions as outlined in the school district's Student Code of Conduct. While it appears that this intervention program over four years had no influence in improving behavior, it would be a worthwhile study to be able to follow up on the types of infractions that black male students were more susceptible to receiving. Further research into this subject should also include more detailed strategies that could mitigate these behaviors or mitigate the perceptions that these behaviors present to teachers and administrators.

This study focused on the black male student and interventions that targeted their ability to overcome academic and non-academic barriers. There is another student population that exists with almost as dismal graduation and performance rates, and that is the Hispanic male. A qualitative study may or may not show that many of the same elements that black males felt were instrumental to their success are also important to Hispanic males. The entire culturally relevant pedagogy strategy for Hispanics would enlighten school personnel and guide professional development. This researcher believes that intervention strategies work best when they are tailored to the needs of the targeted population. Further research could confirm that while a tailored intervention correlates with a targeted population, it also can produce a bleed through effect on others, thus producing positive results for the organization as a whole.

Conclusion

The possible effect of the CTAG Program could appear to reach farther and wider than what was originally intended. The bleed through phenomenon potentially influenced other black males that had not been identified as exhibiting the early warning signs that lead to dropping out. It could also be suggested that through the creation of a more *culturally congruent* learning environment, that black female students also were positively influenced by CTAG. The approximate 15% increase in the black student graduation rate, during a period of time that the CTAG Program was in effect, was publically recognized as a potential factor for such gains. CMSD's Deputy Chief of Organizational Accountability stated that "The only thing we are doing systemically different for African-American students that we are not doing for our other students is the Closing the Achievement Gap Program."

The sense of higher expectations, particularly for black males, was evident throughout the district, thus heightening the overall sagacity of higher expectations for all students. CMSD's website was constantly packed with news releases and video footage of the CTAG students during the four years. This positive exposure to "the world" actually helped shape a new view of black males and their academic achievement. At CMSD, one top ranking central office administrator in charge of the districts safety and security forces even elicited partnerships with the young men of CTAG in helping him to mitigate the negative behaviors of other students. One strategy that he developed in conjunction with CTAG was the wallet-sized card of the "do's and don'ts" when stopped by police officers. This administrator equated the CTAG young men to a sort of positive gang that he affectionately referred to as "The Blazer Boys." These young men had developed their confidence and self-efficacy to the point that they weren't concerned with being ostracized by others because they did well in school and dressed in a manner that was atypical for most black male students in their schools. They were beginning to develop what Whiting (2009) called a *scholar identity model* for black male students. This *scholar identity model* is one in which black males perceive themselves as academicians, and begin to display the characteristics of such. Majors and Billson's (2005) "*cool pose*" persona was no longer needed as a defense mechanism to cope. The young men of CTAG learned to enjoy those activities and visits that were once deemed corny. The exposure trips to museums, plays, and institutions empowered, motivated and created an inward resilience that allowed them to persist when facing those inevitable academic and non-academic barriers.

As noted in the opening abstract, there is a new endangered species – the black male. This catastrophic waste of human potential and talent must be resolved. The reasons this must be mitigated are far deeper than what the average educator may think. Within the black male lies the seed of an entire race. As W.E.B. DuBois asserts in his 1903 essay *The Talented Tenth*, "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be *saved* by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race…" I, through this research study; however, assert that many of our Talented Tenth have been categorized as potential dropouts, and unless intervened upon, will be caught in an indefinite spiral of unending marginality, thus becoming our race's burdens instead of our race's *saviors*.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Questions

THE EFFECT OF A DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR BLACK HIGH
SCHOOL MALES IN THE CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Interview Questions

1. What was your favorite part of the program and why?

2. While in high school, was the curriculum, and the way it was presented, relevant to your life? If yes, in what way; if no, why not?

3. Were the exposure trips (i.e. college visits, spring break trips, plays, dinners, museums, etc) impactful to you and why or why not?

4. What specifically did your Linkage Coordinator do for you that made a

   difference?

5. Do you think that you would have done as well had you not been part of the CTAG Program? Why or why not?

6. If you reflect back over your four years in high school, what would you consider to have been the single most important CTAG Program element that contributed to your success/graduation?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

THE EFFECT OF A DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR BLACK HIGH
SCHOOL MALES IN THE CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Informed Consent Form

Dear Recent CMSD Grad:

      I, Renée T. Cavor, doctoral student in Urban Education at Cleveland State University, am asking you to participate in a research study. The study is on the Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Program, of which you were a recent participant. I am asking you to participate in an individual interview with me, the researcher. The interview will last approximately one hour and can be done in person at the CSU Library or via telephone if you are away at school. The purpose of the survey is to gain your perspective about certain aspects of your participation in the program. It is my hope that the information from this survey will contribute to a better understanding of individuals' perceptions on the interventions necessary to ensure academic achievement, and ultimate increase in graduation rates with black male students in a large urban school district.

      Your survey responses will be treated in a confidential manner, as I, the researcher will be the only person that knows the responses actually came from you. Your name and other identifying information will not be disclosed with the data collected, but rather an anonymous label of "Subject (followed by a number)" will be used to guarantee privacy. There are five other participants that are being asked to participate in this study.

      Participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any of the six questions that I have or you may choose not to participate at all. There will be a $50 Visa gift card granted to you as a participant for taking the time out of your schedule to be interviewed. It is my goal to conduct the interviews between the months of December, 2011 and February, 2012. For further information regarding this research please contact me, Renée T. Cavor, at 216-313-2665, email: r.cavor@csuohio.edu. My research is under the direction of Dr. Frederick Hampton, Associate Professor in the CASAL Department at CSU. He may be reached at 216-687-3828, email f.hampton@csuohio.edu. By signing this consent form you understand that if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630. There are two copies of this form. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

****

"I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to contribute to

this study by participating in an individual interview for approximately one hour."

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

Appendix C: Theme Identification Charts

Themes for Question One: "Favorite Part of Program"

Subject	Themes
1	camaraderie with brothers and Linkage Coordinator
	strong bond
	lifelong friends
2	guest speakers
	exposures
	traveling
	seeing things I have never seen
	support from Linkage Coordinator
	opportunities
	Morehouse
	seeing African American males graduate
	seeing slave routes
	Tuskegee University and a lot of black universities
3	trip to Morehouse
	the pride I brought to my family being in a suit
4	different trips
	seeing new places and seeing different things
	going outside of Ohio
	new opportunities
	new exposures
	meeting new people
	networking
	becoming a part of a family
	a brotherhood
	building new friendships from all over the city, not just 6 block radius
	different environment
5	to get a male model in my life to keep me pressing forward and not to drop out to be another statistic
6	someone to talk to, my Linkage Coordinator
	someone that can relate and give me positive feedback
	my brothers of CTAG
	enjoyed talking to my brothers and had fun moments with them
	positive young men

Linkage Coordinator
Exposure Trips
Brotherhood
Enjoyment (family fun)

Themes for Question Two: "High School Curriculum Relevancy"

Subject	Themes
1	some classes did not benefit me at all in everyday life
	it was kind of pointless at some points in time
	I took class just to graduate because it was requirement
	what I learned of the curriculum is not even relevant anymore in a college setting
	teachers who I had in high school were not from the inner city
	they were not able to relate to the style in which I grew up.. not a lot of money, single parent
	sometimes the teacher would get lost and not know how to teach or present to us at all so the whole subject matter would like of just get blown over.
	we would not learn it because they didn't know how to present it to the classroom
	ineffective teachers because of individuals who have a different style of learning
	I don't think a lot of my teachers possessed those tools in order to teach me the curriculum
	my English teacher let us develop our own curriculum
	she had her core things, but gave us leeway
	if we like rapping, we could write a rap for our paper, so we could feel it
	you could actually be able to see and try to put how you grew up or how you lived into the paper
	that class was very intense
	she let us choose and pick different assignments that we would like to do
	she was a very rigorous teacher
2	I say it was not
	teachers taught things that were not dealt with the way I was going through it
	I've finished my first semester of college and I wasn't not well prepared for it except one teacher
	she taught English
	she prepared us for college, but not the other teachers
	I'm taking a lot of remedial courses
	the English teacher took time out to go off course and go back over things that we didn't know, and she helped us
	in college I first walked into class and didn't know what the assignment was about
3	No, I don't feel like my curriculum in high school prepared me except for English
	In college I felt like the odd ball because I couldn't make up conversation because I didn't know anything about the topic
	teachers should have been more enthusiastic and energetic towards us instead of just throwing it out there and let us learning on our own
4	some of it was relevant to my life. Its half and half
	some teachers would try to break it down and make it easier to understand
	my math teacher used to break down his numbers into whole numbers represented my community or real numbers represented my city
	my English teacher was tough on me.
	she wouldn't let up
	she would accept no excuses; she had high expectations towards us
	she demanded her work to be done
	but in some ways it wasn't relevant
	I didn't have that many history classes, especially African American history

	I'm at an HBCU and I didn't learn a lot of this in high school
	my peers know about a lot of these black successful people and I barely knew anything about them
	All of these things I should have been doing in high school, so now I'm catching up
	I wasn't encouraged to read books in high school
	in high school, teachers would teach to our OGT test. They would teach to the test
	that's not how you're going to survive in college, because in college they're not thinking about an OGT test
	they should be teaching actual curriculum…how we gon survive in the outside world after high school
5	Yes because they pushed me
	they stayed on my butt and made sure I did everything I was supposed to
	I was in self contained classes that actually pushed me to control my anger
	they were able to related to my situation because they was black
	they understood where I was coming from and they my father wasn't in my life
	they knew it was hard and rough for me
6	the lessons did not really help me at all
	two teachers were big influences on my life. They stuck by me and pushed me beyond the limit of where I thought I couldn't even reach.

Relevant teacher
Not relevant experience in high school
Why not relevant
Why relevant

Themes for Question Three: "Exposure Trips"

Subject	Themes
1	college trips, especially Morehouse (it *was mind boggling*)
	they were the most intricate parts of CTAG
	I had never travelled anywhere
	to **SEE** a college, or a play or a museum
	it taught me different things, etiquette (how to properly use a fork and knife)
	etiquette programs
	seeing black males in college gave me *inspiration*
	it *helped me* in my *development* and in my *matriculation* through high school
2	The trip to Morehouse
	if it wasn't for the exposure I never would have *known* about our *history*
	plays was something I had never known about
	hosting a Gala let us **see** a lot of black important people that were entrepreneurs
	it made me **feel** like I *wanted to be one* of those one day
3	the trips actually *saved my life*
	two friends were killed while was away on two exposure trips
	I appreciated the trips because they got me out of here
4	exposure was very, very impactful
	helped me step outside the 6 block radius that I live in
	I got exposed to so many different things that I would never have seen
	I would have never thought about college
	It helped me decide things about college
	it was so many different things that I wanted to know
	tasting so many different foods
	seeing different things
	we got taught etiquette, so when I go out on a dinner for a job or a boss, I know how to eat correctly
	I **seen** different plays people in my community would never see
	I learned different things, it was exciting
	we **saw** different museums and I learned more about my history, my curriculum didn't teach
	without the trips I would never have been the way I am now
5	I have never been to a museum before
	to just **see** all of those pictures and to put on suit and blazer *make me feel* like was going to be somebody one day
	the trips played a role *impacting me in my life* and makes me want to be somebody in life
6	we visited a lot of colleges
	if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't even be thinking about going to college
	I didn't think I was smart enough
	It *taught me to overcome my fears*

What the trips did for them
Non efficacious descriptions of future
Effect of Morehouse trip (seeing themselves in future)
College visits

Subject	Themes
1	he showed me that he actually believed in me
	he told me that he loved me…it made me feel good about myself
	my father was never there
	he was a male, a decent male, with a job, who didn't sag his pants, who wore a shirt and tie to work
	young men's behavior changed when he would come in a room (respect)
	I could talk to him about advice, about anything
	he made me feel like his own, and made me want to strive for excellence
	I didn't want to disappoint him
2	he acted like a father to me because my father wasn't in my life
	he would go out of his way to pick me up and take me to school
	he pushed me to obtain academics
	he went out of his way to talk to my mother to make sure I got to school on time
	he taught how to tie a tie, carry a suit jacket and better myself
	he made me think academically and not just about spores
	he made me think about a backup plan through academics
3	he irritated me because kept putting bugs in my ear about things I should do or how to approach things
	he bugged me about the wrongs and rights of like
	I realized that the irritation was helping fix my problems
	he would give me bus tickets when I need them
	he really came through when I didn't expect it
4	he did a lot of different things that made a different for em
	he stayed on my back
	he made sure I got to class
	he told me to tuck in my shirt, pull up my pants
	he showed me that he cared
	regarding an exposure trip….he called everybody he know that get in contact with me to make sure I went on that trip
	he believed in me
	he knew I could be somebody, and that there was something in me
	he knew I need to see new experiences
	he got me out of some very hard situations, stranded somewhere and he picked me up and gave me a right
	I could always call on him
	he gave me a few dollars to pay the ACT fee when I couldn't get a waiver

	He was like a father figure because my father was never around	
	My LC was there for life…If it wasn't for him I would have no male role model in my life	
	I could always go to him for advice	
	He came from the area that I'm from and he is successful. That showed me the way. He showed me more than what I have inside my neighborhood	
	That's why I love my Linkage Coordinator	
5	He made me be a man and own up to things that I did	
	he made me stop acting like a little kid and take responsibility for my action	
	he taught me to not lie and be a man	
	he would give me bus tickets or a few dollars when I need them	
	He gave me guidance, and I could always come and talk to him	
	If I had a bad day or was feeling down, teachers let me go to him for a little while	
	my teachers (females) did this because there are some things that a woman couldn't do	
6	I talked to him on a constant basis about what I should do	
	I was lost as a young man on how to be a man	
	My father died at the age I was two	
	I didn't grow up with a father-figure.	
	My LC showed me what it was to become a man, how to deal with your problems and not run away	
	He was surrogate father	
	If I needed anything, I could call him up. If I needed advice he was there	
	He was there to help, and not to scorn or look down upon	
	My LC was one of the best men I've ever met and I love him	

No father
Love for LC = surrogate father
Lessons he taught me

Themes for Question Five: "Efficacy"

Subject	Themes
1	I would NOT have done as well
	8th grade year I had a 0.84 GPA…I had all F's and one A in gym
	I was lethargic and didn't really do work in class…and I was in school every day
	I had no inspiration to succeed…"what is it gonna do for my future?"
	CTAG took me on the exposure trips in order for me *to see what could be* if I did well in school
	the trip to Morehouse was the first step and my high school career just took off
	I ended up doing great things
	my high school career transformed…I became a better student…I got involved in the community because I saw LC's doing the same thing
	If not for CTAG my choices were jail or death
	in poverty you start doing irrational things in order to survive and there is no room for production
2	I wouldn't have done as well
	in 8th grade I think I was going to dropout then due to family situation
	CTAG made me realize that there is a way out
	CTAG offered me opportunities to be a leader, student ambassador and opened more gates
3	before CTAG I didn't think I was going to do good in school
	in 8th grade I got jumped and got my jaw broke
	that discouraged me from wanting high school…I didn't care
	I had a ruthless mentality…I didn't care…It just all for self…If it didn't pertain to me then I didn't care...If its harming me then I'm going to get it before it gets me
	CTAG made me feel more determined and that there is a better way to life
	It showed me new ways to life…not all violence, bad, negative and poverty
	It showed me the finer things of life by the trips
4	I don't think I would have done as well
	CTAG taught me to think big
	In 8th grade I thought small. I didn't really want much with my life
	I didn't really care about impacting or about success
	I just wanted to be an auto mechanic and fix cars (I was stealing cars)
	CTAG taught me to think big...To want to own my own shop or franchise
	8th grade had bad grades, suspended a lot, bad attendance
	It offered so many opportunities and I saw different things. I had just wanted to stay in Cleveland, but now I can go anywhere and still come back to give to Cleveland

	I never stepped outside the state of Ohio
	All I knew was guns, drugs, violence. Being tough; how to fight, defend yourself; survive. Only the strong survive. It was rough. The odds were stacked against me
	CTAG helped me get disciplined; better grades; stop getting in trouble
	Becoming a part of CTAG helped me know that I could become successful
	How to be a renaissance man and do multiple things
5	I was 18 in the 9th grade
	If I wouldn't have joined CTAG, I would have dropped out and been in prison
	I would be robbing and selling drugs
	CTAG showed me that there nothing behind that route
	CTAG taught me to hit the books, get a job, a real job so you don't have to look over your shoulders
	It showed me the ways of a real man and real father
	I would have dropped out because I am a black male from a single parent home in special ed classes. I am basically a statistic. Put him in this pile with bad folks
	My father was in jail when I was younger
	My family didn't think I was going to do it. I had to prove them wrong
	Walking across that stage made me feel good because without CTAG I probably would not have done it.
6	I wouldn't be in a good predicament if I hadn't joined the program
	9th grade year all I did was drink and skip school, smoke weed and try to have sex
	My LC made me get my priorities straight
	I was living a fantasy thug life before CTAG (South Central or Boys in the Hood)
	My LC taught me how to become a young man and a young black man
	My LC taught me how to speak up, how to sit, what a blazer was, how to tie a tie, present myself, not slouch, firm handshake, look people in the eye with confidence, step up to the plate, how to walk with confidence

Despair – hopelessness before CTAG
No father
LC/CTAG = hope, father   Exposure = seeing future possibility, different realities
No; would not have done as well

Themes for Question Six: "Most Important Element of the Program"

Subject	Themes
1	trip to Morehouse College
	I never saw or witnessed men excelling like this
	my whole personality changed
	I started dressing different (shirt and tie)
2	the Linkage Coordinator
	he did things that most people wouldn't do
	he was a father to me
	he looked me in the eye and told me what I needed to do to be successful
3	the exposure trips
	they changed my whole mentality and my whole well being
4	my Linkage Coordinator
	I should have never made it
	My LC ultimately helped me change my mindset; helped me change my thinking
5	my Linkage Coordinators
	they were always there for me
6	the whole program is important
	just to graduate was unreal
	I didn't think I was going to graduate in the first place
	the program taught me about success

Morehouse College   1
Exposure Trips   1   →   Changed whole mindset
Linkage Coordinator   3 = surrogate fathers
Whole Program   1 = just experiencing success