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**Critical Incidents Relating to High School
Dropout of Identified Young Adult Black Males**

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**Critical Incidents Relating to High School
Dropout of Identified Young Adult Black Males**

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I could not have possibly determined the many crooks and turns this study would take nor could I have charted the course and recourse for study that would capture such inner, prohibited and often unspoken perceptions from a segment of our population, largely silenced by conditioning effects similar to the “Pavlovian” conditional response. Special thanks are due to the young men who volunteered their time and thoughts to respond to extensive questionnaires and interviews that helped to make this study possible.

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Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Identified Young Adult Black Males

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This research, a qualitative phenomenological study, identified, and analyzed critical incidents of perceptions of young adult Black male drop-outs believed to be directly related to their departure from high schools without graduating. The focus of the study was to find possible connections between school programs, policies, and practices of the senior high school level and the drop-out problem.

Devised methods analyzed reported critical incidents from several perspectives within the school setting. Some cases were referenced by using cross-matrix analyses to compare and contrast patterns of happenings.

What do young Black male students having “failed”, whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years, as adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program that leads to graduation?

Critical incidents will focus on four questions:

1. What are there things that happened to them at school that made them want to dropout?
2. What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out?
3. What is the in-school context reported in their critical incidents?
4. What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?

Interview respondents were tape recorded as they gave detailed descriptions of their in-school perceptions of critical incidents. The identity of respondents, school personnel and the district remained completely anonymous.

Tape recorded reports were analyzed to extract critical incidents and specifics related to the research questions. Critical incidents were coded and categorized to produce themes of types of incidents.

Hearing first-hand from dropouts, of a “failed” system is the first step in a process of efforts to make it widely known and to prevent such “critical incidents” from continuing to occur when high school students forfeit a diploma and full K-12 education. This study provides alterable factors with implications for school policy, teaching and leadership practices that relate to the whole child theory of learning at every stage and

level. This research supports the “whole child” concept of cultural sensitivity, diverse learning and multiculturalism. It contributes to established basics for further research and theory on institutionalized mal-practices.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The view that the system is fraught with undermining student achievement and expectations through institutionalized exclusionary racism has some validity.

“American public schools have utilized institutionalized forms of exclusion, deprivation, and punishment as part and parcel of their internal operations based on a person’s skin color, religion, or national origin” (Kluger,1975).

While the above quote appears to be somewhat dated, consistent patterns continue to emerge when a significant number of students of color are asked why they left school. In both 1992 and 1982, students continued to identify failure in school and dislike for school as major factors that may have lead to dropping out (NCES, 1993). In conjunction with reasons for failure and dislike for school, are underlying factors that ultimately lead to some students leaving rather than graduating.

Those who refuse to study the past will be forced to repeat it in the future (Dubois, 1945).

The above quote gives some understanding of the aforementioned concern for underlying factors reoccurring similar to a recapitulation of a musical refrain.

When I teach my students about unconscious racism, I ask them to think about words such as standards, assessment, accountability, and achievement gap and picture the people who are being talked about. Who is not up to the standard? Who needs to be tested? Who are the students and teachers at failing schools? Who needs to be held accountable? Who sits at the bottom of the achievement gap (Lawrence, 2003)?

At schools all over the nation statistics mirror the neglect and miseducation of our minority learners. The blame is shifted back and forth from home environment to low teacher salaries but, close examination of data and student accounts of their experiences reveal that schooling authorities and staff have not adamantly addressed the issues of teacher ineffectiveness, inappropriate delivery of academic content, inadequate resources, material and equipment and embedded racism and apathy among school personnel that may have resulted in the unexplained exodus of many Black and Hispanic male students. These conditions also take into account individuals within a minority ethnic group and other minority groups that continue to impose identical and/or similar patterns appearing to be of an oppressed nature on one another.

When children are told to “shut up and sit down,” when the toilets in the bathroom are broken and the classroom ceiling leaks, when there are no gifted or Advanced Placement classes (or when Black students are discouraged from taking them), these practices and conditions, like segregation, are symbols of racist ideology. They generate feelings of inferiority (Lawrence, 2003).

.....Our society and our schools devalue them (Black students and especially the Black male student) by virtue of their social identity as African-Americans. It is no wonder that so few of them perform to their full potential (Lawrence, 2003).

These conditions would be a detriment for any and all students whether at-risk for dropping out of school or not.

African-Americans are not immune to the disease of racism. I have heard Black teachers call their students “stupid” and “ignorant,” or say, “What do you expect from kids like this?” I’ve heard Black parents chastise their children with the same demeaning words and heard the words repeated as children taunt each other on the playground. I want to make clear that the abusive adults in our community are a minority. I

have heard the same abuse issue from the mouths of white parents in upscale suburban malls. I also know that when Black adults speak this way to children they are parroting their own teachers and parents, reenacting the destruction of their own psyches, the stunting of their own gifts. This is how racism is internalized and reproduced (Lawrence, 2003).

This study was conducted with a small group of young adult Black males who had recently dropped out of senior high school in one large urban city in Texas. It is a qualitative study, reporting and analyzing the perceptions of these individuals regarding the “critical incidents” or events that they recall to have been related to the alienation and or discouragement leading to dropping out and not returning. The focus is on perceptions of in-school “incidents” as distinguished from social early education, economic, ethnic and other factors that are widely recognized as predictors or “risk factors.” The focus rather examines aspects of the world the students encountered at school.

Background of the Study

While some other nations are on the verge of universal secondary education, the U.S. completion rate has stubbornly plateaued at a lower level. Much research to date has focused on the relationships between various student characteristics and behaviors and the incidence of high school dropout. Traditional research on the individual causes of high school dropout shows that socio-economic context and race/ethnicity are among the most important predictors of subsequent drop out (Alexander, Ackland, and Griffin, 1976; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock, 1986; 1986; Rumberger, 1983).

Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act ended legal apartheid in America, there are many more black students enrolled in college; however while 35 percent of the young Black college enrollment is made up of Black women, only 25 percent are Black men. About 17 percent of young Black men drop out of high school, compared to 13.5 percent of young Black females, which is also too high to continue to aggregate as an expectant, minus questionable causalities (NCES, 2000).

Researchers find that dropping out is a process, not an event. It is relatively rare for students to make a snap judgment to leave school. The reasons students commonly offer for leaving school, for example, low grades, inability to get along, working, and pregnancy, may not be the true causes but rationalizations or simplifications of more complex circumstances (US Department of Educational Research and Improvement, 1994; http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reaching_Goals/Goal_2/Dropouts.html, 1994).

All subjects contend that both overt and subtle forms of racial discrimination are prevalent and ultimately influence teacher expectations of them. Although overt forms of institutionalized racism have come under attack and been legally eliminated, the schools are left with vestiges of them. The lack of expectation that children of color can learn or are not genetically impaired is still rampant in too many schools designed to serve them. Indeed, they are not served at all; they are subjugated into a socially and economically inferior position (Lynch, 1999).

By design the aforementioned phenomenon is commonly referred to as a “*self-fulfilling prophecy*,” when in actuality they may be imposed expectations or the lack thereof with

parameters set by others. The chief causes appear to be deep structural inequalities driven by remnants of a society still profoundly segregated by race, wealth, and social capital (Lawrence, 2003).

Is there a connection between the Black American male who may have become a high school dropout, due in part to critical incidents experienced in our educational establishments? Respondents of this study reflect upon puzzling incidents as adolescent students-to-dropouts-to-adults. They share their perceptions of major influences that impacted their decision to leave school. A varying combination of factors related to dropping out of school among Black males, might involve unforeseen problems from the teacher, counselor and/or administrator in the learning environment.

The complexity of circumstances involving Blacks and Black males in particular, present underlying factors and/or determiners rarely considered for a student's exit from a "failed" system. While reported findings are frequently witnessed as problematic among Blacks, they are also reported by Hispanics yet, virtually unreported by Whites. Frequency of occurrences of a number of questionable actions and/or remarks made by educators, as recalled by dropouts, may also be responsible in part for shaping indifferent attitudes, lack of initiative to learn and inability to focus on school matters.

It is believed that subliminal inducement to dropping out also occurs among African-American, Latino, and Native-American students when they are bombarded with

“stereotype threats” of imposed academic achievement. Social scientists today repeatedly and vehemently announce performance levels of minorities to be significantly less on standardized tests than their White and Asian peers.

When Black and Latino children finish fourth grade they are two years behind their white and Asian classmates according to nationally normed tests. By the time they hit grade eight they are three years behind, and as they reach grade 12 they are performing at the same level as white and Asian eighth-graders. The statistics on grades, graduation, and dropout rates show the same disparities. (Steele, 1997 & Lawrence, 2003).

Given the circumstances, more might tend to be seen through social implications of isolation, lack of self-confidence which might breed low academic and behavioral shortcomings, and withdrawal to low standardized test scores. Questionable actions of the Black male student, who quits school without having to give a thorough account of concerns, feelings, related incidents, or problems leading to their decision and/or stance to leave school without graduating, remain somewhat unclear.

Student attitudes, plans and behaviors are also related to dropout, and students who drop out report higher levels of dissatisfaction and alienation from school and lower levels of self-esteem (Bachmann et al, 1971).

Some leave simply because the need to feel as though they too belong was void of any acknowledgement. When questioned as to why he decided to dropout, one young man’s reply, as reported by area superintendent Shirley Isom-Newsome, at a spring conference of Dallas School Administrators (DSAA), was “no one asks me to stay” (Isom-Newsome, 2003).

Despite the rhetoric of American equality, the school experiences of African-American and other “minority” students in the United States continue to be substantially separate and unequal. Few Americans realize that the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and that students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status. These opportunities are least available to African-American, Latino, and Native American students. As a consequence of structural inequalities in access to knowledge and resources, students from racial and ethnic “minority” groups in the United States face persistent and profound barriers to educational opportunity (Darling-Hammond, 1997).” There are similar concerns for Black male students in particular that become statistical dropouts as they relate and began to identify with inferior school climate, lack of resources and inadequate counseling and instruction received at school institutions that are heavily populated by minorities.

Affirmative action comes too late for the many low income and minority children who drop out of failing schools before completing high school. They need opportunities that begin in kindergarten-the kind affluent children already have (Levine, 2003).

In schools where faculty are proactively involved and exhibit a genuine concern for students, overall absenteeism, withdrawal behaviors and drop out rate are lower (Bryk and Thum, 1989). The appropriate roles of teachers, counselors and campus instructional leaders must also be closely examined with respect to student expectations.

Student perceptions of self and others are often shaped by teachers, counselors and principals. This is also true of counselors whose job description entails delivering accurate and equitable educational planning tools, information and interest/s surveys directly related to the individual student's four-year degree options, interest/s and aptitude/s. It is all too clear that an effective campus will have a well-informed and capable campus instructional leadership who shares this vision. The principle administrator of a campus sets the tone for excellence, dedication and equity as a non-negotiable for all students (*Bryk and Thum, 1989*).

In addition to student level of explanations for dropout, there has been a great deal of research on organizational processes and ways that school personnel exert control over dropout decisions. Although expulsion is relatively rare (*Lawrence, 1998, p. 103*), schools use administrative procedures, which accomplish the same, ends with age cut-offs, grade point average minimums and attendance regulations (*Elliot and Voss, 1974; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985; Mann, 1987; Riehl, 1999; Toby, 1983*). *Bryk and Thum (1989)* also argue that school structure, social organization, and ethos all significantly affect student retention and alienation.

While the exact magnitude of the problem may be elusive, the fact that it's particularly severe in large urban schools has been understood for some time. One study looked at high schools in the nation's 35 largest cities and identified 200 to 300 schools – about half of the regular and vocational high schools in those cities – where more than 50

percent of the students drop out (Orfield, 2001).

Although local districts and state and federal governments supported school restructuring at the secondary level as part of school reform and instituted a number of programs and policies, generally these efforts have not had much success, especially in reducing dropout rates (Purkey and Smith, 1985). Steele, (1997) demonstrates that the social stigma of intellectual inferiority among certain cultural minorities referred to as “stereotype threat”_ contributes to their lower academic achievement. What has yet to be demonstrated empirically is whether these “threats” are clearly in evidence and related to perceptions of Black male high school students.

In a small urban school district in Massachusetts, Roderick (1993), in her study of dropouts examined school transcript data, academic grades for dropouts from each grade and high school graduates in the bottom, middle, and top third of the high school graduating class. She states that, “*dropping out can be characterized as a long-term process of disengagement from school that is manifested in both academic and social performance.*” It does not, however, help us to understand the events in the secondary school years, which lead to leaving school before graduation.

Something happens for the robust, energetic Black male child that was as eager to learn as a primary school student who non-the-less survives for 8, 9, 10 years or more, but at some point, under some circumstances leaves the school setting before graduating.

Question – What do Black male students having “failed,” whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years, as adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program that leads to graduation? More specifically, what are the incidents, occurring at the senior high school level, that contribute to dropping out of school?

Purpose of the Study

The study involves African American male dropouts who perceive that they were “failed” by an urban educational system. The purpose of the study was to identify and analyze perceptions of Black male dropouts reported as critical incidents encountered in high school.

In focusing on Black male “drop-outs” in a selected urban area, the study attempted to elicit critical incidents directly related to high school life. The purpose of narrowing the focus to high school related incidents is to uncover, their significant existence as it relates to dropout recovery and prevention immediacy needs. These alterable factors could have implications for school policy, teaching and leadership practices that relate to the whole child theory of learning at each level and stage of learning. The “*whole child*” concept also takes cultural sensitivity, diverse learning and multiculturalism into consideration as well.

Such a restricted focus has both advantages and disadvantages, of course. Extensive research on cultural, socioeconomic, family, and personal factors associated with dropout rates has been reported. The realities of alienation and academic failure are also documented as widely associated with high dropout rates for various ethnic and socio-economically cultural student populations. The focus on high school specific critical incidents contributed to understanding and possible prevention beyond current studies.

This study deals with the more complex issues that Black dropouts reportedly experienced. At one point, respondents associated leaving school with underlying reasons as determiners. Occurrences of a number of questionable actions, incidents and events in the school setting as recalled by dropouts may provide the basis for further study and preventative actions.

It appears that exit interviews are not widely utilized in any systematic or formal way. Many simply “disappear” following a family move, personal illness, or between semesters, holidays, or summer breaks. Investigative procedures conducted by school authorities were often a matter of formality for documentation purposes. Rigorous and systematic follow-up survey procedures were not generally utilized by school officials. Nor did they further examine suspect stimuli or causations for dropouts at any level..

In general, dropout rates are higher for minority students and for those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Further research related to the reasons for dropouts of Black males is crucial to the understanding of critical incidents cited by an alarming number of individuals with like characteristics of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and location.

This study assumes that a sequence of causalities might be identified as hindrances that clearly tend to be overlooked as critical to the dropout perceptions of the Black male. While perceived accounts of happenings might vary and/or coincide from one individual to another and within other ethnic minority groups as well, the assumption that critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating Black males from completing high school as young adults is plausibly most prevalently witnessed and experienced in the Black race by Black males.

The questions one might raise with school authorities specifically deal with targeting a deeper issue than what is commonly reported as documented data for the student's file. The check and balance of a procedural and confidential dialogue with student dropouts might prove beneficial in detecting other unforeseen incidents that are continuously overlooked. The ideal situation would be some form of check and balance before any potential dropout ever got to the point of dropping out. Identification of underlying factors from a different perspective could be crucial to a system that warrants a variety of check points to ensure equity of service and product, to include drastically

diminishing dropout rates and the critical incidents that cause such.

The background and demographic similarities of participants of this study include socioeconomic status, gender (male), culture (Black), large urban district (district X). Respondents were subjected to what was perceived to relate to alienation, discouragement and hence leaving school without a diploma.

School level characters are also included: school type and location (public and alternative schools in an urban setting). All subjects of the study are Black young adult males that attended senior high school between the years of 1998 to 2004 and who eventually dropped out of school at one point.

Rationale and Focus for the Study

This study will focus on the critical incidents that a selected group of African American (males), in a given urban school setting, report as their perceptions of events leading to leaving school without completing or graduating from high school. The focus will be on male “dropouts” as the sub-set of a much larger group of dropouts, because they tend to be early leavers and are among those with the highest rate of none-graduates that also survived into high school and did not suffer from such problems as pregnancy, migrant life style or non-English family rearing.

Although this qualitative study is subject to inconclusive answers garnered from surveys and interviews of volunteer participants affected by an educational system that worked for some individuals and yet not for others, input from the dropout participants might prove vital in correcting the number of dropouts and in this case study, specifically African American men. Gained understanding and better communication with past and present students could possibly assist responsible school authorities identify, monitor and eradicate those causalities often associated with people of color that are pervasively problematic among Black males.

The relevance of critical incidents as perceived to having influenced student school dropout prior to graduating is the focus of this study. Subsequently, the elicited dropouts in this case study were on a four-year high school matriculation to graduate between the years of 1998 and 2004.

Due to limited findings directly related to African American males with respect to causalities that effect school dropouts, more research must be conducted with targeted subjects, analyzed from the subject's perspective. Most case studies dealing with the dropout dilemma conveniently report an overall aggregated decline among Blacks and Whites but when disaggregated by ethnic percentages, vast differences between the White dropout on one end and the Hispanic dropout on the other end are clearly seen. The middle group is viewed more or less as a pendulum conveniently lumped or

weighed to balance a point of reference at either extreme without concretely addressing those unique critical incidents that reportedly plague the median group of Blacks.

Problem Focus: What do Black male students having “failed,” whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years, as adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program that leads to graduation?

The focus was limited to selected male Black dropouts at the senior high school level. The focus is on perception of incidents that they also perceived to have been critically related to leaving high school. The focus was on critical incidents in the high school setting rather than those in home, community, or even in earlier school years. Former students from high schools throughout the district were identified and coordinated with the district’s Reconnection Center Alternative Programs data. Reconnection centers are located throughout the district to assist students and former students with completing high school.

All selected respondents dropped-out within a four year period of time, and reflected neither historic trends nor inevitabilities; but instead reflected reality in the eyes of these respondents during a specific place and time in urban life and schooling.

Design of the Study

The design of the study was based on perceptions and accounts of: Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Identified Adult Black Males. This research was an ethnographic case study of a purposely-selected group of African American male dropouts that dropped out of high school in a large urban educational system. Dropping out of school is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon. The study's design reinforces the importance of understanding crucial and disparaging events related to the dropout of young adult Black males as viewed by the respondents of such discouraging conditions and practices.

- Critical incidents – The design employed systematic procedures from sampling through data gathering, to analysis focusing only on events, incidents, perceptions of affairs from student perspectives.
- Relating to high school dropout – The design emphasized the events of the high school years and not prior events, not out of school events or circumstances.
- Adult males' perceptions – were sought in the design of this study to assure some maturation of perspective, but also to emphasize the more enduring incidents in the perceptions of dropouts.

For consistency of the reported critical incidents, a classification system of categories were established as to what the incidents were about, in-school location of events and who was involved in the incidents. Related to high school dropout, the in-

school context of the environment entailed events that and/or happenings on a high school campus only. The more reflexive perception of something past yet lingers on has an impact of remaining concern and recall significance for the bit more mature individual. Hence, the young adult Black male has had this time to sort through what did happen with respect critical incidents and thoughts of what attributed to the impacted perceptions.

This study utilized in-depth interviews, structured to elicit perceptions of specific critical incidents perceived to be associated with leaving school after entering an urban high school. The focus was on events within the school setting that are perceived to contribute to the leaving (dropping out) with special attention to alienation and discouragement in pursuit of graduation.

Research Questions

The over-arching question guiding the study was: What do Black young adult male students having “failed,” whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years, as adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program that leads to graduation?

Critical incidents were focused on four questions:

1. What are things that happened to them at school that made them want to dropout?

2. What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out?
3. What is the in-school context reported in their critical incidents?
4. What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?

The above stated questions were the primary focus of the study and were given in-depth attention in both data gathering and analysis.

Methodology

The methods by which essential questions are addressed are discussed in detail in chapter three along with the design of the research, sample selection, data collection procedures and analysis, concluding with limitations of the methodology.

Perceptions were elicited from the case study volunteers as to the in-school incident/s, that determined or influenced leaving school with out graduating.

Design Questions

Rationale for the six years is listed as follows:

<u>2003 Entered</u>	<u>Identified and Selected</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Normal</u>
<u>Graduation</u>			
Fall 2003	Group 6 (Too early)	8 th	May 2006
Fall 2002	Group 5 (current dropouts)	9 th	May 2006
Fall 2001	Group 4	10 th	May 2005
Fall 2000	Group 3	11 th	May 2004
Fall 1999	Group 2	12 th	May 2003
Fall 1998	Group 1(entered)	Dropped	May 2002

Selection of Respondents

Criteria for the study require that the volunteer participants at some recent point in time were high school dropouts. All respondents agreed to talk about their experiences in school. The respondents were also willing to share their experiences with the understanding that there are no gratuities involved and that their decision to do so is strictly voluntary. Confidentiality was also assured and explained. Of course, all were Black males.

In addition to being dropouts in the sense of not completing high school in the normal course of events, even if they subsequently completed a GED or other educational program after leaving high school, the following selection criteria were employed:

1. Have not been incarcerated or confined in any way that might relate to dropping out of school since the focus of this study is on in-school events related to alienation and/or discouragement. A limitation, then of this design is not including these serial drop-outs who might otherwise clearly qualify.

2. At some point met the PIEMS (Pupil Information Education Management System) leaver code/s definition for reclassification as a dropout and were not enrolled in a regular senior high school for a period of time. This provides some clarification for leavers that just missed too many days for illness, truancy and the like.

3. Other participant selection criteria include:
 - selection from a pool of known dropouts identified by the district data system
 - preliminary selection based on completion of a survey instrument submitted by mail and/or completed in person or by telephone, indicating conditions of each individual needed for selection using criteria above
 - final selection of at least 20 to 25 individuals in the area to be interviewed that attended school between the years of 1998 -2004
 - willingness to commit

One scheduled face to face meeting with each individual participant was allocated approximately an hour to an hour and a half of the participant's time. The meeting had been pre-arranged for prompt timing efficiency; selected participants were kept abreast with the line of questioning, selection criteria, and whether a follow-up interview or brief telephone conversations were necessary to clarify gathered information.

- Meetings were scheduled at the convenience of the participants
- The Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview was recorded by the researcher.
- Sequential notes were taken using scripting techniques to identify key phrases, ideas, and comments in response to each question and/or probe (researcher notes elaborated immediately after each interview is finished).
- The recorded session/s were transcribed.
- Data analysis were conducted using standard content coding techniques related to both pre-structured categories and using open-ended codes to identify other themes
- Each individual selected respondent was profiled using categories and commonly emerging themes.
- Comparisons of profiles using coding frequencies were produced, displays of common and differentiated responses were also found in an across analyses of critical incidents.
- A number of samples were selected for reporting on the perceptions of strikingly unique patterns of incidents.

Instrumentation

Upon making contact with the respondents to arrange at least one face to face interview with each participant, the following information was shared to provide a consistent focus on the importance of the study and personal dialogue pertaining to the critical incidents that occurred during their schooling:

- Survey/Questionnaire Assessment
- Activity Scale Rating/Structured Interview
- The Formal/Face to Face Interview and Telephone Communication

Survey/Questionnaire Assessment (Appendix A) This Survey/Questionnaire was devised to obtain pertinent information about the former student's reflective perception of his experiences in an academic setting that may have influenced him to quit school. This questionnaire, serves as the opener to a more inclusive and resourceful participant identifier, according to answers given that affirm the research and is further discussed under sampling procedures in Chapter III & IV.

Face to Face Interviews and Telephone Conferencing (Appendix B) The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and open-ended manner. Along with standard questions relating to school events and factors leading to dropping out; individually tailored questions were presented to get clarification or probe the participant's reasoning and/or perceptions of reported critical incident occurrences in schooling.

Pilot Testing of Instruments and Procedures

The preliminary survey was utilized in draft form with no more than five dropouts from current years, excluded from the final selected respondents. Telephone and face-to-face dialogue were guided by follow-up query of the initial mailed Survey/Questionnaire instrument (Appendix A). A draft form of this was also utilized by the researcher in both the Fact-to-Face Interview and on the telephone calls as well.

Further revisions were made after trials. Experienced researchers were also asked to review drafts of these instruments before actual data gathering.

In early stages of data gathering using both face-to-face and telephone procedures, an analysis was conducted to see whether respondent patterns of responses are substantially different in quality of responses or in the kinds of incidents reported. Such possible bias or other defects would result in changes as needed to assure comparability.

Telephone follow-up exchanges were utilized to clarify any information gathered during the Face to Face Interview. Of course, initial communication was established via postal services and telephone beginning in the Spring of 2004 at one of several conveniently located Reconnection Centers, public library sites and/or community college campuses within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

Data Collection

Survey reports collected data from willing participants and one Face to Face/Formal Interview was set for each selected participant. The plan was to conduct communication by way of mail-out, telephone, email and in person with each individual. For more in depth follow-up questions and answers for clarification it may have been necessary to phone or meet again in person. Otherwise, each participant was contacted again by telephone and/or email in follow-up interviews. Each interview was recorded for reporting accuracy with written permission as given by each interview respondent.

Data Analysis

1. Interview prompts and type scripts were produced, providing the researcher with verbatim details of responses of each participant to each question posed. The transcript notations of each of the interview respondents were also made available.
2. Typed scripts were analyzed coding each meaning segment with one or more codes. Coding was both structured, guided by the intent of each question, and also in open-ended structured form, guided by the purpose of the study but independent of the specific question.
3. Coded responses to each respondent were clustered by themes or content categories. Dominant codes and themes were identified for each respondent on the basis of frequency of codes. The pattern of responses of each respondent was illustrated by selected examples of actual verbatim content.
4. Comparisons among respondents/participants were analyzed using code, theme, and category frequencies similarities in dominant, and rarely reported codes, themes and categories to be identified.
5. Finally, illustrative critical incidents were selected from among the various typescripts of participant groups and reported as incidents of importance in answering specific research questions.

Limitations

While the study provides an arena for some Black young adult males to articulate their perceptions of critical incidents that might have had a significant impact on their failing to graduate under such a system of schooling, it is assumed that a major decision to dropout of school weighs heavily on a combination of adversities in the lives of these individuals. With this in mind, this study only focused on clearly reporting, describing, and analyzing critical incidents in high school as perceived in past years by dropouts themselves. The findings were limited to a select group of Black young adult male dropouts in a particular urban high school setting. Findings cannot to generalized beyond these contexts.

Perceptions have some validity but are not necessarily fully or objectively:

- Purposeful sampling prohibit, generalizing from these data to larger populations
- Focus on in-school events limits understanding for relationships among factors derived from home, school, community and prior years.

Interviews of perceived critical incidents based on consistent and/or frequent occurrences among interview respondents served only to suggest the realities as perceived by Black young adult males. Any extended study beyond this point will become a part of future studies.

Definitions for Dropout Phenomena

Beginning 2004, the state of Texas' new proposed accountability system is to calculate a completion rate. Ideally, student groups will be tracked over four years of high school to completion. The federal definition of a *school dropout* refers to a high school student in grades 9 through 12 who quits school. It excludes the count of a large number of middle school students, who until recently, rarely dropped out. States have often listed dropouts by grade level (grades 7-12).

Because of the variety of definitions attached to the phenomenon of leaving school early or dropping out of school, Congress, in Public Law 100-297, directed the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to provide an annual report on *dropout and completion rates* (Frase, 1989; Kaufman & Frase, 1990). NCES has issued two such reports:

1. *Event rates report* – within a single year, the percentage of students who left high school without finishing work toward a diploma. These rates reflect the actual “event” of dropping out.
2. *Status rates report* - at a given point in time, the percentage of the population of a given age range who either (a) have not finished high school; or (b) are not enrolled. These rates reflect the current “status” of a given group in the population at large (not just students).

3. *Cohort rates report* – over a given period of time – what happens to a single group of students (for example, all those who are now 16)? These rates can reflect changes that affect a given group over time.

Status and cohort rates provide a view of completion, since they can reflect what happens to students after they leave school. *Event rates* concern only the actual act of dropping out in a given year (Frase, 1989; Kaufman & Frase, 1990).

“*Best practices*” – Approaches, processes and strategies approved by ASCD as essential components of high student achievement in academic performance; as researched by Just For The Kids Organization, “best practices” from top performing schools across several states and the nation.

Critical Incidents – defined as conditions characterized by occurrences or events that interrupt normal procedure or precipitates a crisis (American Heritage, 1985). In this study, critical incident/s refer/s to trying moments of spoken words, interactions and/or actions and events in the high school setting that appear to precipitate some form of anxiety discomfort, alienation or discouragement related to continuing as a high school student.

Dropout - The General Accounting Office of the Division of Human Resources in Washington, D.C. defines school dropouts as persons who are neither enrolled in school and/or are not high school graduates (1986). For this study, dropouts selected as

participants were dropouts as defined above but were also old enough to be unlikely to return to graduate and had not pursued a General Equivalency Diploma/GED certificate. Beginning 2004, the state's new proposed accountability system is to calculate a completion rate. Ideally, student groups will be tracked over four years of high school to completion.

Learning While Black (LWB) – A coined term that refers to learning while Black, similar to DWB (*driving while Black*) and DWI (*driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence*).

Non-completer – A student that failed to graduate from high school; individual with unfinished business; person that fails to finish a task, work-at-hand, test, schooling....

Selected Respondents or Participants – Using selective criteria discussed under sampling procedures in Chapter III, a small group of Black male students having “failed,” whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years as adults, critical incidents that discouraged, and/or alienated them from completing a program that leads to graduation in an urban district.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to hear first-hand from dropouts of a system and to make these perceptions widely known as the first step in a process of efforts to prevent such critical incidents from continuing or occurring when students gaining a high school diploma forfeit a full K-12 education. Perhaps this study will provide the basis for further research and theory on institutionalized mal-practices.

Although this qualitative study is subject to inconclusive answers garnered from surveys and interviews of volunteer participants, it is hoped that the findings will give rise to deliberate, conscionable, and speedy actions against such disparagements that cause students to drop-out of school. Individuals directly affected by critical incidents perceived and experienced will provide vivid descriptions of a culture of educational schooling or realities affecting some of our youth that are unknown to policy makers, educators, and citizens alike. These findings may form the basis of future studies and assessments designed to make a difference in the number of potential dropouts by identifying specific types and sources of in-school incidents that may be worthy of consideration in guiding school improvement programs at the high school level.

Summary

The focus of this study gives voice to Black-male high school non-completers as they share reflexive perceptions and awareness of past experiences that might offer vital information not only in the lives of other potential dropouts, but in their own lives of once “failed” students continuing to overcome the low expectancies placed upon them by others. Untold stories of images that served to impose self-doubt, conveyed in the form of critical incidents are etched in some memories to date, with high school completion left behind.

Willing participants voiced their concerns and perceptions of situations as a first step in clarity of understanding and communicating “failed” aspects of their schooling. More than not, “failed” students are placed on a “one size fits all” or “cookie cutter” agenda of warehoused schooling. Training in cultural diversity, multiculturalism, human growth and development, learning styles and learning modalities, and differentiated learning techniques would greatly enhance the sensitivity needed to prevent, recover and reconnect the dropout/potential dropout. These are the identical prescriptors implemented by expert/master teachers and often referred to as “*best practices*.” However, the one thing that cannot be legislated nor taught is the passion for the cause; that emotes from within.

“I don’t care that you know until I know that you care.” Mother Teresa

Organization of Dissertation

The format of the study is arranged according to the Table of Contents that is 1 detail listings of topic and subtopic entries and procedures pertinent to the research. The process entails required procurement consent from a school district superintendent and the close cooperation and communication with campus personnel and former students.

The structural arrangement of this study is built around the perceptions of Black young adult males that dropped out of high school. The respondents report critical incidents peculiar to that of Black males in a “failed” system of schooling. Each phase of the study is designed to question specific problems that occur unique among male dropouts of Black decent that are nonexistent or rarely exhibited by teachers, and/or other campus staff with students of a culture other than Black.

Gathered sources of public information that support and/or inference these perceptions are quoted and paraphrased throughout the study. Collected survey and interview data are analyzed and compared with documented sources as evidenced with accompanying appendices and references.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What do Black male students having “failed”, whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive in later years, as adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program that leads to graduation?

Historical Perspective on Dropouts

Obtaining a high school diploma remains among the most prominent points of demarcation between the “haves” and “have-nots” in American society. 61 Compared to diploma recipients, those who earn a GED (General Equivalency Diploma) have a much higher rate of unemployment and are much more likely to need welfare or other forms of government assistance.62 The economic implications of students’ failure to earn a high school diploma are staggering, and increasingly so as our economy becomes more dependent on the service and information industries (Rumberger, 2001).

Unlike 100 years ago, high school graduation expectations, overtime, have become common among all population groups in the nation. From the nation’s rights to education to state mandates, the minimum attainment level of high school while it “is still associated with positive life outcomes, analyses already suggest that economic returns to a high school diploma (as a terminal degree) are declining” (Mincer, 1989); (Dorn, 1996).

The national status dropout rate, measured for the group aged 16-24, has generally declined in the last 20 years. In this group, the status rate went from 16% in 1968 to less than 13% in 1989. Event rates for the nation as a whole showed a similar decline (from about 6% in the late 1970s to 4.5% in 1988). In 1989, about 4 million persons in the U.S. aged 16 to 24 were high school dropouts (Kaufman & Frase, 1990).

The dropout rate of poor children and people of color was not a national concern until groups/researchers such as the National Research Council, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983 Arias, 1986; Swift, 1986; American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1989; and McCollum and Walker, 1992, continued to report that the United State's future work force was fast becoming a "Nation-at-Risk."

Recognizing that poor children and children of color will form a significant percentage of the future work force, policymakers have increasingly vocalized the need to improve the education of "disadvantaged" youth. However, some people warn that proposed reforms aimed at achieving educational "excellence" often do not provide a coherent plan for effectively educating students at risk (McCollum and Walker, 1992; Swift, 1986, 1986).

Raising standards without providing adequate support to schools may increase academic failure and dropout rates (Government Publication, 1994).

The General Education Development Certificate (GED)

The federal definition purportedly gives a more accurate picture of how many students actually quit school. Discrepancies in the federal and state definitions of what constitutes a dropout have resulted in disputed accounting of data as reported by some states. The federal definition of a school dropout refers to a high school student in grades 9 through 12 that quits school. It excludes the count of a large number of middle school students, who rarely drop out. Second, the General Educational Development certificate, also known as a general equivalency degree, counts as a high school diploma equivalent only if the student actually earns the GED certificate.

In recent years to include the present, the meaning of dropout in Texas according to state officials deals with calculations based on an annual dropout rate from grades 7 through 12. If a student drops out of high school but says he will pursue a General Educational Development certificate, Texas officials don't count him as a dropout, even if he never actually gets a GED.

Though experts have an idea how to attack the problem, recent research has raised new doubts about how many dropouts the country actually has. The national dropout rate has long been thought to be about 15 percent, but researcher Phil Kaufman of MPR Associates showed that the data are gathered using different methods, different definitions, and surveying different populations. In addition, some surveys have very large margins of error. One major discrepancy is that some surveys count students who obtain their General Equivalency Diploma as having graduated, while others count those individuals as high school dropouts (Harvard Gazette, 2001).

Since 1942, the GED Tests have given adults who did not graduate from high school the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma. Recognized nation wide by employers and educators, the GED diploma has increased education and employment opportunities for millions of adults (www.homeschoolzone.com/college-ged.htm, 2003).

- More than 860,000 adults worldwide take the GED Tests each year.
- Those who obtain scores high enough to earn a GED credential outperform at least 40 percent of today's high school seniors.
- One out of every seven high school diplomas issued each year in the United States is based on passing the GED Tests.
- More than 95 percent of U.S. employers consider GED graduates the same as traditional high school graduates in regard to hiring, salary, and opportunity for advancement.

Recent Efforts, Trends and Issues

The number of students that schools have lost track of is increasing across the nation. Unfortunately, data on dropout rates and graduation rates reported by most state and local school districts are usually inaccurate and often reported in a way that masks severe school failure (Kaufman, 2001). For example, one recent study shows that in one-half of the schools located in the nation's 35 largest urban districts, 50% or more of the students who enrolled in the ninth grade failed to go on and graduate with a diploma (Balfanz & Legters, 2001). Estimates are that at least 25-30% of these students dropped out (NAACP, 2003).

Recent issues and efforts to curve the high school dropout rate, especially among African-Americans, most of whom are inner-city males, have been through the

interest of behavioral psychologist and scholars. Questioning “why some students make it,” professors Michael J. Strube, at Washington University and Larry E. Davis of George Warren Brown School of Social Work and the Department of Psychology theorized that “if we can predict who will stay in school, we may be able to design interventions to keep more kids there” (1997). From such studies, focusing on the inverse of “why students drop-out,” a common set of factors are identified: attitudes about the consequences of staying in school/dropping out of school; the social pressures they face, and the barriers they perceive to be in the way (Strube and Davis, 1997).

For the first time, Texas along with several other states (to include California, Florida, New York) has to recalculate dropout rates of school districts using the federal definition of a dropout. USA Today reports that,

accuracy of dropouts is probably the most ignored and serious problem of school reform. In many urban school districts, dropout rates run as high as 50%. Yet, because the counts are so suspect, the underlying problems causing the high dropout rates aren't addressed (2002).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, annual dropout rates for the 100 largest school districts in America were grossly under calculated. Some errors or miscalculations are due to non-counting of a population that is non-enrolled and without an out-reach program. Other errors include those who move-in and do not report to school, annual rates that distort and provide no clue of the actual cumulative state.

Looking to solve America's dropout problem at a Graduate School of Education Conference, researchers, Russell Rumberger of the University of California, Santa Barbara; Phil Kaufman of MPR Associates; Civil Rights Project Co-Director Gary Orfield of the Harvard School of Education and Social Policy and School of Government and others, advocated smaller high schools, smaller class sizes, and programs targeting the difficult transition to ninth grade (Powell, 2001)

Recent mandated dropout prevention policies designed to address the nation's high dropout rates among students from economically disadvantaged and non-English-speaking backgrounds are among the major concerns of middle and high school educators in the United States. While current studies emerge over growing concern for the increase in dropout rates among Hispanic middle school and high school students, there are fewer studies that target preventative programs for school dropouts that are Black and male in gender. Dropout prevention models have become pilot programs specifically geared toward the increasing number of limited-English-proficient Hispanic youth. Some pilot studies based on vocational programs state that African Americans are involved as well (Vaznaugh, 1995).

Studies of Conditions, Causes, and Associated Factors

Dropping out of school is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon. Researchers deal with dropping out as both a process and a citation event. It is relatively rare for students to make a snap judgment to leave school. The reasons students commonly offer for leaving school, include low grades, inability to get along, working, and pregnancy, may not be the true causes but rationalizations or simplifications of more complex circumstances (US Department of Education, 1998)

Students' lives outside of school may have as much to do with whether they persist in school as their experiences in the school. The image of young women who leave school when they become pregnant or of young men and women who drop out of school to support their families points attention to students' lives outside of school. Problems of substance abuse, family violence and abuse, and gang membership are examples of other out-of-school factors that schools may attempt to address through their policies and programs (US Department of Education, 1998).

Family Conditions

Values, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by families, schools and communities; however, what we do not know are the predictors of individual factors associated with or that contribute to dropping out of school for each student. Often times because of the hardships, abuse and/or other dysfunctional ties within families, the only sense of real self worth will come from within the school for some students. Confidence building, self awareness, and esteem for self and others are all shaped before school; however it

too is the responsibility of school personnel to establish and/or reprogram when needed, appropriate interactions within an even broader teaching and learning community/environment. School personnel must model, consult and coach students as they interact with other cultures and the world. Professional development is provided in the areas of not only content specifics, but in the social emotional and learning modes of all learners as well (US Department of Education, 1998).

Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic disparities in dropout and graduation rates are alarming (Rumberger, 1998) failure of high poverty schools to graduate Black and Latino students is particularly acute. We know that poor and minority youth often hit a tremendous wall when they enter high poverty high schools (Maran, 2000; Rathbone, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999; Boyd, Et.Al, 1999). In numerous inner city schools with overwhelmingly minority student populations, less than 30% of ninth graders graduate four years later (Balfanz and Legters, 1998). Federal, state, and local educational agencies must seriously address this issue (NAACP, 2003).

Non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to drop out of high school than are non-Hispanic whites. In the year 2000, 7 percent of whites aged 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school, whereas 13 percent of blacks and 28 percent of Hispanics had dropped out. While Hispanics comprised only 15 percent of the population of 16- to 24-year-olds in the year 2000, they made up 39 percent of all

dropouts. Asian/Pacific Islanders, with a dropout rate of 4 percent, had the lowest dropout rate among all racial and ethnic groups in the year 2000 (Child Trends Data Bank, 2000).

“The No. 1 reason that dropout rates are higher for Hispanics is not work-related and it’s not family-related,” said Zarate, president of the nonprofit group North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals. Over 25% of the dropouts in his state were Hispanic in 2000, up from about 2% in 1990.

“It is school-related. If a child is doing well in school, if he or she feels part of the school, they are not going to drop out (Zarate, 2002).” However, Jennifer Day, an education analyst with the Census Bureau had this to say:

“the lure of a quick paycheck lured others to avoid school entirely. For some, it may not be that they are dropping out of school, but rather that people are coming here and not going to school to begin with,” (USA Today, 2002).

Gender

Although we have gained some knowledge of broad patterns of dropout behavior, the research literature afforded little guidance in understanding gender differences in dropouts. The reasons for students leaving school as identified by school districts differ for adolescent males and females.

A lot of boys need to learn that academic success isn’t a girl thing. It is a power

thing. It is the difference between becoming a mover and shaker in life and languishing in the masses of those who get moved and shaken. Education can help you get...a better life (Page, 2003).

Institutional Discrimination in Schools Relating to Black Males

The view that the system is undermining student achievement and expectations through institutionalized exclusionary racism has some validity. “American public schools have utilized institutionalized forms of exclusion, deprivation, and punishment as part and parcel of their internal operations based on a person’s skin color, religion, or national origin” (Stack, 1974, pp.110-125, 217-229; Kluger, 1975).”

Both overt and subtle forms of racial discrimination are prevalent and ultimately influence teacher expectations of such discrimination. Although overt forms of institutionalized racism have come under attack and been legally eliminated, the schools are left with vestiges of them. The lack of high expectation for children of color can learn or are not genetically impaired is still rampant in too many schools designed to serve them. Indeed, they are not served at all; they are subjugated into a socially and economically inferior position (Lynch, 1998).

Social, Economic Conditions

Trends

For the last decade, the dropout rate for youth age 16-24 has remained roughly the same, about 13-14 percent. Hispanics, Blacks, and economically and educationally disadvantaged youth have a much higher dropout rate, as do those who are (1) pregnant, (2) two or more years behind grade level, and (3) from homes where the fathers also dropped out. Within the first several years after dropping out, about 50 percent either return to school or enroll in General Education Development programs. Labor market opportunities are poor for youth who have not completed high school and are worse for Blacks than for Whites in terms of unemployment. Due to limitations on available data and research, it is not generally known “what works” to prevent youth from dropping out of school or to encourage their return (1986).

For skilled workers, a high school diploma is at best the minimum requirement for entry-level employment throughout the nation. Economic consequences are severe for those with less than a high school degree that earn minimum wages (1986).

Data is scarce in terms of accurate census and research analyses of African American dropouts. According to a U.S.A.Today editorial report, “keeping an accurate track of dropouts is probably the most ignored and serious problem of school reform (2001).

Tracking the African American dropout is difficult despite the importance it would play in providing needed answers to reverse the problem of dropping out of school. Tracking is one way of looking at the problem over time. While dropout rates for non-Hispanic whites and blacks have declined (from 12 to 7 and 21 to 13 percent, respectively) since 1972, they remain significantly too high along with the Hispanic rate at 28% (US Department of Education, 1998).

Cultural Conflicts

Peer Group Pressures

Peer culture is about the attitudes students take to school with them. In general, students believe that doing well in school is desirable and graduating is important. Yet some peer groups regard learning and the effort it requires with contempt, and academically motivated students may face peer pressures that punish them for working hard and doing well. It is not known to what degree the climate established by such views and the behavior that accompanies them contribute to underachievement and dropping out. However, the data suggest they are particularly influential in schools that serve disadvantaged students (US Department of Education, 1998).

Grouping and Diversity

Diversity in schools influence social interaction, students' cognitive processes, and ultimately educational outcomes that is important to meeting the needs of all students to include the potential dropout. Adopting and adapting programs that celebrate diversities (cultural diversities, interactional diversities, structural diversities, learning diversities that address not only the challenged end but the high end of learning as well.

Adequate representation of racial/ethnic minorities is not only necessary to create opportunities for interactional diversity, but also because having too few students from underrepresented groups can produce negative effects for members of these minority groups. In environments that lack a diverse work force or population, underrepresented groups are regarded by majority group members as symbols rather than individuals, or as "tokens." In studies of severely underrepresented women, Kanter (1977, 1993) found that tokenism contributes to heightened visibility of the underrepresented group, exaggeration of group differences, and the distortion of the individuals' images to fit existing stereotypes.

Additional studies confirm that those severely underrepresented are more likely to under perform or think about dropping out..., regardless of racial background and gender (Bynum & Thompson, 1983, Gosman, Dandridge, Nettles, & Thoeny, 1983; Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978). For example, even white students on predominantly black campuses are found to undergo academic difficulties that some researchers attribute

to their “minority status” (Bynum & Thompson, 1983; Gosman, Dandridge, Nettles, & Thoeny, 1983).

As the educational institution becomes more in focus and its functioning, it is able to realize the benefits of various forms of diversity for all students. Research supports these different points and show that structural diversity improves opportunities for interaction, which in turn, has positive effects on learning and democracy outcomes (Gurin, 2003).

Research studies show that attaining a diverse student body results in significantly more opportunities, inside and outside the classroom, for all students to interact with and learn from others of different racial and cultural backgrounds. Longitudinal studies show that students are more likely to report socializing with someone from a different race and discussing racial issues on campuses with a heterogeneous student body (Chang, 1996).

Low proportions of some ethnic cultures provide limited opportunities for interaction across race/ethnicity, thereby limiting potential student learning experiences with diverse groups among others (Hurtado, Dey, & Trevi_o, 1994, 1998).

Educational Factors

Researchers have noted three key academic influences on students within schools that may determine whether they stay in school or not: difficulty of the academic program, a lack of challenging content/activities and low standards, and the view by students that the academic program is simply irrelevant to their lives. School policies and practices thus may attempt to promote engagement by revising academic standards of the

school curriculum, developing students' skills and abilities through school activities, and making academic programs meaningful to the lives of students and relevant to their futures. (US Department of Education, 1998).

Although the aforementioned roles must also question their involvement or the lack of involvement with their teenager's decision to leave school, the intent of the study lends attention to perceptions of that of respondent's critical incidents that occurred while at school. These formative years outside the home, in educational settings, during waking hours, amount to more time spent during a day with supposedly experts in the field of teaching, peers and other campus staff than at home. There are fiduciary expectants of commitment for all educators as well that are listed under historical documents of a Code of Ethics for teachers. The first of which is: Teacher-Student Commitment

- *The Teacher works to develop each student's potential as a worthy and effective citizen.*
- *The Teacher works objectively to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals in each of his students for their advancement.*
- *The Teacher works to develop and provide sound and progressively better educational opportunities for all students.*

Quality of Teaching

The consensus among education researchers is that teacher quality is the single most important determinant of academic success. The evidence shows, for example, that students whose teachers have been trained in their subjects perform better than students whose teachers lack subject-matter preparation, (Hawley, Andrew, 1997; Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 1998; Ferguson, 1998; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997; and Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

A significant number of dropouts come from high-poverty schools that are mostly in high-minority school districts (Lewis, Et Al., 1998), have the least experienced teachers, the highest percentage of “out-of field-teachers, the highest teacher mobility rates, and the greatest incidence of teachers who leave the profession (Campaign for Fiscal Equity, 2001). Evidence also suggests that low-income students are least likely to have teachers who use classroom methods found by research to be effective (Raudenbush, Fotiu & Cheong, 1998). Equally important, a teacher’s capabilities and motivation can be undermined by a variety of conditions common to high poverty schools, including inadequate facilities and learning resources and excessive student-to-teacher ratios (N.Y. Supreme Court, 2001 *see* Kertes, 2001; & NAACP, 2003).

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, about one-third of public school students are members of racial or ethnic minority groups, but minority teachers make up only 13.5% of the workforce. Of the nation’s public schools, 42% of the nation’s

schools have no minority teachers at all (National Education Association, 2001).

The National Education Association predicts that the number of minority teachers will shrink to 5% in the early part of this century even as minority enrollment grows to over 50% of the student population (National Education Association, 2001; The National Center for Education Statistics, and Digest of Education Statistics, 1999). The problem is particularly acute in low-income and urban areas, where minority students are making up an increasing proportion of the most high-risk students. 25 Minorities make up 69% of total enrollment in urban school districts, but only 36% of the teaching force (Council of the Great City Schools, 2001).

Size of School or Class

One of the concerns that researchers deemed important while looking at the dropout problem in the nation is smaller class size, (Rumberger, Kaufman, & Orfield, 2001). With smaller class sizes, personalized and individual instruction might prove to be more effective as teachers are enabled to closely focus on the student's needs and assessment. A growing body of anecdotal and qualitative evidence supports reducing class size. Teachers report experiencing lower levels of stress and job dissatisfaction with smaller classes, primarily because they are better able to attend to each student individually and, as a consequence, student motivation increases and discipline problems decrease (Health & Research Operative Services, Inc., 2002). One study found a link between participation in mentoring programs (specifically the Big Brothers/Big Sisters

program) and academic self-concept in a sample of at-risk children ranging from elementary to high school age (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000).

Grading/Testing Pressures

High-stakes testing used to retain in grade or to deny diplomas based on a single test (including retakes), exacerbates the disparate impact of resource inequality for children of color. A growing body of research and expert analysis reveals that punitive sanctions attached to a student's performance on a single test are unfair, ineffective, and contrary to widely accepted standards of the assessment and psychometric professions, and (Heubert & Hauser, 1999) potentially in violation of civil rights laws and the federal constitution. Specifically, penalizing students by testing them on information that they have never been taught raises both pedagogical questions and constitutional questions of due process (Debra, P. v Turlington, 1984). Research indicates that placing high-stakes test burdens on children under these circumstances is counterproductive because the burdens correlate with increases in grade retention and dropouts, and because the burdens affect minority students disproportionately (National Research Council; the American Educators Research Association; the American Psychological Association; the National Council on Measurement in Education; and the Department of Education, 1999); Heubert, J., & Hauser, R. (Eds.). (1999). High stakes: testing for tracking, promotion, and graduation. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Evidence also suggests that heightened pressure to “teach to the test” often impoverishes the curriculum and most likely contributes to the acute shortage of highly qualified teachers and administrators (McNeil & Valenzuela, 1999).

These policies continue to be adopted by state after state, district, in the name of “high standards” and accountability. Furthermore, test-driven sanctions imposed by many states against low performing schools create a perverse incentive for school officials to get rid of struggling students. Unless test accountability is balanced by graduation accountability (and by safeguards against inappropriate or discriminatory use of special education), this phenomenon is almost certain to intensify (NAACP, 2003).

Although rigorous assessment to include the use of standardized tests, in the learning process and in school reform have a legitimate place, the NAACP believes, that it is unacceptable to implement the high-stakes components of tests until federal, state, and local educational agencies are held accountable for ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources to teach and students have the resources needed to learn (2003).

Exclusion in Classes or Ridicule

Research reveals class and racial disparities in students’ access to challenging curricula (e.g., algebra, laboratory sciences, and advanced placement courses). In many inner city schools, few or none of the Advanced Placement (AP) courses needed to compete for admission into the more competitive colleges are offered (Wheelock, 1992). Many college admissions review boards compound this denial of opportunity in high schools by providing extra points to the applications of students who have taken AP courses. Yet, even when these courses are offered in high school, students of color are excluded,

even when they meet the criteria (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

Federal law requires that all students are held to the standards and have equal educational opportunities to meet these standards (United States Congress, 1994). A growing body of research demonstrates that students learn more, and learning is distributed more equitably, when the school curriculum consists of largely academic courses with few low-level courses (Lee & Burkham, 2001). For example, states and districts that receive Title I funds pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act violate their legal duty if teachers or school authorities communicate lowered expectations for college enrollment and academic achievement by limiting access to advanced coursework (Raudenbush, Fotiu, & Cheong, 1998). This is the most dramatic form of tracking and steering, in which an ineffective “general,” technical, or vocational” curricula are substituted for academically rich coursework that prepares students for college or better pay jobs (Wheelock, 1992).

Interactions with Teachers

One of the strongest correlates of students’ psychological and physical disengagement from school is lack of academic success (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985, 1986; Wagenaar, 1987).

Students at risk need to have their efforts at schoolwork recognized and rewarded. The rewards most frequently offered to students to motivate them to do good school work are high marks, praise from teachers and family members, and respect from peers for meeting challenging classroom assignments. However, students at risk may have poor prior preparation, weak support at home for academic tasks, and negative peer pressures that deprive them of sufficient opportunities to achieve

immediate rewards for school work. Students also may be placed at risk by attending schools that lack the resources and standards needed to prepare them for college and/or workplace success (1994).

Some Examples of Critical Incidents

“Stereotype threat” is the term that Claude Steele, a social science professor at Stanford University, uses to describe the inferior performance of students on standardized tests when they believe they are being judged as members of a stereotyped group rather than as individuals (1999).

Race informs every aspect of the dropout experience from the historical perspective of the denial of the freedom to learn to read to the contemporary notions and conveyance of low expectations from a teacher’s, counselor’s and/or principal’s stereotypical mindset of equating Blacks and other persons of color to that of underclass.

Research consistently establishes that students receive differential treatment from teachers on basis of characteristics such as race, gender, class, ability, and appearance, and that differentiation begins early in the school career and increases as students progress through school. Research reviewed here suggests that teachers’ perceptions of student engagement, as well as ability, also influence the level of support that students receive.

Research also tells us that conditions in the classroom and school influence students’ feelings about themselves; these in turn are reflected in student engagement and

achievement. Not all students experience alienation to the same extent, yet, for the most part, students and researchers describe schools as alienating institutions (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Hargreaves et al., 1996; Johnson, Farkas, & Bers, 1997, Newmann, 1981; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

Schools and Classroom Climates/Environments

In a study of dropouts, respondents described the depersonalization of traditional classrooms with desks lined up in rows (Altenbaugh et al., 1995);

These structural arrangements in the classroom with their strict rules limiting movement and talking, according to Johnson et al, (1983), prevent students from getting to know their classmates on any but a superficial basis and allow stereotypes to continue unchallenged and unexplored.

Research pertaining to school and classroom conditions and the positive (or Negative) influences on children and youth are equally important. Positive climates refer to school and classroom structures and practices, as well as the attitudes, values and beliefs of teachers and administrators, which contribute to high and equitable levels of student achievement and positive inter-group relations. The main point is that positive teacher-student (as well as student-student) relationships based on caring, respect, and trust, facilitates learning (Bennett, 2001).

Emphasis on school-level policies and practices that warrant further attention because of their consequences for potential dropouts include: grouping practices and alternatives to tracking; discipline policies; student assessment and evaluation procedures; and other practices that aim to be “responsive” to student problems, such as alternative curricula must be closely examined with respect to a systemic method of discouraging students from leaving school.

Interpersonal Factors

Researchers have also noted three nonacademic influences on students within schools that affect student engagement and dropping out. First, some students have weak connections to adults in the school and may come to feel that no one in the school cares about them. Second, some students may have weak connections to peers in the school and may shift their attention to friends who are already out of school. Third, some students may have weak connections to the school as an institution and may feel powerless and unsure of what is expected of them. The impersonality of the large urban high school is an example of a nonacademic dimension to life in schools that is frequently described as leading to withdrawal. Therefore, schools may want to consider adopting policies and practices designed to strengthen students’ bonds to school ([http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reaching Goals/Goal_2/Dropouts.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reaching_Goals/Goal_2/Dropouts.html), 2003).

Hargreaves, Earl, and Ryan (1996) echo the voice of many researchers and educators who believe that “one of the most fundamental reforms needed in secondary or

high school education is to make schools into better communities of caring and support for young people” (p. 77). The term “community” as used by McMillan and Chavis proposes that community consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection... (1986).

School and Classroom Social Communities

The significance of community is reflected in the work of Dewey and Vygotsky. Both view education as a social rather than individualistic process. Recognizing children’s interpersonal needs and the importance of collaborative activities for experiential learning, Dewey promoted the idea that students should function as a social group. The quality of education, he argued, “is realized in the degree in which individuals form a group” (1958, p. 65). It is the teacher and school’s responsibility to encourage the development of this sense of community by designing communal activities to which all contribute. As Dewey envisioned it, teachers and students share membership in this community, and it is through collaboration that learning occurs. Being a member of a community includes feeling part of a group. In the school, that community consists primarily of students and teachers.

Programs and Practices Related to Drop-Out Prevention

Many dropout prevention programs pursue such programmatic strategies as providing would-be dropouts with additional resources and supports to help them stay in school. This type of out-reach assistance may have prevented a significant number of Black male dropouts as well? Other alternative measures as solicited from respondents will also provide vital information that could help the students that will then what might be some alternative measures suggestive of the respondents that might have prevented respondents from leaving school?

Harlingen Superintendent Jesus Chavez said his district's success with dropouts stems from a comprehensive approach to the problem. "It's the district, the city, the county, the business community, the police department, it's the entire community." He also stated, "you put all those elements together and that's what allows us to keep kids in school and have them succeed" (USA Today, 2002).

The federal government made substantial contributions to the development of dropout prevention programs; however, earlier evidence of latter reports provides a sobering evaluation of the "New Futures Initiative (*a series of urban dropout prevention projects funded by the Annie M. Casey Foundation*). Initially the results of studies using the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics published annual reports on the status of dropouts in the nation supposedly helped shape the understanding of the school dropout problem, and guided the development of

strategies for keeping students in school. The success of these promulgated programs through the National Diffusion Network in the Department's Office of Educational Research and Improvement was to provide access to promising, if not proven, dropout prevention programs to the nation's schools.

A report that urban dropout prevention projects designed to restructure the delivery of services to youth in four medium-size communities with high dropout rates, high teen pregnancy rates, and high youth unemployment did not fair well. The first 3 years of the 5-year initiative, the evaluators described its total lack of success in restructuring the educational *development* plan.

Conclusion

In concluding, the long ignored inaccuracies of calculating high school completion rates across the nation will be aligned in accordance with the federally mandated definition of a school dropout, beginning 2004. With this alignment, further attention will also be drawn to other serious underpinnings of the dropout problem that plagues specific states and school districts, and ethnic groups and socioeconomic conditions as well.

Whether in the field of education or business and industry, improvement of the product and/or service involves precautionary analyses of past input and performance of the various participants. The perception of past input in the classroom and school setting of students served must also be weighed rather than to sift through past, failed, dropped

statistical data only. This study seeks answers to impeding questions from student dropouts for which no formulaic data or documented record has been presently required.

The literature lends validity to spoken incidents, critical to “failed” students of color as it bears witness to dropout rates and accounts of purported reasons to quit school. The data and findings clearly set the stage for further analyses of respondents’ perceptions through initial survey questionnaire and first person interviews. It is believed that causal factors related to the decision to leave school are spun from more complex issues and overlapping circumstances between school and home. However, the researcher believes that a phenomenal decrease in the dropout rate is contingent upon identifying and eradicating the hidden and subliminal-like incidents that critically arrest the will and motivational fortitude to continue schooling in unfavorable settings and circumstances for some individuals.

Preventive measures to reduce existing school exodus among minority groups, coupled with the predicted increase in school dropouts might be partly due to high stakes testing and instructional inequalities. The other part will be addressed in this study in hopes that the sum of the parts might give a total picture of causalities to be dealt with most effectively and expeditiously.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research is a qualitative study that is used to answer questions about the complex nature of specific phenomena, involving critical incidents perceived to be partly responsible for the “failed” Black male dropout. Gathered Analysis of critical incidents experienced by Black male dropouts, affords the researcher an understanding needed to convey participants’ experiences and responses to their perceptions of in-school incidents in a meaningful and constructive manner.

This study identifies critical incidents and existing patterns of such incidents that may have contributed to or even encouraged males of African descent to leaving school without graduating. This chapter discusses sample selection data and procedures as they relate to instrumentation used to analyze participant responses to critical incidents that happened in high schools throughout a large urban district.

The methods and procedures in this study were conducted with Black young adult males, who at one time were listed as school dropouts. The study was arranged through the district’s main Reconnection Center.

Overview of the Participating Urban District

Urban District's Program Rationale

All participants and potential participants in this study will be identified through the district's campus and central Reconnection Centers. These are centers listed under the Alternative Programs Department that serve special needs students through non-traditional classroom settings, self-paced learning opportunities and approaches to resolve specific academic and behavioral needs and issues. This particular systems structure has a twofold purpose:

1) to recover students who have dropped out of school, and 2) to provide intervention services for students who are at-risk of dropping out. The district curriculum is the basis for all course offerings, and all courses are aligned to state standards that are reflected in the district's policy (from the large urban district's Alternative Programs Department 2003).

Urban District's Annual Yearly Progress Goals

There are six major programs under the umbrella of the Alternative Programs Department: Dropout Prevention; Intervention and Recovery; the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program; Attendance Improvement and Truancy Reduction Initiative; Student Development; Safe and Drug Free Schools; and Adult Basic Education. The goal of the Alternative Programs Department is to devise and implement programs and services that reduce/eliminate dropouts and to

increase the high school completion rate of students.

The primary goal of the department is to effectively engage students in curricular and instructional activities tailored to the individual needs of the student through systemic, consistent and directional approaches designed to empower student autonomy and academic achievement.

Design of the Study

The design of the study is based on perceptions and an account of: Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Identified Young Adult Black Males. From a final count, a group of 25 African American males from a large urban district's Reconnection Centers and other alternative program affiliates i.e., I Can Academies of the local districts were also selected.

A Progression of responding participants selected for the Study started with 100, dropped to 30 to 40 and ended settled with the 25 number of participants/respondents for the study. Criteria used to initially identify individuals for the study were the same for all three categories with the exception of the final 25 participants who appeared to take an interest in the study and exercised follow-through in keeping their scheduled or rescheduled interview appointment/s.

1. 100 prospective respondent/participants contacted by mailed survey (the initial Survey/Questionnaire).
2. 40 prospective respondents actually identified from initial survey
3. 25 respondents volunteered to actually participant by completing the Activity Scale rating and the recorded Face to Face Interviewed that focused on the four Research Questions that were major to the study.
4. Special follow-up participants numbering only 13 used as a sampling for exact verbatim transcription

Participant Selection Procedures

Accordingly, criteria for willing participants were developed based on the study's focus. Participants were well-informed about the research entailed and the needed responses that would become a study conducted with their consent and contributive efforts. Criteria listed below are required prerequisites to the selection process for volunteer participants.

School Dropout Criteria:

1. Age (*the student must be 18 years or older and verified by the date of birth between the years of 1983 to 1986*)
2. Gender - male
3. Ethnicity – Black (*according to the student and verified by documented school data*)
4. School/s (*district wide* *Reconnection Centers with data of students*)

reported to have been a dropout following senior high admission)

5. Attended high school between the years of 1989 – 2004

Data Sources

The study utilizes three major data collection instruments that provide a broad array of responses of participants for analysis in the *Instrumentation* section of this chapter: 1) The initial *Survey/Questionnaire*; 2) the twenty-three statement *Activity Scale/Structured Interview Part I and Part II*; and 3) the *Formal/Fact to Face Interview*.

Instrumentation and Field Testing

Consistent focus of purpose of instrumentation in this study is dependent on the individual responses and dialogue from respondents that pertain to critical event/s that happened during their high school years. Three major instruments were designed and developed for this purpose:

- Survey/Questionnaire Assessment
 1. Field/Pilot Testing of Survey/Question
- Activity Scale Rating/Structured Interview
- Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview

Instruments used to survey participants and guide interviews are data sources collected (*Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale/Structured Interview & The Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview*) recorded, assessed and categorized as they relate

to specific events perceived as leading to student alienation and/or discouraging situations for student drop outs.

The Initial Survey/Questionnaire

The initial *Survey/Questionnaire* is designed to identify respondents that focus more on school life as they recall some happenings that take precedent over other weighted categories of choice. A detailed analysis of participant responses to *In-School Related Issues and/or Factors, Out-of-School Related Issues and/or Factors and Assessment of Activity Involvement* serve to eliminate those participants over-taxed with out-of-school dilemmas as opposed to a respondents' pensive preoccupation with school occurrences that could be viewed as critical incidents.

Survey/Questionnaire Assessment (Appendix A)

This Survey/Questionnaire was devised to obtain pertinent information about the former student's reflective perception of his experiences in an academic setting that may have influenced him to quit school. The nine-statement questionnaire about in-school happenings in the classroom, pertaining to school personnel and instruction serves as the opener to a more inclusive and resourceful interview to focus on participant identifiers, according to responses given that affirm the research. These response indicators are further discussed under sampling procedures of this Chapter.

Field/Pilot Testing of the Survey/Questionnaire

The initial Survey/Questionnaire was field tested with approximately 5 participants who would not be involved in the final selection of participants. The review of the responses by these individuals was the basis for making minor modifications to the existing form shown in Appendix A.

Activity Scale/Structured Interview (Appendix B)

The second of three instruments is comprised of a Part I (*Activity Scale rating*) and Part II (*Structured Interview*). Part I is a twenty-three statement Likert Scale rating which addresses incidents critical to dropping out of school. The incidents involved can then be analyzed for frequency by categories, with weighted areas of concern. Part II is more structured as it poses a direct, more pensive query of statement/sentence completions, and thought provoking questions that set the stage for the more open narrative interview to follow.

The Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview (Appendix C)

The third instrument which involves the respondents' open-ended narrative response to the Four Research Questions, The Formal Interview, is also referred to as the Face to Face Interview throughout Chapter IV. It, like the second research instrument has an extensive heading or two names that are actually one in the same. The double headings exist due to minor changes that were made to the instruments after the study had begun

and for consistency of referencing information with participants, previous instrument headings were retained as well.

Research Questions

Methodology Selected to Address the Four Research Questions

The intent of the design was to query participants concerning in-school critical incidents that were related to dropping out of school. Respondents were asked the following questions:

1. What are things that happened to you at school that made you want to dropout?
2. What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out?
3. What is the in-school context reported in their critical incidents?
4. What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?

The questions were paraphrased for each participant to ensure that participants had equal or consistent access to the requested information and that the request were clearly understood.

Specific Question Prompts for Participants

1. Tell me about the things that happened to you while in high school (*Focus on event that made you want to give up?*)
2. Let's focus on classroom events. What were the things you think were most discouraging to you? Teachers? Content? Activities?
3. What about school experiences out of the classroom?
4. What happened to help or discourage you? Who tried to intervene? What did other personnel do?

From a compilation of several forms of data, the study entails the analysis of respondent interview questions, written and oral responses and transcriptions of verbatim responses as well. The analyses of transcripts for extracting aforementioned data are grouped and can be differentiated by the following four categories:

1. Interview questions and oral responses
2. Events of Relevant Kinds – (*actions, people, times, places, feelings, etc.*)
3. Critical Incidents as constructed narrative of researcher and interviewee (*transcribes verbatim*)
4. Conclusion derived from cross-matrix analysis

The over-arching question guiding the study is: What do “failed Black male students perceive, as young adults, to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating

them from completing high school?

The above stated questions are the primary focus of the study. In depth attention was given to both data gathering procedures and analysis of the data response to questions.

Sample Selection

Participant Scheduling for the Study

Participants were notified by phone to schedule a time, date and convenient Reconnect Center or other suitable and convenient facility for the Face to Face Interview. Several time options were available as well. Out of 30-40 potential participants, a smaller number of approximately 25 interested participants followed-through with scheduled interviews, meeting the criteria which proved to be most beneficial to the study. The effort was made to also get more in the range of 30-40 group participants to follow-through with the interview by rescheduling more convenient times; however, they worked long hours, helped with caring for their off springs and some were in school and had very little time to spare.

The study conducted at one of six Reconnect Centers in a given urban district when available or at other more convenient locations for participating respondents involved participants from across the district. Flexible scheduling of interviews with respect to convenience on the part of the participant helped to establish a rapport and

understanding of the respondents' environment.

Gathered Survey/Questionnaire responses from across the district were identified and categorized according to groups of incidents as indicated by respondents. Interviews of 25 respondents were scheduled to individually meet for approximately one hour to an hour and a half. This Formal Interview, also known as the Face to Face Interview is referred to throughout Chapters IV and V. Pre-arranged phone conferencing with participants ensured that the identified participants were kept abreast with the line of questioning, selection criteria, and whether additional follow-up sessions or brief telephone conversations would be necessary to clarify gathered information.

A plan of action was established to accomplish some of the task involved with the study's sample collection. Below are some stipulations that pertain to the interview process:

- No more than three interviews per day for an approximated hour to hour and a half session per interview (25 interview respondents).
- Sessions were tape recorded by the researcher.
- Sequential notes were taken using scripting techniques to identify key phrases, ideas, and comments in response to each question and/or probe (researcher notes elaborated immediately after each interview is finished).
- Interview session tapes were transcribed.

- Data analysis was conducted using standard content coding techniques related to both pre-structured categories and using open-ended codes to identify other themes
- Each individual selected respondent was profiled using categories and commonly emerging themes.
- Comparisons of profiles using coding frequencies were produce displays of common and differentiated responses across all cases.
- Several cases were selected for reporting on the perceptions of strikingly unique patterns of incidents.

Interview Sampling Procedures

Interview questions took into account several operating assumptions based on student perceptions concerning incidents critical to their well-being with respect to growth in academic achievement and social and emotional understanding. The questions relate to perceptions of school environment, and classroom accounts of critical incidents as told by African American males that quit school at one point.

A sampling of thirteen of 25 responding interview respondents is transcribed in Chapter IV to compare and contrast the frequencies of responses intra-interview and inter-instrumentation of the study's activities. The sampling either positively or negatively identifies the relevance of verbatim recorded expressions where respondents

addressed some identical responses to similar queries within the Face to Face/Formal Interview and in the other two activities as well.

Posed statements of incidents are structured to query whether or not perceptions are significant enough to determine the relevancy between these incidents and decisions made among African American males that dropped out of high school:

- Perception of critical incidents significantly consistent with specific occurrences during classroom instruction, reported by male dropout students of African American descent
- Perception of critical incidents significantly consistent with attempts or the lack of attempts by school personnel to intervene and/or prevent reported (known) or unreported (unknown) occurrences of the said incidents. Basically the question would be stated, “What precautionary measures were taken, if any, to prevent or discourage such incidents that may have convinced you to remain in school?”
- Perception of critical incidents significantly consistent with the physical and emotional climate of a school that negatively impacts African American male students.
- Perception of critical incidents significantly consistent with the students’ expressed overall view of school activities and the time and effort specifically placed on involving the Black male student that may be at-risk of dropping out of school.

Chapter III (see pp. 7, *Specific Question Prompts for Participants*) discusses the actual questions before paraphrasing them for clarity of understanding and consistency across the interviews for each respondent.

Chart 3.1

A Progression of Responding Participants Selected for the Study

Preliminary Selection of 100 25 Potential Participants	Representative Group of 30-40 P o t e n t i a l (30% - 40% of original 100)	Final Selection of Interviewees 20- P a r t i c i p a n t (62% - 66% of the 30-40 who were contacted)
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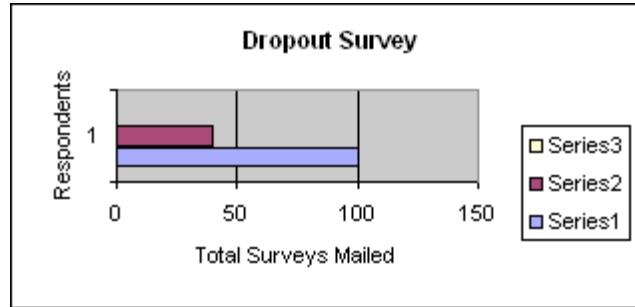
Over 100 mail-outs were forwarded requesting returned Survey/Questionnaires returned the with a self-address stamped Survey/Questionnaire envelope (see Appendix for Attachments) copy	Out of the 100, 30-40 operative telephone numbers verified and could be contacted.	Out of the 30-40, 20-25 interested enough to respond by phone and returned the Survey Questionnaire or completed a second during the Face to Face Interview
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Criteria used to initially identify individuals for the study were the same for all three categories with the exception of the final 25 participants who appeared to take an interest in the study and exercised follow-through in keeping their scheduled interview appointment.

Chart 3.2

Surveys/Questionnaire Mailed to African American Males Meeting Criteria

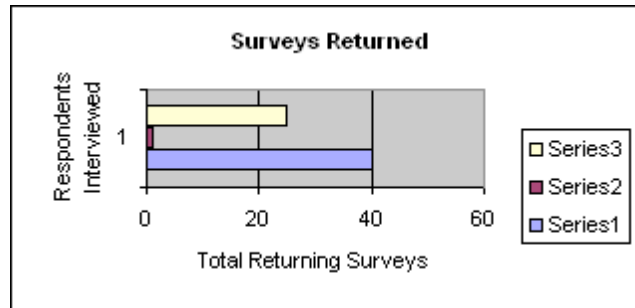
* 100 Survey/Questionnaire forms were mailed in stamped self addressed envelopes to African American males age 18 or older identified as high school dropouts.



LEGEND

Series 1	100	Total Surveys Mailed
Series 2	40	Respondents Returning Survey

Respondent Survey Results



LEGEND

Series 1	40	Respondents returning survey
Series 2	2	Incomplete interviews
Series 3	25	Selected for interviews

Data Collection Procedures and Analyses

Procedures for the Distribution and Collection of Initial Survey/ Questionnaire

Elicited postal and telephone request for 100 potential volunteer participants were delivered to Black young adult males identified as having dropped out of a school by the school district. The quantity of 100 allows for three-fourths of the responses to be discarded due to other influences and reasons for leaving school other than perceived incidents critical and relevant to discouraging and/or alienating them from completing high school.

The initial survey of perceptions as to why and what may have been critical incidents that influenced the decision to dropout of high school was given to respondents. Respondents were asked to initially complete the Survey/Questionnaire and select dates and times to meet/interview to discuss the perceptions of critical incidents in detail. Self addressed envelopes were included in the mail-out to encourage accurate and prompt return of the distributed Survey/Questionnaires and extensive amounts of verbal data from interview sessions were also recorded.

The initial *Survey/Questionnaire* is designed to identify respondents that focus more on school life as they recall some happenings that take precedent over other weighted categories of choice. A detailed analysis of answers to *In-School Related Issues and/or Factors, Out-of-School Related Issues and/or Factors and Assessment of Activity Involvement* serve to eliminate those participants over-taxed with out-of-school dilemmas as opposed to a respondents' pensive preoccupation with school occurrences that could be viewed as critical incidents.

Before the mail-out, requests were made to data services to provide the name, last known address and phone numbers, last high school attended and dropout status of African American males between the ages of 18 and 22 (*see Criteria, Chapter III*). Also included were gender and ethnicity. African American males reported as dropouts for the school years 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 numbered 782. There was no response from over half the mail-outs. Phone calls also accompanied the letters; however, only a third of the phone numbers were operative. Another list of 84 African American males that had graduated from high school between the school years of 2001-2003 was also generated. This list consisted of young men who graduated from high school but, who at some point during their schooling had also dropped out of high school before completing school.

After the mail-out and interviews had begun, the difficulty of getting enough respondents to volunteer their time precipitated a third list of names to be generated.

This list of 275 students was generated from one of several Reconnection Centers located within a high school. The list of names had to be sorted by gender and ethnicity. Phone numbers and addresses were provided for each name listed. Each of the three lists posed the same difficulties for the most part, inoperative addresses and phone numbers and some disinterested parties as well.

Analysis of Initial Survey/Questionnaire Responses

Respondents to the survey were selected to participate in the Follow-up Interview based on the Survey/Questionnaire targeted response, whether mail-out recipients respond by phone, and whether phone contact can be made by the researcher should the mail-out recipient choose not to initiate the call acknowledging the mailed request for the return of the completed Survey/Questionnaire and to schedule an interview. Other considerations include Personal Data (Black male - *listed according to school data and self-declaration as a dropout at some point during senior high school, and Age - born between the years of 1983 and 1986*) and no involvement with drugs and/or criminal activities.

The Survey/Questionnaire is designed to identify respondents that focus more on school life as they recall some happenings that take precedent over other weighted categories of choice. A detailed analysis of answers to *In-School Related Issues and/or Factors, Out-of-School Related Issues and/or Factors and Assessment of Activity Involvement* serve to eliminate those participants over-taxed with out-of-school dilemmas as opposed to a respondents' pervasive preoccupation with school occurrences that could be

viewed as critical incidents.

Participants were notified by phone to schedule a time, date and convenient Reconnect Center for a follow-up interview. Several time options were available as well. Out of 30-40 a smaller number of approximately 25 interested would be interviewees who would follow-through with a scheduled interview and meet the criteria would be most beneficial to the study. If more out of the 30-40 group choose to follow-through with the interview they were also be accepted.

Activity Scale/Structured Interview Procedures

Part I & Part II of the Activity Scale rating and completion questions were administered just before the Face to Face Interview. The instrument allows for respondents to respond on paper and to speak openly with directed queries of them to expound further for clarification regarding a response. It is an informal way of getting the respondent to talk freely in preparation for the Formal/Face to Face Interview which addresses the Research Questions.

Interview Procedures

Each interview question was allocated 3 minutes or less as needed. Probes to be used (*see Specific Question Prompts for Participants, Chapter III, and pp.7*). are shown in Appendix B. Refocusing if needed was done by directing attention to the number item and choice of high, low or midpoint on the activity scale. Another refocusing tool was to have participants expound on their written/circled responses. More details where needed to clarify the marked/given responses were also requested by the interviewer.

Interviewees were oriented to procedures, and foci of questions. Interviewer review assurances of anonymity, tape recording use were explained, the opening question focused on when and what grade the participant dropped out of school and his present age.

Scheduled participant interviews of 25 each met once for approximately an hour and a half. Pre-arranged interview sessions ensured that the identified participants kept abreast with the line of questioning, selection criteria, as to whether a follow-up session or brief telephone conversations will be necessary to clarify gathered information.

- Two to three interviews per day for an approximated hour and a half meeting per interview respondent (25 interviewees).
- Sessions were tape recorded by the researcher.
- Sequential notes were taken using scripting techniques to identify key phrases, ideas, and comments in response to each question and/or probe (researcher notes elaborated immediately after each interview is finished).

- Interview session tapes will be transcribed.

Upon making contact with the 20 to 25 final selected respondents, an interview with each participant was scheduled.

Procedures for Interviewing

Collected survey responses and recorded verbal descriptions that portray events perceived as critical incidents leading to student alienation and/or discouraging situations are assessed and categorized. Six analysis procedures are anticipated in processing interview data as the primary focus of the study:

1. Recordings of one hour and a half focused interview responses are transcribed.
2. Transcriptions of each interview are systematically reviewed and coded for relevance to content directly related to each of the four research questions guiding the study.
3. Additional reviews focus on identifying each reported event that in context appears to clearly be a critical incident as perceived, verbalized, and described in some detail.
4. Identify critical, incidents (see 3 above) verify and elaborate upon using survey questionnaire responses of interviewee respondents cumulative
5. data, and (*if necessary*) follow-up telephone interviews seeking further details or clarification from interviewees.
6. Analyses Across Three Sources of Data (*the researcher computed the types of*

different incidents; and frequency of incidents, for example: events, in school contexts, persons; personnel intervention; location of the school incidents; perception of school climate; and the effect of the incident/s).

- Data analysis was conducted using standard content coding techniques related to both pre-structured categories and using open-ended codes to identify other themes
- Each individual was classified using categories and commonly emerging themes.
- Comparisons of profiles using coding frequencies will produce displays of common and differentiated responses across all the study's activity
- Several cases were selected for reporting on the perceptions of strikingly unique patterns of incidents.

End products from this analysis process as reported in Chapter IV employs the use of a single ethnicity and gender followed year by year in senior high school to form a collection of data related to perceptions of critical incidents that might vary year after year due to inconsistencies that occur each year of school. For example: Critical incidents may not have occurred until senior or junior year when multiple events are encountered; everything may have been fine until 10th grade TAKS (*Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills*) testing hit one who has testing phobia; and the classic case where everything goes wrong in September-October of the Freshman year.

Interview Data Collection

The collection of data as they relate to student perceptions of critical incidents while in senior high school is described as follows:

1. Type of incidents
2. frequency of incidents (*events; in school contexts; persons; ...etc.*)
3. position/title of person/s involved in the incident
4. exact location of the incidents within the school
5. perception of physical and emotional environment
6. causalities posed upon potentially at- risk dropout/s (*effect of the incident/s*)

Organization of Findings/Data Coding

1. Transcribing and Content Coding
 - Audio taped
 - Transcribed
 - Codified data
 - Categorized
2. Profiling by Types of Incidents (*both inductive and deductive typologies*)

Critical incidents will focus on four questions:

- a) What are the varieties of critical incidents that occurred in school that bearsome relevance to dropping out?
- b) What is the in-school contexts reported in their critical incidents?
(i.e. *Teacher alienation/discouragement, other school personnel*)

- c) What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?

Additional Survey Respondents

There were some instances where potential respondents had agreed to meet several times yet, they did not. This resulted in the researcher taking advantage of cold-calling techniques used to conduct on site querying, surveying and interviewing with individuals that may have met the established criteria of a volunteer respondent. This included asking friends and acquaintances about individuals and scheduling time into recreation centers, libraries, community centers and alternative schools (i.e., I Can Academy).

Limitations of the Methodology

Due to the specificities of this study, two types of investigative tools were necessary, a preliminary survey (*informational questionnaire*) and the interviews.

Data collection of student dropouts did not utilize participants by age, gender, ethnicity, and initial schools within a given district, free and reduced lunch provisions, social and economic background, teacher/s and educational background of the parent. Hence, the full range of influencing factors cannot be deduced, nor can we be sure that perceptions, ex post facto, are accurate or really critical.

This qualitative study is more likely to end with tentative answers about what was observed from the survey and interviews. These findings may form the basis of future studies designed to make a difference in the number of potential dropouts by eliminating causalities associated with people of color, which are particularly problematic among Black males.

Summary

Data sources gathered from the study's instruments (*Survey/Questionnaire; Activity Scale/Structured Interview; and The Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview*) provide vital information for analysis of findings. The methodological design of data-captured responses gives voice to respondent perceptions of critical incidents that discouraged respondents from staying in high school.

The initial Survey/Questionnaire through personal data inquiry helped to determine whether potential participants met stipulated criteria for the study. Other completed sections of the Survey/Questionnaire provided gathered data that a with categorical references to in-school incidents assign categorical concerns of incidents to each

Black young adult respondents report their perceptions of critical incidents that

happened in high school. Three major data sources were devised to obtain respondent perceptions related to the study's findings.

Based on analyses of this study, the data provide enough support to suggest that further studies would be helpful to educator stakeholders in identifying and eliminating causations for critical incidents that discourage students from attending school.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter IV examines and reports on perceptions of volunteer-participants derived from using methods and procedures described in Chapter III. The results of analyses of data examined the perceptions of critical incidents experienced by young adult Black males while in high school. Data were derived from three sources: Survey/Questionnaire, Pre-Interview Activity Scale Instrument and narrative dialogue recordings from face-to-face interviews (Formal Interview) with each participant-volunteer.

Overview

This chapter is organized to report findings derived from each of the three (Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale, and the actual interview transcripts of the research questions) data sources initially, then each research question will be discussed synthesizing findings derived for one or more sources. Finally, a special analysis using cross matrix analysis will bring focused crystallization to findings to be presented. The section below on *Survey Respondents* serves to establish coding related to methods of reported findings.

Once the identifying data were completed, other sections of the initial Survey/Questionnaire appeared to have been answered selectively. Approximately 32 responses on a nine statement check-list for In-School Related Issues and/or Factors indicate that more than one statement was marked by several individuals. It also indicates that some chose not to respond to this section and/or phase of the Survey/Questionnaire as well.

From the study's findings, respondents required more time to ponder the statements posed by the *Activity Scale* rating of critical incidents perceived. While all 25 participants entered responses for this activity, several could not decide between the categories of *always*, *nearly always*, *rarely* or *never*, so they entered the response of *sometimes*.

The *Activity Scale* rating and the *Structured Interview* or one in the same with a Part I and Part II. After completion of the nine check-list statements in the initial Survey/Questionnaire and the *Activity Scale/Structured Interview* of the study, and before the *Formal Interview*, respondents were also queried about their responses to the previous two activities (*Survey/Question*, *Activity Scale/Structured Interview* (Part I Part II)). This line of querying helped to get the respondent comfortable enough to expound upon his recalled perceptions of critical incidents in school and it helped to clarify any previous responses not understood by the researcher. Some of the same responses and/or portions of those responses were also shared in the *Formal Interview*. However,

some concerns and/or issues were never mentioned again.

The *Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview* captures the recorded and transcribed verbatim of respondent perceptions of critical incidents that happened while in high school. Looking at findings in a cross-analysis of three major activities helps the researcher to compare and contrast responses of respondents in this study.

Initial Survey/Questionnaire Findings

Survey Respondents

Stage 1 – Respondents

A preliminary survey was mailed to 100 “identified drop outs. All of these potential respondents were 18 years of age or older, males of African American descent. Exhibit 4-1 shows the return rate on the 100 mail-outs of Survey /Questionnaires. After the follow-up phone calls, it was realized that although the mailed *Survey/Questionnaires* were received at the designated address, potential respondents chose not to respond, were not given the mail-out whether they lived at the address or whether they moved away from their family resident, it was of little interest to the dropout and/or the mail-out was viewed in a suspicious manner.

Stage 2 - Respondents

Forty returned questionnaires of potential respondents were analyzed and from that forty more than half, (25 volunteer respondents) were selected to complete the study. Some who thought at first that they had time to commit to the scheduled activities of the study found that they had no time to spare due to working several jobs, caring for their child/children or a combination of work, school, child care and needed athletic involvement.

Stage 3 – Respondents

Twenty-five respondents were interested in assisting with the study and adjusted their schedule several times to volunteer time and effort to completing the activities by way of the mail-out, telephone, email and the face to face interview.

Three instruments were used to obtain informational data essential to the study of respondents:

- Survey/Questionnaire Assessment
- Activity Scale Rating/Structured Interview
- Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview

All three instruments were used to survey participants, (*Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale/Structured Interview & The Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview*) record, assess and categorize the findings related to specific events perceived as leading to student alienation and/or discouraging situations for student drop outs.

The Initial Survey/Questionnaire

The initial *Survey/Questionnaire* was designed to identify respondents that focused more on school life as they recall some happenings that took precedent over other weighted categories of choice. Respondents response to these questions help to determine whether or not they were potential candidates for the study.

Survey/Questionnaire Assessment (Appendix A) The Survey/Questionnaire also gathered information about the former student's reflexive perceptions of his experiences in school that may have influenced him to quit school.

The Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview (Appendix C)

The third instrument which involves the respondents' open-ended narrative response to the Four Research Questions, The Formal Interview, is also referred to as the Face to Face Interview throughout Chapter IV.

Chart 4.1

Survey/Questionnaire Respondents and Interviewee Participants

Steps	Number of Respondents	Criteria
Step 1 Identified Drop-outs	100	Record indicate dropping out, Black males, age 18 to 22
Step 2 Survey Respondents	40	Returned Initial Survey instrument and Pre-Interview Activity Scale largely completed, willing to participate but difficulty with scheduling
Step 3 Interviewee Participants	25	Returned release form, approved appointment, showed up and participated.
Individual Interviewees	25	Consented to being taped, and agreed to provide any additional information that may be needed at a later date.

Perceptions of Incidents Reported to the Initial Survey/Questionnaire

Frequency of Responses By Incidents

Nine categories of critical incidents from the Initial Survey/Questionnaire were identified even though respondents participated in very limited ways. However, all nine categories listed above involved some type of critical incident/s that further influenced respondent's to drop out of high school at one time or another.

In this analysis of survey responses, all 25 participants interviewed are aggregated and displayed in Chart 4.3. In addition, the responses tend to reflect more of what respondents expressed regarding the nine categories of initial survey incidents. While no one incident was consistently reverberated in this recorded data, some item concerns appeared to reflect similar responses in the structured activity scale and narrative interview as well.

The related issues most frequently identified by the various respondents on the Initial Survey/Questionnaire include: Responses to poor instruction (16%), lack of teacher concern (16%), personality conflicts (16%), and poor grades (16%). Each of these issues has an array of expressions coming from respondents. Most comments were negative in tone yet again, some were not. Responses to the most frequently related issues came from only a small number of the 25 participants that might have been

represented. Responses to critical incidents were represented by any one participant. Of the nine item issues, four responses pertain to the classroom studies and instruction (*class size, level and depth of studies, appropriate instruction and instructional pacing*). Two items focused upon factors of an affective nature (*teacher concern and personality conflicts*) and three were rules and guideline oriented (*attendance, grades, and expulsion/suspension*).

The In-School Related Issues and/or Factors from the initial *Survey/Questionnaire* asked respondents to check all the reasons that possibly prevented them from remaining in high school. Embedded in some of these issues and/or factors were critical happenings/incidents that were consistent among the different respondents and are discussed below.

Various Types of Incidents

Profiling By Types of Incidents

Varieties and types of critical incidents reported while in high school ranged from subtle actions/reactions in and/or out of the classroom to hasty attitudinal dispositions in and/or out of the classroom by student participants. These actions/reactions appeared to have been responses to what respondents perceived to have been incidents that caused much discontent in the school and particularly in the classroom setting. Other identifying factors involved the total climate or tone set by environmental factors within the high

school attended by participants before dropping out. The study recorded participant expressions of such critical incidents involving: teacher classroom management and/or ineffective instructional activities, teacher/counselor-to-student interaction; teacher/counselor concern or lack of concern for the individual student; lack of motivation; loss of interest in school due to academic failure and/or inability to keep up; and personality conflicts. All of which attributed to a waning school attendance, which was the number one factor of in-school issues that reclassified participants as truant, eventually resulting in far too many dropout leavers as well.

Although there are out-of- school issues and circumstances that also exist, there are far more in-school issues equally as serious that have not been addressed by campus school authorities to any enforceable extent. These in-school issues, if corrected could substantially reduce school dropouts and more than likely could have prevented the respondents of this study from dropping out of high school.

Out-of School Issues and/or Factors did play a role with some respondents. Such founded factors resulted in poor attendance that could be attributed to their environment and influences as well. Respondent comments did not focus on the home, and for most, home was not implicated. Participants reluctantly admitted that they had tried some form of a drug while others had been more heavily involved in drug usage and/or selling drugs to make money.

Any criminal activity at this level surely affects and could overshadow a study that relies on accurate participant information unless the researcher heavily scrutinizes the present level of participants' desire for an opportunity to do things over with respect to schooling. Having experienced first-hand, the disadvantages of not obtaining a high school diploma, all volunteer participants of this study know the value of and have a sincere desire to earn a high school diploma or GED/General Educational Development certification. Some participants speak of beyond the level of graduating from high school or the GED attainment (*post-secondary training and/or schooling*) that focuses on securing some type of job credentialing/specialization to support themselves and family presently and in the future.

Analysis by Categories of Responses

Out of nine categories for incidents listed as series of events in the initial Survey/Questionnaire given to respondents, the most frequently selected, *poor attendance* is actually not an incident but, a reactionary pattern to other pre-existing conditions and circumstantial incidents. Respective of in-school issues, such factors as *school attendance* is an underlying factor of something more which results in student truancy and eventual dropout.

Poor attendance was a contributor checked by 8 out of 40 participants (20%) dropping out of high school. Further perusal of the response indicated that four out of 32

responses marked the issue category response for *poor grades* (16%). Other categories selected included *not being able to keep up with the studies* (16%), *poor instruction* (16%), and *lack of teacher concern* (16%) *class size* (4%), *lack of challenge* (4%), *suspension behavior* (9%) and *personality conflicts* (16%).

Respondents checked anywhere from zero to several of the issues listed on the questionnaire. These varied responses more fully suggest either lack of understanding or suggest that they tend to disassociate their misfortune in very singular form. The study questionnaire did not, of course, probe for further detail. However, after the Survey/Questionnaire had been completed and before the Formal Interview the researcher queried respondents concerning their response or non-response for more details to better understand respondents point-of-view and for the purpose of preparing respondents to openly dialogue about their perceptions of in-school incidents.

The relative emphasis on *poor grades* and *poor attendance* for a total of 12 out of 32 responses (37%) suggests strong self-responsibility. However, *class size* (4%), *lack of challenge* (4%), *poor instruction* (16%), and *lack of teacher concern* (16%) involved 10 responses out of 32 showing somewhat comparable perceptions of *school responsibility*.

The strongest findings suggested by the analysis of responses are that these are neither extreme nor considered to be the norm.

Chart 4.2

Initial Survey/Questionnaire: Participant Responses

Incidents (Issues)	Number Identified	Percent Participation
#1 – Suspension behavior	2	8%
#2 – Poor grades	4	16%
#3 – Poor attendance	8	32%
#4 – Intimidating class size	1	4%
#5 – Not being able to keep up	4	16%
#6 – Lack of challenging studies	1	4%
#7 – Poor instruction	4	16%
#8 – Lack of teacher concern	4	16%
#9 – Personality conflicts	$\frac{4}{32}$	16%

Frequencies show a total of 32 responses where some respondents marked more than one while other respondents chose not to answer the specific section and/or entry number.

Not all respondents chose to answer this section while some marked several issues as incidents that may have contributed to their leaving school.

Summary of Findings for Initial Survey/Questionnaire

The Survey/Questionnaire (*see* Chart 4.2) indicated that among nine specific incidents presented for responses to indicate or identify as associated with dropping out, the incidents most frequently identified reflects the following concerns:

- Lack of teacher concern
- Poor instruction
- Poor grades
- Not being able to keep up; and
- Personal conflicts

All areas listed above were deemed important enough for respondents to check as an indication of concern on the initial survey that also may have caused negative rationalizations supportive of dropping out of school for some of the Black male participants. Each area was also reiterated upon by respondents during the face to face interviews with a significant number of respondents who may not have chosen to respond in writing about the nine categories listed in the initial survey but expressed the same and/or similar concerns during the individual interview.

Activity Scale Instrument Response Findings

Activity Scale of Critical Incidents as Reported by Respondents rated perceived expressions on Likert scales ranging from *always; nearly always; sometimes; rarely; to never*. This instrument focused on the perception of critical incidents in high school related to *classroom instruction, adult intervention, and the physical and emotional environment*.

Participants responded to twenty-three separate statements suggesting the kinds of incidents, events, and/or conditions that may have possibly related to dropping out. Participants responded to each statement rating the extent of occurrence of each kind of event in their experiences in high school.

Rated respondent perceptions of critical incidents from the Survey/Questionnaire and Activity Scale were later to be compared and contrasted with interview responses which were prompted by the Activity Scale and Initial Survey/Questionnaire as well. Interview verbatim responses came as a result of respondent acclamations to Research Questions that focused more on hearing first-hand what each respondent had to say about their perception of critical incidents that happened in school.

Participants completed the “Perception of Critical Incidents Activity-Scale,” before engaging in the Face to Face or Formal Interview.

Chart 4.3

Perception of Critical Incidents as Ratings on the Activity Scale

Critical Incident Ratings of Perceived Experiences

Abbreviated Statement by Number	Always	Nearly Always	Sum of Positive Rating	Sometime	Rarely	Never	Sum of Positive Rating	Total%
1. Felt part of class	25%	16%	41%	42%	16%	0%	16%	99%
2. Expected to do challenging work	16%	8%	24%	67%	8%	0%	8%	99%
3. Time in school dull/monotonous	8%	50%	58%	33%	8%	0%	8%	99%
4. Optimistic could perform work	25%	25%	50%	33%	16%	0%	16%	99%
5. Adequate/appropriate instruction given	8%	8%	16%	50%	25%	0%	25%	91%
6. Encouraged by level/delivery of instruction	0%	25%	25%	40%	25%	8%	33%	98%
7. Encouraged to learn through interest/learning styles	16%	25%	41%	33%	8%	16%	24%	98%
8. Teacher facilitated learning by diversity	8%	0%	8%	58%	8%	25%	33%	99%
9. Troubling incidents in senior high school	33%	8%	41%	25%	16%	16%	32%	98%
10. Troubling incidents in senior high school	25%	8%	33%	33%	16%	0%	16%	82%
11. Classroom incidents caused self doubt	8%	42%	50%	33%	8%	8%	16%	99%
12. Classroom incidents affected my focus on studies	8%	16%	24%	58%	0%	16%	16%	98%
13. Felt respected both socially/emotionally	33%	25%	58%	33%	8%	0%	8%	99%
14. Rules of fairness established for all students	25%	16%	41%	16%	33%	8%	41%	98%
15. School personnel modeled the "Golden Rule"	8%	8%	16%	75%	8%	0%	8%	99%
16. Students encouraged to model the "Golden Rule"	25%	16%	41%	33%	25%	0%	25%	99%
17. School personnel who made it unpleasant for me	18%	9%	27%	36%	9%	27%	36%	99%
18. School/staff did some hurtful things	0%	9%	9%	18%	18%	54%	72%	99%
19. Felt no school personnel genuinely interested in me	27%	18%	45%	36%	0%	18%	18%	99%
20. Climate of student safety promoted on campus	9%	9%	18%	36%	27%	18%	45%	99%
21. School activities/organizations represented ethnicity	9%	27%	36%	18%	36%	9%	45%	99%
22. Cultural diversity promoted throughout school	0%	18%	18%	54%	18%	9%	27%	99%
23. Parent/guardians/community members were welcome.	27%	18%	45%	36%	9%	9%	18%	99%

Twenty-Three Statements of Activity Scale Findings

Participant responses to the Twenty-Three Statement Activity Scale are shown in Table 4-3, (also see Appendix C, Part I of the Structured Interview “Perception of Critical Incidents Activity Scale”) report the percentage of ratings that are positive, ranging from *Nearly Always* to *Always* in substantial frequencies; i.e., Statement #13 shown below illustrates responses to a positive statement of perception that are strongly rated. Combining the *Always* and *Nearly Always* responses to Felt respected both socially and emotionally represents over half of the respondents (58%). When *Sometimes* ratings are included, nearly all respondent report positively about this statement with relatively rare negative responses.

Also strongly ranging from *Rarely* to *Never* is #18 – School staff did some hurtful things, with 72% combined as *Rarely* plus *Never*.

By contrast, #1 – Felt part of class compared to # 18 – School staff did some hurtful things and #13 – Felt respected both socially & emotionally is not clearly positive but somewhat equivocal. It is also somewhat negative in tone with 5% cautious and less than half, only 41% truly positive.

Responses to instruction, #5 – Adequate/appropriate instruction given and #6 – Encouraged by level/delivery of instruction also indicate a negative response with 25% and 33% each respectively combined by *Rarely* and *Never* in the area of instruction which is also consistent with later findings from the interview research questions as well. Here again the *Sometimes* rating when viewed provides clarity to distribution of percentages and responses that are also strongly negative when *Always* and *Nearly Always* ratings for #5 and #6 were only 16% and 25% respectively.

Responses to diversity both in the classroom and school wide environment indicated negative ratings according to # 8 – Teacher facilitated learning by diversity at 33% with only 8% positive, leaving *Sometimes* at 58%; and #22 – Cultural diversity promoted throughout school at 27% with only 18% positive, leaving *Sometimes* at 54% for over half the respondents.

The only bimodal response was #14 – Rules of fairness was established for all students with 40% of response representing both positive and negative perceptions. The most frequent response was a highly negative. After questioning the respondents further, several indicated that they felt that particular attention to some rules of fairness in the school was established to prevent fighting and dissention among students and the various student groups and ethnicities.

The twenty-three statement Activity Scale findings not only validates the fact that high school dropouts, who just happen to be Black for the purposes of this study, have

perceptions of critical incidents that directly relate to schools and school personnel; yet, they are not being heard.

Percentages of Activity Scale Incidents

Most clearly perceived as “always” found in their school experiences are statements [#3, #4, #11, and #13] that vary from 50 to 58%. Denoted responses to feelings of dullness/monotony when attending school, optimism that they could perform the work, classroom incidents that caused self doubt and being respected ranged from positive to negative. Positive in the sense that fifty percent of respondents felt that they could perform the tasks and that they were respected. Negative in the sense that those respondents felt their time in school was dull/monotonous (boring).

Conversely, combining the responses of “rarely” and “never,” only one of the 23 statements is strongly negatively rated by more than 50% of the participants. For Statement #18, “*school staff member/s said or did some things that were very hurtful,*” 72% of the respondents reported that these things were not commonly experienced. Yet, Statement #8, “*teacher took advantage of opportunities to facilitate learning through the various/diverse cultures and ethnic groups to include yours,*” was rated 33% (“rarely” and “never”), indicating absence of seen support from the teaching staff. There were also 3 other statements, #20, #21, and #14 that were relatively strong negative responses as well with 41% to 45% of all respondents reporting absence of “fairness and...equality,” “concern” for student safety, and school activities.

Mid-level responses rated “sometimes” were strongly represented by statements [#8, #12, #15, and #22 with 54% to 75%] of respondents rating these events as neither highly positive nor highly negative.

Another way of analyzing these survey ratings of perceived events is to consider the focus of the most positively and most negatively rated statements. For instance statement #4 rated highly by 50% of participants focuses on students being optimistic that they could do the work.

While statement #9 also has only a general focus with no person or agent specified, those that do specify a focus (i.e. *statement #15 – school personnel; statement #8 – the teacher*), were not those statements strongly rated as either positive or negative. References to “staff” specifically are found in statements [#15, #8, #18, #17, #19, & #20] and these are those that tend to be rated 35% negative and 20% positive.

Student to student incidents were not directly addressed in the activity scale statements; however, some statements such as #1, #16, #20, imply that students were just as involved as school personnel, especially the campus instructional staff (*teachers, librarians, counselors and principals*) that established rules and practices to be modeled for total climate or environment of the total school as well.

Most statements focused on the classroom, teacher, instruction, school personnel and/or a combination of the four pinpointed areas. Almost none directly addressed the school perse. Nevertheless, statements #9, #10 (These two statements are identical), #17, #20, #21, #22, & #23 queried participants concerning their schools from a more general/school-wide perspective. For example #23 “school activities/organizations represented ethnicity,” inquired about the campus-wide practice. Another example is #20 “climate of student safety promoted on campus,” for which participants were to have completed the statement by indicating one of the following prompts: *always, nearly always, rarely, or never*.

Activity Scale response indicated that over 50% of respondents (*Always and Nearly Always*) felt:

- Time in school was dull/monotonous
- Optimistic that they could perform the work
- Classroom incidents caused much self doubt
- Felt respected both socially and emotionally

Although the combined response from categories *Rarely* and *Never* was less than half, a substantial number of respondents indicated the following:

- Rules of fairness established for all students
- School/staff did some hurtful things

- Climate of student safety promoted on campus
- School activities/organizations represented the campus demography

The last section of the Structured Interview consist of responses to general information as it relates to the high school setting and perceived experiences of volunteer interviewees. Thought provoking statements for completion were initiated to assist respondents with the intended focus of reflecting upon high school incidents related to the study. *See Appendix C – Graphs & Charts Interpretive Findings: for further details.*

Respondents' Perceptions of Critical Incidents as Reported After the Activity Scale Ratings and Before the Face to Face Interview

The twenty-three critical incidents Activity Scale reported the perceptions of respondent concerns about what was happening in their schools on a rating scale from *Always* to *Never*. Here these same critical incident descriptors are represented by verbatim responses that were explained to the researcher querying for details from answers after completion of the Activity Scale/Structured Interview and before the Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview. The Formal Interview however, was more directed or driven by the Research Questions that may not have completely supplied the needed answers about the respondents' responses for the previous activities (*Survey/Questionnaire and Activity Scale/Structured Interview Part I & Part II*).

Also to support the findings of the Activity Scale ratings, are comments from the individual interview sampling of 13 respondents that were used to clearly and frequently show the relevance either positively and/or negatively by verbatim recorded expressions where the respondents addressed some identical answers with similar queries in the Face to Face/Formal Interviews (see below, the Activity Scale, eight *always/nearly always*; and three *rarely to never*). Samplings of respondent responses are shown below.

Always and Nearly Always Category

Statement # 1 – You were made to feel a part of the class during classroom instruction.

“It was always in every class. I felt a part of the class during classroom instruction.”

Statement # 4 – You were optimistic that you could do the work.

“Yes. Sometimes, it was some work that I couldn’t do.....”

Statement #s 9 & 10 (one in the same) – I recall certain classroom incidents that troubled me during senior high school.

“Instructions made me feel a little bit comfortable. You know, cause some teachers, they don’t even go over instructions. You know, they just, you know, you say go to class, they don’t even go over their instructions you know. They don’t tell you nothing, they don’t abide by the rules...”

Statement #13 – You were made to feel as if you were respected both socially and emotionally.

“Yes, because I had played basketball and like it seemed like it was a little school and I was one of the best basketball players there and everybody was real friendly with me. Even most teachers were real friendly with me.”

Statement #14 – Rules of fairness and equality were established for all students to adhere to.

“Yeah they were there for everyone to do, but they didn’t apply for everyone. You know, with the favoritism, like athletes, they could do sometimes whatever they wanted to do. They didn’t always have to do their work.....”

Statement #16 – Students were encouraged to model/practice the “golden Rule” (*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*).

“We had uh like before every third period, everyone had a bell ringer about uh “do unto others as you would have them do unto you. So that was like, treat the person the way you want to be treated.”

Statement #19 – I had a gut feeling that no school staff member was genuinely interested in my well being.

“None of my teachers really came to me and tried to talk to me about staying in school or asking if they could help out with anything.”

Statement #23 – All parents/guardians, the business sector and community were made to feel welcome and were involved in establishing a global atmosphere.

“Rarely. Not really. Nah. I mean, the only time they would ever ask for you know like parent participation or something would be like teacher-parent-student night and something like that but I mean you know it’s like come in and chaperone for maybe uh field trips or and uh maybe you know maybe some parents with expertise to come in and talk to the students or something like that you know.”

Rarely to Never Category

Statement #18 – School staff member/s said or did some things that were very hurtful.

Sometimes the counselors and some of the teachers...you ask them (counselors) to take you out the class then they won't do it, then they'll get mad at you if you like keep coming down there bugging them about it. And then like they'll mess your schedule up. They'll give you more than one schedule....I had my first semester's schedule and my second semester's schedule and I was listed on all them teachers' rolls.

Statement #20 - A climate for student safety and concern was promoted by campus personnel.

"Yeah. Yeah, uh, yeah well you know, cause, well, I guess at school you know would be like a lot of fighting you know I guess you know and a lot of disrespect you know and in things like this.... They would just disrespect somebody and then... the person who got disrespected then they would retaliate and the person who got retaliated on would complain andso you know they (school personnel) would always try... (to promote) treat someone with the respect as you would want them to treat you... if everybody followed that, it wouldn't be a lot of fighting and discrepancy and things of that nature."

Statement #21 – School activities, organizations and governances were democratically and diversely represented according to the demography (*the ethnic and gender make up of the student body*) of the campus i.e. peer mediation teams, student council, National Honor Society, student class officers, drill team, cheerleaders, band, orchestra, choir, and other such organization.

...We had like the drill team and the cheerleaders were like Hispanic and African American mainly. The school make-up was that of...Whites.

Face to Face with the Interview Respondents

Different interview sessions were conducted in public facilities arranged on the basis of date, time and location for each individual participant's convenience (*public branch libraries, public recreation conference/meeting rooms, public civic center conference/meeting rooms and in the meeting/conference rooms of some available schools*) rather than the Reconnect Centers as originally planned.

Although all participants of this study attended district X's schools initially, they either reenrolled in a district school, private or city charter school; obtained a GED or online high school diploma; or remained to date, a school leaver. All participants of this study are and/or have been documented as high school dropouts or school leavers at some point during their high school years; and although they may have reenrolled in the same or different district, and/or GED program elsewhere, they originally dropped out while in a high school with the District of X.

Individual Interview Findings

It was discovered that the Reconnect Centers under the department of Alternative Programs work hand in hand to identify and place at-risk-students to methodically prevent students from potentially becoming statistical dropouts. According to need, the student and/or parent/guardian with school documentation can also request to be placed in the Reconnect Alternative Program.

The third major source of data for analysis was the *Face-to-Face Interview* (Formal Interview). The data presented here reflects the verbatim comments of 13 sample respondents. Interviews for individual participants numbered 25. However, focus groups were not a part of this study.

Overall, 25 face-to-face sessions were arranged lasting from 20 minutes to a maximum of an hour. All interviews were recorded to provide raw data for the findings presented in this section.

Recorded interview verbatim data was analyzed in a variety of ways:

1. Using the recordings of the *Face to Face Interview*, respondents' responses to the Research Questions selectively identified, coded, transcribed and illustrated verbatim statements for additional support of the study's findings.
2. Respondent verbatim from the *Face to Face Interview* was systematically reviewed numerous times for accuracy to code and transcribe, and to illustrate findings related to each of the four research questions. Some verbatim expressions were also taken from the recorded sessions to emphasize and/or validate earlier respondent information addressed in the twenty-three statement *Activity Scale/Structured Interview (Part I & Part II)* and the nine-statement initial *Survey/Questionnaire*. Interview data was used to compare and contrast

respondents' earlier expressions of perceptions and their responses to the same and/or similar/related queries.

3. The record *Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview* reiterated similar respondents' views that were also stated on the *Survey/Questionnaire* and *Activity Scale (Structured Interview)*. Although respondents were briefed about the entire study and were aware of the forthcoming interview questions that focused on four *Research Questions*, their responses to different and varied
4. statements in the aforementioned activities often matched comments made during the *Formal Interview*. Related responses written and discussed from the initial nine-statement *Survey/Questionnaire* and the *Activity Scale/Structure Interview Part I & Part II* ratings rendered information that helped to:
 - Determine whether respondents actually met the initial criteria for the study and/or would consent to volunteering to participant in the study
(*Out of 40 prospective participants that responded, only 25 participants followed up on the request, consent and the necessary interview to complete the study*).
 - Prompt respondents to detailing and expounding upon their perception of incidents via a dialogue warm-up session for the purpose of telling their story.

- Provide the researcher with a better understanding with which to report perceptions and/or point of view of the respondents/s.’
5. Respondent verbatim data was transcribed to accurately reflect the perceptions of several participants during the Face to Face Interview. This procedure also helped to accurately align and clarify respondent input for the study.

The Formal Interview: Findings Related to Research Question Samples

Each research question can be illustrated and informed by verbatim expressions of interview respondents. This section systematically, but selectively aggregates expressions of participants that directly relate to each question.

For purposes of anonymity all persons and places in this large urban district were referred to by names other than their own. Volunteer/participants were referred to as Derrick with an assigned number i.e. Derrick #1, Derrick #2, Derrick #3.....) Using a name as such in this study, (The specific name Derrick was selected because it is the namesake of the first participant that completed the study), helps to decipher between the other numbered activities for clarity between the numbering and sequencing of activities.

Findings Related to Research Question samples in narrative verbatim, central to critical incidents, from thirteen of 25 respondents give specific identifying themes that are common and/or vague according to interviewee frequency responses.

A review of the research questions are as follows:

Research Question #1, “*What are things that happened to you at school that made you want to dropout?*” required respondents to think, recall or reflect upon perceptions of what did happen to cause respondents to dropout.

Research Question #2, “*What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out?*” identified the various categories of events, persons and/or things that focused on the classroom perceived by respondents to have contributed to causes for dropping out from 13 sample interviewees. Research Question #3, “*What are the in-school contexts reported in respondents’ critical incidents?*” identified specific categories of events, persons and/or things that focused on the total climate or environment of the school. Research Question #4, “*What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?*” clarified the role of the person, programs or policy or policies as it/they may have related to respondent’s account of critical incidents.

The Formal/Face to Face Interview of the Four Research Questions

This study identifies and describes the perceptions of critical incidents in high school as it relates to the dropout of young adult Black males. Individual responses are identified according to common and vague themes as shown below:

Respondents' formal/narrative responses to Research Question # 1

Are there things that happened to you at school that made you want to?

dropout? (Tell me about the things that happened to you while in high school and would you focus on events that made you want to give up?)

Derrick #1

1. *“Yes, I just felt like this teacher was picking on me, she was a good teacher, but she was mean. One time, someone was talking in class, and she called my name out. She turned around and said, ‘Derrick shut-up.’ I tried to tell her that it wasn’t me.”*

Derrick #2

2. *“Yes, I mean, I don’t want to sound as if I am complaining about every thing but even in the class, I didn’t get along with two of my teachers. This geography teacher, he just did not like me. He wouldn’t answer any of my questions or help me in any way with the lesson. And I had this English teacher who was mean and stern. She refused to answer any of my questions too.”*

Derrick #3

3. *...cause I know that somebody would have been trying to help me. You know. When you don't got no help it's harder by yourself. But when you got some help and you see somebody that cares, it motivates you to do better.*

Derrick #4

4. *"... I was more into acting, so my mom told me, you know, ever since I was about thirteen that uh me wanting to be in Hollywood and make it as a star uh made me not have that stepping stone of making it and finishing high school. The topics, the topics weren't right also..."*

Derrick #5

5. *"Actually teach the class and break down the work or I just didn't come to class. Too much playing and stuff and the teachers be laughing and playing too. Basically too much going on. The atmosphere was boring. They just gave us a page and said do this. They graded the pages and said the answers are in the book."*

Derrick #6

6. *"The way they uh went by the rules and they just didn't take care of their business or anything like that, the school didn't have any uh you know extra activities for us or nothing like that we wanted... you know..."*

I really didn't like school. I didn't like being in class like, the way they had our classes. ...the way they had the schedule set up, like A and B day. I didn't like that. I couldn't you know, get involved with that

...I guess if the teachers acted like they wanted to be around instead of acting like they didn't want to, well it probably woulda uh persuaded me to do right with them and act right...

...She (the teacher) could have paid a bit more attention to us. She just would give us some work, don't explain anything to us or something like that...It was more like a sub was in your class

rather than a teacher. Teacher just wasn't paying us any attention...Teachers didn't really explain"

Derrick #7

- 7. There were TAAS classes that I really didn't need but they kept me in those classes for two years... And I had already passed and it was time for me to graduate and I had to wait on the exact day. I had to like just get my diploma through the mail and that kinda made me like, I don't want to go to college.... We had to go to Judge Jones (court) The principal, did not support the music...but he supported football...that could have made a difference.*

Derrick #8

- 8. "The counselors and some of the teachers, then sometimes like how they explain stuff, how they do different stuff, how sometime they help you and sometimes they didn't. And then if you had to do something important they won't let you go do it. You just have to like wait or miss whatever it was because they didn't want anybody going out of class and stuff. Because they felt like if you leave out you'll miss something. But some of the teachers weren't really teaching. They were just playing around with us. Then the counselors, you ask them to take you out the class. They won't do it and they'll get mad if you keep coming down there. Then they'll mess your schedule up and then they'll give you more than one schedule..."*

Derrick #9

- 9. "I was most comfortable at home and outside the classroom, I'm most comfortable. Instruction was given to some students, not all students; teachers didn't care, they would talk to some students but not to others, they just wanted to get the day over with."*

Derrick #10

10. *“Yes, the role of the teacher; getting better teachers.”*”

Derrick #11

11. *“Yes, when I was at ... high school, I couldn’t stay focused. There were a lot of things going on in the classroom. Teachers didn’t really teach. You get taught more at other schools. Teachers came there ready for their paycheck. They only teach the basics; I want them to dig deep with the lessons.”*

Derrick #12

12. *“Some teachers are mostly absent and its always a sub (substitute teacher). They don’t know exactly what to do, you know. They might have a lesson plan but you know they don’t know exactly what to do.”*

Derrick #13

13. *“Yes, people made fun of me in class because I was from resource and I couldn’t read so I gave up. I dropped out of high school because I didn’t want to repeat 10th grade again.”*

Summary of Research Question #1

In summation of Research Question # 1, respondent concerns and reflections of things that happened while in high school focused upon the classroom, instruction and teachers and counselors. Remarks appeared to be blatant neglect for students and total incompetence on the part of the campus instructional team of educators.

Recalled critical incidence of lack of teacher respect for students and total disregard and/or validation were expressed by respondents. What is indicated is failure to provide adequate educational counseling and schooling by the campus instructional staff.

Other related areas of concern include teacher/counselor incompetence, poor classroom management, preparation, planning and educational know-how. What was described had to do with inappropriate delivery/implementation of instruction and curriculum as well.

Respondents' formal/narrative responses to Research Question #2

What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out? (Let's focus on the classroom events. What/who were the things/persons you think were most discouraging to you?)

Derrick #1

1. *"It was this one teacher... It felt like she just had something against me personally." She said in front of a class with students listening, "Derrick, shut-up."*

Derrick #2

2. *"The work was simply just too easy. I mean that's what it was. It wasn't challenging. It was basically just too easy. There's not more that I could say to that... The work was just simply too easy, basically.... It didn't challenge us to think a whole lot... and uh, if we had an assignment, it was straight out of the book... We didn't really have a lot of class discussions or anything like that and... when we would review homework and things like that... The teachers would just be like well this is it, this is the answer...they would never ask... why did we get it wrong or anything*

like that. They would sometimes just like give you work and say here do this.

...They would give us like chapter test and stuff like that, they wouldn't not really go over the chapters and in a lot of cases they'd say read chapter 6, read chapter 7. They wouldn't explain it and to be able to expect that you would do well. And with a person like me, yeah, I could do that, I could read it, I could understand it, but I need you to explain some things to me. Don't just give me a piece of paper and expect me to do well on it."

Derrick #3

- 3. "Sometimes its okay. Sometimes, I don't think too many teachers really care." "Some teachers, they don't go over their instructions. They just tell you go to class. They don't tell you nothing. They don't abide by the rules or nothing. Everybody be doing their own thang so you just go to school. And the teacher handles instruction, that means that the teacher is there to handle their business, they are there to teach you, not just make their money. That's why I like it when they go over instruction. (Some) They just go in throw you a paper and you just go to work. That make you feel that they don't even care about you. Make you feel that they just here for the money. Like, say I need help to do something, then if the teacher cares, he'll come and show me how to work my way through this. He'll give me hints. I'm not saying like tell me the answers are whatever, just tell me how to make it through it."*

Derrick #4

- 4. "Well actually...the lessons I dealt with weren't really fascinating. ...I needed to go to a school like... (the visual and performing arts), ...more for me, but by that time I was too old, and in the wrong grade and at the wrong age. You know. Something like that. That was really my down fall. And I thought that I could always make up for lost lessons but the more you loose, the more you loose in the long run... I was too far behind..."*

Reading classes were the best... you get to share, you get to present...I loved reading and math. But as I got older, I dealt with Algebra. I didn't like math anymore. It was just too many; I didn't understand the squares applied to math. You know, I thought it was just when you were a kid you

use to say like here goes the square, here goes the circle. But as you get older you start figuring out that squares and circles are really scary. They (teachers) were more focused on meeting a deadline with the topics, and also teaching the whole classroom, it wasn't a self-paced event you know. Where they focused on one child, it was more the classroom, so they couldn't give me what I needed; that individual attention."

Derrick #5

5. *"Because it's my choice of doing the work or my choice of listening to the teachers sometimes or occasionally teach the class and actually break down the work."*

Derrick #6

6. *"I really didn't want to go to school. I liked sports and math activities and things like that... I didn't like the schedule, A & B day. I couldn't get involved in that. Maybe if the teachers acted like they wanted to be around instead of acting like they didn't want to, they probably would've persuaded me to be around and act right."*

Derrick #7

7. *"...all he done was put like uh, something on the overhead, just put it there and we'd like, okay, what'd we do? He'd like say sit there, figure it out. We'd like, you are a teacher and he would question us, 'why are you talking? I'm the teacher and such and such?' We'd like, we want to know information about how to do the work. 'You can read the instructions on how to do the work.' We'd be like, we've read them, and we don't understand. And he'd just, he is still a teacher."*

Derrick #8

8. *The way they teach stuff. They would like talk to one student and they would finish and if you asked a question, they would be like, 'go ask somebody else... We could be doing math and they would jump to something on TV and when we get back to the regular subject, it would be time to go."*

Derrick #9

9. *“Yes, but even there sometimes (on-campus Reconnect Center), you’ll finish subjects or assignments and they will lose it and it keeps you there longer. Like you take ACP’s (After Course Proficiency) or a test, you take those and some other subjects and finish but they lose it or something. Then they tell you, you didn’t do what you did and turned it in. I guess they miss handled it; or you do book work and they miss handle that and say you didn’t do it when you did. Then they would get mad at you when you try to explain it to them.. But, all in all, it’s (the Reconnect Center) still helpful. “*

Derrick #10

10. *“I just wasn’t going to school. That was it. I just wasn’t going to school. I didn’t like school really. Because It was the teachers, they had little old certain rules that I didn’t go by... They were stupid rules like don’t chew gum, come to class this certain time, if you don’t you know we’ll call your parent, suspended for three days and stuff like that. So it was like, I didn’t want to go.”*

Derrick #11

11. *“I wasn’t too focused, there was a lot going on (in the classroom). Some teachers come in, they can’t get control of the class, lots of kids would throw paper all round the room... School was dull and monotonous; we would do worksheets all the time; the teacher would not explain, he/she would simply tell us to sit-down and complete the questions at the end of the chapter.”*

Derrick #12

12. *“The students would talk about me, whatever. Teachers were not really teaching and not really caring. My, I didn’t really get along with the teachers and staff and I had poor attendance. I came to school on and off, when I wanted to and eventually became a two-week dropout. That’s pretty much it. A lot of things that went on with the students and people I didn’t get along with; they didn’t like me. Not too many people like me. I am more of a loner, not a people pleaser. I never wanted to be with the in-crowd.”*

“I also had a fight. A security guard verbally abused me making comments about my mother. Well you know he came at me and I fought back.”

Derrick #13

13. “People meddling me, like I’m in resource and stuff. Say I couldn’t read and stuff, so I got tied, so I dropped out.”

Summary of Research Question #2

The question of varieties of critical incidents reported that bore some relevance to dropping out also focused on the classroom setting. Respondents indicated that considerable discouraging points dealt with teacher attitudes and failure to provide assignment feedback; voidance of pacing/individualized instruction and not to mention the voidance of intensive assistance; oversimplified studies; boring assignments that at times had no educational relevance; remote and uninteresting materials and resources; and lack-luster instructional approaches. The respondents described a teacher-student disconnect or detachment that failed to foster support, care and concern for the student. Respondents frequently stated that teachers were there for the pay which exhibits a self serving demeanor that students quickly detected. Other respondents spoke of teacher partiality and exclusivity rather than inclusiveness; failure to admit and account for lost written assignments submitted by students; failure to build a climate of acceptance and lack of organizational skills to include classroom management.

Some respondents spoke of having been placed in the wrong course/s, appropriate levels of study while others confided that they had be held-back due to the lack of assistance in

diagnosing, referring or channeling student problems to the proper authority or resource team of professional. in a timely manner.

Respondents' formal/narrative responses to Research Question # 3

What are the in-school contexts reported in respondents' critical incidents? (What about school experiences out of the classroom? What happened to help or discourage you?)

Derrick #1

1. *"It was a little school..."* (Safety and concern was a factor among personnel) *".....We had about 3 or 4 Dallas police officers..."*

Derrick #2

2. *"Lack of teacher empathy or concern, lack of mentally challenging studies. It didn't really challenge us to think a whole lot. Just straight out of the book."*

Derrick #3

3. *"...If you don't got no help, it's harder by yourself, but when you got some help and you see somebody who care, it's like it motivates you to do better."*

Derrick #4

4. *"I needed to go to a school like Booker T. Washington, you know, downtown X (city pseudonym) more for me. It was influences also. You know, following different people doing the wrong things..."*

Derrick #5

5. *“The atmosphere was boring so it just made everybody just feel bored and stuff. Did nobody never do nothing. There were teachers ...that were different but I still think they were just there for the money. Didn't nobody care.”*

Derrick #6

6. *“If I woulda stayed there, I wouldn't be able to make it this far. As far as I am now. I would not have made it at that school.”* (now enrolled in ...Can Academy)

Derrick #7

7. *“The climate of the school was nice but, they could have done better. The security it wasn't the security that you would want it to be. But, the principal, that's the whole school. His name was Dr. And it's like he's not very into music or band. We couldn't go on certain trips, we couldn't have like certain practices late, ... but if it was football, ...track, any athletics... The last principal was Mr.... That made a difference right there...”*

Derrick #8

8. *“...I had my first semester schedule and my second semester and I was listed on all them teachers rolls. And uh, I went to my first semester's classes and uh the second semester's teachers that I enrolled in I didn't miss no classes but, the one's I was n't I was missing days and I had to go to court for that. And then it kept on doing it until it got cleared.”*

Derrick #9

9. *“Teachers could make you feel more welcome in the class and know that you are there.”*

*I think that school could have been a little more orderly and personally I think it should have been on a student's personal goal.”
Sometimes teachers only talked to certain students”*

Derrick #10

10. *Rules, the rules of the teacher. Stuff that they say you can't do and I knew I could... It was the teachers. They had stupid rules like no gum chewing... 'don't, you know, we'll call your parent, you will be sent home, suspended for three days? And stuff like that. So I was like, I don't want to go" (to school).*

Derrick #11

11. *"Well a lot of teachers were encouraging and they helped me out a lot through the tutoring and after school tutoring. The majority of them, they helped you out if you really needed it.*

It was a lot going on in the classroom, most teachers when they come in, they're not ready to teach, say it like that.

Some teachers come in; they can't get control of the class. They suppose to have control of their class.

...when I was up there it was a lot of violence and gangs going around there..."

"It (me leaving) has to do a lot with the people, atmosphere and school. When I was up there it was a lot of violence and gangs."

Derrick #12

12. *"I really just didn't get along with too many people. That's really it right there. I didn't really do too much. "*

Derrick #13

13. *The lessons, they were kinda hard. They tried to put me like in regular class and the work was getting hard...(the question was asked what about what when you are out of the classroom, but at school; and what his thoughts were of the school's climate/environment?): ... It was okay.*

Summary to Research Question #3

In-school contexts that happen to help or discourage an individual were reported in respondents' critical incidents. Most of the issues previously discussed in the summaries of Research Question #1 and #2 have also been expressed here in Research Question #3 as well.

Teacher apathy and partiality toward certain students were mentioned along with teacher/counsel assistance with channeling wayward respondents according to individual needs and interest/s. Teacher/counselor error contributed to the discouragement of a significant number of respondents by their failure to appropriately place respondents in the proper courses and to understand and be able to get help for the student at his specific learning level and difficulty.

Here again the tone was not set for respondents to feel accepted and nor were relationships fostered by teachers or counselors. Most recalls of discouragement came from the classroom about teachers, their lack of empathy and poor instruction and the second most frequent concern dealt with counselors for the same reasons and for some respondents, not channeling them into more challenging studies.

Concerns were also mentioned about the safety of the school and the need to improve the climate of the school in general which would implicate the campus instructional leader as well.

Respondents' formal/narrative responses to Research Question # 4

What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents? (Who tried to intervene? What did other personnel do?)

Derrick #1

1. *"Yes, it bothered me a little bit at the time because I was just 16 or 17. It just seemed as if she (the teacher) had something against me. I was just trying to really graduate. I had a hard time with her that's why I am in school now, taking that class. "In my school it was like even though we (campus personnel) didn't have Black history in our school, some teachers still taught about it...times other than that (Black History Month) we wouldn't hear anything about it (Black in history or any studies). (If I could change something related to policy) ...uh probably like the hardship transfer. Like the M & M transfer (Majority/Minority Transfers). They were trying to stop it. I would change that because more people are looking to come into that school now. It's becoming one of the top schools."*

Derrick #2

2. *"Teachers, counselors, other students, rules that did not apply for all, school favorites, clicks... They favored athletes a lot (campus personnel)."*

Derrick #3

3. *"Some teachers that go over instruction knew how to handle her business or his business. They're there to teach you and not just to make their money... say if I need help to do something, then if the teacher care, he'll come and show me how to work my way through this, he'll give me hints. I'm not saying tell me the answers or whatever; just tell me how to make it through it. That's what I'm saying, give me some hints.*

...I know that somebody would have been trying to help me. when you don't got know help it's harder, it's harder by yourself. But when you got some help and you see somebody who care, it's like it motivates you to do better."

Derrick #4

4. *"I was born to act...I needed to go to a school like Booker T. Washington you know, more for me."* (Wrong program for student?)

Derrick #5

5. *"It was some teachers there that were different, but I still say that they were there for the money. To my knowledge didn't nobody care."*

Derrick #6

6. *"I had one teacher that at the end of the school day sometimes when he had time would come around to my classes and you know give me all the work that I needed in my classroom. That teacher tried to help me a lot. He would help me, he would explain it to me you know and do the best he could. He couldn't help me with all my work 'cause he had his classes to teach."*

Derrick #7

7. *"Ms. X, and Ms Y, they helped me a lot."* (Reconnect teacher pseudonyms)."

Derrick #8

8. *"Students simply stated that "no one listened." "They were not concerned." Several even stated that "they (campus staff/teachers) were just there to draw a paycheck. They enforced the rules (personnel)."*

Derrick #9

9. *"Teachers had favorites, personnel/counselors were too busy to help"*
"Some counselors would help, but some counselors don't want to help. They acted like they were too busy and they would put you off."
... the Reconnect Center was still helpful."

Derrick #10

10. *“...Teachers, principal, counselors, they were trying to tell me to stay in school, you know, talk to me everyday. But it was like going in one ear and out the other. And so I didn’t like. I paid, I paid it, I’m paying for what I done, done. I’m ready to go to school now and get my GED.”*

Derrick #11

11. *“A lot of teachers were encouraging. They helped me a lot in tutoring and after-school tutoring.”*

Derrick #12

12. *“My coach tried to help me with tutoring and some teachers helped me with tutoring. I tried Reconnection but, the pace wasn’t fast enough so I went to Honors Academy and graduated a year later.”*

Derrick #13

13. *“Friends and teachers tried to teach me how to read. I asked the teacher to put me back in Resource and they would say they’re working on it; but that never happened.”*

Summary to Research Question #4

Given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents by respondents, there are clear indications of the roles that some school staff played whether positive and/or negative. Respondents readily addressed the following:

Teacher animosity toward student; teacher, counselor and other school personnel inclusive of principals were too busy to help; teacher, counselor and other school personnel partiality toward certain students, i.e. athletes often were not held to the same

rules and standards by which some other students had to abide; poor judgment in program placement; self-serving campus personnel lacked any genuine concern for the student; some teachers helped as much as they could to include tutoring student on the side, during breaks and after school. Sometimes respondents may not have been enrolled in the helping teacher's or coach's class; however, a number of teachers are remembered for their caring efforts to assist respondents during a time of need. Assistance given by the Reconnect Centers' staff was stated several times along with respondents acknowledgement of some comprehensive campus personnel also tried to persuade and encourage students to stay in school. Another respondent recalled how his teacher and friends tried to teach him to read and yet there other teachers and counselors that did not listen to what the student had requested, leaving him to fail in a class setting that was obviously intimidating and most discouraging.

Table 4.1

Data from the Formal Interview: Identifying Themes
(Common incident themes; vague incident themes)

An analysis of identifying themes of critical incidents known to be common (perceived by most respondents) and vague (less than 50% of respondents expressed any concern) shows that the common themes are 15% more compared to the number of vague themes:

Common Incident Themes	Vague Incident Themes
1. Teacher/counselor apathy (respondents felt “put off” by them)	14. School Violence
2. Poor instruction and/or no instruction	15. Peer Intimidation
3. Personality conflicts & attitude problems	
4. Lack of teacher/counselor support & assistance, with explaining to students	
5. Unable to keep up with the course work	
6. Unchallenging and uninteresting studies	
7. Personnel errors with student records	
8. School schedule	
9. Student schedule and four year degree plan	
10. Partiality toward certain students	
11. Teacher/counselor low expectation of student	
12. Lack of social interaction with peer group	
13. Classroom environment/management	

The above themes that can also be view as codes emerge from the verbatim materials and be compared to the four research summaries at the end of the respective Research Question.

Ten of the above Common themes are incidents that respondents referred to in the classroom (1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6,7,10,11, & 13). However, 50 % of respondents also attributed some of the same critical incidents to that of counselors as well.

Incidents 8 and 9 almost exclusively refer to counseling services while 14 is a campus wide issue/factor.

Teacher/counselor apathy (respondents felt “put off” by them) was mentioned in over 13 interviewee response.

Individual Interview Sample Response to Critical Incidents

Based on the individual interview sample response (*see Distribution of Critical Incidents by Individual Interview respondents*, Table 4.3) again respondents also indicated just as the Activity Scale ratings that in school perceptions of **teacher/counselor apathy; poor or no instruction**; and the **lack of teacher/counselor support** were positive by 100% or 92%, twelve of 13 sample student's response stated that they commonly experienced **teacher/counselor apathy, poor and/or no instruction** and a **lack of teacher/counselor support**. The negative 8% was from a student that had been mainstreamed from resource (a term used for special education) and appeared to be somewhat unclear as to the question asked although questions were paraphrased differently for clarity each time.

While 38% of sample interviewees reported **personality conflicts** with teachers and/or counselors, there were 62% of interview respondents did not readily recall critical incidents of personality conflict.

Unable to keep up, 46% of interviewees indicated varied reasons while other (54%) interviews' reasons were not apparent.

Over half (62%) of interviewees expressed that the **work** was often **unchallenging, boring and monotonous** while a negative 38% felt a bit challenged or somewhere in between.

Some interviewees (38%) indicated that the onset of critical incidents included **personnel errors with student records**; and (62%) did not discuss.

Forty-six percent (46%) of interviewees indicated that the lack of **social interaction** with peers also had an impact on their decision not to remain in school. However, a negative 54% did not articulate such concerns.

Peer Intimidation, was less indicated by a positive 23% with a negative 77% the total opposite.

Derrick #9 - *“I guess I hung around who I was most comfortable with so, I skipped or wouldn’t go to class and I was more comfortable with somebody out side of class, then that’s what I did...”*

Derrick #12 – *“I didn’t get along with the students. I’m a loner....I never have wanted to be a people pleaser.”*

Derrick #13 - *“people meddling me, like I’m in Resource, saying I couldn’t read and stuff...”*

Some interviewees (38%) expressed that **school schedules** also contributed to critical incidents that caused them to dropout while 62% did not:

Derrick #6 – *“...the way they had the schedule set up, you know like A & B day. I couldn’t get involved in that...”*

Interviewees (38%) indicated that they often had discrepancies with their assigned **schedule and official 4-year high school degree plans** while 62% did not.

Derrick *7 – *“...there was the TAAS classes that I didn’t really need but, I was still in those classes. They kept me in there for like 2 years I think, and I had already passed. And when it was time for me to graduate, I had to wait on the exact day, I had to like get my diploma through the mail.....and that kinda made me like; I don’t want to go to college...”*

Interviewees (46%) indicated that they observed what they perceived to have been **partiality/favoritism shown toward other students** while (54%) did not address.

Sixty-two percent (62%) of the interviewees positively identified **Teacher/counselor low expectation of Students**. Some (38%) did not address.

The Formal Interview: Summary

Formal Interview response indicated that things did happen to interviewees while in high school that made them want to dropout. These things or incidents were categorized (*according to frequency of incidents reported by interviewees*) as common incidents; and those less common were considered to be vague incidents.

According to frequency of response by categories, Teacher/Counselor Apathy; Poor/No Instruction; and Lack of Teacher Counselor Support were most common from a list of 13 identified themes that were consistently indicated by respondents. Vague themes/incidents were approximately 13% or a seventh of common themes/incidents. Respondents reported the following three vague themes/incidents:

- Lessons Were too Hard (*hard to keep up*); Lack of Social Interaction with Peer Group; and Peer Intimidation

A total of 15 identified themes (*13 common and 3 vague*) are considered as critical incidents in the findings from the narrative interview.

See Appendix C, Table 4.6

Findings Related to the Research Questions

It is rather unusual to simultaneously be in both categories of Unable to Keep Up in Course Work (46%) and Unchallenging Studies (62%). However 3 of the interviewees indicated that although they were unable to keep up for various reasons (missing instruction from non-attendance; uninteresting studies; and lack of teacher's ability and/or desire to engage students according to their individual learning styles and levels of comprehension; inappropriate and/or poor instruction; lack of students' ability to concentrate due to conflict...) they also found the work unchallenging.

Interviewees in 3 categories (Teacher Counselor Apathy (100%/92%), Poor/No Instruction (100%/92%), and Lack of Teacher Counselor Support) (100%/92%), positively indicated that the major source of critical incidents were within these areas although each individual interviewee's account of his most excruciating event of critical incidents might be otherwise. These significantly conclusive categories conclusive of 100% or 92% or written as such because of one interviewee's (*Derrick #13*) indecisive response and at this point will require further research.

One interviewee (*Derrick #13*) that was mainstreamed from Resource/special education only spoke of critical incidents that involved students "meddling" him because he came

from Resource and he could not read. When asked if there were things/incidents that happened that he could recall that involved teacher/s or counselors he readily stated no.

Yet, he was placed in an intimidating environment where the students were allowed to “meddle” him, and “the work was getting hard.” He also never mentioned that the teacher/s and/or counselors intervened to help him with instruction, attempted to stop students from “meddling,” looked at possible errors in his record and student degree plan, and/or tried to promote social interaction with peers. Given his positive response to Unable to Keep Up in Course Work, Peer Intimidation which is also an indicator for Personality Conflict and attitudes, other questions are raised that would require further study. Questions and/or concerns about the critical incidents aforementioned in the 15 Distribution of Critical Incidents by Individual Interviewees is: #'s 1, 2,4,7,11,12, and 15.

Questions raised should include teacher/counselor concern for having placed a student into a situation that was obviously devastating for the respective student; poor instruction due to lack of meeting the student’s level of need/comprehension and waste of the student’s time and benefit; void of support for the student to experience success by moving from what was known by the student to the unknown in learning to build connections in an educable self-paced climate. Was the student uneducable? And if so, what was some useful level of programmed training for students with special needs available to him on that campus or other campuses in this large urban district? Are there other Derrick 13’s in this large urban school district?

Table 4.2

One interviewee (*Derrick #12*) was the only respondent of the sample study to have implicated each of the 15 categories on critical incidents (*also see Table 4.3 of Appendix C - Graphs & Charts Interpretive Findings*) listed below:

1. Teacher/Counselor Apathy
2. Poor/No Instruction
3. Personality Conflict
4. Lack of Teacher Counselor Support
5. Unable to Keep Up in Course Work
6. Unchallenging Studies
7. Personnel Errors with Student Records
8. School Schedule
9. Student Schools & 4 Year Degree Plan
10. Partiality/Favoritism Toward Other Students
11. Teacher/Counselor Low Expectation of Students
12. School Violence
13. Classroom Management
14. Lack of Social Interaction with Peers
15. Peer Intimation

One interviewee (Derrick #3) with the least number of incident categories selected, also indicated the three categories (each at 100% - 92%) that most concerned all other interviewees, Teacher/Counselor Apathy, Poor/No Instruction and Lack of Teacher Counselor Support.

Critical incidents with a response of 50% or more are: Teacher/Counselor Apathy (100% - 92%); Poor/No Instruction (100% - 92%); Lack of Teacher Counselor Support (100% - 92%); Unchallenging Studies (62%); Lack of Social Interaction with Peers (53%); and Teacher/Counselor Low Expectation of Students (61.5 or 62%).

Critical incidents indicated in the areas of Personality Conflict; Unable to Keep Up in Course Work; Personnel Errors with Student Records; School Schedule; Student Schedule & 4 Year Degree Plan; Partiality/Favoritism Toward Other Students; and Classroom Management rated between 38 to 46%.

Peer Intimidation (23%) was the least of the categories selected by interviewees.

Cross Matrix Analysis

Participant responses to research questions suitable for learning more about little known or poorly understood incidents relevant to dropout often went unnoticed. There are no known or existing investigative procedures in place to monitor, report and respond to factual information/documentation regarding critical incidents before and/or after a potential dropout makes the decision to drop out. What apparently became the focal point for respondents and school authorities (*truant attendance*) were reactions in most cases to actions/causations that contributed to participants' leaving school. Actions in this context are critical incidents experienced by young adult Black male high school dropouts.

Chart 4.4

Initial Survey/Questionnaire: Verbatim Expressions Related to Incidents (percent rounded to the nearest whole value)

Incidents Abbreviated	Verbatim Expressions (Selected)	Frequency	% of Participants
#1	Students chose not to talk about their suspension/s	2	8%
#2	people made fun of me in class because I was from resource and I couldn't read so I gave up. I dropped out of high school because I didn't want to repeat 10 th grade again."	4	16%
#3	"...I just wasn't going to school. I didn't like school, really.	8	32%
#4	"I was most comfortable at home and outside the classroom...	1	4%
#5	I couldn't stay focused...	4	16%
#6	"They only teach the basics; I want them to dig deep with the lessons."	1	4%
#7	...Teachers didn't really teach. You get taught more at other schools. Teacher came there ready for their paycheck.	4	16%
#8	...teachers didn't care, they would talk to some students but not to others, they just wanted to get the day over with."	4	16%
#9	...I just felt like this teacher was picking on me...	$\frac{4}{32}$	16%

Chart 4.5

Initial Survey/Questionnaire: Verbatim Expressions Related to Incidents

- #1 Although the issue concerning **suspension behavior** was checked by two respondents (8% or 2 of 25), they chose not to discuss it
- #2 One respondent out of four (16% of 25) indicated that he had **poor grades** on the initial survey and during the face to face interview he stated the following:
people made fun of me in class because I was from resource and I couldn't read so I gave up. I dropped out of high school because I didn't want to repeat 10th grade again."
- #3 Thirty-two percent (8 out of 25) of the respondents checked that **poor attendance** had some effect on their decision to dropout of school. During the face to face interview, one respondent stated "*...I just wasn't going to school. I didn't like school, really."*
- #4 Four percent (1out of 25) of respondents indicated on the initial survey that **class size was intimidating** and during the interview one individual stated, "*I was most comfortable at home and outside the classroom...*
- #5 One respondent out of four (16% of 25) indicated that he was **not able to keep up** and he validated the same in the face to face interview: "*I couldn't stay focused...*"
- #6 Four percent (1out of 25) respondents indicated on the initial survey **lack of challenging studies**. One interviewee further exclaimed "*They only teach the basics; I want them to dig deep with the lessons."*
- #7 Sixteen percent (4 out of 25) respondents indicated on the initial survey that **poor instruction** contributed to their decision to dropout out of school. During the interview, one respondent stated, "*...Teachers didn't really teach. You get taught more at other schools. Teacher came there ready for their paycheck."*
- #8 Sixteen percent (4 out of 25) of respondents indicated that **lack of teacher concern** contributed to their decision to dropout out of school. One respondent during the interview also stated, "*...teachers didn't care, they would talk to some students but not to others, they just wanted to get the day over with."*
- #9 Sixteen percent (4 out of 25) of respondents indicated that **personality conflicts** had a lot to do with not wanting to be around certain people which contributed to the lack of attendance in school, resulting in the student being counted as a dropout. One interviewee stated, "*... I just felt like this teacher was picking on me.*

Summary Findings From Cross-Matrix Analysis

Responses related to in school critical incidents were gathered via the initial (1) Survey/Questionnaire, (2) Activity Scale/Structured Interview Part I & Part II rating instruments and the (3) Formal Interview/Face to Face Interview. Frequency of in-school related critical incidents focused more on “poor instruction,” “time in school dull/monotonous,” and “lack of teacher/counselor concern.”

Respondents reported a consistent pattern of critical incidents that were charted across each instrument that indicated its relevance. Initial Survey/Questionnaire statement, for instance, “*lack of teacher/counselor concern*” was one of 5 items that ranked the highest at 16% of respondents on a total of 9 items. Statement #19 of the Activity Scale also ranked a positive 45% (*Always or Nearly Always*) “... *had a gut feeling that no school staff member was genuinely interested in my well being.*” Narrative interview response with the most frequencies had a three-way tie between “Teacher/Counselor Apathy,” “Poor Instruction,” and “Lack of Teacher Counselor Support.”

Poor Attendance

The initial *Survey/Questionnaire* indicated that student dropout bordered on skipping classes which was the primary factor selected by respondents of the study. As a result, one might conclude that poor attendance ultimately prohibited respondents from being able to keep up with their classroom assignments/tests. However, last section of the

Activity Scale/Structured Interview Part I & Part II instrument includes the response of a number of participants that dropped out with poor attendance yet, these participants managed to make passing grades. They reported that they enjoyed making good grades in the following completion sentence found on the last page of the Activity Scale: *In school, I was excited about:* “making good grades,” “passing class,” “passing geometry and algebra” or graduating,” however most students that dropped out did report poor grades. They also reported that school was “dull and monotonous.”

Some student respondents found the studies were too easy. “There is no thinking involved,” remarked another respondent. Whether respondents barely passed in school to those respondents who attained higher academic fetes, they all did identify with the critical incidents within a school.

Good Instruction

While there are underlying issues/factors related to dropping out and/or continually missing school some respondents described in detail what good instruction would appear to be to them by describing what was missing from their existing instructional programs, and environment. In the initial survey and the last portion of the Activity Scale section 98% of respondents took responsibility for having made some poor choices about quitting school and several stated that they had never thought of the intrinsic value their studies could provide along with “staying focused.” As stated by respondents’ on the sentence completion sections of the *Survey Questionnaire* and *last section of the Activity Scale/ Structured Interview Part I & Part II*, the relevancy of school now has

significant meaning for respondents who quit school at some point. The benefits of completing high school were evident as they mentioned skills, future work and perhaps the support of a family/future.

Responses and Triangulation of the Various Activities

Several responses from the various activities, *Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale (Part I and Part II)* and individual interview (*Formal Interview*), were compared for similarities and differences reported by respondents concerning critical incidents. While some critical incidents personally affected respondents differently, a number of respondents recalled their experiences concerning the classroom setting which involved classroom management, instruction, teachers/counselors, and a perception of self in the above findings.

It appears that classroom incidents imposed *self doubt (#1)* for 50% of respondents according to the Activity Scale rating. However, only four out of a sampling of 13 respondents implicated that they doubted themselves in the individual interview. Also according to the activity scale findings, over 50%* felt optimistic about their work performance and over 50%* of respondents also felt respected both socially and emotionally (*see Chart 4-3, pp.4-16: Perception of Critical Incidents as Ratings on the Activity Scale*).

The initial Survey/Questionnaire had few respondents to complete a smaller section with nine statements which pertained to incidents that may have happened during their schooling. Only 4% (of 25) marked the option that *studies lacked a challenge* as opposed to 58% responding to the Activity Scale findings of *time in school was dull/monotonous and the classes and work assignments bored them (#2)*. Individual interview responses to this issue with similar perceptions were eight in number of respondents.

The least frequent events associated with dropping out of school were: intimidating class size, lack of challenging studies and suspension/expulsion behavior. Critical incidents in the initial survey were consistent with the face to face interview dialogue as well. Examples of both were seemingly most adamantly responded to in the language of these participants:

“teachers acted like they didn’t want to be around students;” “the teacher didn’t really teach, they just gave us worksheets to finish;” “Some teachers, they come in...well they are not ready to teach...they ready for their paycheck...”

Respondents frequently discussed teachers and counselors when they were asked to expound upon their perceptions involving school staff. While several respondents recalled that they remembered the concern and assistance received from some teachers and counselors, most reports were of a negative nature for teachers and counselors. One respondent stated that they (*teachers/counselors*) were always “*too busy*” to assist them adequately. The entry *teacher/counselor-centered rather than student-centered (#3)* was not entered as an option for which to respond in the initial Survey/Questionnaire;

however, *lack of teacher/counselor concern and support and teacher apathy (#4)* were addressed with 16% (of 25) responding positively in the initial Survey/Questionnaire.

When asked about critical incidents in school, (*incidents in school that were troublesome -#4*), respondents reflected upon situations that involved teachers and/or counselors between 41% and 33% of the time (see *Activity Scale rating #9 & #10*) to which all respondents addressed in the Formal Interview. Each interviewee mentioned teachers and several talked about counselors as well.

Interview feedback pertaining to teachers and counselors indicated that 12 out of 13 (see *#5-Lack of teacher/counselor concern & support; teacher apathy*) respondents spoke of incidents due to teacher/counselor incompetence or inadequacies, teacher/counselor apathy to include lack of teacher classroom management style. Although respondent #13 did not openly state the aforementioned perceptions, one would surmise that respondent #13 may have been incapable of deciphering connections between adverse circumstances by which he had been subjected. Now in senior high school, he never learned to read and was mainstreamed from special education into an insensitive environment (*they read aloud in class and he was also called upon to read*) in which neither teacher nor counselor corrected his immediate conditions and/or placement assignment. So, with what he had to endure, he quit school; yet, he never connected the fact that school personnel bore any responsibility in correcting this problem or determining how best to provide him with an appropriate level of instruction in the least non-threatening and non-intimidating environment.

Relevant responses to the findings related to *teacher/counselor concern and support; and teacher apathy* (#5) can also be compared to *teacher/counselor-centered rather than student-centered* above (#3). The Activity Scale ratings there are additional responses that have similar findings related to *school personnel who made it unpleasant; school staff did some hurtful things; and felt that no school personnel was genuinely interested in student's/students' well-being* (also see above at 45% at #5).

Entry #6 – *Poor instruction* and entry #7 above encompass responses discussed above and appear to be direct effects of actions perceived by respondents. *Poor instruction* and *poor classroom management* appear to be the results based on comments as to what happened or what did not happen with respect to: teacher/counselor assistance and concern.

* The overage or plus sign (50 %+) of 50% is derived from factoring in the category of sometimes for both of the above.

See Appendix C, Table 4.6

Conclusion

The Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale and individual interview recorded perceptions of what were critical incidents for some respondents were not considered to be critical incidents for other respondents. These incidents often depend on how one was personally affected by what took place and/or the lack of what did not take place.

Classroom incidents caused much self doubt according to activity scale findings; however, over 50% of respondents felt respected both socially and emotionally.

Causes or reasons for the Activity Scale response to dull/monotonous and boring indicate the lack of student engagement and/or interests in the classroom learning process. Respondents indicated in both the Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale and Formal Interview, that school was dull/monotonous. Although it was not among the highest in frequency, respondents alluded to the classroom as lacking luster in their own terms of expression.

The aforementioned critical incidents are recapitulated through respondent narratives during the formal interview as they talk about the routine activities of worksheets and reading and answering chapter questions from books. Respondents also reported that often there was no instruction or learning and the teacher wasted time off task with them. Respondents during the Formal Interview recalled incidents involving the

practice or lack thereof of classroom instruction, procedures and management while student engagement in the course/s of study appeared to be minimal.

This of course frustrated and/or further discouraged respondents who were potentially at risk of dropping out while in school. Based on respondent perceptions of critical incidents collected via the Survey/Questionnaire, Pre-Structured Activity Scale and

Formal Interview, further studies are needed in the related areas of inappropriate instruction and neglected individual learning styles and individual interest/s of respondent/s as a way of determining causal factors and to what extent these critical incidents impacted the respondent's decisions to drop-out of school.

Related findings from the Formal Interview involved teacher apathy; poor/no instruction and lack of teacher/counselor support. The Survey/Questionnaire also reported response of poor instruction and lack of teacher concern. According to interviewee narrations, such incidents contributed to their decisions to skip classes/school and/or quit school as well.

Respondents indicated in both the Activity Survey/Questionnaire and Formal Interview, that school was dull/monotonous. Although it was not among the highest in frequency respondents alluded to the classroom as lacking luster in their own terms of expression.

Aside from classroom boredom, further indications of respondent's ratings from all three instruments (*Survey/Questionnaire, Activity Scale and Formal Interview*), consistently reported teacher concern, teacher/counselor apathy, and poor instruction.

Lack of teacher concern in the Survey/Questionnaire which is related to Teacher/Counselor Apathy in the Formal Interview and Poor Instruction, were the three leading concerns of respondents. Other relevant concerns include, Not being able to keep up and Personality conflicts, which are also associated with Peer Intimidation.

Relevant correlatives can be drawn between the three instruments (*Survey/Questionnaire, Pre-Structured Activity Scale and Formal Interview*) that also includes the Activity Scale's response to Time in school was dull/monotonous to Poor instruction and Lack of Teacher Concern of the Survey/Questionnaire. The same or similar response from the Formal Interview also involve Poor instruction; Teacher/Counselor Apathy; and Lack of Teacher/Counselor Support.

Research questions posed to respondents concerning in-school incidents for the purpose of better understanding perceptions of critical incidents related to high school dropout of young adult Black males, show patterns and signs that warrant further research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Review of Chapter One

Purpose of the Study

This research seeks to understand the connection between critical incidents relating to high school dropout as perceived by identified young adult Black males and the practices and experiences of these unsuccessful students. It is believed that much of the perceptions reported as experiences by respondents are symptomatic of systemic problems and frustrations that promote defeat, which results in high levels of non-completion of high school by such at-risk students.

Focus of the Study

The study focuses upon the perceptions of participants/respondents as they relate to incidents that happened to them in school that may have influenced their decisions to drop out of school. These critical incidents most likely were related to school climate/environment, involved teacher/counselor and other campus personnel, instruction and/or content. Are there relationships between these critical incidents and dropping out of school? How do Black males perceive critical incidents as having

affected their interest/s in staying or dropping out of school before graduating? Who, on campus, might have discouraged or encouraged respondent/s to leave or stay?

Review of Chapter Two

From research, the literature suggests that teachers are most significant in the schooling of young Americans to include that of the young African American male.

It is important, therefore, not to underestimate what teachers can do to improve the educational experience for all youngsters, particularly racial minorities and those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. A resourceful, skillful and committed teacher can make a tremendous difference in the acquisition of knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

We must do all we can to assist teachers to grow and develop in a continuing way in order that they can become effective instructional leaders in their classrooms with high expectations for student success (Green, 2005).

Review of Chapter Three

This chapter sets the stage for methodologically devising ways to identify events that are perceived to be critical to high school dropouts. Through relating dominance and frequency of occurrences unique to that of young adult Black male students and their experiences in senior high school, the process of supporting these findings through a method of looking at the data and subjects was first established here.

Review of Chapter Four

Verbatim responses of the four Research Questions were consistent with other previous activity findings (*Survey/Questionnaire and Structured Activity Scale*). Responses to the queries ranged from reserved thought to candid reply of perceptions concerning critical incidents in school. Interview respondents focused more on an open response in the *Face to Face Interview/Formal Interview*; open-ended statements and questions allowed the respondent to elaborate upon his thoughts. However, written responses to the statement/questions found in the previous two instruments (*Survey/Questionnaire and Structured Activity Scale*) were methodically designed for further clarification and explanations after completion. These steps preceded the Formal Interview which focused more on the Research Questions.

Final Summary Findings

Becoming frustrated and disappointed with some classes that had been assigned, a sizable number of African American male dropouts admitted to irresponsibly cutting class and often skipping school altogether. They also became involved with and somewhat influenced by other individuals that were disinterested in school as well.

When questioned about the things that happened to them while in high school involving critical incidents (*circumstances/situations*) that made them want to give up, most participants focused on *classroom activities that lacked substance* along with the lack of

genuine teacher concern for the individual student. One frequently cited example was that of worksheets placed on the overhead to be completed and submitted. Some felt that much of the studies were merely busy work, while much of the vital instruction of content was void of needed explanation, initial introduction, guidance and/or feedback. Courses lacked structure and were void of instructional approaches, topic discussions and/or feedback or follow-up to the course work assignments. For example; in some classes the most frequent instructional directive given to students was to complete and submit assignments by the end of the scheduled class period.

Some respondents talked of total disarray and classes out of control while others stated that there was a lack of motivation to do the work when “*all you do is walk in and hear things like, just sit-down, shut-up, and answer the questions at the end of the chapter.*”

Failure to *schedule students for the proper courses, programs and code students correctly in the campus database* was reported as causing a down spiraling of students that did not have the support from home. Parents and students lacked an understanding of the problems entailed and how to intervene by communicating these issues with the proper authorities to help correct such matters. Participants reported that they were placed in classes that were not needed and some of those classes were even repeated. Sometimes parents were only told that the child was cutting class and/or skipping school. One student stated that he took two TAAS classes (*Texas Academic Assessments of Skills Test*), while in high school that he did not need.

Meanwhile school personnel appeared to have been slow to correct pupil accounting errors and readily offer explanations, apologies and solutions to students and parent/s for the problem/s that confronted them. Still another student recalled teachers accusing them of not turning in assignments that the teacher misplaced and as a result, the student had to redo and again submit the disputed work.

Respondents frequently discussed teachers and counselors when they were asked to expound upon their perceptions involving school staff. While several respondents recalled that they remembered the concern and assistance received from some teachers and counselors, most reports were of a negative nature for teachers and counselors. One respondent stated that they (*teachers/counselors*) were always “*too busy*” to assist them adequately

The findings indicated that in-school systems or the lack thereof have failed to engage all students in the learning process for whatever reason/s; i.e. Black male respondents having “failed”, whether personally and/or by their high schools, perceive that critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completing a program which leads to graduation, is part of a system’s failure to incorporate and implement known appropriate resources, be it human and/or otherwise, to effectively educate all learners in this large urban district.

Findings Summarized by Research Questions

Findings from the four Research Questions:

1. Are there things that happened to you at school that made you want to dropout?
2. What are the varieties of critical incidents reported as those that bear some relevance to dropping out?
3. What are the in-school contexts reported in respondents' critical incidents?
4. What are the given titles of dominant persons, programs or policies related to the recalled incidents?

Findings also revealed that all respondents targeted incidents that occurred within the classroom. From the environment or climate to classroom management, instruction and teacher/counselor apathy, problems mainly stemmed from critical incidents with the classroom.

Critical incident also dealt with the classroom setting where teachers failed to provide adequate facilitation and the proper assistance to students. It was noted that respondents spoke of teacher incompetence, lack of teacher/counselor assistance and concern as well.

Although response were similar for Research Questions #1 and #2, additional concern was raised regarding properly recorded data and mismanaged course enrollment and assignments. Concern for safety and a need to improve the overall climate were two additional areas mentioned by the respondents as well.

Limitation of Findings

While a sample group of respondents indicated their perceptions of critical incidents in school as being related to their school dropout, the frequency or extent is undetermined. Problems relating to critical incidents in the areas of school personnel, teacher/counselor and instructional/scheduling practices and procedures are numerous and would require further extensive studies to derive in-depth findings pertaining to each of the above areas of involvement.

Implications and Policy Recommendations

Implications for Policy and Program

Under the education law *No Child Left Behind*, increased federal and state accountability measures continue to be driven by legislative changes and educational policy that center on effective educational practices needed for students to meet standardized state graduation requirements. *Poor Black and Latino parents have supported high-stakes testing because they know that the schools are not teaching their children basic reading and math skills and they want to hold those schools accountable* (Lawrence, 2003).

Based on participant responses, continuous focus must be given to appropriate implementation of curriculum and instruction to include effective professional development for teachers and other campus personnel as well (counselors, principals and other instructional personnel). Curricular changes dictated by testing pressures will need

to be addressed in order to overcome the absence of content of greatest and most vital interest to adolescent males of color.

School-wide leadership from the principal down could promote and develop the needed climate/environment conducive for student engagement in the academic process and for minimizing to alleviating student dropout (Green, 2005; Cotton, 2003; McEvoy, 2003; Fullan, 2002; Uchiyama & Wolf, 2002; Ubben et al., 2001; Tucker & Coddling, 1998; Hirsch, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Grant, 1985; Bunzel, 1985; Squires, Huitt, & Segars, 1983). It begins with the tone being set by the campus instructional leader. From the beginning, high expectations must be set for all learners. It has to do with finding where students are individually and building from the known to the unknown. The system must be rebuilt around the learner rather than learner having to fit around the system. Student engagement is approached from the student's point of interest/s and methodically guided to where the educator needs to take him.

More conducted studies might help to influence policy and teaching/ learning strategies with which to engage and empower all students academically, socially and emotionally. Perhaps some policy to require more direct teacher/student contact hours in the actual observation (shadowing) of modeled/master facilitation or teaching implementation would be more effective than the present form of professional development of basically "stand and deliver" with a few cute and somewhat meaningful activities. The impact of direct-teach which entails classroom observation could prove to be more beneficial than the present form of professional development. Some type of scheduling rotation for the

district and/or campus would have to be established that would take into account revolving schedules by areas; and mentoring, coaching and consulting components.

Implications for Teacher Retraining and Cultural Education

The *Survey/Questionnaire*, *Structured Interview Activity Scale* and *Formal Interview* each bore information about schools and classrooms that have totally missed the challenge and the opportunity to engage students in their learning. The enrollment of African American males in alternative programs continues to increase for both public and private institutions. Over 50% of the respondents of this study have completed or plan to complete high school through a public (*large urban district program of this study*) alternative program. Thirty percent of respondents completed their schooling with a GED or private alternative institution. Could this movement have anything to do with the perception of critical incidents in the general/traditional high school as it relates to the dropout of young adult Black males?

Curricular changes are needed which give emphasis to learning and coping with real life problems of these students. Health education, exploratory work experiences as well as socialization, economic and conflict resolution studies may well be the kinds that are required.

Mentoring adults who work closely with individual students to assist them in dealing with frustrations, conflicts and boredom may be needed.

More conducted studies might help to influence policy and teaching/ learning strategies with which to engage and empower all students academically, socially and emotionally. Respondents did not respond favorably for the most part concerning in-school personnel, instruction, classroom management and/or climate although instruments were set for both positive and negative remarks. Far too many took the easy way of responding down the center for the category *Sometimes* on one of the rating instruments (Activity Scale rating) which was an indication that students were not actively being exposed and challenged to the romance and intrinsic value of learning by teachers who were passionately involved with their craft of facilitating and engaging students in the learning process.

Based on participant responses, continuous focus must be given to appropriate alignment and implementation of curriculum and instruction to include effective professional development for teachers and other campus personnel as well (counselors, principals and other instructional personnel).

For example, in-service training on curriculum mapping, both horizontal (teaching/learning that takes place across the subjects) and vertical, (teaching/learning that takes place from grade level to grade level) would help teachers and administrators focus the delivery and implementation of content, skills, activities and assessments of students at different grade levels and abilities. Curriculum mapping is essential in a teaming approach to develop interdisciplinary lessons, cross-curricular lessons, and vertical alignment.

A high percentage of teachers felt that writing maps provided an opportunity to really think about what they were teaching. They also felt that their teaching improved, their curriculum was more organized, and the maps were relevant to their teaching (Jacobs, 2004).

Through the use of technology formatting, teachers and administrators were able to emphasize alignment as aforementioned which includes schedules, feedback, self-evaluation, content integration and goals both inter and intra campus and districts (Jacobs, 2004).

Investigation into the perception of critical incidents that further contribute to students' dislike for school might prove profitable for educators in meeting the needs of learners. Based on conversations and observation of respondents that leave school and later enroll in an alternative program, general/traditional classroom teachers and staff should follow the model of gained student respect, a multi-faceted set of approaches to teaching/learning that would establish a more efficient process for delivering research-validated instructional strategies, and concern for the individual learner.

With a growing realization of just how true those words are (What Research Says Effective Teachers Do), preparing and sustaining effective teachers in the classrooms of America's schools is becoming a priority of the highest order in educational policy, especially in schools with significant numbers of poor and racial minority students (Green, 2005).

Respondents spoke highly of their Reconnect Center teachers. It appears that alternative programs better serve the needed individualized concerns for student well-being and the student's grasp for completing his own course of study. This is effectively

accomplished via the collaborative mission of teachers, counselors and administrators committed to implementing a total paradigm shift for students under their tutelage. This shift orchestrates student-centered learning combined with student interest/s and autonomy, and the individualized education plan (IEP) rather than a cookie cutter, one-size-fit-all, traditional program or instructional approach that attempts to make students fit the program.

Implications for Further Research

More in-depth studies of alternative programs of special interest with respect to African American males are needed. Through these programs students learn the necessary transfer or transitional skills and strategies for acquiring depth of knowledge. It is unknown as to whether some of the following implications for further research in this large urban district presently exist according to individual classrooms, schools, campuses and/or areas; however, the practice has not become systemically implemented by the district.

1. Systemic change might be hastened by closely assessing and monitoring district-wide findings of teaching/learning practices. This could prove to be most helpful in assisting teachers and students alike in the implementation and delivery of appropriate curriculum and instruction, pedagogical approaches and methods for eradicating harmful i.e. inequitable practices and conditions.

2. Review of programs in general education settings that are responsive to male African American pre-dropouts
3. Higher expectations for African American males that is void of racist stigma and stereotype.
4. Exploring each student's interest/s and given intellectual gifts through more student-interests survey/questionnaires self-evaluations and school and personnel assessments as well.
5. "Actions speak louder than words open door policy" that would include frequent feedback from students concerning their studies, course enrollment, educational plans, campus and staff observations and concerns via surveys, email, hotline and/or in person.
6. Parent, community and business industry involvement components connected to students that may potentially be at risk for dropping out.
7. It is suggested that replication of this study using Hispanics also be further researched with a focus on ethnic and racist biases.
8. A study of alternative views concerning mentoring by caring teacher might also be considered for comparing and contrasting view points and perspectives.

9. Another consideration which might also be a policy issue deals with specific institutional responses of promise for assisting with critical concerns.

Implications for Further Program Restructuring

Expert mentors who will listen and who are also prepared to coach and consult with teachers appear to be needed according to respondent remarks which implied that teacher performance/instruction was not up to par. The mentors would through observation and one-on-one dialogue, assist teachers with more personalized and flexible implementation of individualized instructional facilitation to students; for example, “virtual schools” in the form of *online learning and/or e-learning, service/skills learning, and field lessons/projects*. There is an art and science to the mastery and delivery of teaching for which self-compelled teacher strive to become.

All respondents were concerned about the lack of being able to find full-time and/or part-time employment after dropping out of school. Given the forecast of the current and future economy and labor market, service/skills learning might better assist students to focus on the purpose and benefits of completing high school as a means of putting their livelihood in perspective. Connections are readily made between basic portable skills and entrepreneurial skills identifiable in both school and meaningful well-selected service projects that relate to student interest/s and aptitudes. Through an array of experiences and exposure, it is hoped that students might grasp the “big picture” of how

high school completion as a stepping-stone helps one to transition to their advantage point into post secondary studies and/or employability.

With systemic consistency, communication and the patience of well-informed instructional leaders, responsible counselors and teachers, it appears that an integrated curriculum with challenging and fun approaches to learning could establish a personalized atmosphere to guide students from 9th through 12th grade without annual disruptions. Effective communication in the form of feedback to students and teachers and from students and teachers regarding regular assessment performance are also needed measures for positive results not only for the student and teacher, but for the state-defined standards as well.

Departmentalization around academic disciplines exasperates student opportunity for meaningful learning. Core programs focus on real-life problems of adolescent life need to be considered.

Student-teacher relationships need to be addressed as needlessly disruptive of student engagement and sense of belonging when complete changes are made every semester and/or year in both subjects and scheduling.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey/Questionnaire

Initial Mail-out Research Instrument

Survey/Questionnaire

Please complete and return the Survey/Questionnaire in the stamped self-address envelope provided as soon as possible.

Survey Prerequisites

This survey is intended to gather the response of men of African descent from 18 years of age and older who at one time were considered to have been high school dropouts in an urban district. Please check or fill in the appropriate questions:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City & Zip Code: _____

Birth Year: _____

Gender: _____

Female

Male

Ethnic Background:

Asian

Black

Hispanic

Native Indian

White

Mixed

Dropout year/s recorded: _____ / _____ / _____
Once Twice Three or more

Withdrawal year: _____ Withdrawal date: _____

Last senior high school attended: _____ Grade Level _____

(Last enrolled as a regular/full-time student) 9th 10th 11th
12th

How many years were you enrolled (*senior high school*) before finally dropping out?

Less than a year

One Year

Two Years

Three Years

More than three years

Other High Schools attended: _____, _____, _____.

In-School Related Issues and/or Factors

Check all the reasons that possibly prevented you from remaining in high school (*Focus only on the time you spent in your last and/or only high school*).

- Suspension or expulsion for misbehavior
- Poor grades
- Poor attendance
- Intimidating class size
- Not being able to keep up
- Lack of challenging studies
- Poor instruction
- Lack of teacher/educator apathy/concern
- Personality conflicts with:

___ Student/s ___ Administrator/s ___ Counselor/s ___ Other

Out-of-School Related Issues and/or Factors

- Personal illness
- Drug and alcohol abuse and/or addiction issues
- Conflict/noise/confusion at home
- Lack of self-motivation/discipline
- A regular job
- Work to help support the family—can not/could not juggle both school and a job
- Getting married, getting pregnant, and/or becoming a parent.
- Becoming a member of a gang—and its activities leading away from school activities
- Incarceration as juvenile or adult
- How much did you talk to your parent/guardian about pursuing your work at school?

___ Never ___ Sometimes ___ Often

- Besides your parent/guardian, did you have other valuable guides in your life that served as mentors like church leaders, teachers, or other interested adults in the community?

(Check the ones most involved with you).

___ Minister/Clergy ___ Teacher & Subject taught _____
___ Mentor/Coach ___ Employer _____ other

- Were you involved with community groups, clubs, sports hobbies and/or the discovery of your passions/talents?

___ Yes ___ No

- Were you involved with extra-curricular activities at school?

___ Never ___ Sometimes ___ Often

- Did you personally attempt to seek other resources? Such as:

___ Counseling, ___ Test preparation, ___ Homework preparation,
___ Tutoring ___ other

List some things that could have possibly stopped/prevented you from dropping out of high school:

Given the opportunity to do things over, what would you do differently about your decision to quit school?

Appendix B

Activity Scale/Structured Interview

Part I & Part II

PART I OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PERCEPTION OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS ACTIVITY SCALE

Perception of Critical Incidents Related to Classroom Instruction

Volunteer interviewees should complete the written portion before verbally communicating their thoughts aloud. Statements are thought provokers to prompt expansive elaboration and clarification through verbal communication.

Circle the most appropriate answer or the one with which you most agree.

1. You were made to feel a part of the class during classroom instruction.

Always	_____	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	_____	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	_____	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	_____	Never
--------	-------	---	-------	------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------------	-------	-------

2. You were expected to do challenging, and meaningful work in class.

Always	_____	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	_____	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	_____	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	_____	Never
--------	-------	---	-------	------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------------	-------	-------

3. The time you spent in school was often dull and monotonous.

Always	_____	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	_____	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	_____	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	_____	Never
--------	-------	---	-------	------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------------	-------	-------

4. You were optimistic that you could perform the work.

Always	_____	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	_____	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	_____	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	_____	Never
--------	-------	---	-------	------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------------	-------	-------

5. Adequate and appropriate instructions were given to you along with the assistance needed to perform successfully in the area of academic achievement.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

6. You were encouraged by the level and delivery of instruction and resources.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

7. You were encouraged to learn through your interest and learning style/s (*Hands-on, listening, visual, hearing... etc...*).

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

8. The teacher took advantage of opportunities to facilitate learning through the various/diverse cultures and ethnic groups to include yours.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

9. I recall certain classroom incidents that troubled me during senior high school.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

10. I recall certain classroom incidents that troubled me during senior high school.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

11. Certain classroom/school incidents caused me to doubt myself in senior high school.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

12. Certain classroom/school incidents angered me to the point of not being able to concentrate or remain focused on my studies and schooling in senior high school.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

Perception of Critical Incidents Related to Adult Intervention in My High School

13. You were made to feel as if you were respected both socially and emotionally.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

14. Rules of fairness and equality were established for all students to adhere to.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(Occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

15. School personnel modeled/practice the “Golden Rule” *(Do unto others as you would have them do unto you)*.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

16. Students were encouraged to model/practice the “Golden Rule” *(Do unto others as you would have them do unto you)*.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

17. I can recall certain school personnel that made it very unpleasant for me.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

18. School staff member/s said are did some things that were very hurtful.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

19. I had a gut feeling that no school staff member was genuinely interested in my well being.

– – – –

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

Perception of Critical Incidents Related to the Physical and Emotional Environment

20. A climate for student safety and concern was promoted by campus personnel.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

21. School activities, organizations and governances were democratically and diversely represented according to the demography (*the ethnic and gender make up of the student body*) of the campus i.e. peer mediation teams, student council, National Honor Society, student class officers, drill team, cheerleaders, band, orchestra, choir, and other such organizations.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

22. Extra measures were effectively taken to visibly promote cultural diversity through bulletin board displays; photographs of the student body, faculty, staff, families, community involvement, career and student related projects and the like;

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

23. All parents/guardians, the business sector and community were made to feel welcome and were involved in establishing a global atmosphere.

Always	–	Nearly Always <i>(in most cases)</i>	–	Sometimes <i>(occasionally)</i>	–	Rarely <i>(hardly ever)</i>	–	Never
--------	---	---	---	------------------------------------	---	--------------------------------	---	-------

PART II OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

General information as it relates to the high school setting and thoughts of the volunteer interviewee

High school graduates in immediate family (number). ____ (Relationship; i.e. Aunt, uncle, cousin)

What are your talents (examples music, art, cooking, writing, car repair)? _____

Approximate the number of good friends you had while in school. ____

What are you good at doing? _____

What are you not so good at doing? _____

What do you remember about your high school setting that was outstanding?

What was it about your high school setting that you did not particularly like or that you could have done without? _____

What clubs and/or organizations did you belong to while in high school? _____

What was your greatest success in high school? _____

Did you work while in high school? Yes ___ No ___

Part time ___ Full time ___ Number of hours per week ___

Do you work now? Yes ___ No ___

While in high school did you have pressures from family, friends, and/or classmates? Yes ___ No ___

In high school did you have an opportunity to help others? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, who did you help? _____

If No, why not? _____

General information as it relates to the high school setting and thoughts of the volunteer interviewee

How were your parents involved with the schools?

- Volunteers
- PTA
- Helped in classroom
- Chaperone on school trips
- were not involved with the school

Please complete the following statements:

What people do not know about me _____

What people need to know about me _____

In five years I would like to be _____

In school, I was excited about _____

In school, I was bored with _____

To students, I would advise them to _____

If I had an opportunity to do things differently, I would _____

Explain how some of the things that happened to you in school are connected or had something to do with you quitting school before graduating. _____

APPENDIX C

Table 4.6

Triangulation of Activity Responses			
	Survey/Question	Activity Scale	Formal Interview
1 - Self-doubt (<i>imposed</i>) in the classroom	Not covered	50% +	Derrick 1, 9, 12, 13
2 - Dull/monotonous 7, and boring classes and work assignments	4% of 25	58% +	Derricks 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12
3 - Teacher/counselor- 12, 13 centered rather than student-centered	Not covered	27% + 09% + #17 & #18	Derricks, 6, 7, 8, 9,
4 - Critical incidents in school that were troublesome	Not covered	41% + 33% + #9 & #10	13 out of 13 Derricks
5 - Lack of teacher/counselor concern & support; teacher apathy	16% of 25	45% +	12 out of 13 Derricks
6 - Poor instruction	16% of 25	25% + 33% + 24% + #5, #6, & #7	12 out of 13 Derricks
7 - Poor 13 classroom management	Not covered	24% +	Derricks 5, 8, 9, 12,

Part I of the Structured Interview "Perception of Critical Incidents Activity Scale"

*Volunteer Interviewees completed the "Perception of Critical Incidents Related to Classroom Instruction" portion of the survey before verbally communicating the same and similar shared experiences with interviewer.

**Not all respondents selected a response to each of the 23 survey statements.

However, calculations were made by total respondents to total responses and percentages computed. Not all statements have a total value of 100%. See Exhibit 4.4 for detailed statements.

Survey Results

Statement #	Always	Nearly Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total %
1	25%	16%	42%	16%	0	99%
2	16%	8%	67%	8%	0	99%
3	8%	50%	33%	8%	0	99%
4	25%	25%	33%	16%	0	99%
5	8%	8%	50%	25%	0	91%
6	0	25%	40%	25%	8%	98%
7	16%	25%	33%	8%	16%	98%
8	8%	0	58%	8%	25%	99%
9	33%	8%	25%	16%	16%	98%
10	25%	8%	33%	16%	0	82%
11	8%	42%	33%	8%	8%	99%
12	8%	16%	58%	0	16%	98%
13	33%	25%	33%	8%	0	99%
14	25%	16%	16%	33%	8%	98%
15	8%	8%	75%	8%	0	99%
16	25%	16%	33%	25%	0	99%
17	16%	8%	16%	0	8%	48%
18	0	8%	8%	8%	25%	49%
19	16%	8%	25%	0	0	49%
20	0	8%	8%	16%	16%	48%
21	8%	25%	0	16%	0	49%
22	0	16%	25%	0	8%	49%
23	8%	8%	25%	8%	0	49%

Distribution of Critical Incidents by Individual Interviewees

Name	1 Teacher/Counselor Apathy	2 Poor/No Instruction	3 Personalit Conflict	4 Lack of Teacher Counselor Support	5 Unable to Keep Up in Course Work	6 Unchallenging Studies	7 Personnel Errors with Student Records	8 School Schedule
Derrick 1	√	√	√	√				
Derrick 2	√	√	√	√		√		
Derrick 3	√	√		√	√			
Derrick 4	√	√		√	√	√		
Derrick 5	√	√		√		√		
Derrick 6	√	√		√	√	√		√
Derrick 7	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
Derrick 8	√	√		√		√	√	√
Derrick 9	√	√		√	√		√	√
Derrick 10	√	√	√	√				
Derrick 11	√	√		√		√		
Derrick 12	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Derrick 13	√?	√?	√	√?	√		√?	
	100% or 92%	100% or 92%	46%	100% or 92%	46%	61.5 or 62%	38% or 30%	38%

Distribution of Critical Incidents by Individual Interviewees

Name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Student Schedule & 4 Yr Degree Plan	Partiality/Favoritism Toward oth Students	Teacher/Counselor Low Expectation of Students	Lack of Social Interaction wth Peers	Classroom Management	School Violence	Peer Intimidation
Derrick 1		√	√				
Derrick 2		√	√	√			
Derrick 3							
Derrick 4							
Derrick 5		√	√		√		
Derrick 6				√		√	
Derrick 7	√		√				
Derrick 8	√	√	√		√		
Derrick 9	√	√	√	√	√		√
Derrick 10				√			
Derrick 11			√	√	√	√	
Derrick 12	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Derrick 13	√			√	√		√
	38%	46%	62%	53%	46%	23%	23%

Part II of The Structured Interview

General information as it relates to the high school setting and thoughts of the volunteer interviewee.

*Respondents were asked to respond to survey instrument based upon their personal experiences in their high school environment. *See Survey Part II, pages 1&2 - Appendix A*

**Chart reflects the range and scope of respondents personal responses. Because these are perceptions they are listed but not ranked.

Responses

Statement#1

High school graduates in immediate family.

Responses: Range from none to greater than 20

Statement#2

What are your talents?

Responses: Range included fine arts skills, martial arts, cooking, writing, auto repair

Statement#3

Approximate number of good friends in high school.

Responses: Range from none to greater than 20

Statement#4

What are you good at doing?

Responses: Range included fine arts skills, making money, rapping, writing, auto repair, building things, nothing

Statement#5

What are you not good at doing?

Responses: Range included mathematics courses, reading, writing, spelling, people skills athletics, hanging out, nothing

Statement#6

What are your outstanding high school memories?

Responses: Responses included some classmates, some teachers, making good grades, athletics, hanging out, nothing

Statement#7

What are your dislikes about your high school setting?

Responses: Range from attitudes of students and some teachers, violence, school hours, teacher support, social groups, travel time to school, some courses

Statement#8

What clubs/organizations did you belong to?

Responses: Range included none, band, choir, drama club

Statement#9

What was your greatest high school success?

Responses: Range included eventually getting diploma, some classes, making good grades just making it to high school

Statement#10

Did you work in high school?

Responses: Range was yes, no with overwhelming majority saying No.

Statement#11

Do you work now?

Responses: Range was yes, no with overwhelming majority saying No.

Statement#12

While in high school did you have pressure from family, friends and/or classmates?

Responses: Range was yes, no with overwhelming majority saying Yes. But no explanation

Statement#13

In high school did you have an opportunity to help others?

Responses: Range was yes, no with overwhelming majority saying Yes.

If Yes, who did you help?

Responses: Majority listed some form of tutoring friends

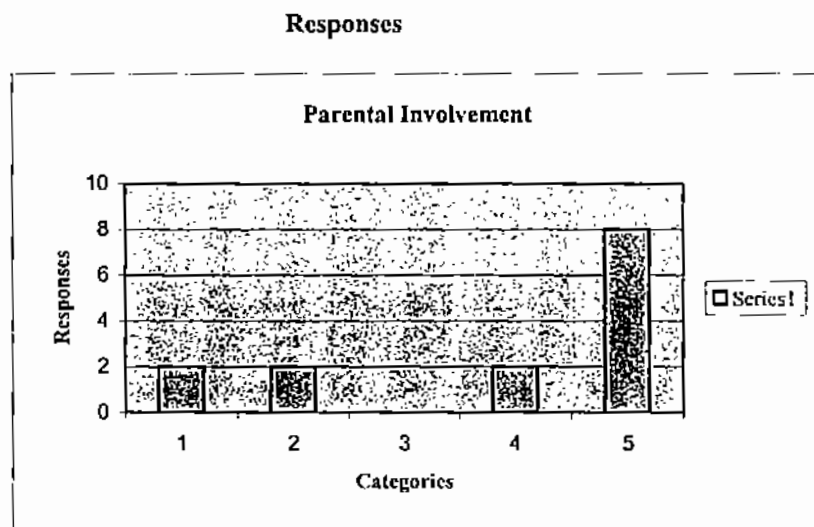
If No, why not?

Responses: None were listed

Statement#14

How were your parent/guardian involved with the school?

Responses: Respondents were given a list of five categories and asked to check all that applied



LEGEND

Volunteers	2
PTA	2
Classroom	0
Chaperones	2
Not involved	8

Conclusion

Based upon frequency of selection:

Not Involved was the primary indicator selected

Structured Interview - (Part II)

General information as it relates to the high school setting and thoughts of the volunteer interviewee.

*Respondents were asked to respond to survey instrument based upon their personal experiences in their high school environment. See Survey Part II, pages 1&2 In Appendices.

**Chart reflects the range and scope of respondents personal responses and gives the interviewer insight into the respondents disappointments, aspirations and feelings about how they are perceived.

Responses

Statement 1

What people do not know about me is:

Responses: I'm intelligent, I want to be a success, I blow up easily, I'm really nice, I have a bad attitude

Statement 2

What people need to know about me is:

Response: I'm really a positive person, I work hard, I want to make a positive impact, I'm dedicated, I'm nice, Don't bother me

Statement 3

In five years I would like to be:

Responses: Still living, working, Be my own boss, Graduating from college

Statement 4

In school, I was excited about:

Responses: My peers, Good grades, Nothing, Drama class, Just getting out of school, Graduating, but I didn't

Statement 5

In school, I was bored with:

Responses: My teachers, Classroom work, Everything, Activities, Nothing, School period

Statement 6

To students, I would advise them to:

Responses: Strive to be the best, Hang in there, Don't skip classes, Go with your dreams

Statement 7

If I had an opportunity to do things differently, I would:

Responses: Not dropout, Stay focused, Change school, Done the same thing, Graduate

Appendix D

2002-2003 PEIMS Data Standards Leaver Codes and Documentation Requirements

Leaver Reason Codes and Documentation Requirements

The attached table provides an expanded definition and specific guidelines on acceptable documentation for each of the leaver reason codes listed in Code Table C162 of the Texas Education Agency 2002-2003 PEIMS Data Standards. The table is organized into the following broad categories of leavers:

- Completed High School Program
- Moved to Other Educational Setting
- Withdrawn by School District
- Academic Performance
- Employment
- Family
- Other

Compulsory Attendance

Several leaver reason codes make reference to the compulsory attendance law, Texas Education Code §§25.085-25.086. The compulsory attendance law requires students to attend school until they are 18 years old. There are two exceptions to this basic law that are relevant to leaver reporting. The exceptions are:

The student is at least 17 years old, is attending a General Educational Development (GED) preparation program, and one of the following four conditions have been met:

- (1) the student has the permission of their parent or guardian to attend the program,
- (2) the student is required by court order to attend the program,
- (3) the student has established a residence separate from their parent or guardian, or
- (4) the student is homeless.

The student is at least 16 years old, is attending a GED preparation program, and one of the following two conditions have been met:

- (1) the student is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the student under court order, or
- (2) the student is attending a Job Corps program.

Acceptable Documentation

Acceptable documentation consists of either a documented request for transcript or a written signed statement from the parent or guardian. Students who are married (or 18 years or older) may sign their own statement. Acceptable documentation also includes verification by the superintendent or authorized representative that the child has been enrolled in a nonpublic school or another program or institution leading to the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate, has returned to their home country, is being home schooled, has enrolled in college in a program leading to an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, or has other similar circumstances.

Documentation must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district. The district should have a written policy stating who can act as an authorized representative for purposes of signing withdrawal forms and other leaver reason documentation.

Withdrawal forms completed by the parent/guardian or adult student should be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student as well as the district representative. Adult students include students who are 18 years old or older, students of any age who are married, and students who have established a separate residence from their parents or guardians.

An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student. Written documentation of oral statements made by the parent/guardian or adult student (in person or by telephone) is acceptable documentation in some situations if it is signed and dated by the district representative.

A statement by an adult neighbor or other adult (other than the parent/guardian or adult student) is allowed only to document a student returning to home country. In all other cases the documentation must be provided by the parent/guardian or adult student, or an educational or other institution.

Documentation is required for dropout reason codes as well as other leaver reason codes.

Documentation supporting use of a leaver reason code must exist in the district at the time the leaver data are submitted (no later than the mid-January PEIMS Submission 1 resubmission date).

Merits of leaver documentation are assessed at the time the documentation is requested during a data inquiry investigation. Determination of the acceptability of documentation is made by the professional staff conducting the investigation. These guidelines describe the most common types of documentation the investigator would expect to find supporting use of each leaver reason code. Other documentation that represents good business practice and shows a good faith effort on the part of the district to properly report leaver status will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Intent to Enroll in Another School or Program.

Intent to enroll elsewhere must be documented at the time the student withdraws or quits attending school – generally within 10 days of the last day the student attended school. If intent is not documented at that time, the district must acquire documentation that the student is enrolled elsewhere. For students who do not return to school in the fall after completing the prior school year, intent must be documented at the end of the prior school year.

Acceptable documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program is a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form), completed at the time the student quits attending school in the district, and signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate either where the family is moving, the name of the school the student will be attending, or that the student will be home schooled. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student.

A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student written at the time the student quits attending school in the district, stating that the student will enroll elsewhere or will be home schooled, is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student made at the time the student quits attending school in the district, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

Enrollment in Another School or Program.

Acceptable documentation of enrollment in another school or educational program is a records request from the school or educational program in which the student is enrolled. Telephone requests must be documented in writing, including the date of the call, the name of the school requesting the records, the name of the person making the request, and the name of the person who received the call.

A signed letter from the receiving school or education program verifying enrollment is also acceptable documentation. The letter must state the name and location of the school or program in which the student is enrolled. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by a representative of the receiving school or program providing the name and location of the school or program and verifying that the student is enrolled, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
Completed High School Program	
01* Student graduated	<p>Use for students who meet all graduation requirements (which includes passing the exit-level TAAS) at any time during the prior school year, including the summer following the close of the prior year.</p> <p>To graduate a student must satisfy the requirements under 19 TAC Chapter 74, Subchapter B. Special education students must satisfy requirements under 19 TAC §89.1070.</p> <p>Students who complete all graduation requirements in one school year, but do <u>not</u> pass the exit-level TAAS until a later year, are reported as graduates in the year in which the TAAS test is passed.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.</p>
19* Student failed exit-level TAAS but met all other graduation requirements	<p>Use for students who completed all other graduation requirements but did not pass the exit-level TAAS before the end of the school year, and did not enroll in school the next year. If the student does enroll the next year, a leaver record is not submitted.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Transcript showing sufficient credits.</p>
31* Student completed the GED, and district has acceptable documentation and student has not returned to school	<p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.</p>
63* Student graduated in a previous school year, returned to school, and left again	<p>This code may be used for students who graduated in the reporting district or from another district, state, or country. Students who graduate mid-year should be reported as graduates even if they return to school later in the same year.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.</p>
64* Student had received a GED in a previous school year, returned to school to work toward the completion of a high school diploma, and then left	<p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.</p>
Moved to Other Educational Setting	
80* Student withdrew from/left school to enroll in another Texas public school district	<p>Student withdrawn from school and parent/ guardian or adult student indicated at time of withdrawal that the student would be enrolling in another Texas public school district, including charter schools (code 80), a private school in Texas (code 81), or a public or private school outside Texas (code 82). The district may or may not receive a records request from the other school, and is not</p>
81* Student withdrew from/left school to enroll in a private school in Texas	

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
82* Student withdrew from/left school to enroll in a public or private school outside Texas	<p>required to follow up with the school the parent/guardian or adult student indicated the student would be attending.</p> <p>These codes should be used when the parent/ guardian or adult student indicates at the time the student quits attending school that the intent is for the student to enroll elsewhere.</p> <p>If the student intends to enroll in another school in the district, a leaver record is not submitted.</p>
80*, 81*, and 82* (continued)	<p>80*, 81*, and 82* (continued)</p> <p>These codes would be used in the following situations:</p> <p>(1) The parent/guardian or adult student withdraws the student but does not indicate at that time that the student will be enrolling elsewhere. They may indicate some other reason for the student to be leaving school or not indicate any reason. However, the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student that the student is enrolled in another public school district in Texas, including charter schools (code 80); private school in Texas (code 81); or public or private school outside Texas (code 82).</p> <p>(2) The student quits attending school without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student.</p> <p>(3) Student moves during the summer without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student.</p> <p>The district would change the original code assigned to the student, or add this code, when the records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student is received. If the original withdrawal date for the student is later than the date the student enrolled in the other school, the withdrawal date must be changed and all attendance accounting records affected by this change must be updated.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program or requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.</p>

School leavers coded with this LEAVER-REASON-CODE are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
<p>21* Student who still resides in the district officially transferred to another Texas public school district through completion of an <i>ACC-041BR01, Transfers Beginning May 1</i> form</p>	<p>Form ACC-041BR01, Transfers Beginning May 1, is the official transfer form used when a student who lives in one school district transfers to a school in a neighboring school district. These transfers are approved by the superintendents of both districts; the students are coded with an ADA eligibility code of 3 or 6 in the districts to which they transfer.</p> <p>This code should be used by districts that do not serve all grade levels for students in grades 7 or higher who have completed all grades offered in the home district and are being transferred to a neighboring district.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Required documentation is a copy of the ACC-041BR01, Transfers Beginning May 1, completed and signed by both superintendents or their authorized representatives.</p>

School leavers coded with this LEAVER-REASON-CODE are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

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Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
<p>22* Student withdrew from/left school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (TEC Sections 25.085-25.086), and district has acceptable documentation that the student is working toward the completion of high school (diploma or GED certificate)</p>	<p>Use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy programs. If the student enrolls in one of these state-approved programs, the district does <u>not</u> need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws (state approved programs will not accept students unless they are in compliance) and does <u>not</u> need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED (this is the only option these state-approved programs offer).</p> <p>Also use for migrant students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in U.S. Department of Labor High School Equivalency Programs (HEP). If the student enrolls in a HEP, the district does <u>not</u> need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does <u>not</u> need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED.</p> <p>Also use for students who are at least 16 years old and leave the district to enroll in Job Corps training programs. Job Corps is the only program in which 16 year olds can voluntarily enroll and still be in compliance with compulsory attendance laws. If the student enrolls in a Job Corps program, the district does <u>not</u> need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does <u>not</u> need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED.</p> <p>Also use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs to work toward completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate. For alternative programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs the district must determine that the student is working toward a high school diploma or GED certificate because these programs may offer students other options such as job training. For 17 year old students, the district must also determine that the student meets one of three additional conditions of the compulsory attendance law: student has parent/ guardian permission to attend the program, student has established a residence separate from the parent/ guardian, or student is homeless.</p> <p>The district is not required to track the student's attendance or progress in the alternative program or to ascertain that the student actually obtains a high school diploma or GED certificate.</p> <p>Do not use for students 17 or younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program - use code 72.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.</p> <p>If the program is not a state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps program, the documentation must indicate that the student is in compliance with the compulsory attendance law and is pursuing a high school diploma or GED certificate.</p> <p>Written documentation of an oral statement by a representative of the alternative program, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district, is acceptable.</p>

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
72* Student was court ordered to attend an alternative education program.	<p>Use for students 17 and younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program.</p> <p>The district is not required to confirm enrollment or attendance in the court-ordered program.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Copy of the court order.</p>
60* Student withdrew from/left school for home schooling	<p>Student withdrawn from or left school and parent/guardian or adult student indicates at time of withdrawal that the student will be home schooled or when contacted by district that the student is being home schooled. The district is not required to obtain evidence that the program being provided meets educational standards.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is being home schooled is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is being home schooled, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.</p>
24* Student withdrew from/left school to enter college and is working towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree	<p>This code is for students who leave secondary school to enter college early. It should be used for students who are enrolled full-time (at least 9 credit hours per semester).</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.</p> <p>Documentation of enrollment in a college or university must indicate that the student is enrolled full-time in an academic program.</p>
Withdrawn by School District	
78* Student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007 and cannot return to school	<p>This code is used for situations in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007, <u>and</u> • the term of expulsion has not expired <u>or</u> the student's failure to attend school is due to court action. <p>Documentation Requirement: Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.</p>

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Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
79 Student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007 but can now return to school and has not done so	<p>This code is used for situations in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007, <u>and</u> • the term of expulsion has expired, <u>and</u> • the student's failure to attend school is <u>not</u> due to court action. <p>Documentation Requirement: Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.</p>
83* Student was withdrawn from school by the district when the district discovered that the student was not a resident at the time of enrollment or had falsified enrollment information, proof of identification was not provided, or immunization records were not provided	<p>This code is used for situations in which the district discovers when verifying enrollment information that the student is not a resident of the district. These are rare situations in which enrollment information was falsified or there was a misunderstanding about which school district the student's residence was located in at the time of enrollment.</p> <p>With few exceptions, students enrolling in Texas public schools must be immunized against specified contagious diseases. Under Texas Department of Health rules districts must provisionally admit students who have begun the required immunizations but may withdraw those who do not complete the immunizations within 30 days.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Due process documentation supporting the withdrawal.</p>
Academic Performance	
84 Student withdrew from/left school for reasons related to academic performance such as low or failing grades, poor attendance, language problems, or TAAS failure	<p>These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is because of low or failing grades, poor attendance, limited English proficiency, age, or TAAS failure. Whether the parent/guardian or student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes.</p>
14 Student withdrew from/left school because of age	<p>These codes may also be assigned based on district review of the student's history of attendance and academic performance before leaving school.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or has left school because of low or failing grades, poor attendance, limited English proficiency, age, or TAAS failure.</p>
Employment	

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
02 Student withdrew from/ left school to pursue a job or job training	<p>These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is to pursue a job or job training (code 02) or join the military (code 04). Whether the parent/guardian or adult student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school to pursue a job (code 02) or join the military (code 04).</p>
04 Student withdrew from/ left school to join the military	
Family	
08 Student withdrew from/left school because of pregnancy	<p>This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy. This code should not be assigned based only on the fact that the student is pregnant at the time she leaves school.</p> <p>This code can be used for male or female students.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy.</p>
09 Student withdrew from/left school because of marriage	<p>This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage. The district is not required to confirm that the student is married.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage.</p>
15 Student withdrew from/left school because of homelessness or non-permanent residency	<p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of homelessness or non-permanent residency.</p>
66* Student was removed by Child Protective Services (CPS) and the district has not been informed of the student's current status or enrollment	<p>This code applies only to Child Protective Services. Private agencies that provide asylum for students do not have the legal authority to remove students from school.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Due process documentation supporting this withdrawal.</p>
Other Reasons	
03* Student died while enrolled in school or during the summer break after completing the prior school year	<p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is a copy of the death certificate or obituary.</p>

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Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
10 Student withdrew from/left school because of alcohol or other drug abuse problems	<p>This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Student does not have to be admitted into a treatment program.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or adult student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems.</p>
16* Student withdrew from/left school to return to family's home country	<p>Use for students whose families are leaving the United States. The citizenship of the student is not relevant in assigning this code.</p> <p>This code can also be used for foreign exchange students.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is a copy of the Transfer Document for Binational Migrant Student completed at the time the student withdraws from school, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district. Acceptable documentation is also a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form) signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home country and should specify the destination. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student.</p> <p>A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home county is also acceptable documentation.</p>
16* Continued	<p>Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian, adult student, or other adult with knowledge of the family's whereabouts, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district.</p>

Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
30* Student withdrew from/left school to enter a health care facility	<p>Health care facilities provide medical and/or rehabilitation services. They include hospitals, nursing homes, cancer treatment centers, burn centers, drug and rehabilitation facilities, and mental health treatment facilities. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students in health care facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted.</p> <p>Use this code for private health care facilities that provide their own educational programs. Also use for students who are entering a health care facility outside the district if the district does not know which school district will be providing educational services to the student. Use for students who are entering health care facilities outside Texas.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program or requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. These requirements also apply to students withdrawing from/leaving school to enter a health-care facility. A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is enrolled in a health care facility is also acceptable documentation. The letter must state the name and location of the facility. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student providing the name and location of the facility, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.</p>
61* Student was incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	<p>This code applies to juveniles as well as adult students incarcerated in facilities such as juvenile detention centers or jails outside the boundaries of the district. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students incarcerated in facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted.</p> <p>Do not use this code for students who are placed in a JJAEP. If the student is enrolled in a JJAEP, a leaver record is not submitted.</p> <p>Documentation Requirement: Acceptable documentation is written documentation from the facility in which the student is incarcerated.</p> <p>A signed statement from the parent providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated is also acceptable documentation.</p> <p>Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.</p>

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Leaver Reason Codes	
Leaver Code and Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
99 Other (reason unknown or not listed above)	<p>This code is used for students who are withdrawn by the school district after a period of time because they have quit attending school and their reason for leaving is not known.</p> <p>It is also used for students who withdrew from/left school for reasons not listed above.</p>

Appendix E

Institutional and School District Proposals & Approvals

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

Exhibit 4

Instructions: (1) abstract (three references in the sample of all for that you plan to administer to district personnel or students for data collection, and (4) the authorization from the Institutional Research Board of your institution (as required for studies involving human subjects) if applicable. Submit items (1)-(4) to: Marisela Abundis-Martinez, Office of Institutional Research, 3700 Ross Avenue, Box 55, Dallas, Texas 75204 (Telephone: 972-925-4013, Fax: 972-925-4009).

Name: Henri L. Simpson Date: October 29, 2003

Professional Address: Post Office Box 222246 Dallas, Texas 75222-2246

E-Mail Address: henrisimpson@sbcglobal.net

Contact Telephone: 214.334. 6080 Fax: 214.371. 0965

Can you receive confidential information on the fax number and E-mail address provided above? [X] Yes [] No

Area of Study: Educational Administration

Specific Topic: Critical incidents related to perceived reasons for dropping out of high school

1. Title of Study: A Study of Perceptions:

Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Identified Adult Black Males

2. Major hypotheses/questions to be investigated:

What do Black males, after dropping out of high schools, perceive to have been critical incidents discouraging and/or alienating them from completion and graduation?

3. Summary and rationale:

The focus of this study gives voice to Black-male high school non-completers as they share reflexive perceptions and awareness of past experiences that might offer vital information not only in the lives of other potential dropouts, but in their own lives of once "failed" students continuing to overcome the low expectancies placed upon them by others. Untold stories of images that served to impose self-doubt, conveyed in the form of critical incidents are etched in some memories to date, with high school completion left behind.

4. Student population(s) or data desired (describe in detail):

This study will solicit the participation of Black male students that meet the following criteria:

- The student must be 18 years of age or older
The student was considered by Dallas ISD to have been a dropout during a period of his schooling

- The student may or may not be presently enrolled or re-enrolled with Dallas ISD Reconnection Center, but is listed as a potential participant through recorded district data. The principal investigator with the approval and assistance of the District's Associate Superintendent of Alternative Programs, Dr. H. B. Bell, Assistant Superintendent of Alternative Programs Student Development, Dr. Allen R. Sullivan and the Centers' counseling staff will make contact through the Reconnection Centers.

5. Titles of instruments (forms, questionnaires, tests, etc.) to be used for data collection:

- Random Sample Survey/Questionnaire
- Interview Activity Scale

6. Procedures planned for implementing treatment(s), administering instruments, and/or collecting data from school records:

All participants and potential participants in this study will be identified through Dallas Independent School District Campus and Central Reconnection Centers. The centers, listed under the Alternative Programs Department, serve special needs students through non-traditional classroom settings, self-paced learning opportunities and approaches to resolve specific academic and behavioral needs and issues.

All meetings and interviews will take place at one of the reconnection sites, whichever is most convenient for participants and Reconnection Center staff. The plan is to utilize survey feedback gathered from approximately 100 Black male dropouts that identify with the above criteria and desired response to the survey/questionnaire. Between 60 to 100 participants are expected to take part in this study.

7. Design and statistical techniques planned for data analysis:

The design of the study is based on perceptions and accounts of Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Selected Adult Black Males. This research is an ethnographic case study of a purposely-selected group of African American male dropouts that dropped out of high school in an unnamed urban educational system. Dropping out of school is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon. This study will utilize in-depth interviews, structured to elicit perceptions of specific critical incidents perceived to be associated with leaving school after entering an urban high school.

Interview questions will take into account several operating assumptions based on student perceptions concerning incidents critical to their well-being with respect to growth in academic achievement and social and emotional understanding. The questions relate to perceptions of school environment and classroom accounts of critical incidents as told by African American males that quit school at one point.

8. Expected beginning date and completion date of study:

The study will begin immediately upon approval of the consenting District and end spring, 2004.

9. Form in which findings will be reported:

The findings will be reported in a doctoral dissertation

10. "I, the applicant, do hereby agree that I will abide by the policies and regulations of the Dallas Independent School District and will furnish a copy of the abstract and report describing the findings of the study to the DISD Office of Institutional Research."

Aleni L. Simpson
Signature of Applicant

If you are presently a student, please ask the professional sponsoring your research (e.g., major professor, chairperson of your advisory committee, department head, etc.) to sign the following:

"I am familiar with the proposed study and feel that the researcher submitting this proposal is professionally qualified to undertake the investigation. I also believe the research design to be valid and appropriate."

Alan R. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Signature of Sponsoring Professional

Assistant Superintendent & Committee Member
Position or Title

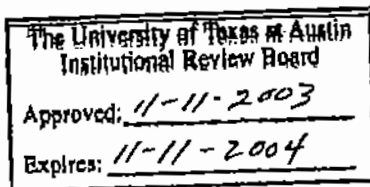
Dallas Independent School Dist & UT Austin
Name of Institution and Department

FOR DISTRICT USE ONLY

Date Approved: _____

Assigned to Dr. Allen R. Sullivan
for coordination Assistant Superintendent of Student Development

Marcelo F. Pinto, Ph.D.
Director, Institutional Research and Accountability



IRB# 2003-09-0053

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

A Study of Perceptions: Critical Incidents Relating to High School Dropout of Identified Adult Black Males

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):

Henri Simpson – Principal Investigator

Doctoral Student – Educational Administration Executive Leadership Program

214.334. 608; 972.925. 3279

Professors Ben Harris and Nolan Estes

Educational Administration Executive Leadership Program

512.471. 7551

Funding source:

Funding is to be paid by the principal investigator.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to provide vivid descriptions or understandings from a group of Black male dropouts (approximately 100) who did not complete their schooling.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

The intent of the principal investor is to:

Contribute to the understanding of complex personal, situational and institutional factors producing dropouts from high schools.

- Contribute to focusing on in-school events and identifying unique causalities often related to the dropout problem.
- Afford dropout respondents an opportunity to tell their story as it relates to perceptions of "critical incidents" experienced at school and/or in the classroom.
- Provide information that might assist teachers of such students and other school personnel
- Create more supportive, successful and motivational school experiences for Black male student learning.
- This will be done by interviewing you and talking with you about critical incidents associated with your schooling and dropping out of school.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

Adequate planning, preparation, and collaboration with the consenting district and volunteer participants, will alleviate possible discomforts. There are no known risks from your participation in the study.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Possible benefits will be derived from attempting to contribute to solving a troubling exodus from our nations schools by looking at what is not apparently understood nor considered enough; goodwill; and ultimately, the elimination of existing "critical incidents" and the lasting effects of humiliation to fellow human-beings.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

The only expense for your participation is that of your time.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

You will not receive compensation for participation in this study?

What if you are injured because of the study?

It is extremely unlikely that you will be injured because of study activities.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin or the Dallas Independent School district.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should tell me. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 512/232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

Beyond publishing or presenting the results, researchers will not benefit from the volunteers' participation in this study.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Henri L. Simpson September 3, 2003
Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent Date

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject Date

Signature of Subject Date

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

Appendix F

Letters to Present to Former & Reconnecting Students of the School District



Dallas Independent School District

March 17, 2004

Dear Present and Former Students:

This letter is being sent to you to ask for your help. We in the district are interested in learning about the views of students who may have at some time experienced difficulty in attending school or who may have dropped out during their school career. Based on the information you provide we would like to design more effective programs that will be of assistance to students who have had school experiences similar to yours. Some students who shall be interviewed may have already graduated while others may not. We are interested in the views of all current and former students of the Dallas Independent School District. This will give you a chance to let us know firsthand what we need to know to improve our educational offerings. Ms. Henri Simpson a doctoral student of the University of Texas Austin will be conducting this study.

Please read the enclosed study information from Ms. Henri Simpson and indicate your willingness to be interviewed. It will not take a lot of your time and will give you a chance to make a real difference for yourself and others. You shall be contacted as a follow-up to this communication. If you have any further questions please call my office at (972) 925-3746. Thank you in advance for your assistance and help.

Sincerely yours,

Allen R. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Assistant Superintendent

Office of Student Development

February 25, 2004

Post Office Box 222246
Dallas, Texas 75222-2246

Dear Volunteer Participant:

I am requesting your participation in a study that will focus on the experiences of African American males who at some point were counted as high school dropouts. The study is designed to consider the ideas of these individuals as they think about critical events that impacted their decision to quit school.

Any contribution that you could make toward this effort would be greatly appreciated. With your permission, I would like to include you in this study. Please complete the attached Survey/Questionnaire and allow me to follow-up with a scheduled interview session to discuss your response to this survey in detail. All information shared such as names, schools and location/s will be kept confidential.

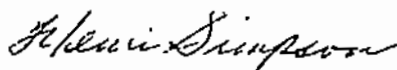
As educators, we realize that there is a side that has not been fully explained and we want to hear first-hand from you and other African American males who would be willing to share their story. The study seeks to understand some of the concerns and problems that may have influenced you and other students to dropout and/or perhaps may not have encouraged you and other students enough to remain in school.

Please allow me the opportunity to include you in this study which could possibly shed more insight and understanding of conditions and experiences that may have contributed to the high school dropout of some African American males. By telling your story, we are better able to define major implications that could first, make a difference in how students are treated and secondly, influence the quality of the education of every student, in every school and classroom to come after.

Please contact me at 214.334. 6080 or 214.372. 9107 as soon as possible to schedule an interview to discuss your perception of critical incidence that may have occurred during your high school years as explained in the attached Survey/Questionnaire. Please send the Study Permission form back in the enclosed stamp addressed envelope as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Henri Simpson
Doctoral Student
University of Texas at Austin



Dallas Independent School District

December 8, 2003

Marcelo F. Pinto
Dallas Independent School District
3709 Ross Avenue, Portable 3
Dallas, Texas 75024

Henri L. Simpson
P.O. Box 222246
Dallas, Texas 75222-2246

RE: Approval to conduct *Critical Incidents Related to Perceived Reasons for Dropping out of High School* at DISD

Dear Ms. Simpson:

The Research Review Committee of the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) has reviewed and approved your proposal to conduct the above-referenced study. Based on the information provided, the committee concluded that the study served a worthwhile purpose, and its findings will be beneficial to the district.

It is our understanding that you have read and agreed to the terms described in *Procedures and Policies for Conducting Extra-District Research in the Dallas Independent School District*. In addition, according to the proposal submitted to this Committee, participants in your study will be 18 years of age or older and will sign an informed consent form. Please note that all identifying student information should remain confidential and that any data collected from DISD should be used only for the purpose of the proposed study.

Per your request, your proposal was assigned to Dr. Allen R. Sullivan for coordination. Approval by this committee provides no guarantee that DISD's departments, schools or personnel must comply with data requests for the proposed study.

Please submit a copy of your report within 30 days of completion. Best wishes on your study.

Sincerely,

Marcelo F. Pinto, Ph.D.
Director
Institutional Research and Accountability

CC: Allen R. Sullivan

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