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# Investigating an Afterschool Program for Black Teenage Males Designed to Increase Self-Efficacy

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Investigating an Afterschool Program for Black Teenage Males Designed to Increase
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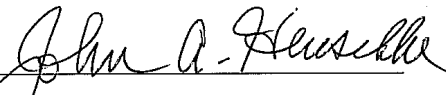
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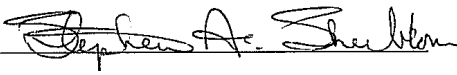

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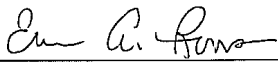

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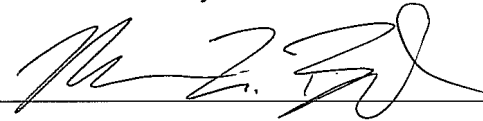
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

This is a study of the experiences of Black male teenagers in an after-school program designed to increase self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the measure of one's confidence in their capacity to achieve an ultimate goal. Inequality has proven to be a cyclical state-of-being that plagues families from one generation to another. In many instances, Black families find themselves in this cycle of inequality. Education seems to be a factor in breaking the cycle. This study was developed under the belief that there are also qualitative components that must be considered when it comes to erasing the gap between minority and white students.

The research question was: Self-efficacy: What happens when it is promoted in an after-school program for Black youths? The name of the after-school program was The Journey and the meetings took place in a classroom in the school building. The participants in this study were all Black males. The participants were chosen randomly from those who met criteria determined by the mentors who conducted The Journey meetings. To answer the research question, the researcher developed an observational protocol to record observations during each meeting. A questionnaire was also created in order to determine any change in self-efficacy. Lastly, interviews were conducted with each participant at the conclusion of the study.

It was found that participants experienced an immediate short-term increase in self-efficacy as determined by qualitative data analysis. The participants created goals in the program that were often lofty and not attainable. The challenge was determining how to maintain that increased level of self-efficacy and motivating the participants to act on it. The participants also exhibited actions apart from the study environment that did not

align with the future goals they set.  Additionally, participants were moved by their

present stimuli and circumstances to make decisions that adversely affect their future.

Future researchers may benefit from this research by considering how to support  a Black

male living in poverty to seek and consistently apply knowledge while maneuvering

around the obstacles of poverty.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Twenty-five years have passed since the publication of "Nation at Risk" in 1984, the document that sparked a much needed discussion about the dismal state of education in the U.S. In 2002, the Federal Government enacted aggressive legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The law requires that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Klein, 2010). While many continue to argue for and against the legislation, it is clear that strides have been made since 1984. However, there is still a long way to go. Public education trails behind many countries in science and math. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) administered a standardized academic achievement exam to over 400,000 students in 65 countries in 2009, and the U.S. educational system ranked 19th in reading, 23rd in science, and 31st in math (Fleischman, Hopstock, & Pelczar, 2010, p. 7). In the past 10-15 years, there has been increased use of student achievement data in education in order to improve learning. This data is used to make the best possible decision for students and to assess the overall performance of the nation's schools. One student population seems to be at the highest risk of not succeeding—Black males.

**The Problem Statement**

As the data is analyzed and the demographics are compared, it is clear that the discrepancy in student achievement between White and Black students has been consistent (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010). This pervasive gap manifests itself into adulthood and it affects the future of Black males (Clark, Harris, & Allen, 2005). Just as an early advantage in life becomes a lifelong advantage, so does an early disadvantage

become a lifelong disadvantage.  For the purposes of this study, this lifelong

disadvantage will be called the cycle of inequality.  Breaking the cycle of inequality,

especially for Black male youths, requires effort, focus, and a great deal of determination

by those in it.

**The Cycle of Inequality**

There is limited literature that directly addresses the concept of the cycle of

inequality.  The term was used in 2009 to describe the persistent gap in achievement in

the public schools in Great Britain (Breaking the Cycle of Inequality, 2009).  There is a

common factor that contributes to the cycle.  This factor is socioeconomic status (SES).

Based on a review of the literature, it would appear that the cycle of inequality is the

perpetuation of low SES from one generation to another.  According to VandenBos,

"socioeconomic status is defined as the social standing or class of an individual or group

and it is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation"

(VandenBos, 2006, p. 371).

One's education, income, and occupation can have a lasting effect on their

outcome (Keller, 2010).  The correlation between low SES and poor school performance

is well documented (Crosnoe, 2009); however little has been done to address this

problem.  Pogrow (2006) claimed, "it is shameful that our society has such high levels of

poverty and that so many of the children born into poverty are concentrated in struggling

schools across the country" (p. 1).  Financial resources afford opportunities to those who

have an abundance of them already.  Those with low SES simply do not have the social

resources, such as money and influential contacts, to assist themselves in overcoming barriers to improving their life.

The cycle of inequality affects many families, however, Blacks find themselves in the cycle of inequality at an alarming rate. More specifically, Black male youths generally underachieve in school paving the way for the cycle to continue. The literature suggests that this is a byproduct of the cycle of inequality.

> Additionally and strongly correlated with those low scores of academic performance, these young [Black] men usually had the highest rates of suspensions, expulsions, non-promotions, dropouts, special education placements, and the lowest rates of secondary school graduation and gifted and talented assignments. (Garibaldi, 2007, p. 324)

In many cases, the disparity is alarming. The test scores of the average Black 12th grader are similar to those of the average White eighth grader (Klein, 2010, p. 12). What makes matters worse is the fact that they are well on the path of the vicious cycle of inequality that consumes the Black male youths and their future families.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to observe the Black male participants who were a part of The Journey during the 2010-2011 school year. The Journey is an after-school program designed to help increase self-efficacy in Black males. Seven Black male students participated during this time. Observational data were collected in addition to questionnaire information from each participant. Participants also answered interview questions at the conclusion of the study.

**Significance of the Study**

The Brown versus Board of Education opinion in 1954 (Hall, 2005) stated that Black students would not be able to achieve as well as their White counterparts in a segregated and unequal environment. Though integration efforts still continue, the on-going result of the NCLB assessments of academic achievement maintains that more needs to be done to assist Black males (Olson & Jacobson, 2006). In an effort to reverse this trend and deflect negative public relations, districts around the country have been trying to find a solution to meet a variety of quotas. Many of them are related to minority student achievement.

In order to find increased academic success among Black males, their attitudes must be dealt with first. Students must believe in their ability to achieve success in school if they put forth the necessary effort. Students obtaining any kind of success hinges upon the direct intervention of the attitudes that have been formed as a result of the various socioeconomic barriers they face daily. These attitudes conflict with one's belief in their capabilities and affect how much effort is put towards the goal. The United States is a country rich in opportunity and resources. Many have made sacrifices so that equal opportunity is given to all. However, in order for those opportunities to yield fruit, students must be internally motivated to plant seeds of time, effort, and passion (Reynolds, 2010). It is the unseen that must be given more attention. The grades that one attains are only the manifestation of a student's direct effort which is due to an inward motivation. It has been over 50 years since the Brown v. Board of Education decision and today, there are different variables that must be considered in order to take advantage

of what that decision made possible for this country today. This study will explore lack of self-efficacy as one of those factors that must be considered to break the cycle of inequality. Self-efficacy is an important factor that can determine if students are successful or not in school (Brady-Amoon, 2011). It is imperative that Black males in the cycle of inequality have a high level of self-efficacy (Whiting, 2009).

**Research Question**

The research question is: What happens when self-efficacy is promoted in an after-school program for Black youths? Self-efficacy is, "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Black males in the cycle of inequality see several barriers in their lives on a daily basis. These barriers can paralyze one from even trying to do anything about them. Perhaps a change in self-efficacy will increase their ability to deal with the barriers while still pursuing their long-term happiness.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of the study was the participants' distrust. Teenagers are very careful to protect their image. In doing so, they are guarded when it comes to participating in something that is new and different. Teenagers tend to shy away from situations in which they may receive a bad label in the eyes of their peers. These notions serve as mental barriers and close the mind to many possibilities. Additionally, all of the participants were Black males in a school that had a predominantly Caucasian teaching and administration staff. These notions are out of the control of the researcher.

Participants were given information detailing the confidentiality and the purpose of the study. Measures were taken to create a safe environment for the participants. Such measures include allowing them to listen to their music and converse with each other prior to the discussion. The second and final limitation was attendance. Because the study took place after school, getting full attendance was challenging. A variety of extracurricular activities and suspensions interrupted the consistency of program attendance.

**Definition of Terms**

**Achievement gap.** The achievement gap is defined as the "disparity in school achievement between white students and black and Latino students" (Romney, 2003, p. 30).

**No child left behind (NCLB)**. Aggressive legislation that requires schools to publicly report the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of all students on a yearly basis (Haretos, 2005).

**Socioeconomic status (SES).** The social standing or economic class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (VandenBos, 2006, p. 371).

**Self-efficacy.** "People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71).

**Self-identity**. An individual's sense of self as defined by physical and psychological characteristics that are unique to an individual. Self-identity also includes ethnicity, social roles, purpose, and values (VandenBos, 2006, p. 463).

**The Journe**y.  The Journey is an after-school program, which is a series of meetings that take place after school once a week.  The Journey took place for 20 weeks during the 2010-2011 school year.  Only Black male students in their Freshmen or Sophomore year were eligible to participate.  The goal of The Journey was to help increase the self-efficacy of the members by focusing on the areas of self-identity, soft-skills (tools needed to succeed in school and in the workplace such as communication skills, ability to work in a team, positive attitude, and adaptability [Mueller and Wilder, 2005]), and support.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Aggressive legislation, such as the NCLB law, aims to close the achievement gap through more stringent accountability on the part of school districts and teachers.  While many offer praise and criticism of the legislation, it is clear that it is in the best interest of the country to eliminate the achievement gap.  The teaching profession has evolved greatly since 2002 (Klein, 2010).  Much has been done to improve teaching methods and decision making in public schools across the country as a result of the 2014 deadline set by NCLB requiring every child to progress toward a predetermined level of proficiency in his or her pursuit towards graduation (Dillon, 2010, p. 1).  Currently, teachers and administrators have a vast array of knowledge at their disposal to meet the needs of diverse student populations.  However, successful teaching and learning requires the input of a number of stakeholders.  While NCLB can influence the behavior of school districts around the country, it lacks the power to effectively address and alleviate the long term effects of the cycle of inequality.  Duffy, Giordano, Farell, Paneque, and Crump (2010) contended that NCLB does not take into consideration a number of factors that affect student achievement while placing too much emphasis on standardized tests.  These factors include negative influences, lack of necessities at home, and a lack of positive role models (Edin, 2010).

The NCLB legislation utilizes quantitative data (e.g., Standardized Test Scores) out of necessity in order to determine the status of a school.  This approach is the most reasonable as there are 15,274 (Proximity, 2010) school districts in the country and there are only a limited amount of financial resources available to fund the ongoing research.

However, in order to eliminate the achievement gap, there are numerous qualitative measures to consider as well, such as the students' motivation to accomplish the goals set by NCLB.  Rothstein (2004) warned of the dangers of dismissing the qualitative factors that affect student achievement.  He also contends, " it is true that low income and skin color themselves don't influence academic achievement, but the collection of characteristics that define social-class differences inevitably influences that achievement" (Rothstein, 2004, p. 106).  Many districts have some non-academic focused programs in place such as alternative school settings, afterschool and summer programs, but a more focused effort is needed.  However, with a 2014 deadline for proficiency, many schools simply do not have the time to follow through with the qualitative approach with great emphasis.

This chapter reviews the literature on how the cycle of inequality affects Black males at the beginning, middle, and latter parts of their lives; a review of the three phases of the cycle of inequality, historical reasoning for why the cycle plagues the Black male population, the adverse impact of the cycle of inequality on society, the needs of Black males in high school, the concept of self-efficacy, and after school programs.

**The Three Phases of the Cycle of Inequality**

The cycle of inequality can affect an individual throughout the three phases of life.  Without the necessary interventions, the cycle is self-perpetuating and can be devastating.  Figure 1 illustrates the three phases of the cycle of inequality.  It begins early in life, before the child sets foot in a school building.  The adolescent years can be filled with conflict at times as the youth searches for balance.  During the adult years,

without an education, there is little inheritance of money and knowledge to pass on to the

next generation.  Consequently, the adverse factors in one generation have an effect on

the next generation.  Notice how the factors, if not eliminated, carry themselves to the

next generation.  This chapter discusses the information contained in Figure 1.

**Early Years**
**(Birth to 12 years)**
➢ Lack of education-based child care
➢ Less books in the home
➢ Brain development is slowed by environment of poverty
➢ Less developed reading skills becomes its own barrier

**Adulthood**
**(18 years old and up)**
➢ Inefficient money management skills
➢ Single-parent family structure leads to multiple stressors
➢ Lack of opportunities for mobilization due to past decisions

**Adolescence**
**(12 – 17 years old)**
➢ Firmly developed view of society and life
➢ Strong acceptance of social norms that hinder success
➢ Crime
➢ Insufficient standardized test scores

**Figure 1.** The Cycle of Inequality
*Note*. Figure 1 is a compilation from Edin (2010) and Brady-Amoon (2011).

**Early years.** Between the years of birth to 12, the cycle of inequality begins to take effect. The fact is that for most single parent homes, it is extremely difficult to obtain the financial advantages of a two-parent family. Black males living in a single-parent home are more likely to experience poverty, suffer from abuse, and academically perform at a low level (Gray, 2009). Some states even estimate future prison populations based on third-grade reading scores (Gillis, 2006). Most children in this case have a challenging time getting off to a good start in life when it comes to being able to compete for resources in the current economic system in the United States. In cases where poverty persists, the daycare, family income, environment, and pre-school education fail to offer children the proper foundation. Fuller, Eggers-Pierola, Holloway, Liang, and Rambaud (1994, p. 7) maintained that impoverished families do not have the economic resources to send their children to better preschools that have a systematic focus on education. "Today, preschools are often of poor quality, in short supply, and prohibitively expensive for poor or even middle-class children" (American Federation of Teachers, 2002, p. 1). To further prove the point, Duncan, Ludwig, and Magnuson (2007) found that "children's early learning environments differ profoundly across the lines of both race and class" (p. 144).

The importance of family values such as faith, healthy lifestyles, and the importance of a two-parent family was brought to the forefront during the first Bush administration in the early 1990's. However, the divorce rate and the rate of single-parent families have increased since then. McCarthy (2009) found "the portion of first marriages that remained intact dropped from 77.4 percent in 1970 to 61.2 percent last

year" (p. E10).  The literature is also consistent regarding the correlation between single-parent families and poverty (Ferris, 2006).  "The spread of single-mother families has therefore played a major role in the persistence of poverty" (Ellwood & Jencks, 2002, p. 1).  The effects of poverty on a young child can also have astounding physiological side-effects:

> Neuroscientists said many children growing up in very poor families with low social status experience unhealthy levels of stress hormones, which impair their neural development.  That effect is on top of any damage caused by inadequate nutrition and exposure to environmental toxins.  (Cookson, 2008, p. 5)

The danger of this phenomenon is that these hindrances are not noticed immediately. After all, it is impossible for the human eye to see the important neural connections that are either realized or not (Davis, Naegeer, & Cohen, 2002).  Therefore, a false sense of security can set in and the manifestation is not seen until many years later.  There are many experts and concerned citizens who believe that early childhood education is the front line of the war on poverty.  The disadvantages at such an early stage have numerous negative effects.  Among all kindergarteners in families with less SES resources, researchers found that many spend less time reading, have little to no access to computers, and spend more time watching TV than increasing their mental capacity (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

Heckman (2011) makes the argument when he contends that, "gaps in cognitive and emotional stimulation for children in families of different socioeconomic status open up early" (p. 32).  The effects of these gaps eventually threaten the adulthood potential of

children (Heckman, 2011). Geoffery Canada (Pines, 2005), leader of the renowned

Harlem Children's Zone also understands the importance of early intervention. As the

leader of this charter school district in an impoverished area in New York City, Canada

offers educational support beginning with pre-school aged children as well as their

parents. In an article detailing the district, Pines (2005) detailed that "Parents who

graduate from 'Baby College' reported reading and singing more to their children. This

practice has enabled the children to begin school at grade level" (p. 87). Such thinking is

progressive and proactive. This is in sharp contrast to public school as "most social

policies are devoted to playing catch-up against children's early disadvantages, but

disparities are already apparent among young children and many disadvantaged children

never catch up" (Duncan et al., 2007, p. 145). Black children are up to 14 times more

likely to live in a high childhood poverty neighborhood (Drake & Rank, 2009). In

conclusion, extreme measures must be taken in order to offer proper early childhood

education to prepare impoverished children for school.

      **Adolescence.** During the adolescent years, the effects of the cycle of inequality

have set the young Black male up to be separated from a large and integral sector of

society due to lack of necessary development for various reasons during the early

childhood years. Cunningham (1999) asserted "when attempting to make meaning of

one's personal and social experiences, adolescents make judgments based on what they

know, experience, and feel competent about" (p. 583). The adolescent years are crucial

because this is when the young adult draws conclusions about life based on the

surroundings in which they were raised. Those conclusions affect performance and

attendance in school. Unfortunately, often "adolescent beliefs are based on exaggerated and stereotypical notions" (Cunningham, 1999, p. 583). At this crucial stage in life, Black male teens are exposed to adults who have valuable wisdom to impart to anyone who will take heed and listen whether they are teachers, administrators, or members of the community. However, stereotypes portraying young black males as delinquent are pervasive in society (Hall, 2009). It is challenging for Black males to identify with school - this integral sector of society - because they find it hard to relate for a number of reasons. One reason in particular is the social price one has to pay for success. Cooper and Smalls (2010) discovered that Black students who perform well in school have a more difficult time adjusting and fitting in with their Black peers. In addition, for these young adults, the sacrifices necessary in order to achieve in school seem unnecessary, overwhelming, or incomprehensible.

In order to maintain existence in a society filled with stereotypes detailing their inferiority, "the black male seeks to earn respect from his peers by being cool and underachieving" (Hall, 2009, p. 535). It is up to teachers, administrators, and other community members to understand and discover how this segment of the student population can be appropriately educated. According to Osborne (1999) "Several theories argue that sociocultural factors negatively influence the ability of students of color to become and remain strongly identified with academics" (p.560). Unfortunately, there is another sector of society that has difficulty looking past the outward behavior with the understanding that within the young male there are a multitude of talents and abilities. Consequently, research has also shown that Black male students have difficulty

understanding their academically at-risk status due to the lack of intensive support they receive at school (Pollard, 1993). Success in school requires effort that must be sustained and is based on teacher feedback. If that effort is not put forth during those early years, then the numerical data documenting the effects of the cycle of inequality becomes increasingly evident during the adolescence phase. This data involves grades, standardized test scores, and dropout rates.

For many teenagers, status and acceptance based upon the having of material things is highly important. However, the pursuit of such things can lead to crime. Moncher and Miller (1999) discovered that there is a high correlation between stealing behavior and lack of performance in school. They also found that the reason for the behavior was "perception of need and peer influence" (Moncher & Miller, 1999, p. 586). Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman (2011, p. 2) argued that it is possible for people to make a connection between possessions and self-worth. Minority adolescents are more likely than their peers to establish a record with the juvenile justice system (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2007). Tuzzolo and Hewitt (2007) claimed "in 2003, African-Americans made up 16% of the nation's juvenile population; however, they accounted for 45% of juvenile arrests" (p. 61). This unfortunate track record leads many professionals to predict an undesirable future for the Black male. McCarthy and Hoge (1987) further emphasized the danger of the cycle of inequality when they concluded that, "the result is a system which perpetuates social disadvantage" (p. 1117). Sadly, "minority juveniles are at particular risk of delinquency because of links between

delinquency and poverty, neighborhood, family structure, and discrimination" (Wampler & Downs, 2010, p. 107).

**Adulthood.** Research shows that only about 53% of Black males 18-24 years old have a high school diploma (O'Brien & Rozsa, 2009, p. 1). As an adult in the cycle of inequality, a high school diploma is only a minimal beginning. Recent economic events such as the downturn in 2008 dictate this point. The literature is clear that Black males with a high school diploma will earn more over a lifetime than those who never finish high school. In a study conducted in 2002, it was found that Black males who hold a bachelor's degree earned 94% more than their counterparts who only attained a high school diploma (American Council on Education, 2004, p. 35). The NCLB legislation has forced schools to focus on the bottom line, which is improving quantitative measures. However, there are courageous questions that dare to be answered. There is a lack of serious discussions among policy makers and administrators about the effect of poverty. Therefore, it is suggested that society has not discovered what it takes to truly ensure that no child is left behind (Houston, 2007). As a result, socioeconomic mobility for the current and future generations of Black males is greatly retarded by a lack of acquired knowledge.

The recession of 2008 affected Black males drastically and has forced them to make adjustments and choose from only a few alternatives in order to sustain a certain standard of living. These alternatives include continued education, minimum wage jobs, and criminal activity in some cases. In 2009, the Black male unemployment rate was the highest among any subgroup in the country at 15.4% (Cawthorne, 2009). Making matters

worse is that Black males who are in a cycle of inequality have a difficult time receiving help.  Overall, unemployed Black male workers are less likely to receive unemployment insurance than their unemployed white counterparts (Cawthorne, 2009).

On the contrary, more desirable alternatives exist for those who are equipped with socioeconomic resources such as discretionary money, networking, contacts, and family support.  Socioeconomic resources allow survival of unforeseen difficulties such as a recession.  Unfortunately, some black males make unwise choices that only reap short term benefits at the expense of their freedom by engaging in criminal activity.  The choices in life are multiplied when educated in the many aspects of life.  For Black males who have a criminal past, it is increasingly difficult to find employment, thereby limiting their option in their adult years (Edmondson, 2009).

Financial education is also elusive among Black males and the negative effects peak during adulthood.  Those in the cycle of inequality do not possess the tools it takes to create wealth.

> The students in the poorest communities, on average attend larger schools with a far greater number of needy students and with fewer adults to provide support.  It is perhaps not surprising then, how different student outcomes are in each.  Nearly all students in the wealthiest communities are promoted in a timely fashion and graduate, compared with less than two-thirds of the student in the poorest communities.  (Menchik & Jianakoplos, 1997, p. 441)

 In a society where status with the evidence of material things is celebrated, keeping up can prove to be very difficult.  According to Target Market, a company that tracks Black

consumer spending, "Blacks spend a significant amount of their income on depreciable products" (Young, 2004, p. 9a).

As of 2009, the median net worth for a white family was $113,149, compared to $5,677 for Black households (Wall, 2011). Such trends predict a forecast of financial insecurity and dependence in the future. Unfortunately, for many in the cycle, the future is now. A new study of 401(k) plans has revealed that "Black and Hispanic workers save significantly less for retirement and tap into their accounts more frequently than White and Asian employees" (Hobson, 2009, p. 24). Savings for education and retirement are forgone for numerous reasons. Financial practices such as these help to perpetuate the cycle of inequality because the next generation is starting at the same point the previous generation began in terms of SES. Giving more credence to this point, the African-American community historically has spent more than it has held (Holmes, 2005).

The cycle comes full circle when children enter into the picture. In some cases, children are born out of wedlock making it very difficult to receive the SES resources that will help them elevate the next generation.

> A relatively high fraction of the nation's young high school dropouts were raised as adolescents in families that frequently experienced severe income inadequacy problems. Given the limited earnings potential of many young high school dropouts, comparatively few of them have the economic resources to form independent households. (Sum, Khatiwada, & McLaughlin, 2009, p. 42)

To further bring clarity to the issue, Black families who make it to the middle class are "vulnerable to slipping back to their low income origins, in part, because they lag behind

Whites on many of the major indicators of middle classness (i. e., income, wealth, homeownership, and educational attainment)" (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009, p. 244).

**Historical Causes of the Black Male Being in the Cycle of Inequality**

Since the first African slaves touched British colonial soil in 1619 (Hazen, 1934), Black Americans in this country have been behind in regards to the struggle for socioeconomic resources. The involuntary servitude of the slaves allowed some (the masters) to pursue prosperity, while prohibiting others (the slaves) from doing so. Past generations of Black Americans struggled for freedom, citizenship, and the right to vote. After the passage of the 13th (Freed Slaves, 1865), 14th (Citizenship for freedmen, 1868), and 15th (Protection of voting rights, 1870) amendments to the U.S. Constitution, failed reconstruction policies prevented Black Americans from building legacies for their future families. Shortly after the Civil War, Southern states began to pass laws with the court's approval to "criminalize black life" (Blackmon, 2008, p. 53). At that time, According to Huston (2005), those who governed the country were not willing to take a firm stand and defend the civil liberties of the recent freedmen and therefore, hostilities persisted against many Black Americans in the United States.

It is not widely known that other forms of enslavement of free Black Americans existed in this country well after the passage of the 13th Amendment. In 1905, the Supreme Court decided against ending the form of slavery known as the Convict Lease Program that enslaved Black Americans under the guise of the law (Blackmon, 2008, p. 277). This program sold the labor of legally imprisoned individuals. All one-time Confederate states with the exception of Virginia participated in the Convict Lease

Program (Blackmon, 2008).  Perhaps this helps explain the gap in wealth between Black and White citizens.  The government has made numerous compromises in an attempt to resolve the tainted history of slavery and racism in the U.S.  However, it has proven difficult for some to overcome the late start, and multiple barriers still exist.  It would appear that Black men are unfairly treated by the U.S. justice system.  Anti-drug legislation mandated longer sentences for "low-level drug dealing and possession of crack-cocaine" (Alexander, 2010, p. 86).  The result is an ever-increasing amount of Black males in prison.

The concept of *cultural inversion* may shine light on the involvement of the Black community in the cycle of inequality.  Osborne (1999) argued that through cultural inversion, Black citizens, who are descendants of involuntary immigrants, seek to make sense of the world by going against societal norms such as education.  This is in sharp contrast to the involuntary immigrants who entered this country as slaves in colonial America.  The slaves who were brought to this country had no means of resisting the dominant culture of their owners, whereas current descendants can resist the culture even if it is to their detriment.  As a result, "African American children are instead encouraged to value other aspects of society - usually whatever is in opposition to European American values - as appropriate for themselves" (Osborne, 1999, p. 558).  For example, society values attaining an education yet, it is difficult for Black males to fit in socially among their peers if they are seen as scholarly.

**How the Cycle of Inequality Affects Society**

The cycle of inequality has many social implications. Eighty-two percent of the prison population is without a high school diploma (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2001, p. 2). The economic climate dictates that life will be difficult without a high school diploma. College graduates are even having a tough time finding jobs. Faced with few options and little knowledge, many turn to a life of crime. Thirty-five percent of the 2.3 million prison inmates are Black males (Darensbourg & Perez, 2010, p. 196). Once these prisoners serve their time, they sometimes find employment to be difficult as a result of their conviction (Alexander, 2010). In 1980, there were 143,000 Black men in prison and 463,700 enrolled in college (Justice Policy Institute, 2002, p. 10). It is the responsibility of government to keep order by dealing with crime. But in the U. S. after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the costs of protecting the country and the number of prisoners has skyrocketed. With these additional prisoners, come financial responsibilities. Cash strapped states are looking to trim budgets by considering ways to reduce prison budgets. In 2009, Lawrence (2009, p. 15) predicted that by the end of 2011, the state budgets for imprisonment will collectively be over $27 billion. Education has been proven to reduce crime as well as reduce incarceration rates (Owings & Kaplan, 2004, p. 11).

Certainly, the country benefits if more citizens are offering positive contributions to the country. In a 2005 study, it was concluded that the dropouts from the 2004 class alone will cost the country $200 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes (Rouse, 2005, p. 3). "More than half of all 16 - 19 year old high school

dropouts had no paid employment in 2007" (Bloom, 2010, p. 91). Such negative trends in education affect the country's standing as well. "The nation's economy and competitive standing also suffers when there are high dropout rates" (Alliance For Excellent Education, 2007, p. 3). It is to the detriment of the country when these young adults do not enter the workforce.

**Education is the Key to Ending the Cycle of Inequality**

It has been known for many years that education is one of the keys to success in this country. The Founding Fathers were aware of this as well. Provisions were made for public education by Congress in 1785 and 1787 with the passage of the Land Ordinance of 1785 (Sheehan, 1987, p. 10). In 2008, Barack Obama proved this point as he was able to successfully campaign for and win the Presidency of the United States. "More than any other civil right, education is supposed to be the great equalizer in America – as President Obama's odyssey to the White House attests" (Klein, 2010, p. 1). Educators are entrusted with not only teaching, but they are also obligated to do what they can to make sure their students are well rounded citizens (Garrett, 2006).

Education is the way to break the cycle of inequality that persists. This is not a groundbreaking revelation. Koolhof, Loeber, Wei, Pardini, and Annematt (2007) found that low IQ delinquents were more behaviorally and cognitively impulsive than other delinquent peers with higher IQ's. Educators have been diligently focusing efforts to eliminate the achievement gap. There are many successful stories about young Black males who grew up to break the cycle. More attention needs to be paid to these young men and they should be honored so that others have something positive with which to

identify (Novak, 1990). Education is the common denominator in most of these cases. However, graduation statistics show that the value of an education is either taken for granted by the student or not effectively communicated by teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Only 45% of Black males graduate high school with their class (Gewertz, 2006, p. 18). Sadly, those young Black men who do graduate from high school are ill-prepared for college, for only a third who matriculate will graduate within six years (Schmidt, 2008, p. 5).

It appears that one of the obstacles that is overlooked is the absence of a thirst for knowledge. The research literature illustrates that chances for success are greater if student diligence increases. Heimerdinger and Hinsz (2008) discovered that "performance was strongly related to the students' goals and by their confidence in their abilities to act in ways that will lead to desired outcomes" (p. 390). It is important to encourage students to actively pursue their education through the use of goals. Rigorous goals inspire motivation because they require more effort in order to achieve the desired result (Locke & Latham, 2006). A thirst for knowledge fueled by self-motivation is necessary in order to accomplish rigorous goals.

**The Needs of Black Male High School Students in the Cycle of Inequality**

Pre-school is the primary battleground in the war against the cycle of inequality. Sadly, in many cases the problem has been allowed to exist and fester due to lack of effective interventions, complacency, and partisan politics. The NCLB legislation has been in effect for close to a decade and the law is still contended. In 2008, the Bush Administration was criticized by an opposing party member, who was the chairman of

the House Education and Labor Committee saying that it "has chosen to make piecemeal changes to a law that educators and parents know is in need of significant improvement" (Hoff, 2008, p. 21). Therefore, dropout rates, referrals, attendance, and test scores mimic a chain of falling dominos along the cycle of inequality.

Currently, there are high school students who have needs that have gone unmet. The transition from middle school to high school leaves students vulnerable to failure as they begin high school with low reading comprehension (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). Ultimately, this leads to undesirable results. "Dropouts come disproportionately from low-income and minority families" (Bloom, 2010, p. 90). Black high school students may not be benefitting from existing resources available to them such as free and reduced-priced lunches because of fears of being stigmatized or because of school bias.

> Minority concentration and poverty are also tightly linked in the nation's high
> schools. Free and reduced-price lunch data are notoriously inaccurate at the high
> school level. Students are reluctant to turn in the necessary form and schools put
> forth varied effort to collect them. (Balfanz, 2009)

In light of the factors that contribute to the problem of the cycle of inequality, self-efficacy seems to be an important factor that contributes to the solution that breaks the cycle of inequality among Black males. It is unacceptable to simply convey information with no learning. A recent study found that "only a third to half of high school graduates today are prepared to succeed in college" (Balfanz, 2009, p. 17). Such a scenario is all too familiar. Instead, students must be both willing and actively engaged in their pursuit of happiness. Self-efficacy fuels the inner-motivator of students to pursue happiness.

**Self-efficacy**

VandenBos defined *efficacy* as "an individual's capacity to act effectively to bring about desired results" (2006, p. 831). Related to this capacity is what people believe about their own capacity - *self-efficacy* is "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Education may be the key to breaking the cycle of inequality, but equally necessary is the belief that one can effectively use that education. As individuals venture through their education, a high level of self-efficacy is important. There are numerous obstacles that make it difficult for young Black males to achieve success in school. One of those subtle obstacles is the lack of a thirst for knowledge and a symptom of a lack of thirst for knowledge is low motivation in school (Crumpton & Gregory, 2011). Self-efficacy is one of the things that fuels one's motivation to put forth the effort (Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010). It is not always easy to determine why some students are motivated and others are not. Bandura (1994) argued, "people motivate themselves and guide their actions" based on their internal beliefs about what they can do (p. 73). Therefore, increasing self-efficacy in the classroom seems to be very important.

Self-efficacy is a better indicator than self-esteem in education because it is more indicative of improved student performance (Green, 2003). Self-esteem simply defines how one feels about themselves. (Green, 2003). Self-efficacy in the classroom yields positive results as students with a stronger sense of self-efficacy are more likely to accept greater challenges and set higher and more concrete goals (Schabo-Grabowski, Call, & Mortimer, 2001). It is imperative that self-efficacy be addressed in schools because there

are numerous outside factors that can divert students from the task at hand in the classroom.

In order to maintain successful teaching and learning throughout the duration of a K-12 education, it is also imperative that students diligently seek to accomplish educational tasks and goals. This has proven to be difficult for students in the cycle of inequality (Crumpton & Gregory, 2011). Lack of preparation before starting and during school can hamper the necessary diligence it takes to acquire pertinent knowledge in school (Garibaldi, 2007). Numerous SES factors reinforce inequalities that develop well before the child reaches school-age (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

The Efficacy Institute has worked with high poverty and high minority schools in order to close the achievement gap through improved self-efficacy. The institute offers a number of resources and training to school districts. The founder of the institute claims "exceptional results in many urban school systems, including, most recently, Memphis, Boston, and Palm Beach County, Florida where the efficacy approach has resulted in clear and measureable improvement in student outcomes" (Reeves, 2008, p. 85). The most important component of this approach is that it empowers students to believe in their abilities. The Efficacy Institute has a belief system that states, "Smart is not something you just are; smart is something you can get" (Reeves, 2008, p. 85).

High school is where students typically learn how to become more independent. Successfully increasing self-efficacy can assist this transition toward independence. When students are able to manage themselves, they tend not to rely on others to prompt them (Rafferty, 2010). Based on a review of the literature, it appears that self-efficacy is

increased by addressing three key areas: self-identity, skills, and support (Margolis, 2005).

　　　　*Self-identity.*　It appears quite possible that the lack of a defined identity can lead a youth astray.　After 20 years of research in the psychology field, Dweck (2006) is of the belief that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. There is a correlation between self-identity and academic achievement (Hejazi, Shahraray, Farsinejad, & Asgary, 2009).　For teenagers, breaking the cycle of inequality requires the ability to visualize, understand, and invest in the future during a very pivotal time in life with their own self-identity, not that of their peers (Cadely, Pittman, Kerpelman, & Adler-Baeder, 2011).

　　　　Peer relationships are very crucial for young Black males in the cycle of inequality.　Black males find solace and comfort in these relationships while not understanding the long-term effects.　Harter (2003) claimed that students who are most concerned about the opinions of their peers find themselves distracted in the classroom and devote less time to school work.　De Ruyter and Conroy (2002) argued that identity is socially constructed because identity is developed through interactions with others. Therefore, a poor choice in friends can be damaging to a Black male in the cycle of inequality.　More importantly, a segment of Black students in public education adopt what is termed a "street" identity in order to find acceptance and an inner peace (Payne, Starks, & Gibson, 2009).　This "street" identity is contrary to the values that society has designated as acceptable. Additionally, the foundations of the American educational system can prevent black males from developing a positive self-identity (Booner,

Jennings, & Marbley, 2008).  For Black males in particular, it is imperative that they be

taught to be resilient, self-determined, and have a well-defined sense of "self" (Obiakor

& Beachum, 2005, p. 21).

　　　*Counseling*.  The research is positive in regards to what counseling techniques

can do in order to assist students and help them develop a healthy and positive self-

identity.  Researchers in the field challenge the status quo in school counseling.

Mitcham-Smith (2007) believed that school counselors can effectively utilize the

empowerment approach to bring about a "systemic effort" in which the entire school

community would promote the self-identity of all students.  It is up to educators to

determine how to use these resources to benefit students.  Creativity and patience is

needed to maximize the potential of counseling and mentoring as a means to eradicate the

achievement gap (Bodenhorn, 2010).

　　　While schools offer counseling services to their students, resources and time

constraints limit what can be done to improve the social and emotional health of all

students.  These constraints pose a risk to the Black males' development of a positive

self-identity.  The literature also verifies that the counselor-student ratios are too high and

non-counseling tasks are consuming valuable time (Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007).

Dodd and Bowen (2011) believed that "high school students should receive a one-hour

[per week] minimum of both individual counseling and group guidance counseling" (p.

15).  Research conducted in the area of group counseling and Black males has yielded

positive results.  Group counseling techniques are prudent because students are faced

with the challenges of succeeding in school while also dealing with the pressures of being

a teenager among an increasing diverse population of students.  The literature is clear that

Black students can benefit greatly from groups that are culturally responsive (Bemak,

Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).  The group approach allows educators to utilize the

influence that students have over one another in a positive way in addition to helping

them develop a positive self-identity.  Also, the group approach can help to alleviate the

negative effects of cultural inversion by encouraging students to see school success as

something that can be very beneficial.

A successful group intervention will need guidance and a strict methodology.  In

order to achieve the desired results with any program, order is absolutely necessary.  In a

study conducted by Steen, Baunman, and Smith (2007), 802 participating school

counselors replied that they "generally did not base their groups on a particular

theoretical orientation or recommended practice" (p. 75).  Upon review of the numerous

philosophies, it appears that the literature praises the results of The Empowerment

Theory.  The Empowerment Theory places emphasis on the things that can be

accomplished as opposed to dwelling on the multiple adverse factors.  Perkins and

Zimmerman (1995) maintained, "empowerment research focuses on identifying

capabilities instead of cataloging risk factors and exploring environmental influences of

social problems instead of blaming victims" (p. 570).  It is quite possible that there is a

parallel between The Empowerment Theory and self-efficacy.  Empowerment research

promotes goals for students along with collaboration among peers in order to obtain

pertinent understanding of the world and how they fit in it.  The Empowerment Theory

can also be useful in order to help students view education as valuable because it

emphasizes the importance of their decisions. This theory supports the development of a positive self-identity as it allows people to make wise decisions in life, thereby increasing their chance for success.

Members of involuntary minority groups might consciously or unconsciously interpret school learning as a displacement process detrimental to their self-identity, sense of security, and self-worth (Osborne, 1999, p. 581). One cannot dismiss the fact that the fate of public education is uncertain and there are numerous debates as the NLCB 2014 deadline approaches. Unfortunately the students pay the ultimate price for school failure. Therefore, as the possible key to breaking the cycle of inequality, schools can also be inhibiting which can lead to a misguided self-identity that deters self-efficacy.

> With regard to African-Americans, the system of schooling in the United States
> can either ameliorate or alienate; all too often the latter is true. This same
> educational system creates a cycle of failure for far too many African American
> students. (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005, p. 19)

And so it is absolutely necessary that students are offered the opportunity for empowerment to overcome some of the barriers that they may find in their lives, including an evolving and imperfect educational system. Lord and Hutchinson (1993) claimed, "people's belief in their own capabilities and unique personal characteristics helped foster confidence in their ability to take initiative in changing their lives" (p. 19). It appears that there are many counseling programs that embrace the cultural background of Black males as a way to validate them and help them to further develop use of other skills that can be utilized in school as well as situations (Osborne, 1999). Perhaps

success could be achieved if students are taught how to empower themselves by understanding social rules and using them to their advantage, therefore increasing self-identity through effective counseling practices.

**Soft skills**

It is impossible to increase self-efficacy without the skills necessary to meet the requirements in education as well as the workplace.  High school is where young adults learn the importance of *soft skills*.  Mueller and Wilder (2005) defined soft skills as tools needed to succeed in school and in the workplace such as communication skills, ability to work in a team, positive attitude, and adaptability.

> Unlike academic or disciplinary knowledge, which is subject-based, content-specific and formally assessed, soft skills comprise a range of competencies that are independent of, albeit often developed by, formal curricula and rarely assessed explicitly.  (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, 2010, p. 221)

Soft skills may also be defined as the "attitudes and behaviors displayed in interactions among individuals that affect the outcome of such encounters" (Davis & Muir, 2004, p. 96).  Some high schools around the country are implementing soft skills within their curriculum (Gewertz, 2007).  More specifically, it is the absence of soft skills that have the most adverse effects on young Black males.  Black Americans are perceived to be deficient in the area of soft skills (Williams, 2004).  Taylor (2005) maintained that the shortage of soft skills possessed by youth in general needs to be addressed in school.

*Exposure to soft skills.*  Non-cognitive skills improve future employability as

well as performance in school.  With an achievement gap that affects the nation's

schools, now is the time to further explore all options.  Developing soft skills through

exposure to the places in the community where they will be most beneficial, including

college campuses, places of employment, and other situation that require a high level of

professionalism, seems to be the prudent thing to do.  Black males' exposure to such

skills needs to take place while still in high school (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, &

Tobar, 2007).  The socialization of the Black male should include exposure to soft skills.

Myers (2004) defined socialization as the process whereby individuals learn to willingly

behave in accordance with the prevailing standards of their culture.  In the case of the

Black male in the cycle of inequality, it is important that they understand that they still

have autonomy in their lives even if they learn these soft skills. It is imperative for Black

males to be exposed to these key skills early and often as they grow.  Robbing young

Black males of soft skill exposure may be damaging to their future.

*Perception of soft skills.*  Stevenson (2002) maintained that "without active

cultural socialization, youth are unaware of the maladjustment that sets in leaving them

hyper vigilant and at risk for seeing danger where little exists, thus taking them out of the

opportunity loops that society has available" (p. 360).  The danger that Stevenson speaks

of is based in a lack of soft skills.  Black males in the cycle of inequality during the

teenage years have the added challenge of viewing these skills accurately.  To Black

teens, soft skills such as proper communication, appropriate dress, and putting effort into

academics are seen as conformity (Osborne, 1999).  Valid and reasonable attempts to

impress these skills upon the youth can often be viewed as antagonistic. Therefore, it is

not enough to simply expose them to these skills. The perception of these skills must be

nurtured and framed appropriately. For example, a Black student who achieves

academically is labeled as "acting white" by his/her cultural peers (Osborne, 1999). This

negative interpretation creates peer pressure that counteracts the very skills that can be

used to fight inequality.

### Support for self-efficacy

Parents as well as community members are a necessary component of a school

district. Parents as well as students must be engaged in the college preparation process

for students to realize success (Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010, p. 144). Sheely and

Bratton (2010, p. 181) mentioned that strengths-based family counseling has a positive

effect on the African American student achievement because it strengthens the

relationship between parent and child. Parental involvement is most crucial to the

students living in a low SES situation. Currently, public education officials emphasize

the importance of involving stakeholders in all educational decisions. In addition to

parents, stakeholders include federal, state, and local education officials (Strom, Strom, &

Beckert, 2011). Olguin and Keim (2009, p. 17) contended that career related activities

with stakeholder involvement must be developed and implemented with the intent to

eliminate educational barriers.

Support is necessary in order to counteract the sacrifices that youth will have to

make in order to achieve the long-term goal of breaking out of the cycle of inequality.

Young Black males are regarded as an "at-risk group for failure" if members of society

do not offer support (Edmondson, 2009).  In order for Black males to experience the

success that comes from using feedback to make good decisions, they will need the

support of many individuals.  Improved self-efficacy is realized through support.

Additionally, peers can be a great source of support towards increased self-efficacy

(Woodland, Martin, Hill, & Worrell, 2009).

       The Community School Model is one that is predicated on the involvement of all

stakeholders.  The Community School Model is based on the commonly understood

principle that student achievement is related to the support of all stakeholders.

> These schools break the traditional six-and-a-half-hour-day, 180 days a year
>
> mold, with programs before and after school, as well as on weekends and during
>
> the summer.  They supplement academics with medical care and social services.
>
> They involve parents as learners and teachers.  And they also partner with high-
>
> asset city agencies, community groups and businesses.  (Kirp, 2010, p. 26)

Due to the overwhelming involvement of all stakeholders, students are able to learn the

importance of developing the necessary skills that will benefit them later on in life.

"Alongside educators' limited influence over students' out-of-school time is their limited

influence over other individual, peer, family, and community factors known to constrain

and prevent academic learning" (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008, p. 163). Black males are

in need of support that is early, consistent, and often.

       ***After-school programs.***   After-school programs offer schools the ability to work

with and service students in an environment that is entirely different from the normal

school day.  The most successful after-school programs offer Black males the opportunity

to receive feedback, support, and an open forum to express themselves freely (Woodland et al, 2009).  Perhaps the benefits of after school programs are undervalued.  After school programs have the ability to nurture students on various levels in order to help them grow to be competitive members of society.  The merits of after school programs have been well documented.  Students are showing an increase in academic performance as a result of after-school program attendance (Jenner & Jenner, 2007, p. 232).  Additionally, many students find themselves without supervision and they can decrease their chances of getting into trouble by participating in an after school program (Dodd & Bowen, 2011).  Such a benefit mediates symptoms of the cycle of inequality and allows for increased self-efficacy due to positive student achievement.

Current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009) maintains, "yes, afterschool helps youth develop academically but, more importantly, it helps them find their passion and better themselves long term" (p. 2). The president is also of the belief that after-school programs are essential.  President Barack Obama recognized this fact when he said, "We need after-school programs and summer school programs because minority youth and poor youth are less likely to get the kind of environment and supplemental activities that they need" (as cited in Carter, Ellis, Hossain, & Mclean 2008, p. 1).  If students are expected to actively become involved in their education, then their passion within must be nurtured.  They must be motivated to pursue their passion and always keep in mind the long-term results of their efforts.

Many experts believe that Chicago schools are being considered as a model for future school reform.  The After-School Apprenticeship Program in Chicago allows

students the opportunity to train in a paid apprenticeship. Most of their work is conducted in inner-city schools that are predominately minority. The After School Alliance (Alliance for Education, 2009) also reported that "Student attendance rates averaged between 80 and 90 percent, and program staff reported that participants showed improvement in self-confidence, understanding of life skills and the ability to work as a team" (p. 4). After-school programs allow the opportunity for schools to further nurture the development from adolescence to adulthood. In order for a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood, Black males must be allowed to increase their self-efficacy through various methods such as participation in an after-school program.

*Mentoring.* Mentoring can be defined as a relationship between an advanced career-oriented adult and a teenage student for the purposes of realizing students' success through increased self-efficacy (Turnbull, 2010). The benefits of mentoring apply to all demographics. Mentors and role models have always played a fundamental role in developing gifts and talents and motivating students (Whiting, 2006, p. 226). In terms of support, "mentoring is a way to address problems that can result from decreasing adult availability, support, and guidance in the lives of many children" (Caldarella, Gomm, Shatzer, & Wall, 2010, p. 200). In order to achieve success in school, at-risk Black male students must be provided with mentors to reduce the risk they may face in the future (Winfield, 1994). Students and parents report positive changes due to participation in mentoring programs (Caldarella, Adams, & Valentine, 2009). In terms of self-efficacy, it is through the mentoring relationship that Black males receive the feedback they need in order to make decisions that bring positive results.

**Summary**

The cycle of inequality is filled with negative effects that last for generations if nothing is done to break the cycle. There are historical explanations for the cycle of inequality and how it has plagued Black families, but society will not accept this reasoning. An increased effort in the area of education may be one way to break the cycle. The trends in family values have also lead to problems that challenge success in school. The evidence is a poor graduation rate among Black males around the country. The effects of poverty place Black males at a disadvantage well before they even enter the classroom. The lack of knowledge can hamper them and their future children in this capitalist economy.

No Child Left Behind has instigated a valiant effort to eliminate the achievement gap. Unfortunately it is difficult for states to efficiently carry out the legislation due to various factors. Perhaps, most educators are equipped with skills and have many other resources at their disposal. Successful teaching requires teachers to execute appropriate lesson plans and students to diligently seek to expand their knowledge base. Simply put, if students are not willing, then students have made a decision that will affect their future tremendously.

Increased self-efficacy can lead to student achievement. Short-term goal setting can entice students to increase their efforts in the future. The benefits of after-school programming along with increased counseling can help students grow emotionally, socially, and academically. Empowering students to succeed can further motivate students to take an active role in their education. At the high school level,

misinterpretations of soft skills as well as a lack of acquired knowledge are manifested in a way that furthers entanglement in the cycle of inequality. Students at this level may benefit from after-school interventions that aim to improve self-efficacy by offering assistance in the areas of self-identity, soft skills, and support.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

There are many innovative techniques that schools must consider when it comes to eliminating the achievement gap.  The achievement gap further manifests itself into a life trapped in a cycle of inequality.  Interventions such as No Child Left Behind neglect the qualitative research data that may meliorate the issues that adversely affect the education of Black males.  Without students' diligent participation in their education, they are less likely to improve their academics.  Teachers, administrators, and all stakeholders must do whatever it takes to motivate students to put forth the necessary effort in school.

The purpose of this research was to observe the Black male participants who were a part of The Journey during the 2010-2011 school year.  The Journey is an after-school program that offers an environment to Black male students in which their empowerment is facilitated through a foundation based on increasing self-efficacy.  In this environment, students are free to set goals, evaluate their young lives, and understand how they can influence their future by the decisions they make every day.  Students are also encouraged to understand who they are apart from the social groups they are familiar with on a daily basis.  They also have the opportunity to develop relationships with other adult Black males who serve as mentors during the program.  During this particular year, all six mentors were faculty at the high school.  The goal of The Journey is to increase self-efficacy by focusing on the areas of self-identity, soft skills, and support.

**The Qualitative Research Methodology**

There are two types of methodology in the research field: qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative method deals with numerical data as opposed to the qualitative that deals with descriptive data. The qualitative method was chosen for this study. This particular method has become more pervasive in the research field (Smeyers, 2008). Quantitative data in the educational field consists of grades, test scores, and attendance. Alone, these numbers answer certain objective questions. It is the qualitative method that can perhaps explain why the numbers answer certain questions. This is so because the qualitative method offers the researcher the ability to analyze and utilize oral and written data (Langer, Lietz, & Furman, 2007). The qualitative method also allows for analysis of observations. Given that the purpose of the research was not simply to state what happened but to draw meaning from why it happened, it was more reasonable to choose the qualitative method because the measurements that were sought after cannot be easily quantified.

**The Necessary Effort to Increase Self-efficacy**

The effects of the cycle of inequality are drastic; however, it was fully understood throughout the process that participants would ultimately make the decision as to whether or not to take advantage of the program. The Journey offered Black males systematic mentoring in a way that offers comfort and support through group methods. Therefore, the research question was: What happens to participants' self-efficacy when it is promoted in an after-school program? The qualitative nature of this study was necessary as it is extremely challenging to quantify one's motivation. The effort is lacking for a

variety of reasons. A review of the literature yielded that the necessary effort to increase

self-efficacy entails the setting of realistic goals and diligently seeking and using

feedback to accomplish goals (Bembenutty, 2011).

The Journey offers the necessary self-development in the key areas of self-identity, soft

skills, and support. This chapter will outline the reasoning behind the methods that were

utilized as well as justification that considers the existing literature.

**The Journey in Detail**

The Journey was tailored to meet the needs of Black male high school students.

The Journey offered participants an opportunity to receive attention in the areas self-

identity, soft skills, and support. The Journey took place after school once a week after

school for 20 consecutive weeks throughout the school year. Each session lasted for two

hours. The goal of the researcher was to observe and record data from these weekly

meetings. The participants reported to a meeting room where they met with a group of

mentors. The first hour of the meeting was designed so that the mentors and participants

could share refreshments and fellowship about whatever the participants desired to talk

about. This first hour was referred to as "food and fellowship".

Once the "food and fellowship" time was over, participants were asked to engage

in a group conversation which lasted for 45 minutes to an hour. Two mentors facilitated

the group discussions. This portion of The Journey resembled a group counseling

session. While the mentors were not licensed counselors, the counselors who worked in

the building had a great deal of input throughout the duration of The Journey (2010-2011)

by way of lesson plans, ideas, and commentary regarding the data. Each week, the

mentors presented participants with information and conversations that focused on the

weekly topic.  The topics are listed in Appendix H.  The topics and agenda for each week

were meticulously planned by me according to the literature with some input from the

mentors.  The three goals of The Journey are as follows:

**1.  Students feel safe in the environment provided by the program.**  The benefits of

this program for its participants would be minimal if they did not feel the need to take

advantage of what the program had to offer.  The Journey offered participants an

opportunity to learn and better themselves in an encouraging environment where they

were free to admit mistakes and reflect on their personal journey through life.  The belief

was that more could be accomplished with students if they understood that they were safe

in the environment throughout the meeting.  The feeling of safety was also promoted by

the building of relationships with the participants.  This was measured through the three

questionnaire results administered during the study.

**2.  An increase in the Thirst for Knowledge.**  The cycle of inequality is perpetuated by

a lack of knowledge.  In 2009, President Obama told a group of students at a high school

in Wisconsin, "The currency of today's economy is knowledge" (as cited in Richards,

2009, p. 2).  This concept is exceedingly hard to grasp for students who live in

impoverished homes.  It is more likely that the achievement gap will be eradicated if

students seek knowledge as a man lost in the desert seeks water.  Historians recall how

Abraham Lincoln, a self-educated lawyer, walked miles in order to borrow books.  This

goal is not simply limited to book knowledge.

There is a great deal of practical knowledge about the world that everyone needs to acquire in order to sustain a fulfilling life.  It is important to mention that The Journey program was designed to encourage participants to seek knowledge beyond the limits of the classroom.  There is knowledge of many different things that many students are simply not exposed to due to their SES status and lack of the necessary effort such as soft skills, dressing for success, proper study skills, time management, and meticulously planning for a future that involves matriculation.  Mentors were encouraged to share personal stories of failure and triumph in life.  Students were encouraged to seek wisdom from the mentors so that they could learn not to repeat the mistakes made by the mentors. This was also measured through the three questionnaire results administered during the study.

3.  **Students demonstrate a stronger sense of Self-efficacy.**  Through educating participants about themselves and their history, students will develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and a more realistic view of where they are and where they can be.  This self-awareness enables a person to not let their weaknesses distract them from putting forth effort (Whiting, 2006).  The Journey was designed to help students develop their identity and understand that they have the power to achieve in life.  I wanted participants to understand that they do have a great deal of control over their situation if they only believe in their capability to achieve success with effective effort.   The observation protocol, questionnaires, and exit interview results were used to measure participant self-efficacy.

**Participant Criteria**

For the purposes of my study, I decided to focus on students who were in The Journey and who fit a set of criteria. The students who participated in The Journey were referred by their teachers and counselors. I enlisted the help of the freshmen teachers and counselors who currently work in the high school where I conducted the study. I gave these individuals a list of criteria that I wanted them to use for selecting referees. Initially, I had 10 participants in mind for the study. During the previous school year, The Journey had 10 participants as well. All of the prospective participants were Black males. The following is the criteria that were used to further screen participants:

- Have academic difficulty in school

- Freshmen status

-  At least one formally recorded behavioral incident in the previous quarter (office referral)

As far as the first criterion is concerned, students who exhibited difficulty in language arts and math were chosen. All content areas are important; however, these two subjects are excellent indicators regarding student achievement as they are heavily monitored year to year. They are also important in terms of meeting NCLB requirements. Discipline referrals also reflect an issue in the area of behavior. I chose to recruit freshmen participants because it is during this year that many students make the decision to drop out of school. Prior research also influenced me to utilize only freshmen or possibly sophomores due to poor retention rates amongst upperclassmen for a variety of reasons.

More importantly, "research shows that ninth grade performance is a reliable predictor of future retention or graduation" (Sims, 2010, p. 26).

During the study school year 2010-2011, there was a participant added to the group who did not fit the aforementioned criteria. This participant was the unofficial group leader. The participant was not told about the intended purpose, but the idea was that perhaps the other participants would learn from the example set by one of their peers. The following constitutes the criteria for the unofficial group leader: (a) freshman status, (b) at least a 3.0 GPA, and (c) Black male.

**Randomization and Selection**

Once I received a sizable pool of applicants from the school staff, I assigned each applicant a number. The numbers were typed into an excel spreadsheet and the program generated 10 random numbers from the sample. The individuals represented by those numbers were chosen as participants I would invite to be a part of The Journey. Once they accepted the invitation, they were also asked to be a part of the study of The Journey. All 10 gave their consent. However, there were 3 participants who did not continue due to their decision or long term suspension. Once the dynamics of the group stabilized, there were seven consistent participants.

**Procedure**

During the data collection process, I utilized three instruments including participant questionnaire, interviews, and an observation protocol (see Appendices E-F). Due to the qualitative nature of the research, the depth of participant responses was important. I developed the three instruments utilizing the current literature while keeping

the goals of the program in mind. My intention was to use the instruments' results to determine what changes occurred within the participants as The Journey continued throughout the school year. Therefore, the qualitative procedure relied on the honesty of the participants. This can be a limitation. However, The Journey was designed to build trusting relationships. The data collection tools are found in the Appendices C-H.

**Questionnaire.** The participant questionnaire consisted of only four questions. This instrument was administered to the participants at the beginning, middle, and end of The Journey using the same questionnaire every time. All questions were open-ended with the exception of one. The open ended questions were designed with the goals of the study in mind. Ideally, as participants become more comfortable with the process, their feedback will be more detailed. The non-opened ended question asked how many times participants thought about the information throughout the week. In order to minimize bias, the survey was administered by an administrator who worked at the school where I completed the study. The participants had a full 90 minutes in order to answer the questions. The questionnaire may be found in the Appendix C.

**Exit interviews.** At the conclusion of The Journey on May 26, 2011, the participants were interviewed. The interview was comprehensive in nature as it related to and referenced many concepts that were highlighted throughout The Journey. The interview questions were chosen based on an extensive review of the literature in addition to the unique experiences had by each participant. The purpose of the interview questions was to gauge the overall experience of the participants as well as measure a

possible change in the level of self-efficacy. The interviews were conducted by me. A list of the questions is located in the Appendix E.

**Observation protocol.** The observation protocol was created utilizing a detailed review of the current literature. It was important for me to note any query of information by participants because it illustrates that participants are seeking knowledge. Therefore, I utilized Marzano and Kendall's (2007) taxonomy verbs as key triggers. These verbs would be used in teachers' lesson plans to help them differentiate the level and type of thinking that is expected of the students (Marzano & Kendall, 2007). Marzano's taxonomy (Marzano & Kendall, 2007) also "ensures that specific types of knowledge are addressed and processed in specific ways" (p. 14). In this instance, the participants served as the teachers and their objectives are stated in the form of questions that revealed their desire to gain knowledge. In other words, if any of the participants made a statement or asked a question utilizing selected taxonomy verbs, I noted it. It was also important to note and make inferences based on participant responses. Therefore, I placed two columns in the body of the instrument. The left column was labeled "What is happening?" and the right column was labeled "What do I believe is happening?" The purpose of the left column was to allow me to record statements, questions, or events during The Journey meetings. The right column enabled me to record inferences based upon the corresponding statement, question, or event. The frequency, amount, and type of questions that the participants asked was also a relevant qualitative variable. As mentioned before, the thirst for knowledge applies to not only academic knowledge, but

all knowledge. It is my contention that an increased knowledge base can encourage one to continue if that passion is nurtured. This instrument is located in Appendix D.

**Setting.** The meetings took place once a week in the very school building that the participants attend daily. Most of the meetings took place in one of the newer classrooms in this high school building. The chairs were placed in a circle in order to facilitate a discussion in which the speaker was able to have direct eye contact with all the participants. During the moments when participants were eating or completing a writing exercise, the students were sitting in desks that were placed together to mimic a dinner table. A diagram of the layout may be found in Appendix I.

## Data Analysis

The strategies that I used to analyze the questionnaires, interviews, and observation results are described in this section. The data analysis process involved analyzing similarities and differences of participant actions and responses. The data analysis involved (a) comparing the three questionnaire results of each participant throughout the program, and for acquired knowledge and application, and (b) matching participant-specific observation protocol material with survey results.

**Questionnaire responses.** During the data analysis stage, the survey responses for each participant were compared. The differences and similarities were analyzed and listed for each individual question. Compelling survey responses that were relevant to the goals were highlighted and coded depending upon which goal was referenced. Next, the pertinent feedback was placed on a note card and filed under the goal of the study to which the answer was related. The participant responses to the surveys were highly

important in terms of providing feedback to the mentors as to what the participants would like to discuss during future meetings. For example, before each meeting, the mentors studied the responses and tempered the lesson plans to address any questions or concerns the participants expressed in the questionnaire.

**Observation protocol findings.** The observation protocol information is important because it offers specific insight into what took place during each meeting. It is a record of both the verbal and nonverbal occurrences during each meeting. The observation protocol is designed to help offer analysis of the effects of the participant's time in The Journey. Additionally, this instrument provided a quick and easy review of the Journey meetings. The coded survey results for each participant were compared to the observation protocol information.

**Exit interview transcripts.** During the interview, the answers were audio recorded. Next, I transcribed the interview answers by listening to the answers and typing them out as they were stated. The transcribed answers were placed on separate note cards based on their substance. Lastly, the answers were combed through and coded based on their relevance to one of the three goals of the study. In the end, note cards were categorized in piles based on the corresponding goal of the study. This was accomplished similar to the way the survey results were coded.

**Grades.** Although the study was qualitative, I included the grades of the participants throughout the entire school year. The inclusion of grades will also allow anyone interested in duplicating the study or modeling The Journey to have as much

information as possible to persuade any necessary parties.  I compared the grades of each

participant before and after the study.

**Summary**

In Chapter 3, I described all the methods that were used to collect and analyze all

the data sets.  This section also described the after school program titled, The Journey,

which was designed to increase self-efficacy.  All instruments were created based on the

review of literature and the program goals of The Journey so that the instruments could

accurately measure what changes, if any, took place within the participants.  Due to the

qualitative nature of this study, meticulous coding of data was necessary to decipher the

meaning of the data.  The qualitative method allows the researcher the opportunity to

possibly understand how a person is growing, changing, and thinking.  Lastly,

quantitative data in the form of participant grades were monitored throughout the

duration of the study for possible correlation between student achievement and

participation in The Journey.

**Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings**

The purpose of this research was to observe the Black male participants who were a part of The Journey during the 2010-2011 school year. The measurements were surveys, observation protocols, and interviews. These tools are found in appendices C-F. The study was a collection of primary and secondary data. Due to the fact that The Journey is an ongoing program at this particular local high school, I included secondary data (student grades) from students who were in The Journey the previous school year of 2009-2010. The primary data was collected from a total of seven students who consistently participated in The Journey during the 2010-2011 school year. The names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

**2009-2010 Participants**

During the initial year of The Journey, which began in January of 2010, I decided to gather information about the program and the effect on the participants because I knew that I wanted to formally conduct a study regarding the program. The Journey actually started in the third quarter of the school year. I decided to sit in on some meetings and gather some observational information. There were a total of eight faithful participants throughout the course of the program out of the original 10 who signed up. When I returned to follow up with these participants, I discovered that there were only two participants left as the rest had moved on to other schools. The information regarding their participation in The Journey is secondary information as it was based on observations prior to the beginning of this particular study.

**Damon.** At the time of his participation in The Journey, Damon was a freshman in high school. He was chosen for the study because he met the criteria in all categories. His teachers reported that he was a very knowledgeable student and that he was only lacking effort, not ability as a high school student. More specifically, Damon was inconsistent in his assignment completion and admitted that he did not spend much time studying. In one instance, Damon was asked to complete a Geography project in which he planned a trip to a place he would like to visit. The students were given two weeks to work on the project in class. Damon's progress was very slow. He had to be reminded numerous times to stay on track and he often tried to change the specifications of the project to something that would be easier for him to accomplish with little effort. When the due date arrived, Damon was complacent as he stated, "I don't have it finished. I'll just take the zero." His teacher decided to give him a partial grade for doing the little work he was observed completing during class time.

During class, teachers reported that Damon would often become distracted by other things while important information was being presented. It was also discovered that he had a difficult time with authority figures. Damon's parents divorced at an early age. His father currently lives out of state. Damon is able to visit his father on a somewhat consistent basis. His mother is very involved in her son's education. She reached out numerous times so that she might be of some assistance to his teachers. She has expressed serious concern for her son and his future. It was reported that Damon became irate a couple of times in class and became insubordinate towards his teachers.

His female teachers hypothesized that his problems with teachers as authority figures could be the result of his ongoing struggle with his mother.

*Observations.* Damon was certainly aware that a bulk of his problems in school were attributed to effort. He said in an interview, "I just don't see why I have to go to school, I don't care" (Damon). His teachers reported that he is very rebellious at times and that he puts forth effort whenever he feels like it. Damon believed that he can do well, but the effort is just not there. He agreed with his teacher about his attitude, but he accepts only half of the blame for his poor grades. "If these teachers would leave me alone, maybe I would like being here. I hate this school. " There are definitely things that Damon loves to do in his free time. He likes to listen to music, cook, and fix small electronics. During the semester, Damon came up with an idea to start a cooking business in his mother's basement. As he was quizzed about his plan, it was clear he had not thought out how the business could sustain itself by finding an appropriate balance between costs and revenue. His only thought was accumulating enough money so that he could move out early.

Damon would not admit that he could be a little confused regarding his future. He switched his goals from going to a major university to dropping out of high school. His plans changed depending on how his day had gone. One day, Damon stated, "my goal is to be the starting running back for the school next year." It is important to mention that Damon did not play much football before his freshman year and his play was very limited due to his "poor effort and grades" according to his coaches. Throughout his time in the study Damon had a seemingly tough time fitting in with the rest of the group. It is

highly normal for peers to make fun of each other in an endearing manner.  However, Damon seemed to say things that made him socially awkward.  In one instance, Damon stated that muscle cars (cars built typically for speed with little consideration of gas mileage) do not burn a lot of gas and that he knew this to be true because he owned one.  Once his peers pressed him for more information, Damon was not able to offer any more information and it made him appear to be lying in order to fit in.  Other members of the group verbally dismissed him as we moved on to another subject to protect him.

It also seemed that Damon was marginal and socially awkward.  He was very interested to know who would be a part of the study before he agreed to participate.  As the study went on, Damon sought approval from the group.  On numerous occasions, Damon reported to the more popular member of the group certain gossip he heard in order to seek acceptance.  He also listened intently to this more popular member of the group with his body leaning forward to catch every detail.

Damon was open to hear words of wisdom from adults.  He was even more willing to seek advice regarding his relationship with his mother and members of the other sex at school.  During his first conversation with his assigned mentor, Damon went on to express deep despair about living with his mother as there was friction between the two of them every day.  His mentor reported "Damon is very down.  I couldn't believe how open he was with me.  He was looking for help.  I hope I gave it to him." Throughout the study, two of Damon's teachers approached one of the mentors and said positive things about him.  One of Damon's teachers reported:

I am so impressed by what I have seen in Damon.  He was so helpful and polite.  I

was getting ready for class when he came up to me and asked, "Is there anything

that I can do to help you Ms.  Robinson?" (Damon's teacher)

Damon was very proud at the end of the program as he was given a plaque with his name

on it.  "I think I am going to use SWAG (Systematic Ways to Achieve Goals) to help me

in the future."

  *Grades.*  Unfortunately, Damon's grades declined during the time he participated

in The Journey.  Though grades are not the focus of the study, grade improvement would

be a positive outcome of this intervention.  However, the numerical feedback offered by

his teachers lead Damon and his mother to believe that a fair argument can be made that

Damon is capable of better.  The challenge is motivating him to do so.  On numerous

occasions, Damon stated that he did not feel like working and that he found the content to

be boring.  Modest gains were realized in his Social Studies and Science classes between

the second and third quarter.  Minimal gains were made in Communication Arts and

Math.  However, the possibility of a trend was not sustained as his grades fell

dramatically in the fourth quarter.

  Table 2 illustrates the grades Damon accumulated throughout the school year

beginning in the second quarter.  A school year is made up of four quarters.  The quarters

represented in Table 2 represent portions of the school year in which Damon was

involved in The Journey.  All grades are percentages and are out of a possible 100%.

Damon only saw an increase in his science and social studies classes.  However, this

momentum was not sustained as his grades in those classes dropped by the end of the

year. At no point was he ever passing his Communication Arts or Math class.

**Table 1**

*Damon's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 40 | 42 | 25 |
| Comm. Arts | 49 | 49 | 51 |
| Science | 51 | 61 | 42 |
| Social Studies | 56 | 76 | 57 |

    *Follow-up interview.* During the follow-up interview, Damon sat across from me

as he fiddled with a paper clip. He was a little shy at first because of the formality and

rarely made eye contact with me. On the day of the interview Damon had just come back

from a five day suspension. Damon opted not to attend The Journey this year due to

other after school activities. He did mention that The Journey, "taught me good tools

about my decision making process." Damon was honest as he admitted that he has not

been using the techniques that he learned last spring. Things at home have not gotten

better for him. He is also spending a great deal of time at home. During the interview,

Damon lamented some of the decisions he made last year as well as this year. "My

grades aren't very good this year." Damon still has aspirations of playing football in

college, even though he is not even qualified to play due to his grades. Damon also said

that he will attend The Journey meetings next year because he knows that eventually, he

will have to be self-reliant as he grows older.

**Steven.** At the time of his participation in The Journey, Steven was a 16-year-old sophomore. He was chosen for the program because he met the criteria. His teachers reported that he is a very likeable and intelligent student. One teacher stated, "I love Steven. He would do so well if he found a different group of friends." He reported that his mother was very excited that her son was chosen to participate in The Journey. Steven is one of the many children who come from a single-parent home. Two of Steven's teachers expressed gratitude to the mentors for the program. "I want to tell you that I have heard about your program, and I think it's wonderful. Steven has changed so much and he is trying harder" (one of Steven's teachers).

*Observations.* Steven understands that his potential is very high. "I know I could do better if I tried." He also believes that most of his teachers care about him. Steven lives in a world where a person must fight in order to maintain respect. Before one of the meetings, Steven told the group that he challenged another young man to a fight. As he was detailing the event, the group listened casually. "I told him, if he wanted to do this, then we got to do it off school property cause I ain't trying to get suspended" (Steven). During the very first meeting, Steven was one of the three participants that showed up. He was very receptive to the presentation on discovering Systematic Ways to Achieve Goals. During one particular slide, a picture of President Obama and a popular rapper was shown side by side. At the time, Soldier Boy had recently released a popular song titled, "Get my swag on." The question was posed, who has the most swag. Steven identified President Obama as having the most swag because, "I think it's cool to be

yourself instead of what everyone else expects you to be." Steven appeared to emerge as the focal point of the group that day.

There was a little time before the meeting began and so the participants had time to visit. During this time, the other participants seemed to gravitate towards him. As a teacher at the same school, I was also able to observe Steven in the hallways. Steven was observed talking to members of the other sex. As they would pass by, they sang his name. Steven was also observed three times standing outside his class during class time talking to other students who were walking in the hallway past his classroom. When asked about those incidents, Steven mentioned, "that lady (his teacher) don't care if we learn. She said we make her want to leave."

Steven seemed to be very happy among his peers. However, there was a point during the study in which Steven found himself kicked out of his home. I had to switch roles in order to offer advice because the mentors were preoccupied. Steven came into the room very quiet and his head was down. I asked him what was wrong and he quietly informed me that he was kicked out of the house by his mother after he had a fight with his sister. I asked to have a private conversation with him. During that conversation Steven said, "My mom said she couldn't take anymore." Steven also went on to detail the stress that comes with a household where seven people reside. At this point he expressed deep despair as he looked at the floor while detailing the event. "She don't listen to me," said Steven. I gave him some conflict resolution techniques and later was happy to hear that he resolved things and moved back in with his mother. Steven became emotional during one of the Emotional Obstacles meetings. The presenter was sharing

his own personal story growing up without a father. Steven got up from his seat, grabbed some tissue and left the room. Upon his return, the group maintained their focus on the presentation. Steven claimed to be alright and declined to speak with a mentor privately.

*Grades*. Steven had some improvement in his grades as he remained in The Journey as illustrated Table 3. He admitted that the trouble at home has had an effect on his grades. His science teacher constantly pursued him in order to make sure he completed his missing assignments. She would come by The Journey meetings to drop off work or visit with Steven. This is an example of a variable that is often overlooked in the education field. I believe that this teacher's persistence had a lot to do with Steven putting forth more effort in this class. Table 3 also shows a significant gain was realized in Communication Arts but, the momentum was not sustained.

**Table 2**

*Steven's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | 67 | 44 | 69 |
| **Comm. Arts** | 54 | 75 | 30 |
| **Science** | 89 | 82 | 86 |
| **Social Studies** | 51 | 26 | 43 |

*Follow-up interview*. During the final interview, Steven was very happy as he sat down. He looked me in the eye as he anticipated the questions. Steven said that this year was much better than last year due to the fact that he was more focused on getting his work completed and graduating. Steven would like to go to college. Steven only made it

to two meetings this year due to the fact that he was now a junior and he was working in addition to playing sports. The review of the literature suggests that retention in after-school programs is highly difficult among upper level classmen. Steven reflected on his time in The Journey last spring and said it was helpful because he learned to believe in his ability to accomplish goals. He also mentioned, "It motivated me to try harder."

One of his goals for the school year was to do well enough on the ACT to get into college. He was given ACT study materials by one of the mentors in attendance. At the time of the last interview, he was enrolled in ACT prep session and sat for next ACT. Steven planned to use the tools regarding effective effort to help him accomplish goals in the future. He believed that school does not have to be as hard as he has made it seem in the past. While Steven wanted to be more participative in The Journey for the 2010-2011 school year, he believed that he learned a great deal and that is why he is having his best year academically. He also reported that things are great at home between him and his mother.

**2010-2011 Participants**

During this particular year of the Journey, there were a total of 10 students participating in The Journey who met the criteria. However, due to a number of circumstances, three participants who signed up for the study had to drop out. Therefore, my total number of consistent participants after 20 weeks of the study was seven. Additionally, one of the seven was placed on long-term suspension towards the end of the study and was unavailable for the final interview. It is also important to mention that the student who was chosen for the student leader position consistently attended The Journey

meetings. A section is devoted to each participant of the study. Included are a profile of

the participant, observations, grades, and assessment of the goals of The Journey as it

relates to the individual participant. In the "assessment of goals" portion, more detail will

be paid to the concept of self-efficacy as it is the focal point of the study.

**Caleb.** At the time of the study Caleb was a 15-year-old freshman in high school.

His interests included basketball, video games, and football. Caleb was very polite and

he seemed to understand the importance of the decisions that he makes now in his young

life. Caleb lamented, "I need to get my stuff together." Caleb's biggest challenge seemed

to be that of others seeking his attention during class. "I need to stop talking to my

friends in class" (Caleb). At the time of his recruitment in The Journey during the second

quarter of the school year, he had already accumulated two referrals for disrupting class.

One of Caleb's teachers remarked on his progress report that his effort was "inconsistent"

and he "wasn't working to his ability."

*Observations.* Caleb fully understands that his performance in school is not up to

par. "I know I should try harder in school. It's just hard to do all that work." Coupled

with this feeling is the belief that his teachers treat him differently than they do his White

peers. Caleb feels that "I have to work harder than them White kids." During our session

on self-identity, Caleb also shared with the group that "White teachers don't understand

where I'm coming from." Caleb's admissions really helped to encourage other

participants in The Journey. However, Caleb told half the truth as he later admitted that

he does not turn in all of his assignments. The mentors explained to Caleb that he has the

power to control how his teachers treat him. This revelation silenced Caleb and he asked

the mentor for clarification. The mentor had the following exchange with Caleb:

*Mentor: Do you think teachers treat a "good" student the same way they treat you?*

*Caleb: No*

*Mentor: Does color have anything to do with it?*

*Caleb: I don't think so.*

*Mentor: Why?*

*Caleb: Cause they don't talk while the teacher's talking and they do their work.*

*Mentor: So, it stands to reason that if you are a student who comes to class and*

*completes his work, then you wouldn't have to worry about being treated differently.*

Caleb paused and then nodded in agreement to this thought. In his first survey, it was

clear that once Caleb realized that The Journey was going to be a mainstay in his life, he

valued the opportunity of gathering with peers and mentors. Caleb never missed a

meeting throughout the six months of the study. In his first survey response, Caleb

indicated that he thought about our meeting four and six times during the week after the

meeting.

In terms of thirsting for knowledge, Caleb indicated in his first survey that he

would like to know "how I can improve how I identify myself." Caleb also paid close

attention to what the mentors were saying during the meetings. When his peers would

talk while the mentors were talking, Caleb would scold his peers. At the end of one

particular meeting, Caleb approached the mentors and said, "I think we should get rid of

some of the people in The Journey. They are just coming for the food." The mentors

expressed their appreciation for Caleb's persistence and attention during the meetings. During one particular meeting, a panel of four high achieving senior Black male students was present to answer any question posed by the members of The Journey.   A panel member offered this advice, "you have to put extra focus on your areas of weakness." To this piece of advice, Caleb anxiously leaned forward for rebuttal, raised his hand, and said "every time I focus on my weaknesses, the classes that I'm strong at go down." Caleb's plea for help encouraged the mentors to put together a lesson on time management and prioritization.

During the goal setting week, Caleb set the following goal for the quarter, "my goal is to study 30 minutes a day my school subjects and maintain a 3.0 GPA." After Caleb set this goal, he reported that he stayed after school for tutoring for three consecutive weeks.  Ultimately, he did not meet the goal.  After a short period of excitement, his focus started to decline.  Caleb still cares about his grades, however he had to lower his academic goal to a more feasible 2.5 GPA.

Caleb had a rough stretch during the school year in which his grandmother was very sick.  His family had been tending to his grandmother throughout the day and night. However, Caleb was faithful in his attendance to school, as well as The Journey meetings.  He actually fell asleep during two meetings because of the situation at home. During most meetings, Caleb felt comfortable in the setting because he knew many of The Journey participants and he quickly developed a rapport with the mentors.

*Questionnaire responses.*  Caleb's questionnaire responses varied a little as he continued to participate in The Journey.  Usually, he was the first one finished and his

answers were very succinct.  Caleb was very much excited about participating in The

Journey.  One constant that was increasingly evident is that Caleb felt safe in the

environment.  "The Journey is a safe place to talk about stuff that you are struggling with.

What goes on in The Journey stays in The Journey." Additionally, Caleb reported a

stronger sense of belief in his abilities to accomplish goals.  For example, he was given a

questionnaire the week after he set academic goals for the quarter.  Caleb was focused on

meeting his goal.  He reported on his questionnaire that, "I know what I got to do in order

to meet my goal for the quarter and make a 3.0.  If I do what I learn in The Journey, then

I could do it." This was the most detailed answer that Caleb gave for this particular

question in the three times he answered it.  Additionally, Caleb reported on each of his

questionnaires that he thought about The Journey four to six times in the six days since

the last meeting.

   *Final interview.*  Caleb showed a great zeal as he talked about his participation in

The Journey.  He was very thorough in describing how The Journey has helped him this

year.

*Interviewer: Tell me about your experience in The Journey.*

*Caleb: I learned a lot and it helped me to know how I should identify myself.  How I*

*know how to change things around and I know who I should hang out with.*

Caleb also mentioned that his school year would have been "boring" had he not

participated in The Journey.  Caleb further stated that "I would've been with the wrong

group of friends if I didn't have The Journey to teach me about the sacrifices I have to

make to be successful." There was an intriguing exchange between Caleb and me after I

asked the following question:

*Interviewer: What do you see yourself doing five years from now?*

*Caleb: I see myself in college playing football, if I can get my grades up.*

Caleb's use of the word "if" was very compelling and so I followed up with him on what

he meant by qualifying his vision with that word. "Well, I am going to get my grades up.

That's what I meant to say." Caleb had the right things to say when I asked him how he

was going to get his grades up. "I'm gonna get my grades up by asking my teachers for

extra help." I found it very compelling that Caleb has not yet done this, "I've

been thinking a lot about football and I lost my focus"(Caleb). I also discovered during

the interview that Caleb's grades had been an issue since last year. Throughout The

Journey, grades came up and Caleb set high goals. I asked him if The Journey compelled

him in any way to think about actually doing something about his grades. "Yeah, I mean

The Journey kept the things I need to do on my mind during the year" (Caleb).

     *Grades.* Table 4 illustrates Caleb's grades for the 2011-2012 school year. Caleb

showed much progress between the first and second quarters of the year. His attitude was

very good, however, there was a dip in his achievement in all classes with the exception

of one (Social Studies). As Caleb stated before, he has not been pleased with his grades

since last year. During the third quarter, his teachers reported that he was still not

working up to his ability.

**Table 3**

*Caleb's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | 77 | 82 | 73 |
| **Comm. Arts** | 63 | 66 | 58 |
| **Science** | 85 | 66 | 62 |
| **Social Studies** | 66 | 60 | 66 |

*Assessment of goals.* In terms of instilling a seeking of knowledge, I believe we saw a great deal of progress towards that goal. Caleb was very persistent in asking questions that related to how he could better himself. He emphatically asked the mentors to teach him the proper way to study. Now, it is important to state that he admittedly did not put those tools into action as the semester went on. "I like that we learned how to better ourselves from someone who has been there before" (Caleb). The following statements about Caleb indicate a change in his self-efficacy:

- Believed he could use the tools he learned in The Journey to accomplish his goals

- Wanted to continue in The Journey to help him in school and life

- Believed that he could succeed in higher level classes

- Believed he could have met his goal with more effort

- Near the end of our time together he stated, "I will be playing football at Mizzou"

**Tim.** During this particular school year (2011-2012), one modification was added to the Journey. While the other participants fit the aforementioned criteria, Tim did not. Tim was recruited because he fit the criteria of a potential group leader. The goal was to assist Tim in developing leadership skills and to encourage other members of the group by his example. The idea was that hopefully, through sharing his story, he would inspire the rest of the group to actively strive for success. At the beginning of the study, Tim was a 15-year-old freshman in high school. He lived with both his parents and they were very supportive. His interests included basketball, football, and playing video games.

*Observations.* Tim has been well taught by his parents. He very much wants to go to college some day and get his grades back up to his standards. He is accustomed to earning As and Bs. However, we learned that Tim has areas that could use improvement. "I just don't study because I don't know how." Tim has learned that if he pays attention in class and completes his work, then he will at the very least make a B on most of his tests and quizzes. "I just don't act up in class so I don't have to try to spend a lot of time catching up" (Tim). Tim attended more weekly Journey meetings than any of the other participants. When he heard about The Journey, he pursued the opportunity to be a part of the program. Although he did not meet the criteria, he learned a great deal from his time in The Journey. His body language during the meetings was very inquisitive as he would sit on the edge of his seat with his chin resting in his hands. He asked an average of five questions during every meeting.

In terms of application, Tim reported that he was using the goal he set during our goal setting meeting to help drive him. "I've been thinking about that goal I set for this

quarter.  I've been following it.  I don't have any missing assignments" (Tim).  Tim was

very excited to report his progress and application of the principles that we discussed the

previous week.  Tim also reported to the mentors, "I'm using my planner now to keep

track of my assignments."

Tim was not officially given the title of leader and he was not very vocal;

however, he did have an effect on the group.  This was consistent with De Ruyter and

Conyer, (2000) who said that self-identity is created through interactions.  On numerous

occasions, other participants pointed to Tim as a great example of a *good student*.  During

a Journey meeting, one participant remarked, "Tim doesn't have to work as hard cause

he's smart." The rest of the group voiced their agreement with this statement.  Tim

remarked, "no, like the mentor said, if you do your work your life will be easier.  I just do

my work." The rest of the group listened intently as Tim shared his story along with his

struggles.  "I don't do my best in math cause I can't learn from that teacher" (Tim).

*Questionnaire responses.*  Tim was a little more detailed in his survey responses

than the other participants.  The common thread throughout his responses was that he felt

that The Journey was a good thing for him and anyone else who wanted to join.  In his

last two questionnaires, Tim stated that he wanted to know how he could better manage

his time so that he could "turn my weaknesses into strengths." This is in direct response

to a conversation he had with a mentor about the classes in which he had a B.  The

mentors wanted him to focus more attention on those classes so that he could accumulate

all As.  Tim also used similar language to express how safe he felt in the environment on

all of his questionnaires.

*Final interview.* Tim was very excited as he talked about his experiences in The Journey. "I think The Journey was good. It actually helped me. Like, ya'll tell us a lot of useful. The stuff you tell us is good for me. I feel I can use it to help me accomplish my goals" (Tim). Tim also expressed a tremendous amount of gratitude for being a part of The Journey. He claimed that the mentors helped to inspire him to devote more of his time to studying and completing homework. "I used to just come home and play video games. But now, I go home and get my work done before I have fun" (Tim).

*Grades.* Table 4 illustrates Tim's grades for the 2011-2012 school year. Tim was definitely the high achiever among participants in this study. However, he still had a lesson to learn. During one week, Tim revealed that he rarely studied and still earned decent grades. The mentors expressed to him that he could do better if only he delegated his time better. As a matter of fact, two mentors debated as to which approach Tim should take regarding his grades. One mentor felt that As and Bs were fine. The other felt that Tim needed to focus more time on the classes in which he was earning a B. Tim's willingness to apply mentor advise served him well and allowed him to make gains in his overall GPA.

**Table 4**

*Tim's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | 81 | 85 | 79 |
| **Comm. Arts** | 82 | 91 | 89 |
| **Science** | 87 | 90 | 86 |
| **Social Studies** | 89 | 91 | 90 |

*Assessment of goals.* Tim led by example throughout the duration of The Journey. He reported that he felt safe during the program. He also reported that he believed that The Journey helped him transition from middle school to high school. The following statements about Tim demonstrate an increase in self-efficacy throughout the duration of The Journey for the 2010-2011 school year:

- Now believes that if he studies, he could earn a 4.0 GPA

- Began using a planner to stay organized

- Actively worked on math problems from an ACT manual given to him by a mentor

- Wanted to remain in The Journey to help him accomplish his goals

- Established and accomplished third quarter goal of 3.5 GPA

- Independently read an article that instructed students how to study

- Believed that he would play football at Mizzou and study engineering (he was not sure if he could study and play football at the beginning of The Journey)

**Darrin.** At the time of the study, Darrin was a 15-year-old freshman. He met all the criteria for participation in The Journey. Darrin spent time between his mother's and father's house as they had been divorced for five years. Darrin is also an only child. His interests included football, music, and dancing. In class, his teachers reported that he is very bright. His only challenge was that he does not always try as hard as he can and that his assignment completion is inconsistent. Darrin received a fresh start at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year as his parents decided to remove him from the city school where he was getting into trouble. Darrin was extremely articulate. Throughout the study, he often said, "teachers tell me I could be a lawyer cause of my debate skills."

*Observations.* Throughout the six months of the study, Darrin has shown a great deal of zeal for the gatherings. Darrin seemed overwhelmed with surprise during the second meeting, which was catered. "Wow, is all that for us? Did you pay for that? Thank you." Darrin seemed to be one of the leaders of the group in terms of openness and a willingness to self-reflect. "I ain't gonna lie. If I was at my old school, I probably would be suspended now and I haven't been suspended yet." Darrin's teachers were certainly on to something as Darrin had a way with words that set him apart from the other members of The Journey. Darrin exhibited a great deal of attention seeking behavior during the meetings. Due to his monopolization of the time, a system was developed in order to allow everyone to have an opportunity to speak. In order for someone to be allowed to speak with undivided attention, participants were given a tennis ball to hold. It was agreed that the person who held the tennis ball would be the only one talking until it was passed to someone else.

Darrin was proud of the fact that he is doing better than in past years. During the week focused on setting goals, Darrin was very aggressive and set the following goal for the third semester, "I will make a 3.0 GPA." However, he did enter a decline as the year went on. Darrin admitted that he does not always turn in his assignments. "I think that's what be bringing my grades down." During one meeting, Darrin was surprised to learn that he could still pass a class with a D. The following is an exchange between Darrin and a mentor:

*Darrin: You could still pass if you had a D?*

*Mentor: Yes, you can.*

*Darrin: Oh, yeah I didn't know that. I'm good now. Are you sure about that?*

It's quite possible that Darrin was again seeking attention during this exchange that could have monopolized the time in the meeting. However, the mentors decided to move on to the next student. There was a presence of contradictory behavior evident in Darrin. He had high expectations for his future, but doing the work was not desirable. "Those teachers be giving us too much work."

During The Journey meeting dedicated to community service, Darrin received a great deal of praise from his peers in The Journey. One peer remarked, "Darrin was talking to those kids like a teacher. He was keeping them engaged." Darrin was also very pleased with the opportunity to be looked up to by the others. "It made me feel like I have a lot of responsibility to do better so they could have something to look up to."

***Questionnaire responses.*** Darrin's questionnaire responses did not vary either. His responses were also succinct and there was very little that could be gained from them.

However, he did report that he thought about The Journey at least seven times in one week on his last questionnaire. Additionally, Darrin reported that he felt safe in the environment using the same language on all of his questionnaires. On his last questionnaire, Darrin was the most specific when he stated that, "I want to know more about what I could do this summer to better myself." This was in direct response to a conversation he had with a mentor about not wasting his summer.

*Final interview.* Darrin holds high expectations for his future. In five years, he expects to be "in college, going to the military, I mean Air Force." Darrin sat up straight as he shot his answers to the interview questions. He seemed very confident in what he was saying. In terms of comprehending what it takes to make his five-year vision a reality, Darrin was equally confident, "Get high school over with, accomplish my goals with grades." Darrin paused to think about what else he wanted to say to answer this question before he finished. "Being outstanding in classes, a well prepared student and being respectful, responsible, and cooperative."

I decided to test his confidence by asking him if his actions line up with the vision that he has for his life. He immediately replied "yes, because right now I feel I'm not getting in any trouble. I am following the steps that my Journey mentors are giving me. I say what the teachers say." In regards to Darrin's remark, "I say what the teacher's say," he is referencing a tool that was given to him during a recent meeting. Darrin paused to ponder a thought. He then said, "my old teachers would be surprised to see me now. My momma tells people that D, that's what she calls me, D don't get suspended from school."

Darrin seemed to be a master at saying all the right things. I recalled the fact that he shared that his teachers encourage him to be a lawyer. An interesting revelation surfaced during this exchange:

*Interviewer: Are you willing to make that sacrifice?*

*Darrin: No, I feel I don't have to.*

*Interviewer: Why do you feel that way?*

*Darrin: Because I think I can manage both (work and fun). I'm almost 75% sure I can do both.*

*I think I've done it before. I can manage my girlfriends. I'd tell them I can't talk right now. You know what I'm saying? I think I'm good.*

*Interviewer: How is doing both working for you this year?*

*Darrin: It's working, but it's not cause I think my GPA is like a 2.0 and that's not bad, but it's not good. I think one of the reasons and other reasons is that I want to play around with my friends in class. At home I want to talk to my friends, play games and stuff like that.*

*Interviewer: Can you clear that up for me please?*

*Darrin: I feel I can do both without having to cut stuff out. Like mainly with females, I don't really talk to dudes for real. I talk to upper classmen females. If I can come to school, talk to females, go home and talk to friends, I would do my homework all during Academic Seminar on the same day or do it in the class before. I can't remember the last time I did homework at home.*

Darrin was fully aware of what he was doing. He knew that he was not working up to his full potential. However, he did offer to me that the student panel was very successful as

it inspired him to, "use a planner and work on my time management." During that particular Journey meeting, Darrin asked a total of five questions, which was the most asked by any participant.

In terms of how The Journey impacted him, Darrin had positive comments about the experience:

*Interview: Tell me about your experience in The Journey.*

*Darrin: My experience in The Journey has been outstandingly good, we got to help kids. You guys have given us vital tips. Giving good tips to us, so it has been good so far.*

*Interviewer: What do you mean by tips?*

*Darrin: We learned how to plan, and got words of advice.*

Overall, Darrin claimed that the most impactful thing about his participation in The Journey was that he was able to interact with the other teachers and administrators who served as mentors for the program during the meetings as well as during the school day. When I asked Darrin about his grades for the third quarter, he expressed a little regret. "I wasn't like happy with my grades, but I feel that I can do better." During the second part of the interview, I made it a point to ask Darrin if he is using his planner now like he said he would the last time we spoke. "No, I be forgetting it." The troubling point about Darrin is his inclination to accept less than what he believes he is capable of. For example, during the goal setting week, Darrin set a goal to obtain at least a 3.0 GPA. When I asked him about it during the interview, he gave a contradictory answer. "If you set your goals low, that means you have low confidence." At this point, I had to know what he was thinking:

*Interviewer: Did you do all you could to meet the goal?*

*Darrin: No.*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Darrin: I'm a goofy person, I like to have fun and do things.  I know I gotta do the basics*

*so I could have fun.  I'm still eligible to play sports.  As long as I'm not failing any of my*

*classes.  I do my homework, not at home but if I do the basics, I'm good.*

*Interviewer: Has The Journey changed the way you think about your effort in school?*

*Darrin: Not really, what has the most impact is my father.  I look up to my Dad.  I want*

*to do better than he did.*

At one point, I asked Darrin to name something with which he currently struggles.

His answer revealed a Spanish class that he is currently in.  He also mentioned that he has

trust issues.  "I think I got a huge problem with trusting people." It is very interesting to

contrast this statement with the fact that he felt very free to discuss with the group the

details of his parents' divorce and the effect that it had on him as his parents had to share

custody.

***Grades.***  Darrin's grades are illustrated in Table 5.  In terms of how Darrin

viewed his overall purpose at school, The Journey had no changing effect.  "I feel like,

my whole grade thing comes from my household and my father does not accept D's and

F's.  He barely accepts C's." Darrin's academic progress has held true to form as he has

maintained a C average throughout the year.  However, Darrin began to care deeply about

his grades as the year went on.  Numerous times during The Journey meetings, Darrin

would access his grades on the computer and show them to the mentors.  He seemed to

enjoy the positive feedback that he received when the mentors praised him.  Darrin's

improvement was slow and steady as he had to recover from a slow start. Upon

reviewing Darrin's grades, the mentors let it be known that they believe that Darrin could

do better. However, after about three weeks of excitement about moving his grades up,

they started to come down and his excitement decreased. Upon review of his grade card,

the comments from his math teacher read, "too much socializing / good and accurate

thinker." It appears that these comments summarize Darrin's freshman year.

**Table 5**

*Darrin's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 72 | 71 | 74 |
| Comm. Arts | 69 | 86 | 74 |
| Science | 77 | 79 | 76 |
| Social Studies | 64 | 80 | 64 |

***Assessment of goals.*** Darrin reported in all of his surveys a deep level of comfort

within the environment offered by The Journey. He also asked the most questions during

each meeting at which he was in attendance. As stated before, Darrin asked so many

questions that the format of the meetings had to be altered in order to meet the needs of

others in the group. In terms of efficacy, I believe there is little evidence that Darrin has

experienced a major change. However, I do feel it to be significant that Darrin

participated and shared personal information given the fact that he has admitted trust

issues. Darrin's progress was evident during our meeting dedicated to writing vision

statements.  Darrin's vision was, "to be a respectful, responsible, respected, successful, happy, proud son, intelligent, loving, caring, leader, man of God, have thanksgiving in my heart, and meet my goal, which is to meet the pursuit of happiness." The following represents a summary of Darrin in terms of self-efficacy:

- Wants to remain a member of The Journey to help him in school

- Is open to listening to mentors to change his mind about studying

- Is now using his planner to help him remember his assignments

- Based on mentor encouragement, he signed up for higher level math class

- Is admittedly spending more time studying than he has ever before

**Cameron.**  At the time of the study, Cameron was a 15-year-old freshman.  He met all the criteria for participation in The Journey.  His interests include football, basketball, and visiting with his friends.  Cameron just so happened to be great friends with another member of The Journey.  He was very excited when his name was chosen to be a part of the program.  "I know I need to turn things around cause I want to go to college.  I think this program will help me." Cameron's teachers were very complimentary of him.  Multiple teachers remark that he is very polite although he does not complete all of his work.  "There are too many classes." When asked about his struggles in school, Cameron seems somewhat confused as to what he is supposed to do with his time in order to prepare for academic success.  "I just don't know how to study."

*Observations.*  Cameron was very excited when he realized his very good friend was also chosen to be a part of The Journey.  This seemed to add a level of comfort especially during the beginning stages as the participants did not know what to expect of

the program. During the first meeting, Cameron fit in well with the other participants. Cameron was pleased to learn that they all had similar interests in sports and music. Cameron was also very happy to learn that the initial meeting was catered.

In terms of seeking knowledge, Cameron was definitely curious about learning more. On numerous occasions, he asked "what are we going to talk about next week?" Also, at times Cameron would grow frustrated with his peers when they would talk while the volunteers were presenting information. He would say to them, "Shut Up, Dude!" Cameron was also one of the first participants to open up to the group in terms of honesty. On one of his surveys, Cameron mentioned, "Yes I feel safe because I know whatever we say in the Journey stays in the Journey and I can trust the people I am talking to about my personal life/problems." During a week when the topic was about money, Cameron admitted that he would indeed take money that did not belong to him. "I know it's wrong, but I would take the money." It appeared that Cameron had a difficult time doing what he knows is the right thing to do because of the negative alternatives that were available. This is evident in his teacher's comments on his report card. "Cameron is polite; however, he socializes too much in class."

Cameron did miss portions of some meetings due to other after-school activities, but he was diligent in asking what we talked about during the time he missed. During the Vision Statement week, Cameron asked a total of five clarifying questions when trying to perfect his vision for his future. The following is the vision that he wrote for his life: "I'm a respectful son, a caring older sibling, a responsible young man, an achiever, a leader, I'm intelligent, a speaker of my mind, a person that's blessed, and a successful

person in life." Cameron was praised by the mentors for the depth of the vision he created

and encouraged to do everything he can to make the vision a reality.

Cameron also seems to ponder deep thoughts. The very fact that he wonders such

things leads me to believe that he wants more from life than what he sees around him.

For example, on a survey Cameron replied, "One thing I want to know more about is why

do African American boys get labeled as bad kids? Is it because of their first impression."

To answer his question, the mentors used a real life situation. One day as Cameron and

three other Journey participants were walking to their meeting, three White teachers

asked multiple times where they were going. Cameron stated that they never heard the

teachers and so the teachers began to yell at them. This misunderstanding caused a

negative chain reaction that resulted in The Journey members openly disrespecting the

authority of the teachers who were just trying to make sure that the hallways were clear

of unauthorized students as the meetings were held after school. It was discovered during

the study that Cameron had been trying to control his anger. The mentors made sure to

focus on how to deal with authority figures numerous times throughout the study.

*Questionnaire responses.* Cameron's responses were also similar on all three of

his questionnaires. Again, safety did not appear to be an issue as he reported, "I feel like

I can be myself in here." The mentors found information that Cameron was looking for

based on his second questionnaire. Cameron reported that he wanted to know more about

the upper level classes so that he could have a better chance of doing well in college.

This was in direct response to a Journey discussion on giving effort in school. As a result

of Cameron's request, the mentors arranged for counselors to come to The Journey and assist the participants in creating their schedule for the next school year.

      ***Final interview.*** Cameron was very pleased as he reflected on not only the school year, but his decisions out of school as well. "I think it's been a really good year for me." Cameron smiled brightly as he talked about his experience in The Journey:

*Interviewer: Tell me about your experience with the Journey.*

*Cameron: Well, with the Journey, we could talk about the problems we been having in school and in life, and not have to worry about it getting out. We could think of this as a brotherhood type thing.*

Given the fact that Cameron did miss some meetings due to his participation in extracurricular activities, Cameron felt strong ties to The Journey and was very happy to be a part of it. He also believed that his participation has allowed him to gain a great deal.

*Interviewer: How do you think the year would've gone had you not been in The Journey?*

*Cameron: I think probably, if I hadn't been in The Journey my grades would've slipped a little more because The Journey makes me think about my education more.*

      Once again, due to the fact that Cameron was an infrequent participant in The Journey, I was curious about why he spoke of it so highly. In order to understand how The Journey could have possibly changed his thinking, I simply inquired about his thought process. "The Journey has made me think, like more often about my future and what I am going to be in life." Also, during the interview, Cameron spoke very highly of his future.

*Interviewer: What do you see yourself doing in five years?*

*Cameron: I see myself in college, having a job, being successful.*

During our four weeks devoted to Effective Effort, Cameron claimed to have learned a great deal of knowledge. It was also evident in his body language and the fact that he asked many questions during these meetings. I inquired about how he has applied what he learned. "Right now, I am doing most of my homework. I'm finally studying for the first time. Get stuff done in class. Listening in class and not playing as much." Cameron found the week that focused on dealing with authority figures to be the most impactful. Cameron reported, "I realized that they are in higher authority than us and we can't treat them like they are our peers."

***Grades.*** Cameron showed a great deal of consistency with his grades during the year, which are illustrated in Table 6. His most challenging class was Social Studies as it requires good reading comprehension skills as well as the ability to think critically. Ultimately, his inability to understand how the information would benefit him hindered his grade. "I don't see why we need to take that class". As of this writing, Cameron's grades continue to trend upward. Cameron seems very motivated as he has been checking his grades and showing them to the mentors. Between the second and third quarter of the school year, Cameron has made gains in three of four classes.

**Table 6**

*Cameron's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | 84 | 83 | 92 |
| **Comm. Arts** | 76 | 76 | 82 |
| **Science** | 84 | 84 | 86 |
| **Social Studies** | 65 | 79 | 62 |

*Assessment of goals*. Cameron was very pleased with the environment created by The Journey. "We could think of this as a brotherhood type thing." He reported feeling very safe. Additionally, Cameron said that he would definitely participate next year because, "there is still stuff I need to know about." In terms of self-efficacy, I believe that a modest increase can be attributed to his participation in The Journey. The following represents evidence of change in self-efficacy throughout the duration of The Journey:

- Where at the beginning he discarded use of a planner, he now using his planner to help him accomplish his goals

- Where college was not an option, he now believes he can go to college if he stays in The Journey

- He has come to realize the impact of this choices, and is committed to hanging out with different people so that he can accomplish his goals

- He has changed his behavior based on mentor encouragement and offers of tutoring, he has signed up for an upper level math class

**Eric.**  At the time of the study, Eric was a 15-year-old freshman.  He met all of the primary criteria for participation in The Journey.  His interests include football and visiting with his friends.  Eric is one of six brothers and sisters.  His situation is very tumultuous.  His parents are divorced and he lived with his mother at the beginning of the year.  However, because he got into so much trouble, his parents decided that he should live with his father.  Eric has a difficult time controlling his tongue in the classroom.  "I ain't gonna let no teacher talk to me like they crazy."  Eric would like to stay out of trouble, but for some reason he will not help himself.  "I mean I don't want to be in trouble, but I can't help it.  It's just too fun."  Going into his freshman year, Eric has accumulated a history of poor grades and disrespect towards staff members.

*Observations.*  The most troubling thing about Eric was the fact that he had a Deputy Juvenile Officer assigned to him due to his actions in the community.  During one particular week, when The Journey meeting was canceled due to the participants trying out for a sports activity, Eric was brave enough to share with the mentors who were present that he actually enjoyed robbing people of their possessions.  This impromptu Journey meeting solely with Eric yielded a deeper insight into his life.  Eric was very cavalier when he mentioned his motivation for stealing from people in the community.  "I do it cause I need the money."  During this particular meeting, Eric's body language seemed confused, while at the same time it appeared that a burden was being lifted off his shoulders.  At the beginning, of the particular meeting, Eric spoke in vague terms.  "I got in some trouble and now I live with my Dad.  I don't know if I can make it to The Journey meetings cause my father lives out of the district."

As the study went on and Eric became more comfortable with the group and, he felt compelled to share with the group his struggle to find some normalcy in life. "It happened again this weekend" to which the mentors replied, "What happened?" "I broke into another house, but . . . there was a gun involved this time." Eric began to sit up straight as he realized he had an audience. "My brother and I broke in this house, right? In and out. But later, we saw these people running towards us shooting at us. Me and my brother ran and he fired back at them in the air."

Eric also had numerous truancy issues. Unfortunately, Eric attends a large high school and therefore his truancy is not dealt with as swiftly as it should be. According to Eric, he skips out on an average of three hours of class per week-whether it be skipping altogether, trips to the restroom, or taking an extended lunch. When asked why he thinks he has gotten away with that so far this year, Eric claimed that "teachers don't like me cause of my attitude."

Though Eric was more than willing to admit his barriers to educational success, his defiance is compelling, yet sobering. After school one day, the participants were supposed to head toward The Journey meeting room. Eric and the rest of the participants took their time as they said "bye" to their other peers and "people watched" as the hallways cleared. A teacher instructed Eric and the rest of the participants to move along. Eric yelled back at the teacher, "I don't have to move nowhere!" As The Journey facilitator, the teacher informed me of what happened in front of Eric. Eric became angry and tried to talk over the teacher. I immediately looked at Eric with a stern face and instructed him to be respectful. He walked away as the teacher told me what happened.

During the meeting that day, the mentors conversed with him about how he is a reflection of The Journey and that The Journey will unfortunately be measured by how the participants are seen around the building. Eric was very adamant regarding how people including teachers addressed him and it was difficult to calm him down that day.

During our exploration into self-identity, Eric was very active. During the initial three weeks, Eric asked the most questions. During a particular exercise, the mentor asked every participant to say how they would like to be seen by others. Eric immediately put his head in his hand as he pondered the question. After about 30 seconds, he said "I don't understand." The clarification that he sought helped to break the ice and allowed others to be comfortable with their answers. Eric emphasized that he wanted to be seen as a "kind, smart person who loves his family." When asked if his life was reflective of his self-identity, he said, "No, I got some things I need to work on." I felt that this level of honest reflection was critical to Eric's development. Unfortunately, Eric was unable to finish the year due to a long term suspension in April of that year. Eric committed a serious offense in the school building. It is important to mention that Eric was not alone during the act and that it was committed during class time. As a result of his suspension, he was not available for a concluding interview.

*Questionnaire responses.* Eric was the least forthcoming on his questionnaire responses. He was only able to complete two as he was placed on long-term suspension before the school year was over. His responses revealed that he felt safe in the environment to talk about "whatever is on my mind". In summary, Eric responded that he in no way was influenced or helped by the information he received in The Journey.

*Grades.* Unfortunately, Eric's grades showed his unwillingness to improve. Eric's grades are illustrated in Table 7. His grades declined sharply and it is interesting that his suspension was levied at the end of his worst quarter, which was the third quarter. Eric made poor choices and was not motivated to perform in school. Additionally, Eric felt that his teachers did not like him. I deduce that his convincing himself that his teachers did not like him allowed him the justification to do poorly in school.

**Table 7**

*Eric's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** | 68 | 53 | 21 |
| **Comm. Arts** | 64 | 37 | 24 |
| **Science** | 47 | 53 | 10 |
| **Social Studies** | 71 | 36 | 12 |

*Assessment of goals.* Unfortunately, this intervention was not able to get Eric to think differently in terms of his actions when not being supervised by adults. Eric reported multiple times that he felt safe in the environment offered by The Journey. As a matter of fact, he felt safe enough to discuss his legal issues as well as his undiscovered misdeeds. I believe Eric was reaching out to the mentors in order to get help to stop his misbehavior. I believe that deep inside himself, Eric did want to stop doing the things that he knew would get him into serious trouble. The following represents his small change in self-efficacy throughout the duration of The Journey:

- Believed he could do well in school, but admittedly cannot stay out of trouble because it is too much fun to get into trouble

- Admitted that he is motivated to graduate by others in The Journey

**Robert.** At the time of the study, Robert was a 15-year-old freshman. He met all of the primary criteria for participation in The Journey. His interests include football, basketball, and visiting with his friends. Robert is one of six brothers and sisters. He currently lives with his mother, step-father, and two of his brothers. Robert has an extremely positive relationship with his mother. "I respect my mother. I wouldn't never talk back to her." When he comes to the meetings he is always well dressed. "My momma keeps me looking good. She takes care of me." However, the same cannot be said for his relationship with some of his teachers.

*Observations.* Robert had a challenging time focusing during many of The Journey meetings. At numerous times, his peers were reminding him to be quiet while others were talking. Robert had to be challenged by the mentors due to his constant texting during the meetings. One mentor had to say to him, "It's disrespectful to me that you are texting while I'm giving you wisdom that will help you." Robert immediately put his phone away and listened to the rest of the mentor's presentation. Early during the year, Robert spent a great deal of time having laughs at the expense of others.

Robert went through a four-week period in which he did not participate in The Journey meetings. When asked where he had been, he replied, "I had stuff to do at home." It is important to mention that Robert was seen around the building during a Journey meeting. Around the same time that Robert had been missing meetings, two of

Robert's teachers volunteered to the mentors that Robert has taken a sharp decline in academics and behavior.

During the exploration in self-identity, Robert stated that he sees himself as a "student, friend, and loving son." When asked if his character lines up with the self-identity, he honestly said, "no". At that point, a mentor challenged him by stating the following: "If you see yourself as a loving son, I believe your parents would want you to do your best in school. Wouldn't it be an act of love if you made good grades and stayed out of trouble?" Robert's response was 10 seconds of silence with his head down. He never verbally answered and the discussion moved on to the next participant.

It was also discovered that Robert has a serious problem dealing with authority figures. During our week concerning "Dealing with Authority," Robert asked 10 questions concerning the topic. Robert was very emotional and emphatic as he spoke about his relationship with his teachers. "I think that Black teachers expect more from you and White teachers expect less." This comment was so compelling because it encouraged the rest of the group to agree with him. While it is possible that teacher expectations may differ from student to student, Robert did not tell the whole story. He received multiple office referrals for how he responds to teachers. He has also received referrals for truancy. Robert admitted in the same meeting that he would text other students in the building and plan to meet them after they asked their respective teachers for a pass to go to the bathroom. Robert was silent after a mentor asked, "how can you infer racism if the teacher still expects more from you even though you misbehave that way?"

*Questionnaire responses.* Robert's responses were succinct. There was little variance in his answer on the three questionnaires that he completed. Like all participants, Robert reported feeling safe in the environment. On all of his questionnaires, Robert reported thinking about The Journey at least seven times in the week since the last meeting. Robert seemed to be most influenced by the topic of "working with authority figures". In his longest response, Robert expressed that "I thought about how I could do different things to stay in class and get along with my teachers."

*Final interview.* Robert spoke very highly of his experience in The Journey. "The Journey gave me the opportunity to know more about my peers." Robert further spoke about how he was comfortable in the environment because he was able to get more intimately acquainted with his peers as they all shared personal information and sought advice. Robert enjoyed having teachers and administrators serve as mentors.

*Robert: I learned certain things about the teachers and administrators in the building. I learned that they were cool and that they would help you out if you had a problem and give you good advice to help you in life.*

Robert claimed that he did receive some helpful information regarding his transition from middle school to high school.

*Robert: I learned about how to get along with my teachers better. But I didn't use the advice y'all gave us, though. It did help today cause I didn't talk back to my Social Studies teacher when she told me to stop talking.*

I asked Robert about his relationship with one teacher he thought was picking on him. During the week concerning "Dealing with Authority," the mentors gave Robert a lot of information that he could use for that particular situation. "I think I'm better with talking to my math teacher. I used to talk before I thought and that got me in trouble." I wanted Robert to further explore this self-reflective side and here is a transcript of the exchange:

*Interviewer: What is the perception of you among your teachers?*

*Robert: Loud, talkative, rude, disrespectful.*

*Interviewer: Is that who you are?*

*Robert: No, it's not who I am but it's the choice I'm making.*

It was very interesting to listen to Robert discuss the information that he had attained, yet he was honest about his lack of application of the information. "I know ya'll taught us some good stuff during The Journey but I just didn't do a lot of it for the most part." I believe that this lack of application may be due a lack of understanding of the right thing to say when an adult asks him a question about his future.

When I asked him what he saw himself doing in five years he said, "hopefully playing football with a scholarship at a college." I asked him why he prefaced his response with the word "hopefully" and he quickly rephrased the response with "I will be." Robert also stated that he will have to put forth hard work, get his grades up and lift weights. However, at the time of the interview, Robert was not eligible to participate in any sports due to his grades. He also admitted that he has not been participating in the school's off season weightlifting program. Robert asked an average of five questions per meeting.

*Grades.*  It is of no surprise that Robert saw his best quarter during the beginning of the football season.  Ever since the season ended after the 1st quarter, his grades have declined steadily including an extreme drop between the first and second quarter.  Robert has discussed on numerous occasions how he loses control of himself and is disrespectful toward his math teacher.  This fractured relationship is highly evident as he experienced a 38 point drop between the first and second quarter and a34 point drop between second and third quarter (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Robert's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 86 | 48 | 14 |
| Comm. Arts | 54 | 68 | 86 |
| Science | 78 | 66 | 67 |
| Social Studies | 67 | 54 | 68 |

*Assessment of goals.*  Robert felt very at ease during The Journey meetings.  The presence of his peers encouraged him to continue to participate.  Robert obtained information during The Journey.  He admitted that the information he learned was, in fact, of great value to one who would choose to use it.  Robert definitely is not lacking of confidence.  That makes it increasingly difficult to ascertain any positive change in his self-efficacy.  He says all the right things and he can regurgitate the information he has been given.  However, I believe that the application of the information is necessary in

order for self-efficacy to be clearly demonstrated.  The following represents the change in self-efficacy throughout the duration of The Journey:

- Wants to stay in The Journey to help him make better decisions and accomplish his goals

- Believes in his ability to achieve in upper level classes

- Believes that he can get along with all of his teachers if he uses the tools he learned in The Journey

- Claims that The Journey has encouraged him to skip less

- Believes that mentors and peers of The Journey can help him stay on the right path

**Solomon.**  Solomon was heavily nominated for participation in The Journey.  He did, in fact, fit all the necessary criteria for participation in the program.  Solomon is one of only two of the seven participants who live with both parents.  However, Solomon had a very difficult time staying in school.  He has been suspended from school numerous times for truancy.  He admitted that he was "bored sitting in class".  Solomon's teachers placed the following comments on his first quarter progress report:

1. Poor work ethic

2. Attendance issues

3. Rebellious

4. Does not try

I found Solomon to be a very quiet and polite young man.  However, he asserted that, "I have an anger problem.  If someone gets me mad, then I don't back down." This would

explain the numerous referrals he had accumulated before he began to participate in The Journey meetings.

   ***Observations.*** Solomon was very quiet at first. He kept his answers short and did not volunteer a great deal of information. Solomon admittedly was not sure if he was going to continue to participate. The turning point came during a week that was devoted to self-identity. As the participants were sitting in a circle, and they were each taking turns explaining how they identify themselves. Solomon seemed to put a great deal of thought into how he saw himself. He talked about being a son, a student, and a brother. He seemed as if he was proud to talk about his family.

   Solomon was very active during the week in which The Journey participants went to a local elementary school where they sat at different tables of elementary students playing different games. Solomon was at a table by himself as the only Journey participant. Solomon was very talkative during this meeting. He spoke to the kids with a great deal of energy and excitement. The Journey had been meeting for 15 weeks and this was the first time that I observed him with a smile on his face. The elementary school liaison complimented him specifically on the way he carried himself. Throughout the course of the study, Solomon missed three meetings in a row due to his proclivity to skip classes. When his peers in The Journey confronted him about it, he just shook his head and remained silent. This happened numerous times when he was asked to explain his thoughts and actions. Based on his survey responses, Solomon felt comfortable with the environment provided for The Journey meetings. It is a positive sign that he indicated that he thought about information presented to him one to three times in between

meetings. In terms of knowledge, Solomon claimed that he would like to know more about how to deal with authority figures.

*Questionnaire responses.* Solomon was very succinct in his responses to all three of the questionnaires. In fact, many of his responses were limited to five words or less. Like all participants, Solomon mentioned that he felt safe in the environment. Solomon also never indicated that he wanted any additional information than what was given at The Journey meetings. Only once did Solomon indicate that he was influenced by a meeting that focused on success. "I think I felt like I kinda know how a teacher feels when they get on me about me not doing my homework and skipping class. I just don't care. I can try to do better."

*Final interview.* As I was conducting this interview, Solomon sat across the table from me with his head down. He made very little eye contact with me. Solomon had just come back from a long-term suspension due to his skipping class. Skipping class continued to be an issue throughout his participation in The Journey. "I walk around the building cause I don't feel like going to class." Solomon claimed that he thought about things that he learned in The Journey before he decided to skip. However, his dislike for his teachers influenced him to skip anyway. Solomon would also leave the building for hours at a time during the course of a school day. "I would walk down the street to McDonalds and eat there, then come back later."

When I asked him what else goes through his mind when he skips, he named four of his seven teachers that he does not like. A compelling point is the fact that Solomon

earned either a D or F in these four classes.  The reasons he does not like these teachers are numerous.

1. *The teacher talks to me like I'm a kid*

2. *He doesn't teach, he just talks about boring stuff cause he wants us to sleep*

3. *The teacher is sarcastic*

4. *She gives too much work*

Solomon was visibly agitated as he discussed why he did not like his teachers.  What I found confusing was that Solomon mentioned that he would like to go to college and become a chemist.  However, at the time of the interview, he was only passing one of his core classes.  While it makes sense that he is passing his science class, the path that he is on is not one that leads to college.  When I asked him if he cared about his academic performance, he said he cared about it, but he was not going to let any teacher talk to him in a way he deemed disrespectful.

Solomon's definition of success is graduating from high school.  At this point, he will have a difficult time graduating with his class.  I discovered that Solomon previously had a high self-efficacy in terms of school.  "School is not really that hard.  I can get a 3.5 (GPA) if I want to." Unfortunately, the challenge is to motivate him to act on his self-efficacy as it relates to school.  When I asked him about his lack of effort, he went back to his relationship with the teacher.  "If somebody comes at me the wrong way, I won't do anything.  I won't do anything.  I have attitude problems.  My mom says I'm bipolar, but I don't think so cause I haven't been diagnosed." Solomon went on to explain how he was in charge of himself when I asked him what his parents reaction was to him getting

in to trouble constantly and his poor school attendance. "They can try, but it's not up to them. I'm the only person who can control what's happening."

*Grades.* Unfortunately, there was not a tremendous amount of improvement in terms of Solomon's grades (see Table 9). Beginning with the second quarter, his performance began to decline steadily. Solomon did show promise in his science class. Science happens to be his favorite subject. Solomon would like to be a chemist some day. He also reported that he has not had any trouble getting along with his science teacher. I find it compelling that it is clear that his relationship with his teachers affects his grades, but given the fact that there are hundreds of other students in his high school, this variable will be ignored and the grade will speak for itself. Solomon's grades steadily declined as the year progressed, with only the science grade rising in the 3rd quarter and a small increase in his communication arts grade between the second and third quarter.

**Table 9**

*Solomon's Grades*

| Content Area | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Math | 74 | 47 | 36 |
| Comm. Arts | 61 | 57 | 59 |
| Science | 74 | 51 | 73 |
| Social Studies | 60 | 55 | 46 |

*Assessment of goals.* Solomon's comfort level in The Journey increased drastically as the school year went on. I believe that his close relationship with his principal, who was also a mentor, helped to ease any anxiety he may have had at the beginning. Solomon, was given specific tools he could use to help him focus and communicate with authority figures. However, it does not appear that he experienced positive results during the study. I believe it was a positive sign that Solomon asked the most questions during a meeting dealing with how to communicate with authority figures. Solomon seemed very unhappy at numerous points during meetings and during the final interview. The following represents what I determined was the modest change in self-efficacy throughout the duration of The Journey:

- Believes he can attain a 3.5 GPA if he applies lessons learned in The Journey

- Looks forward to how things will be different next year with the things he has learned from The Journey

**Summary**

The students who took part in the study during the 2010-2011 school year had numerous experiences that had an effect on the way they thought about life, school, authority figures, and self-management. I believe that all the participants were inspired and motivated to put forth the necessary effort. However, as time went on, some lost the momentum and reverted back to their old ways in terms of academic achievement and decision making. I also find it plausible that if The Journey continues and the participants remain in the program, they will grow and improve greatly in self-efficacy.

**Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations**

In conducting this study, I found that the participants had a zeal for meeting after school once they became accustomed to the routine of meeting weekly.  The participants appeared to enjoy the refreshments that were served.  The Journey offered participants an opportunity to receive attention in the areas self-identity, soft skills, and support in the area of skill building and professional development.   My study sought to ascertain to what extent self-efficacy was promoted within the members of The Journey during the 2010-2011 school year while also finding out what happened to the participants from the previous year.  The topics that were covered allowed for participants to think inwardly and reflect on where they are going in life.  Such thinking is probably rarely achieved by teenagers without guidance of others and a consistent flow of information.  It was discovered that the participants did in fact internalize some of the information presented to them on a weekly basis.  All participants reported that they thought about the information presented to them on an average of six times per week.

**The Research Question**

The research question was: What happens when self-efficacy is promoted in an after-school program for Black youths?  In answering the research question, I focused on the three goals of The Journey and the participants in the 2010-2011 school year.  The following were the three goals of The Journey Program:

1. Students have a feeling of safety in the environment;

2. An evident increase in the Thirst for Knowledge has taken place; and,

3. Students report a stronger sense of Self-Efficacy.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it was very important that participants be willing to be in attendance and share with the group. Early in the study, the participants were comfortable with the environment as they were fed and allowed to listen to their music. It also appeared that allowing students to listen to their music prior to the meeting facilitated breaking the ice. I feel confident in saying that at no point throughout the study did participants feel unsafe or uncomfortable because most of the participants were already acquaintances. The Journey became a moment of anticipation. The participants were saddened when they thought they misunderstood that The Journey meetings were finished in January. The participants shared a great deal of personal information about themselves, being vulnerable by sharing sensitive information and reaching out for help.

In terms of a thirst for knowledge, it appeared that the rate of attendance (83%) overall was a great indicator of the participants willingness to hear something different. I make this assumption due to the fact that the participants were aware of the fact that there would be a solid hour in which they would be sitting and conversing with adults. During every one of the meetings, no fewer than 17 questions among eight participants were asked of the mentors. The participants expressed beliefs that they could truly succeed if they employed the techniques and concepts they were exposed to during the study. "I know I could be successful if I do what I learned in The Journey." One participant mentioned that he would have had a bad year if it was not for The Journey. "I would've been with the wrong group of friends if I didn't have The Journey to teach me about the sacrifices I have to make to be successful."

My analysis of the data leads me to the discovery of key themes and the

conclusion that self-efficacy was increased in all the participants of this study.  The

interview and questionnaire responses reported not only detailed visions and goals for the

future, but they also showed the understanding of the systematic steps that must be taken

in order to achieve the success they desire.  As I was analyzing the data, I concluded that

the participants need more of what was offered in The Journey throughout the course of

their time in high school because of the evidence of contradictory statements and

behaviors from the participants such as saying that they want to achieve a 3.0 GPA for

the quarter and not studying in order to make that goal a reality.  As previously

mentioned, community-based schools continue to stress the importance of education

during non-school hours.  Additionally, a 2009 report indicated that community-based

schools are seeing higher graduation and college matriculation rates (Coalition for

Community Schools, 2009).  In terms of the limitations, the only pervasive limitation was

participant absence due to suspension.  Two participants were not able to attend due to

long term suspensions.  The major themes that emerged from the data were *Sight and*

*Vision and Safe Environment.*

**The struggle between sight and vision.**  The first theme that emerged during this

study was what I call *the struggle between sight and vision* – I find that sight represents

the present and whatever is desirable right now and vision represents the future and the

present sacrifices that must be made in order for a vision for the future to become a

reality.  Throughout the study, it was quickly realized that the participants had big dreams

for the future.  However, their actions were not aligned with their vision.  Contrary to the

literature (Osborne, 1999) concerning the concept of cultural inversion, the participants

proudly expressed plans that included getting a college education.  Yet, their grades were

not congruent with what they were saying.  After spending a considerable amount of time

with the participants, I realized what I believed was the reason for the contradictory

behavior of the participants.  Their ability to plan for the future was negatively impacted

by their present circumstances.

In addition to the disparity between their hopes and their reality, there were other

various distractions in the lives of many of the participants- peers, absent parent(s),

discord at home, etc.  The literature predicted that I would find this to be true and that

these distractions contribute to underdeveloped soft skills (communication skills, ability

to work in a team, positive attitude, and adaptability [Mueller & Wilder, 2005]) in

minorities (Williams, 2004).  Obtaining soft skills takes time and effort spent in

interpersonal interaction.  The inability to master soft skills lessens the amount of money

one makes over time and therefore, the cycle of inequality continues (Hobson, 2009).  I

observed that the participants wanted to do what the mentors were saying and many of

them did, but their will was not strong enough to sustain it over a long period of time.  I

contend that the severity of their present circumstances presents students with what seems

like a plausible reason to give up and stop trying.

The concept of the struggle between sight and vision was mentioned in 2007 to

describe sight as something that can be seen and vision as something that requires faith in

order to be seen (Mkrules, 2007).  I use the struggle between sight and vision as

something that seemed to disrupt the fruition of increased self-efficacy because the

participants were simply not willing to put in the effort past a certain point.  Table 10

illustrates the decision students must make on a daily basis.  To focus on vision means

combating the urge for immediate gratification in order to achieve long-term goals.  Sight

represents things of a short-term nature and it may yield some gains initially, but long

term, a decision to focus on sight may lead to negative consequences later.  These

consequences are low SES status (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987), delinquency (Wampler &

Downs, 2010), and inadequate resources for retirement (Hobson, 2009).  More

specifically, it is extremely difficult to overcome lack of an education.  Young (2004)

was also correct in that all of the participants place a lot of value on material possessions.

Many of them found comfort in the particular style of clothing they wore or the style of

their hair.  Initially, it was difficult to get them involved in any dialogue on self-identity

because it seemed as if the participants never thought about it.  Their sight caused them to

look outward instead of inward for an identity.  The literature is clear that such a rubric

for self-identity can have damaging consequences (Payne et al., 2009).  Table 10

represents my findings in the study regarding the struggle between sight and vision.

**Table 10**

*The Struggle between Sight and Vision*

| Sight = Things that are seen with the eyes | Vision = A picture of the future created in the mind |
|---|---|
| • Current social conditions and academic barriers are easily visible | • Challenging to pursue |
| • Sight can obstruct vision | • Requires long-term planning and goals |
| • Sight makes it easier to quit pursuing the vision | • Must properly use effective effort in order to accomplish goals |
| • Sight leads to low self-motivation | • Actions are meant to bring the vision into sight |
| • Sight overshadows the value of the vision | • Easy to verbalize, challenging to accomplish |
| • Possession = self-worth | • A vision increases motivation |

*Note.* Summary of findings in the study

Vision represents the future. A vision must be meticulously planned for and that plan is the driving force in the life of the individual who has created it. The Journey mentors focused heavily on changing the thinking of the participant so that they may focus on their vision. After the mentors established the importance of a vision, they taught the participants that soft skills were a necessary component to help them achieve the vision. Those who work to acquire the soft skills are more able to create a vision and go after it with less deviation (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Soft skills are needed tools in order to correctly pursue a vision. For example, during the week when the participants created a resume, many struggled with using socially acceptable language. The mentors had to teach the participants the importance of communication as a means to fulfill their vision.

"A vision is the beginning point of a journey that tightly aligns our sight and our actions" (Mapes, 2007, p. 105). A vision can help students have a proper understanding of sight or their current reality and place it in its proper place while continuing to pursue a greater sight. According to Sills (2004), a vision 1) must be positive, 2) must be under your control, and 3) must move you forward, if only one step (p. 80).

I was amazed to realize how many of the participants simply gave up once they encountered a certain level of opposition in terms of striving for their goal. According to Mapes (2007) , "the gap between the current reality and the vision create a tension that must be resolved" (p. 102). Tension must be dealt with systematically in order to completely realize resolution and change the current reality. I observed that participants found it difficult to deal with the tension over what they deemed a lengthy amount of time.

**Answering the Research Question**

The answer to the research question, Self-efficacy: What happens when it is promoted in an after-school program for Black youths is discussed in this section. At first, the participants were unsure of The Journey program. The participants and their parents were given a summary of the program; however, there was still anxiety due to the fact that all of the participants were Black males. This anxiety did not last long. By the third meeting, the participants appeared to fully trust the mentors and the program. The participants were also relieved when they received the assurance that they were allowed to speak freely without having to worry about their opinions making their way out of the

group.  The participants shared sensitive information pertaining to arrests, family matters, and personal struggles.

There was evidence of a change in thinking by all of the participants.  Increasing self-efficacy demands that challenges are viewed as opportunities for success.  The participants actively listened to what the mentors had to say during the meetings.  They asked many questions regarding the experiences of the mentors.  They seemed very engaged when the mentors told stories about their teenage years with which the participants could identify.  When the participants were asked to set goals for their third quarter, many were emphatically determined to accomplish the goal, "I am going to make my goal of a 3.0 GPA for the third quarter".  When the goals were reviewed, the participants who made their goal for the quarter were very excited and praised by the mentors.  It was emphasized to them that goal setting is something that can apply to many aspects of life.  The participants asked the mentors how goal setting could benefit them in other areas.  The mentors mentioned sports, time management, and studying.  Those who did not make their goal were encouraged by the mentors to keep trying.

As the participants explored their self-identity, it appeared as if they had never considered their self-identity and what makes them unique.  The participants were asked to respond to the question, "Who am I?" They were confused until a mentor gave his answer to the questions.  The participants seemed to be in deep thought as they pondered the question and listed the many things that are unique to them.  The topic, "Who am I?", lasted for three weeks and by the end of the three weeks the participants appeared happy to know that they had an answer to the question.  Throughout the study, the mentors

asked the participants if their actions aligned with their answers.  For example, one

participant described himself as "caring".  Weeks later, that same participant admitted

that he would steal money from a wallet he found on the ground.  A mentor challenged

him saying, "that doesn't sound like something a caring person would do".  The

participant was silent as he thought about his conflicting statement.

   In the first five weeks of The Journey, there was a lack of structure during the

time when the participants and mentors sat in a circle and discussed the topic of the week.

The participants would become excited and start to talk over each other during the

discussion.  The positive was that the mentors had a significant amount of input on the

topic, however, it was difficult to reach a consensus.  After the fifth meeting, the mentors

came up with the idea of introducing a tangible item that gave an individual the authority

to speak without interference.  The participants had to be reminded numerous times about

the new protocol, but they soon adapted.

   In terms of the three goals of The Journey 1) participants feel safe, 2) increase in

thirst for knowledge, and 3) demonstrate a stronger sense of self-efficacy, it appeared that

the results were positive as indicated by the questionnaire results, interview responses,

and my observations.  At no point did any on the participants mention that they felt

uncomfortable in the environment (felt safe).  The participants were also very inquisitive

during the meetings.  Additionally, all participants indicated on each of their

questionnaires that they wanted to know additional information about a particular

thought, idea, or process (thirst for knowledge).

While the participants were engaged and asked many questions, it seemed as if the participants would have benefited if they continued taking part in The Journey meetings past 20 weeks. Participants remained excited about the information that they learned in the meetings and their goals were high. The Journey meetings appeared to be highly anticipated by the participants and it also seemed that they changed the way they thought about their abilities (increase in self-efficacy). However, many participants contradicted what they were saying by decreasing their effort in the classroom and violating the behavioral rules of the building. While it appeared self-efficacy may have increased as evidenced by the words of the participants, the outward behavioral evidence was not yet realized.

**Recommendations**

While the data does not provide proof of a great amount of change in self-efficacy, I believe that this study is worth duplicating. Based on a review of the literature, systematic efforts that produce some positive change in the achievement gap must be realized. I am also curious to gather information from these students in the future as I will be meeting with them consistently until they graduate. I also wonder if the outward evidence of increased self-efficacy will come to fruition and provide a comfortable bridge for the students to high school. After concluding this study, I have recommendations for those who are interested in furthering the study of this particular topic, school districts seeking to offer systematic assistance to their struggling Black male teenage students.

**Create and support purposeful after-school programs.** Many Black males who struggle in school are in need of the type of guidance that isn't embedded in their curriculum. After-school programs allow for discussions and lessons regarding life. While I focused on how The Journey could possibly make an impact in the achievement gap that is present in public education, I always realized that the techniques utilized in The Journey do not have to be limited to Black males. It is also possible to take the same model and apply it to males and females of any background. However, in all cases, much care needs to be taken when choosing mentors. It is my belief that mentors should have some commonalities with their mentees. Choosing a group of mentees is not something that should be taken lightly. Data such as grades, SES status, and familiarity with other potential group members should be taken into consideration when putting a group together as was done for this study. A purposeful after school program can help improve the high school transition (Jenner & Jenner, 2007). The social aspects of this program such as self-identity and support may help to alleviate other teenage issues such as depression, bullying, and suicidal thoughts.

I propose some modifications to the observation protocol data collection tool that I used which can be found in Appendix D. Rarely did the students use the exact trigger words listed at the top of the tool, but there was a great amount of other data that I collected in which those trigger words were not used. I also discovered that it is highly important to share the observed information with the mentors. After each meeting, I conversed with the mentors about what transpired during that particular meeting and what we can do to improve the continuity of our meetings. After one particular meeting that

was very challenging due to the participants talking over each other, a mentor offered the

idea of giving the participants a tennis ball in order to indicate the one person who is to

be speaking at that given time.  Based on his idea, I offered the idea of allowing one of

the participants to act as timekeeper.  During the following week, the idea was introduced

and the meetings were much better afterward.

   **Maintain cognizance of the fact that Black males have their own free will.**  I

believe that this is especially important to understand as it relates to teenagers.  Black

male teenagers have the autonomy to make many important decisions throughout the

course of a single day.  Unfortunately, for some students, we must sell to them the

concept and the value of an education.  The push for an education may be the American

Dream, but it is my contention that schools currently do not have the capacity to confront

the very possibility that there are students who are simply not interested in what an

education can do for them.  While it is most unfortunate that this is the case, we must deal

with the reality that exists.  Black males are in need of motivation to do what must be

done in order to be successful (Whiting , 2006).

   I believe that the current model of the U.S. public education must be altered to

handle this reality.  Without investment there is little appreciation.  Secondary schools

must seek a way to incorporate more feedback of students and offer them more freedom

to choose and be involved with the planning of their vision.  Black males need to be

encouraged to make more decisions regarding their education.  They can only make wise

decisions if they have the necessary information and are given the support to carry out the

decision with maximum effort (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).  That means that the

school district must partner with the community and continue to impress upon students

the importance of their decisions in relation to their vision (Kirp, 2010).

**Make guidance counselors available to Black males on a more consistent**

**basis.**   On numerous occasions, participants mentioned that they enjoyed coming to The

Journey meetings because they felt comfortable talking to the adult mentors with whom

they have developed a relationship.  Most of the participants did not know the name of

their counselor (Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007).  Those who did barely had a

relationship with their counselor.  If teachers and administrators want to keep the

expectations high, then more attention must be paid to building meaningful relationships

with Black males entering into the ninth grade.  This is not to say that counselors are not

available.  Counselors work hard at what they do.  However, current budget and

financing constraints have limited the good things that a counselor can do.  Logistically,

schools should put an emphasis on the amount of time spent and the quality of

"counseling" Black males in addition to all students.  Surely, this can help deter such

issues as negative self-identity, bullying, teen suicide, as well other issues that arise.

**Involve student leaders.**  The meeting in which we had a panel of four successful

Black male students was a great success simply because the same message was coming

from peers.  It was enlightening for The Journey members to see that they were not alone

in terms of their struggles.  This motivated the participants to consider increasing their

effort in school (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993).  The students who were part of The Journey

received some helpful information from the adult mentors.  However, hearing these

things from their peers who put them into action has an effect. Additionally, this gives these student leaders the opportunity to serve the community by helping others.

**Ask not can, but how.** I believe that the solutions that we seek concerning our public education are not hard to find. I believe that by changing the way we think about education will free our minds to see the possibilities. For example, within the hearts and minds of our students there are deep rooted beliefs about the world. Unfortunate circumstances can misguide Black males to make decisions that can adversely affect the rest of their lives. To teach them can be a challenge. However, a one size fits all approach is unwise. Special Education is accounting for outside factors and creating opportunities for students by ensuring that they have a plan specifically designed for their success. It is my contention that Black males in addition to all students need some sort of specialized education plan to help them meet their goals. When addressing dropout prevention programs, Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) claimed that policy and procedures should be created with enough flexibility to allow school staff to personalize the protocol based on local conditions. It is only by taking this kind of progressive step that proper measurements of success are realized for Black males.

In terms of creating a climate of positivity, cohesion, and hope throughout the school building, I recommend that schools adopt a mentoring program that incorporates strategic methods such as those utilized in The Journey. My personal vision is that multiple purpose-driven mentoring groups will meet after school within a given school building (Jenner & Jenner, 2007). This is only one of many steps that need to be taken in order to keep America's public education competitive on a global level. There are

negative consequences of growing up in a low SES home as a Black male that adversely affect the performance of our public school students. Innovation and outside the box thinking is the only thing that will swing the trend upward.

**Students develop and pursue a vision.** Students would benefit from developing a vision of their future. Creating a vision involves pondering questions such as: What does my life look like five years from now? How will I get there? Who will help me? I would recommend that Black males in addition to all students be encouraged to visit their counselor at least once every school quarter (Steen et al., 2007). These visits should be focused on developing and pursuing a vision. Additionally, it would be helpful if students could organize a club at their building that is dedicated to pursuing visions. It is very empowering when peers are surrounded by like-minded people.

## Key Consideration for Future Research

There appears to be a sense of aimlessness and complacency in which the traditional school setting is perhaps a contributing factor. It is my contention that these two factors overwhelm Black males in the cycle of inequality when they graduate high school and are forced to make decisions for themselves. While at-risk students are not currently in the most ideal situation as the label suggests, that does not necessarily mean that they may not have success in life. A review of the literature suggests, however, that it will be more difficult (Whiting, 2009). If only someone or something can compel at-risk students to chase after a grand vision, then I believe that Black males in addition to all students can overcome the at-risk label. Therefore, perhaps a question that could be answered in a future study is: How can all the stakeholders in the life of a Black male

give him the opportunity to develop and determine his individual vision which leads to a

sustained inward motivation towards seeing that vision make a difference in his life?

**Conclusion**

This study focused on the unquantifiable measures that affect student performance

in a public school. The schools exist primarily to educate students. However, for years

Black males have lagged behind their White peers. This gap in achievement can be

attributed to factors out of the control of the school. The school must adapt in any way

possible to meet the unmet needs of a Black male living in the cycle of inequality. What

I found is that students can entertain a false sense of security once they receive helpful

information. It is crucial that students receive assistance to help them focus their energies

so that they can fulfill a long term vision by accomplishing small steps along the way.

By helping students achieve an increased self-efficacy, we can build up their capacity for

the success that all stakeholders desire for them.

I conducted this study because I wanted to discover what happened when self-

efficacy is targeted for increase in a population of struggling Black teenage males.

Students were provided with an opportunity to receive information that could possibly

yield outward evidence as a result of increased self-efficacy. This study acknowledged

the free will of the participants while planting and fertilizing seeds of wisdom in their

lives. Self-efficacy can be affected by systematic, focused, and consisted attention.

Schools may benefit from encouraging an increased self-efficacy amongst their students.

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**Appendix A**

# LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY
**Institutional Review Board Disposition Report**

**To:   Mr.  Byrd**

**CC: Dr.  Henschke**

The IRB has reviewed the resubmission of your application for research and it has been approved.

Ricardo Delgado                                             11/12/10

Institutional Review Board Chair                        Date

**Appendix B**

Lindenwood University

School of Education
209 S.  Kingshighway

St.  Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Increased Motivation through Increased Self Efficacy

Principal Investigator : Marvin Byrd

   Telephone:  314-482-7618   E-mail: mlb778@lindenwood.  edu

Participant_____

Contact info_____

_____

1.  You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Marvin Byrd and Dr.
    John Henschke.   The purpose of this research is to give support to black teenagers so
    that they may believe and visualize success in their lives during High School and
    beyond.

2.  a) Your participation will involve

    ➢  Positive Interactions with peers
    ➢  Participating in a team building activity

➢ Self-Reflection
➢ 45 min with personal mentor from the community (Black Male)
➢ 60 min in Support Group with peers and an adult facilitator
➢ Meeting once a week after school for 20 weeks at Hazelwood West High School


   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 2 hours on a weekly
   basis after school during the 10-11 school year.
Approximately 10 participants will be involved in this research.  [There will be field
trips throughout the community that involve: 1. College Visit  2. Team-Building
Course 3. Volunteer in the Community.]

3.   There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.  They
     include *possible uncomfortable feelings answering questions about their life.*

4.  There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.  However, your
    participation will contribute to the knowledge about Black Male Achievement,
    Academic Success, and Self-Identity and may help society

5.  Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research
    study or to withdraw your consent at any time.  You may choose not to answer any
    questions that you do not want to answer.  You will NOT be penalized in any way
    should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6.     We will do everything we can to protect your privacy.  As part of this effort, your
    identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from
    this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the
    investigator in a safe location.

7.  If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise,
    you may call the Investigator, Marvin Byrd 314-482-7618 or their Faculty Advisor,
    Dr.  John Henschke 636-949-4590.   You may also ask questions of or state concerns
    regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB)
    through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-
    949-4846.


    **I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask
    questions.   I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records.
    I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

Guardian's Signature                          Date                Guardian's Printed Name


Participant's Signature                        Date                Participant's Printed Name


Signature of Principal Investigator

                                              Date                Investigator Printed Name


**Appendix C**

**Participant Questionnaire**

Please answer the questions as thoughtful as possible.  Your responses will be held privately in a secure location.  You do not have to respond to this questionnaire. However, if you choose to, please write a 4 digit number that you can easily recall on

this line _____

1.  What about our meeting last week has had an influence on you? *OR* In what way did our last meeting help you? (if it didn't at all, please feel free to say so)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.  Do you feel safe in the environment provided by the program?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.  What do you want to know more about? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4.  Since we last met, how many times have you thought about our last meeting? (Please circle)

1-3                    4-6                7+

**Appendix D**

# Observation Protocol
**Date:** _____

**Trigger words/stems:** why, what happened, explain, tell, show, how, where, difference, remember, agree, understand, think, will you, meaning, when, same

| What is happening? | What do I believe is happening? |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Total number of questions asked:        0-3            4-9            10+

**Appendix E**

**Participant Exit Interview Questions**

**(2010-2011 Participants)**

These questions will not necessarily be asked in this order and are subject to change.  The investigator also may ask follow-up questions to compelling responses.

1.  What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now? How will you get there?
2.  Do you believe in your ability to accomplish goals? Why?
3.  What were you expecting from this program?
4.  In order to be successful in life, what will you have to sacrifice?
5.  Would you attend the program next year if it were offered?
6.  What did you really like about this program?
7.  Do you have to change who you are to be successful? Why or why not?
8.  How has participating in this program affected you?
9.  How do your parents feel about your participation in this program?
10. What would you change about the program?

**Appendix F**

**Follow Up Interview Questions (2009-2010 Participants)**

These questions will be posed to the group as a whole.  These questions will not necessarily be asked in this order and are subject to change.  The investigator also may ask follow-up questions to compelling responses.

1. What tools/ideas you learned last spring have you used or thought about since our last meeting?
2. What are your goals for this school year?
3. How can you use some of the tools/ideas you learned last year to help you?
4. What is SWAG?
5. Are you open to learning more of the same tools/ideas you learned last spring?

**Appendix G**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Hello, my name is Marvin Byrd.  I am a teacher at Hazelwood West High School.  I am also a student at Lindenwood University.

As a requirement of the program, I am required to conduct research in the educational field.  I have chosen to study Self Efficacy (motivation) and how it affects Black males in all areas of their lives.  I have designed an intervention that I hope will increase student motivation through and emphasis on developing a scholarly identity, skills, and a thirst for knowledge.

The program also combines the benefits of one on one mentoring with group discussions designed to help participants strengthen each other as they grow.  The purpose is to help participants understand how their present impacts their future.  The program is also designed to give participants the skills and the support they need to experience long term success.  The program takes place after school and will require participants to meet once a week throughout the school year once all paperwork is approved.  The activities bus will be providing student's transportation home.  Refreshments will also be provided.

Your child has been chosen to be a part of this study.  Of course, the decision to allow your child to participate is entirely up to you.  I will be collecting information as the program goes along in hopes of seeing the program become permanent.  ALL participant information will be kept highly confidential.  If you have any questions about the program before you make your decision, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,


Marvin Byrd
314-482-7618
mbyrd@hazelwoodschools.org


## Appendix H

*Topics Covered throughout The Journey during 2010-2011 school year*

| Topic 1 | Introduction/Who Am I? |
|---------|------------------------|

| Topic 2 | Who Am I? pt. 2 |
|---------|-----------------|
| Topic 3 | Who Am I? pt. 3 |
| Topic 4 | First Impressions |
| Topic 5 | What is Success? /The Price of Success/Who will help me get there? |
| Topic 6 | Money |
| Topic 7 | Goal Setting |
| Topic 8 | Respect and Authority |
| Topic 9 | Overcoming Obstacles (Physical) |
| Topic 10 | Establishing a Vision (a) |
| Topic 11 | Establishing a Vision (b) |
| Topic 12 | Overcoming Obstacles (Emotional) |
| Topic 13 | Caring for the Community (a) |
| Week 14 | Caring for the Community (b) |
| Topic 15 | Smart is what you can become |
| Topic 16 | College Visit |
| Topic 17 | Celebration/Closure |

**Appendix I**

# Meeting Room Layout

Circle of Chairs

(2nd half)

Food and Fellowship Table w/Chairs

(1st half)
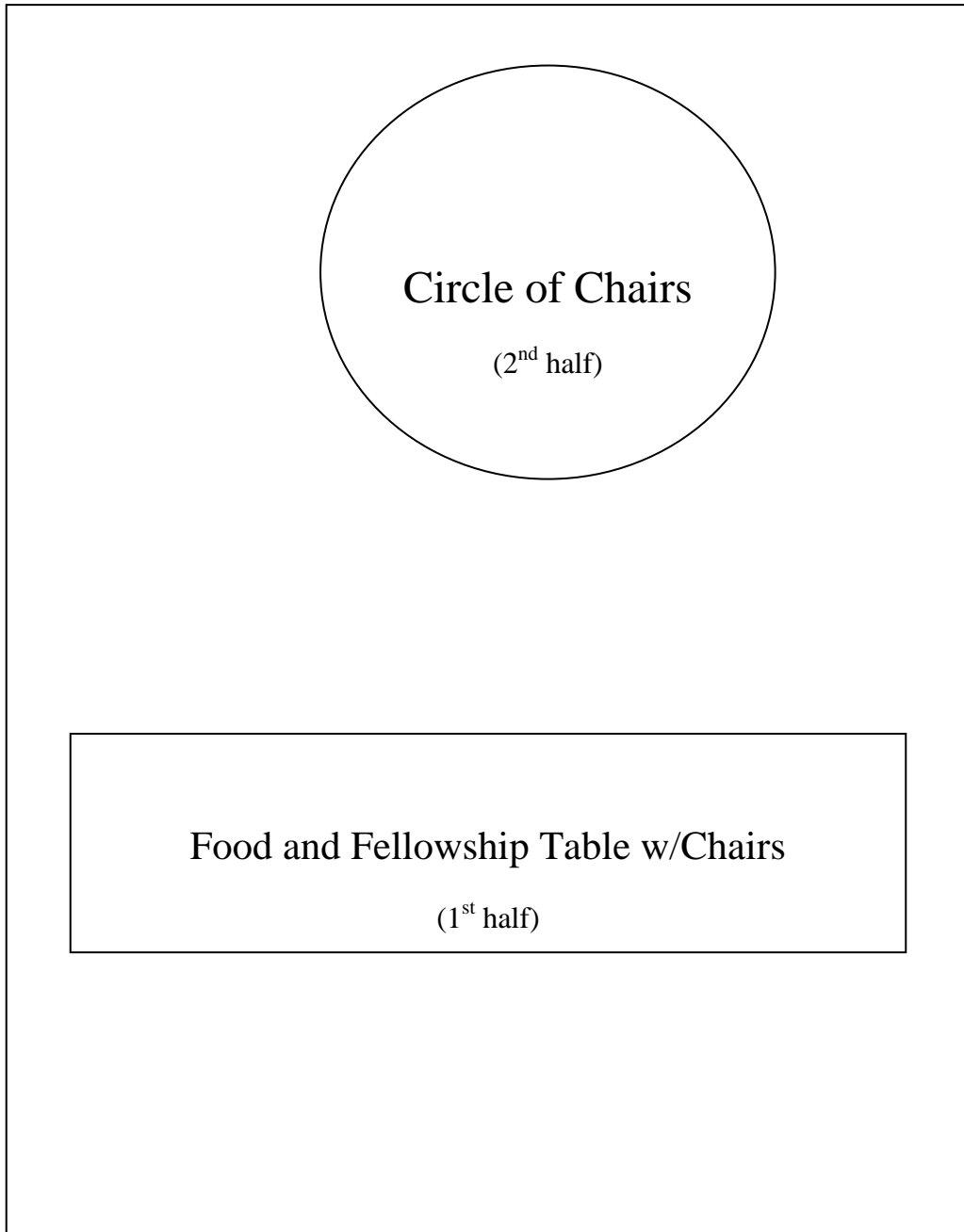
**Vitae**

Marvin Byrd was born September 6, 1979 in St. Louis, Missouri. Following graduation from McCluer North High School in 1998, he attended the University of Missouri in Columbia. Shortly after graduating from Mizzou, Marvin enrolled in the Master's teaching program at Lindenwood University. He received his Master's degree and teaching certificate in 2005. He proudly began his teaching career at Joplin High School in Joplin, Missouri. In 2009, he received his second Master's degree in Education Administration. He is expected to attain his doctorate in educational administration in the fall of 2011. Currently, he teaches at a local high school in St. Louis, Missouri. He his happily married to his beautiful wife, Tamara. He is active in his church as well as the St. Louis community.