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Examining the Perceived Influence of a Comprehensive Youth Development Program for Promoting Black Male High School Persistence

Richard Gray Walker
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EXAMINING THE PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR PROMOTING BLACK MALE HIGH SCHOOL
PERSISTENCE

by

Richard Gray Walker

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
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and the Department of Human Capital Development
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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR PROMOTING BLACK MALE HIGH SCHOOL PERSISTENCE

by Richard Gray Walker

December 2017

Black male youth in the United States drop out of high school at a rate consistently higher than their White counterparts. A lack of academic persistence contributes to lower workforce participation rates among Black Americans, which leads to lower national productivity and unrealized personal prosperity. Youth development research has developed an extensive body of knowledge regarding possible causes and contributing factors of minority high school dropout. Literature shows youth experience higher dropout rates when they grow up in adversity. Adversity risks such as dysfunctional families, cultural discontinuity between home and school, dysfunctional neighborhoods, or low-expectations from teachers contribute to graduation failure. Interventions that positively influence youth who grow up with adversity may improve high school persistence and related workforce outcomes.

Youth development literature details numerous intervention elements to enable coping with adversity and influencing positive outcomes. Long-term, meaningful relationships with adults and peers, challenging tasks with high expectations for performance, meaningful opportunities for skill development and personal growth are frequently cited as effective youth program elements. Scholars call for programs to apply these elements to improve intervention effectiveness.

This research examines the influence of a theoretical comprehensive youth development program (CYDP) on adversity risk as perceived by program participants. The Boy Scouts of America serves as a proxy for a CYDP containing numerous program elements described in literature. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology guided the examination of personal experiences of six Eagle Scouts who graduated high school to determine CYDP influence on their decision to graduate.

The study reveals a CYDP can be an effective intervention for youth facing adversity risk during high school. Study participants described adult leaders and youth peers as having strong, positive influence on character development and academic achievement. They emphasized their CYDP experiences built confidence, taught teamwork and leadership, instilled empathy, and enabled personal growth. Every participant described actual program influences aligned with theoretical influences as described by scholars. Results indicate youth interventions should include as large a mix of theoretical youth development program elements as possible to improve effectiveness for youth facing adversity risk.

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I owe a large debt of gratitude to Mr. Jeffrey Berger and Ms. Margee Egan of the Boy Scouts of America, National Capital Area Council headquarters and to Scoutmasters Robert Simpson, Charles Hall, and Mark Adams for your vital support to this research project. More importantly, I thank you for your tireless work with Scouts and I hope you realize the vital difference your efforts make in their lives. Finally, to my bride, Dr. Angie Walker, thank you for blazing our trail and keeping me going when it would have been so very easy to walk away from this journey. Thank you all.

DEDICATION

For my Dad.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In 1855, Frederick Douglass is widely attributed to have written in a letter to a southern planter that "it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men" (Kristoff, 2012). Douglass' declaration is over 150 years old, but his words are still relevant to the contemporary struggle of young Black men seeking to overcome a myriad of obstacles to achieve a rewarding and happy life. Programs for crime prevention, addiction treatment, and prison rehabilitation abound and yet problems among America's young Black men persist. Douglass' words assert to the nation that it is better to develop youth who successfully cope with adversity and thrive rather than continue treating the symptoms of adult failure.

Chapter I introduces the research study and includes a discussion of the importance of increasing high school graduation among Black male youth. The chapter provides background information on the state of high school dropout in the United States, a statement of the problem, the purpose, and significance of the study. The research objectives of the study, theoretical framework, study limitations, and delimitations are presented. Chapter I concludes with a summary of the study problem and purpose and an introduction to the chapters that follow.

Background

Black male youth in the United States drop out of high school at a higher rate than White male youth. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016), between 1967 and 2013, for White and Black males, age 16 to 24 years, the gap in high school persistence has remained considerably higher for Blacks. In 1967, high school dropout rates were 14.7% for Whites and 30.6% for Blacks. In 1972, dropout

rates were 11.6% and 22.3% for White males and Black males respectively. In 2013, the last year of the report, dropout rates for White males decreased to 5.5% and 8.2% for Black males (NCES, 2016). While the decreasing trend line is encouraging, the consistent disparity in minority academic persistence remains troubling (Child Trends, 2015; Fry, 2014).

The Cost of Dropping Out

In the United States, education has long served as the gateway to the adult workforce and to personal success and independence (Desilver, 2013; Fry, 2014; Griffin, Care, & McGraw, 2012). This linkage is noteworthy because the need for a highly trained national workforce continues to increase (Rothwell, 2011; Stewart, 2007). Menial, repetitious, low-skill jobs are fast-evolving into technical jobs that demand, not only the knowledge, but also the mental discipline learned in a challenging academic environment (Rothwell, 2011; Stewart, 2007). Workforce requirements are changing at the same time the nation experiences large-scale labor losses due to baby-boom generation retirements creating a greater need for a skilled United States populous (DeLong, 2004; Herman, Olivio, & Gioia, 2003).

Considering the Black population makes up over 14% of the total United States population, closing the academic persistence gap and enhancing workforce participation rates is critical to the long-term health of both the nation and the Black population (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016a, 2016b; Herman et al., 2003; Leach & Williams, 2007). From the perspective of the creation and maintenance of useful skills and expertise among the American population, enduring minority dropout statistics reveal a

problem in national workforce development, and specifically, a problem in national minority youth development (Nafukho, Hairston, & Brooks, 2004).

Unique Challenges for Black Youth

Black male youth development literature identifies developmental obstacles that White male youth either do not face or are more successful in overcoming (Garrett, 1995; Harper & Davis, 2012; Morales, 2008a, 2008b, Ogbu, 2004; Thompson & Schwartz, 2014). Youth development researchers identify cultural differences, or “cultural discontinuity,” between Black male youth experiences at home and in their neighborhood and issues commonly encountered at school as substantial factors in academic failure (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015). Cultural discontinuity between home and school can include mismatched language and communication styles, differences in “acceptable” behavior, and personal-family-peer priorities that may not value academic achievement (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Golden & Womack, 2016; Harper, 2009; Morales, 2016; Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umana-Taylor, 2012; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Wilcox, 2015). Cultural discontinuity can be a risk factor for Black male youth who fail to successfully acclimate to academic environments. Such young men often begin a self-defeating behavioral trend that ends in dropping out of school (Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Wilcox, 2015).

Neighborhood dysfunction is a second risk factor for Black male youth that includes adversities such as gang violence, poor infrastructure, and high rates of teen pregnancy or drug use. Family dysfunction is another risk factor and includes such adversities as missing or abusive parents, poverty, or no support for academic success. A final important risk factor for Black male youth are low expectations for performance

from teachers who often consider challenging academic work “beyond” the ability of minority students (Masten, 2014a; Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Werner & Smith, 1982). Additionally, adversity risk factors rarely occur in isolation, often overlapping, producing compound effects, and increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Masten, 2011; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982). The compounding of adversity risk factors requires interventions to focus on multiple risk factors at once (Overton, 2013). For example, a minority youth program cannot address family dysfunction without also addressing related problems with neighborhood dysfunction because the two cannot be separated. Black male youth face a compounding, comprehensive set of challenges. Interventions intended to improve the probability of positive outcomes must use a comprehensive set of factors to develop resilience to adversity (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Masten, 2014a, 2014b, 2011; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Designing an Effective Intervention

Through the 1980s, strategies for youth development were commonly based on deficit models that assumed a youth who failed to finish school was somehow “broken” and needed to be “fixed” (Lerner, 2006; Lerner, DeStafanis, & Ladd, 1998). Following that assumption, researchers attempted to identify and define the causes of the dropout problem within the individual from a psychological stance and mitigation strategies addressing the failure focused on behavioral modification (Damon, 2004; Lerner et al., 1998; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2006; Morales & Trotman, 2011). Beginning in the 1990’s, human development theorists began to approach the question of effective youth development from the viewpoint that youth are a valuable resource with knowable

strengths and talents to be nurtured and enhanced (Lerner et al., 1998). Positive youth development (PYD) evolved as a theory assuming all youth initially have the same ability to succeed and failures must be attributed to external factors (Damon, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005; Larson, 2000; Larson, Eccles, & Gootman, 2004; Masten, 2011; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Morales & Trotman, 2011). If all youth begin with similar internal abilities, variations in outcomes are most likely due to differences in family support, environmental surroundings, cultural strengths and weaknesses, and other external factors (Masten, 2011). PYD-based strategies seek to build upon a youth's natural strengths to develop and enhance coping with external risk factors that threaten success (Larson, 2000; Larson et al., 2004; Masten, 2014a; Morales, 2016).

One successful intervention for improving youth academic persistence is mentoring (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Youth mentoring programs commonly match adults with youth in a one-to-one relationship to model desired behaviors, teach methods and skills, and provide guidance and counseling (DuBois, 2005; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Research shows youth mentoring to be statistically significant for improving academic performance in youth; however, the relationship is statistically weak and the results short-lived once the intervention ceased (Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Furthermore, traditional mentoring methods have been more successful with White youth than with Black youth (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009; Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz, & Watson, 2014; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Studies indicate cultural discontinuity risk is difficult to overcome with typical mentoring applications. Common mentoring

program limitations such as limited contact time between youth and adult and limited peer interactions weaken long-term program effectiveness (Gordon et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2014; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Wilcox, 2015).

Study results suggest programs should include mentoring as one of many components of a more complex system of elements. Youth programs should be more comprehensive in design with multiple program elements working together to yield protective factors against the adversity risk routinely faced by Black male youth (Rutter, 1987). The extensive body of relevant literature calls for structured youth programs to consider racial identity and culture, rely on family and peers, commit to long-term adult-youth relationships, and focus on challenging goals with high expectations for results (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Jackson et al, 2014; Maxwell & Connell, 2013; Morales, 2016; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Poland, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013; Wang, Ferris, Hershberg, & Lerner, 2015).

Youth development scholars have studied a variety of programs, including 4-H, Big Brothers-Big Sisters (BBBS), intended to produce positive outcomes for at-risk populations (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011; Hershberg, DeSuza, Warren, Lerner, & Lerner, 2014; Gordon et al, 2009). Research into such programs and their outcomes yields theory-based recommendations for interventions to develop protective factors against adversity risks such as cultural discontinuity, family or neighborhood dysfunction, and low expectations (DuBois et al., 2011; Garmezy, 1985; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Gordon et al., 2009; Morales, 2016; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008). Rutter (1987) names any process that produces protective factors for at-risk-youth a *protective mechanism* and likens protective mechanisms to the application of medical

immunizations. An immunization does not remove the risk of disease but exposes the patient to an infection in a way that enables coping and resilience development.

Similarly, providing youth with challenging tasks that lead to increased success builds confidence and strong self-esteem. These traits tend to protect youth from adversity risks and promote positive outcomes such as high school persistence (Gordon et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2005; Morales, 2011, 2016; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Rutter, 1987).

Youth programs can function as protective mechanisms if they culturally align to participants' needs and interests, develop and maintain long-term and trusting adult-youth relationships, present challenging requirements with high expectations for results, provide noteworthy leadership opportunities, and offer meaningful peer interactions (Ashanti & Feliciano, 2012; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Jackson et al., 2014; Morales, 2016; Rhodes & Dubois, 2008; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982). The researcher applies the label comprehensive youth development program (CYDP) to youth programs containing such a diverse set of functions. A CYDP draws from existing program models such as PYD and expands them with additional theory-based elements such as required youth leadership and peer mentoring for all program youth. If a CYDP effectively promotes positive outcomes such as graduating high school, it may be considered a valuable tool for increasing the human capital value of minority youth and enabling their eventual workforce participation (Herman et al., 2003; Leach & Williams, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

American Black males drop out of high school at nearly double the rate of White males (NCES, 2016; Child Trends, 2015). Failure to complete a foundational high school

education is a primary contributor to failing to enter the national workforce (Weber, 2011). An increased number of individuals who fail to enter the workforce contributes to lost productivity, reduced innovation, and stunted economic growth for the American economy and a human capital cost that translates to unrealized monetary income, diminished personal identity, and weakened family security for Black Americans (Desilver, 2013; Griffin et al., 2012; Herman et al., 2003; Stewart, 2007).

Psychologists and human development professionals have extensively studied the phenomenon of minority high school dropout. Research focuses on youth mentoring programs and the body of youth mentoring research predominately examines one-to-one, adult-youth programs such as BBBS and 4-H with mixed results (Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Adult-youth programs are relatively short in duration, tend to narrowly focus on single functions like mentoring, and provide limited opportunities for peer leadership and interaction (Herrera et al., 2011; Lerner et al., 2011; Rhodes et al., 2006). While studies demonstrate youth mentoring programs are effective for promoting positive outcomes, their effect is commonly characterized as statistically weak and susceptible to deterioration once the mentoring application ceased (Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Scholars question the effectiveness of mentoring programs for minority youth if programs are not tailored to minority culture and do not bridge gaps between home and academic environments (DuBois et al., 2011; Eby et al., 2008; Harper, 2009; Neblett et al., 2012; Morales, 2016; Ogbu, 2004). Minority youth development programs should be expanded to develop protective factors that promote resilience for the compounded effects of adversity risks such as cultural discontinuity, neighborhood dysfunction, family

dysfunction, and low expectations (Morales, 2016; Rhodes & Dubois, 2008; Rutter, 1987; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Protective factors are more likely to develop in culturally aligned programs that include substantial peer interactions, quality youth-adult relationships, and challenging requirements with high expectations for achievement (Ashanti & Feliciano, 2012; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Jackson et al., 2014; Morales, 2016; Rhodes & Dubois, 2008; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982). Examining the influence of a CYDP on positive outcomes can provide useful insights for designing future youth interventions. A CYDP that develops protective factors to enable Black male high school graduation represents one possible avenue for reducing minority unemployment, and increasing overall workforce productivity and innovation (Desilver, 2013; Griffin et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceived influence of a CYDP for promoting Black male high school graduation by examining the experiences of Black male CYDP members who successfully graduated high school. The study will examine how a CYDP might enable coping with adversity risk and promote desirable outcomes. The results of this examination are intended to inform the design and implementation of youth interventions intended to increase high school persistence among Black male youth.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for considering minority high school graduation a workforce problem beyond a simple question of equity or diversity. The relevance of Black male high school graduation is considered from the perspective of lost benefits to the nation, to communities, and to individuals which can potentially derive from the skills, talent, and imagination of Black Americans. This study examines the potential effect of theoretical youth development processes for improving Black male youth high school graduation to possibly increase workforce participation, that eventually improve national workforce effectiveness and Black American opportunities.

Research Objectives

Research objectives frame the study. The following objectives were established based on a review of the relevant literature:

RO1 Describe the study participants in terms of age, years since high school graduation, length of time spent in a CYDP, and leadership positions held within the CYDP.

RO2 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the cultural discontinuity experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO3 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the neighborhood dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO4 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the family dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO5 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the low neighborhood and school expectations experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO6 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP to promote high school persistence among Black male youth program members.

Theoretical Framework

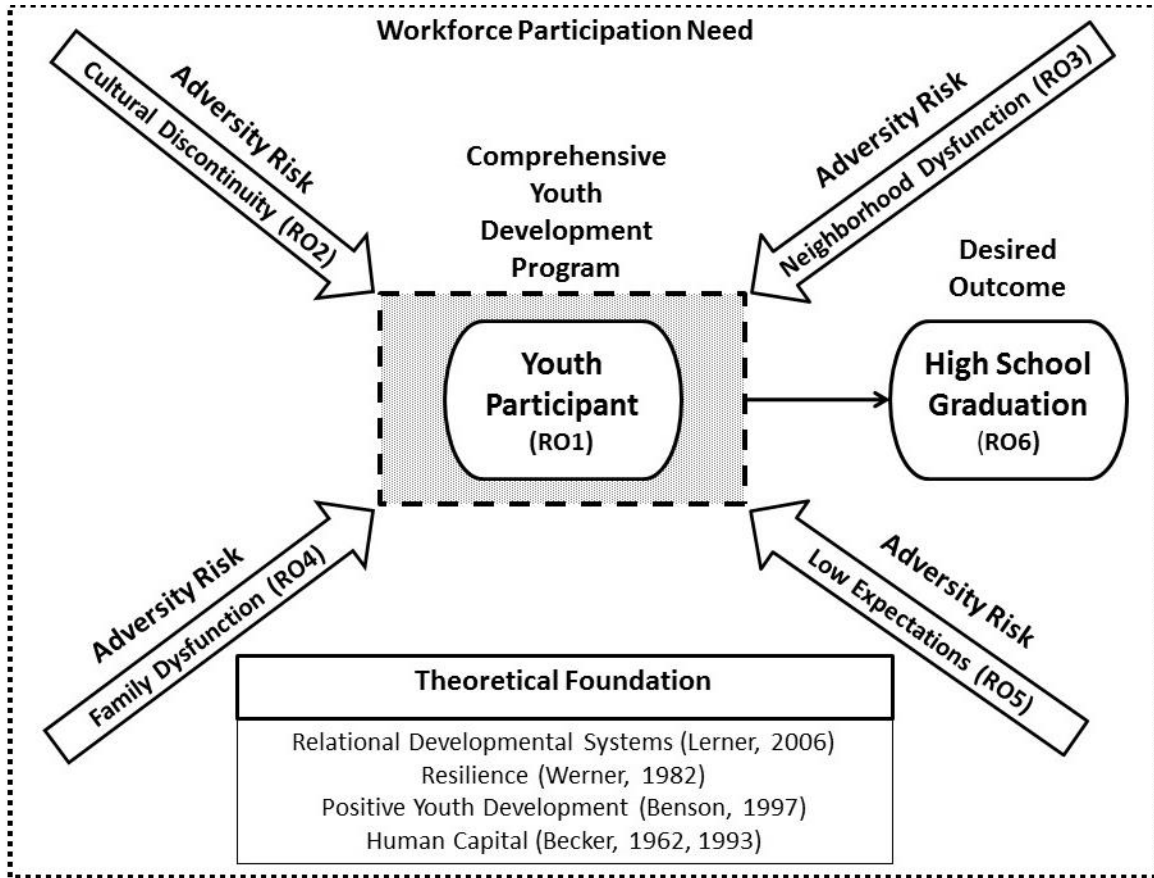


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Note. The framework illustrates a CYDP application serving as a protective mechanism against adversity risk and promoting the desired outcome. The framework is underpinned by four foundational psychology and human development theories and surrounded by the overarching need for maximum workforce participation.

The study’s theoretical framework illustrates the posited relationship between Black male youth, adversity risk, a CYDP intervention, protective factors, and the desired high school graduation outcome. The youth psychology and human development theories of relational developmental systems theory (RDST), PYD, and Resilience

provide the foundation for creating a CYDP. Youth development programs can build protective factors that instill resilience to adversity risk and promote desirable, positive outcomes. The study research objectives assessed various concepts and recommendations derived from these theories. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the theoretical framework.

Adversity related risks like cultural discontinuity between home and academic environments, neighborhood and family dysfunction, and low expectations for achievement from teachers and adults reveal a connection between individual youth and their home, neighborhood, or school environment, or “context” (Lerner, 2006; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Rutter, 1987; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014; Werner & Smith, 1982). RDST is an important departure from traditional theories of human development that considers the individual-context relationship critical for understanding inter-related developmental outcomes (Lerner, 2006; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014). The concept of context in RDST includes the living environment, culture, time in history, and people who surround an individual to influence actions and decision-making (Lerner, 2006; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014). According to RDST, implementing interventions designed to affect youth outcomes must consider the individual-context link as unbreakable by examining the complexity of the individual, the complexity of the context, and the interchanges between the two. To understand an individual’s reaction to an experience, one must understand the surrounding context and its interactions with the individual (Lerner, 2006; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014). This approach is particularly valuable when considering minority youth who often face multiple sources of risk that overlap and compound their effects (Morales, 2008a, 2008b;

Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Youth development scholars apply the principles of RDST by identifying culturally aligned programs as important for addressing problems in a youth's neighborhood, family, and school.

The study examines the influence of a CYDP for enabling Black male youth to cope with adversity and graduate high school. This examination considers PYD theory to be an integral concept enabling youth to cope with adversity and achieve positive outcomes such as high school graduation. PYD differs from traditional human development strategies by rejecting a deficit-based focus to change youth's wrong choices and instead highlight their strengths and abilities to design processes for promoting desirable, positive outcomes (Benson, 1997; Larson, 2000; Lerner, 2006). PYD stresses youth must be considered a resource to be led and developed rather than a problem to be treated. This study of a CYDP focuses on how to enhance a youth's inner strengths and abilities rather than how to correct problems. Quality adult and peer relationships that mentor and encourage good choices together with challenging requirements with high expectations for results that stretch an individual youth's abilities and build confidence are central elements of PYD (Benson, 1997; Larson et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). A CYDP expands on the PYD model by emphasizing youth leadership for every program member and high challenge activities to build confidence and skills. These challenges align with Morales' (2008a, 2008b) mitigation strategies for overcoming risks of low-expectations commonly found in minority schools and some intervention programs.

Empowering the ability to overcome substantial adversity risk is a primary goal of minority youth development. Resilience theory suggests resilience as a key factor for

avoiding risk behaviors and achieving positive outcomes (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982). Resilience is not as much an inherited trait or quality as a descriptor for the ability to adapt to and cope with substantial adversity. Scholars claim a youth development program can function as a mechanism for building resilience when it provides protective factors that offset specific risk such as a dysfunctional neighborhood characterized by violence and widespread drug abuse (Garmezy, 1985; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Goleman, 2006; Masten, 2011; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Rutter, 1987; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Limitations

Research limitations are factors outside the researcher's control that may affect study results and conclusions. A limitation of the study is the potential inaccuracy between the actual details of a lived experience and how a program participant might recall, interpret, and relay an experience to the researcher. Smith et al., (2009) explain that individuals do not discuss real experiences. Rather, they provide a recollection and interpretation of the experience. Smith and Osborn (2016) add that researchers, by necessity, apply a second layer of interpretation during analysis of interview data by filtering the participant's responses through the researcher's own frames of reference to report results and draw conclusions. For this study, the researcher's personal experience with the proxy CYDP aides both data collection and analysis by providing familiarity with program elements, terminology, and processes. A second limitation is the small population of Black male youth who meet the study criteria, some 22 individuals, so the sample size is small.

Delimitations

Study delimitations are those factors chosen by the researcher to limit the scope of the research. First, the study examines only Black male youth to limit variation due to differences between minority groups. Second, the study examines Black male youth from a single urban area who completed the proxy CYDP and graduated high school in the last five years to form a purposefully homogenous sample as described by Smith et al. (2009). Third, the study focuses on high school graduation as a measurable indicator of academic achievement. Last, the study examines a single program as a representative of possible CYDP interventions to limit the number of program elements being considered.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined for the study:

Cultural Discontinuity – The real and perceived differences in such things as language and communications methods, “acceptable” behavior, work ethic, dress, and personal priorities between informal home and neighborhood context and formal academic context (Morales, 2008a, 2008b).

Family Dysfunction – A family situation in which conflict, violence, and neglect or abuse on the part of individual parents occur continually and regularly (Kaslow, 1996).

Human Capital – The accumulated knowledge, skills, talent, and experience enabling an individual to act in new ways that provide economic value and productivity (Becker, 1962, 1993).

Neighborhood Dysfunction – A community situation in which unemployment, substance abuse, crime, violence, neglected infrastructure, and a sense of hopelessness are pervasive (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008).

Positive Youth Development – A youth development philosophy that considers youth from an asset-perspective as a resource to be developed according to their individual potential instead of from a deficit-perspective as a problem to be managed and mitigated (Benson, 1997).

Protective Factor – A contextual feature that enables successful adaptation to and coping with adversity risk rather than removing or insulating its effects (Werner & Smith, 1982).

Protective Mechanism – Developmental processes that yield protective factors against adversity risk (Rutter, 1987).

Relational Developmental Systems – The connection between an individual’s complete environment or “context” including personal culture, historical setting, neighborhood culture, information patterns, and sense of self (Lerner, 2006).

Resilience – A dynamic process for successfully adapting to and overcoming the effects of considerable adversity (Werner, 1982).

Risk Factor – An overt characteristic of environmental context, existing in either the past or present, that tends to promote undesirable, negative outcomes (Bernard, 1991).

Social Capital – The interactions, relations, behavioral norms, and sanctions that shape individual and group actions and decisions (Coleman, 1988).

Summary

The health of the American economy depends, in part, on development and maintenance of a skill national workforce. A large percentage of Black male youth face substantial adversity during development which contributes to many failing to complete high school and subsequently failing to enter the American workforce. The loss to the

workforce of the inherent ingenuity, talent, and skill of Black males is a human and youth development problem. A review of the relevant literature outlines the evolution of youth development as a science and provides a sketch of the challenges faced by youth development practitioners attempting to improve minority youth outcomes. The literature describes resilient youth who adapt to adversity and achieve positive outcomes and offers effective youth program elements for developing resilience to adversity risk.

The details of the study are presented in five chapters. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant scholarly literature. Chapter III presents the research methodology including the study participants, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents participant demographics and interview results. Chapter V provides a discussion of study conclusions and recommendations for application and additional research. Finally, a set of appendices and reference list are provided.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an examination of the scholarly literature related to youth development programs that may promote Black male high school persistence. The first section describes foundational human development theories including HCT and SCT. The theoretical foundation establishes the concept of human capital, including youth, as a resource to be developed and underpins the study problem that high school dropout rates reveal a loss of innovation and value, both to the nation and for individual Americans. Social capital is presented as a vital concept for building human capital by providing supportive relationships and RDST calls for a holistic focus on both the individual his or her ecological context as an inseparable system.

The second section reviews resilience and PYD theories. Youth who adapt to substantial adversity and avoid vulnerabilities to risk and then achieve positive life outcomes are considered resilient. Viewing youth as strong and talented resources with capacity to overcome adversity is central to PYD and contrasts sharply to traditional deficit models of youth development. Deficit models focus on environmental risk factors and attempt to minimize their influence while largely ignoring a youth's strength and adaptability.

The final section discusses youth mentoring and reviews specific considerations for mentoring young minority Black males presented in the literature. Youth development scholars present mentoring as an effective intervention for at-risk youth to promote academic achievement and persistence. Mentoring is a common youth program element but results are mixed depending on program elements and application. Youth development researchers list common characteristics of successful programs including

trusting and long-duration relationships, youth-focused goals, high expectations, and meaningful tasks. Minority mentoring researchers add cultural and contextual alignment as necessary characteristics of effective minority youth mentoring stating there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Youth development interventions must align with minority culture and help bridge any real or perceived gaps between a youth's home context and "mainstream" academic context. Positive focused, culturally aligned youth development programs are presented as potentially effective interventions for promoting resilience and yielding desirable outcomes including academic persistence. The chapter summary introduces the study methodology discussion in Chapter III.

Youth Development Processes

Until the mid-twentieth century, economists defined business capital in terms of tangible assets such as buildings, machinery, and raw materials (Becker, 1993). However, classical theories of economics and psychology were not able to fully explain observed variation in the performance of the U.S. economy so the generic term "residual factors" was used to account for un-identified effects in economic calculations (Nafukho et al., 2004). Schultz (1961) introduced the concept of "human capital" as a means of more accurately accounting for variation in workforce skills, innovation, and productivity. Human capital is the accumulated knowledge, skills, talent, and experience enabling an individual to act in new ways that provide economic value and productivity (Becker, 1962, 1993; Schultz, 1961; Tan, 2014).

Human Capital Theory

Neoclassical economic thought forms the foundation of HCT where individuals maximize benefits to themselves via personal investments in skill enhancements such as

education and training that provide positive returns in income and professional advancement (Becker, 1962, 1993; Tan 2014). HCT does not view education and training investments as one-time events. Rather, investments in learning span an individual's lifetime to include primary and secondary schooling, on-the-job training, advanced professional degrees, and formal apprenticeships (Becker, 1962, 1993; Tan 2014). Increased knowledge and ability provided by learning investments yields returns to the individual measured in increased earnings, higher life satisfaction, increased productivity, and upward mobility. Returns to an organization are measured in increased productivity, increased innovation, and higher personnel morale and retention (Becker, 1962, 1993; Swanson & Holton, 2009; Tan, 2014). If investments in learning provide such positive outcomes for individuals and organizations, then failing to invest in learning yields substantial negative outcomes.

Individuals who fail to graduate high school represent unrealized potential for innovation, productivity, and process improvement within organizations and the nation (Leach & Williams, 2007; Swanson & Holton, 2009; Weber, 2011). High school dropouts represent lost personal income, family wealth, and community prosperity for individuals (Fry, 2014). HCT emphasizes leaning and skill training for developing human expertise in preparation for entering the workforce and thereby guides efforts to increase high school persistence by providing a theoretical foundation for emphasizing education (Becker, 1993; Nafukho et al., 2004; Swanson & Holton, 2009; Tan, 2014). Learning and having the discipline to learn are important achievements for an individual seeking to enter the workforce and a high school diploma is considered a minimum requirement for reaching that goal (Weber, 2011). Building human capital is a complex

process that demands many levels of support for the individual that are commonly provided by his or her social network of family, friends, and community (Becker, 1962, 1993; Coleman, 1988).

Social Capital Theory

HCT describes the changes that occur within an individual that enhance his or her personal and organizational value (Becker, 1962, 1993; Nafukho et al., 2004; Tan, 2014). SCT defines social capital as interactions, relations, and behavioral norms that shape individual and group actions and decisions (Akdere, 2005; Coleman, 1988). Social capital is created through changes between people in the form of purposeful interactions and relations (Coleman, 1988). Like human capital, social capital is intangible, existing in three social structures: obligations and expectations, behavioral norms, and information channels (Coleman, 1988).

According to SCT, when an individual or group does something for another, the transaction produces an expectation and obligation to be repaid by the recipient sometime in the future (Coleman, 1988). Social obligations normally flow between all parties in a relationship but vary in quantity and value. Effective social transactions are conducted in families, schools, peer groups, and community organizations and tend to strengthen bonds between individuals and within groups. Social bonds are founded on trustworthiness to repay obligations to the satisfaction of both parties and only exist in trusting relationships (Coleman, 1988; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). Trusting relationships, in turn, guide individuals toward acceptable behaviors and provide direction for performance and achievement expectations (Akdere 2005; Coleman, 1988).

Behavioral norms establish boundaries for acceptable decision making and impose constraints on undesirable conduct. When considering the problem of Black male high school dropout rates, guidance and pressure provided by group norms can help a youth choose the socially desirable outcome of staying in school (Akdere, 2005; Coleman, 1988; Polson, 2013). For example, parent involvement in a youth's school work, adult guidance to remain in high school, and peer choices to stay in school are examples of social capital norms. Behavioral sanctions deter behavior and choices that do not conform to group norms and take the form of criticism, chastisement, and even ostracizing from the group (Coleman, 1988). Social sanctions promote high school persistence by imposing penalties for dropping out of school or even considering or discussing dropping out of school (Akdere, 2005; Coleman, 1988).

Creating social capital may be especially important for youth who lack natural sources of social capital such as a strong, supportive family. In such cases, individuals rely on what Coleman (1988) describes as multiplex relationships with family, peers, neighbors, church members, teachers and others who develop trust and provide social capital support and guidance. One or more person(s) who has earned a youth's trust and formed an important bond can provide the social capital required to help bound a youth's behavior and choices (Akdere, 2005; Coleman, 1988; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007; Polson, 2013). Developing and maintaining complex relationships may be an important avenue for providing needed social capital to youth with limited natural sources of social capital but who seek human capital learning investments (Coleman, 1988; Rhodes, 2005). When discussing factors for promoting human capital development, scholars emphasize the importance of not only relationships between youth and surrounding people but also the

relationship with his or her surrounding environment often referred to as “context” and how that relationship may dictate effective interventions for promoting positive outcomes (Lerner, 2006).

Relational Developmental Systems Theory

High school dropout, for any segment of society, has often been studied by human development scholars as a singular achievement outcome, in isolation from all other outcomes (Lerner, 2006; Overton, 2013). In such studies, high school dropout was not examined as an integral part of a complex system of problems, merely as a singular phenomenon to be understood and treated. Theories of human development traditionally followed dualist, either-or models such as well-known nurture versus nature theories of child development (Lerner, 2006; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014). Overton’s (2013) exposition on “Relationalism” describes dualist theory reliance on “Cartesian-Split-Mechanistic paradigms” in which complexity is devolved into its simplest elements. Following the lead of other science disciplines such as chemistry, these models view human development as a whole that must be broken down into its pure elements (e.g. an individual’s genomic structure) to reveal the causes of good and bad outcomes (Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014; Overton, 2013). Researchers compartmentalize dependent variables such as physical, emotional, and intellectual outcomes and study them in isolation from potential influence on one another. The error in this approach, according to Overton and others, is the failure to adequately account for the back and forth, reciprocal effects between variables in determining developmental outcomes (Lerner, 2006; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014; Overton, 2013).

Recent trends have moved away from such dualist models that view developmental factors in isolation and toward models that conceptualize human development as a system in which individual factors constantly interact each other and with the environmental context (Lerner, 2006; Overton, 2013). RDST emphasizes the connection between an individual's complete environment or "context" that includes personal culture, historical setting, community culture, information patterns, and sense of self (Lerner, 2006; Lerner et al., 2011; Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014; Overton, 2013). Human development is viewed as a fluid, mutually dependent relationship between the individual and his or her constantly evolving context (Lerner et al., 2011). RDST draws from an individual's entire life-span of experience and relations in order to explain variations in developmental outcomes and includes models of biological, ecological, cultural, historical, physical, social, and behavioral factors when examining the individual-context relationship (Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014).

Lerner (2006) emphasizes the strength and importance of the individual-context link by identifying RDST as a *fused developmental system*. In contrast to traditional Cartesian models that split individual development outcomes from related environmental or cultural factors, Overton (2013) uses holism, the principle in which "wholes define parts and parts define wholes" (p. 98) to describe RDST. For example, a scene in nature is composed of a set of parts: trees, mountains, snow, animals, clouds. However, each individual part is linked and can only be understood according to its relation to the scene: snow on the mountains, squirrel in a tree, sun behind the clouds, etc. Likewise, a community is composed of several parts and those parts must be examined both according to individual composition and in relation to the community (Overton, 2013).

RDST contains three principles to guide the study of individual-context relations; the *identity of opposites*, the *opposite of identities*, and the *synthesis of the whole* (Overton, 2013). Identity of opposites claims that researchers can only understand the whole through a study of its related parts, meaning to understand the outcome of an individual youth, one must examine each of the youth's context elements. The opposites of identity claims that researchers can only understand contextual parts through an understanding of how those parts fit into the whole individual-context relation and development outcome. Finally, synthesis of the whole requires the study of the outcome's individual-context parts be accomplished without splitting them from each other or examination in isolation. These principals emphasize the importance of the link between the individual and his or her context and frame future study of developmental outcomes (Lerner & Schmid-Callina, 2014; Overton, 2013).

Minority youth development research reports examining and considering individual-context relations is critical to understanding outcome variance (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). The interaction between Black male youth and family, peers, school, and neighborhood are different from interactions for White counterparts and RDST says the differences must be understood and accounted for before conclusions can be drawn about academic developmental processes and outcomes (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Youth development researchers who apply RDST to the question of Black male achievement examine characteristics of both Black male youth and Black male youth context to conceptualize how individual-context relations enhance or inhibit successful adaptation to adversity risk (Lerner & Schmid Callina, 2014; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Overton, 2013).

Understanding the uniqueness of the Black male individual-context relationship enables an understanding of Black male coping with adversity risk and how that coping might lead to either positive or negative outcomes (Lerner, 2006; Morales, 2008a, 2008b).

Developing Strength to Overcome Adversity

Child psychologists and human development theorists have long debated the strength and adaptability of children challenged by adversity during development (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Damon, 2004). Early philosophy, much of it homespun, held that children were strong and able to adjust to adversity (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Damon, 2004). However, following the end of the Second World War, the field of child developmental psychology rapidly expanded and researchers, observing the trauma of post-war Europe and Asia advanced the *fragile child* model (Damon, 2004). By the late 1940s, youth were believed to be vulnerable to the effects of hardship and to suffer serious mental and emotional shock because of meeting challenges for which they were not prepared (Bernard, 1991, 1997, Masten, 2014a, 2014b). Human development researchers borrowed from medical science to form a pathology model in which developmental risk is studied as a disease or contagion with the goal of identifying a prevention or immunization (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Youth Resilience

Continued research found the fragile child model did not hold up, predominantly because large numbers of children in study samples grew up in high risk environments but did not experience negative outcomes (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Masten, 2014a, 2014b; 2014a). Garmezy (1985), in his review of recent youth development work, notes that nearly half of the youth in one study who grew up in adverse conditions escaped those

conditions as adults, and Bernard (1991) repeated a commonly observed statistic that “while one in four children with alcoholic parents develops alcohol problems, three out of four do not” (p. 3). Beginning in the 1970s, child development studies repeatedly challenged the fragile child view leading to the opposing *invulnerable child* model (Bernard, 1991; Gramezy, 1985; Garmezy et al., 1984). Researchers found that, instead of being highly fragile, youth regularly displayed a substantial ability to adapt to and even thrive in adverse context (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Brody et al., 2013; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Developmental researchers initially theorized that adaptable youth possessed an extraordinary trait or inner strength enabling them to overcome the negative effects of an adverse context (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Borrowing from the field of psychiatry, the term *ego-resiliency* was coined to describe personal traits, including resourcefulness, flexibility, and confidence, considered essential for successful adaptation to highly adverse context (Luthar et al, 2000). In the early 1980s, youth development scholars distinguished ego-resiliency from resilience by defining ego-resiliency as an innate trait that may exist with or without the presence of adversity. Resilience was defined as a dynamic process for successfully adapting to and overcoming the effects of considerable adversity (Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Werner (2012) insists scholars not focus on successfully adaptive individuals as resilient but instead focus on resilience development as a life-long process. The presence of adversity is a required element of resilience development and an important difference from resiliency (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2014a, 2014b). Successful adaptation to adversity with resultant positive outcome was determined to be a common ability rather than

special quality and resilience researchers asserted that resilience processes should become a focus of youth development study (Goleman, 2006; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2014a, 2014b). Werner (1993) found that children who successfully adapted to adversity were not unusually talented, but displayed an ability to effectively recognize, utilize, and improve upon the skills they did have to achieve their goals.

The literature originally used the terms invulnerability, invincibility, and survivor, to describe successful adaptation to high levels of risk to achieve positive outcomes, but resilience has become the commonly accepted name (Bernard, 1997; Masten, 1991, 2001; Yates & Masten, 2004). At its core, resilience research is the study of success (Morales, 2010). Resilience describes three discrete processes: (a) achieving desirable outcomes despite being at high-risk for failure, (b) sustaining good performance despite prolonged adversity, and (c) overcoming a highly traumatic event (Masten 2001; Masten, et al., 1990). Resilient youth develop normally and often thrive despite adversity where deficit-based theory would predict negative outcomes (Brody et al., 2013; Jain & Cohen, 2013). Resilience models stress competence development through positive interventions to nurture and enhance individual strengths and effectively mitigate the effects of destructive, high-risk context (Brody et al., 2013; Yates & Masten, 2004; Werner, 2012).

Risk Factors

The literature underscores two factors for considering an individual as resilient: (a) presence of substantial risk to development, and (b) resultant successful developmental outcomes (Bernard, 1991, 1997; Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Masten et al., 1990). Risk is an overt characteristic of context, existing in either the past or present (Bernard, 1991). Successful outcomes achieve normative developmental or competence

criteria such as maintaining grade-level reading and math skills, avoiding drug addiction or unwed pregnancy, and achieving expected school grade advancement (Brody et al., 2013; Bernard, 1991, 1997; Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Masten et al., 1990). Resilience researchers describe successful outcomes as “good enough” functioning that leads to personal well-being rather than striving to achieve potentially unrealistic superior performance outcomes (Masten, 2014a; Masten et al., 1990). When considering long-term stress, as is common in low-SES environments, resilience may be better understood as coping, implying resilient youth maintain status quo functioning despite constantly high levels of stress (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Masten et al., 1990).

Masten (2014a) states, risk events exist on a gradient from high to low and may be singular and highly traumatic such as an airplane crash or house fire, or of long duration and varying intensity such as living in a high-crime neighborhood or attending a poorly resourced and dysfunctional school. In each case, traumatic events may have substantial effects on long-term outcomes for youth and necessitate developing resilience to mitigate risk (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Masten et al., 1990). Resilience research shows adversity risk factors are correlated to undesirable, negative outcomes and include low-socioeconomic status (SES), family and community dysfunction, and several biological factors including low birth-weight and parental schizophrenia (Jain & Cohen, 2013; Masten, 2014a, 2014b). However, studies show SES factors are better predictors of risk than biological factors (Masten et al., 1990).

Risk factors rarely exist in isolation. Rather, multiple risk factors commonly occur in combination and tend to combine effects, sometimes additively, sometimes exponentially (Masten et al., 1990). Risk factors are further differentiated as either

proximal or *distal* depending on their impingement on an individual youth (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole (1990). Proximal risk factors, such as lack of clothing, inadequate food, or a violent parent affect youth personally on a daily basis (Masten et al., 1990). Distal risk factors, such as low-SES or minority status, may surround a youth and touch on multiple contextual aspects but not affect him directly (Masten et al., 1990). This distinction is important when considering mitigating interventions (Baldwin et al., 1990, 1990; Masten et al., 1990). Risk factors can be offset by factors that protect youth from risk and related negative outcomes; for example, good parenting might mitigate low-SES distal risk or strong faith-community relations may offset violent home proximal risk (Baldwin et al., 1990; Jain & Cohen, 2013; Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Protective Factors

Werner and Smith (1982) state the presence of risk is a probability, not a guarantee of outcome and the presence of *protective factors* reduces the probability of risk related negative outcomes. The fact that a youth is born a Black male may increase the chance of eventually dropping out of high school but does not guarantee it, and adding protective factors to his context decreases the chances of that outcome (Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1993, 2012). Protective factors do not remove risk or insulate youth from the effects of adversity; rather, protective factors enable successful adaptation to adversity to promote positive outcomes (Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982). Protective factor variables include competent parenting, caring adult interaction, positive peer relations, academic success, positive self-esteem, self-

efficacy, sense of control, and strong faith in a higher power (Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982).

According to Werner (1993), successfully adaptive youth establish close, trusting, positive relationships with at least one adult who provides support and encouragement, serves as a mentor, and may fill in as a surrogate parent. Adults filling this role may be grandparents, aunts or uncles, teachers, coaches, neighbors, youth volunteers, or church ministers (Werner, 1993). The important elements are depth of trust and longevity of the relationship (Werner, 1993). Resilient youth participate in extra-curricular activities that require cooperation, peer interaction and support, structure and boundaries, and provide opportunities for leadership and challenge (Werner, 1993). Werner (1993) found that faith in a higher power and strong relations with a faith group is one of the most influential protective mechanisms for youth, although no specific religion or denomination proved statistically significant (Werner, 1993).

In his foundational youth resilience research, Garmezy (1985) divided protective factors into three sets of variables: (a) personality features, (b) family features, and (c) external support features. Zolkowski and Bullock (2012) found five characteristics of protective factors prominently in the literature: (a) self-regulation, (b) self-concept, (c) family conditions, (d) community supports, and (e) faith. Werner and Smith (1982), in their seminal longitudinal study of adaptation among high-risk children on Kauai, similarly divided protective factors into five clusters of variables having similar characteristics. The first includes temperamental characteristics that enable positive interactions with adults and peers. Cluster two encompasses the ability to realistically self-evaluate and utilize talents. Cluster three relates to the style and competence of a

youth's parents. Cluster four includes effects of non-parent adults who interact with youth such as Grandparents, teachers, and coaches. Cluster five relates to opportunities presented at major life transitions such as high school graduation, marriage, or child-birth that changed the trajectory of a youth's life (Werner, 1993, 2012). Given the apparent importance of protective factors in helping high-risk youth adapt to and overcome the effects of adversity, youth development researchers needed to understand how those factors might be produced and cultivated.

Protective Mechanisms

In the quest for effective risk adaptation techniques, research has largely focused on identifying protective factors (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993). While categorizing and testing lists of protective factors provides scholars sets of variables for study, such lists do not provide guidance for developing and nurturing protective factors within youth (Rutter, 1987). Rutter (1987) and Werner (1993) both state that efforts to mitigate the effects of adversity in high-risk youth must focus on processes instead of variables. Rutter (1987) explains that any given factor may act as either a risk or a protector depending on the individual-context interaction and that researchers should focus on protective processes or "protective mechanisms" instead of roughly defined protective factors. Werner (1993) states that the study of resilience is the study of the individual-context interplay, derived from developmental systems, and is therefore a study of processes.

When studying resilience, Rutter (1987) alters his research to focus on vulnerability to adversity and explained the distinction by saying that an individual may be more or less vulnerable to the same risk at different points in his or her life. The

ability to cope with a similar risk varies depending on contextual circumstances so relevant protective factors may also change (Rutter, 1987). Vulnerability and protection are opposite ends of the same concept and the identity of a factor as vulnerability or protection is only revealed when combined with a specific individual-context interaction and varies as interactions vary (Rutter, 1987). Since the identity of a vulnerability-protective variable may change depending on the risk situation, Rutter (1987) explains that “it is the process or mechanism, not the variable, that determines the function” (p317).

Protective mechanisms yield protective factors that promote successful adaptation to high-risk contexts (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993). Rutter (1987) compares the effects of protective mechanisms to medical immunizations that does not completely remove the risk of disease; rather they enable the body to overcome exposure to infection by building up resistance to its attack. Protective mechanisms do not help a youth avoid adversity, they instead enable youth to develop resilience through the acquisition and application of protective factors (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993).

When discussing protective mechanisms, Rutter (1987) links his work with Werner’s (1993) fifth cluster of protective factors by emphasizing the importance of understanding turning points for youth development research. According to Werner (1993) turning-points are central because events that occur at that point in development determine the path of all events that follow. For example, choosing to avoid pre-marital sex during high school clearly effects a youth’s life-path by not interrupting his development with early, unplanned parenthood. The application of protective factors such as strong faith-based norms and trusted adult guidance help mitigate vulnerabilities

to peer pressure, resulting in a positive outcome (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993). While the existence and effect of the protective factor is important, an understanding of the mechanism to develop and apply that factor is critical for effective youth development (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1993). Beyond merely cataloguing protective factors, youth development scholars must understand how those factors are established, how they produce the desired protective effect, and how they might change a youth's life trajectory (Rutter, 1987).

Rutter (1987) highlights four protective mechanisms as especially effective for mitigating risk. The first is *reduction of risk impact* in which exposure to or severity of risk is limited to the coping skills of the youth. The second mechanism is *reduction of negative chain reactions* in which interventions limit risk following an initial risk event (Rutter, 1987). For example, the presence of a trusted peer mentor can offset the effect of another peer breaking trust. Such a breach of trust might normally be expected to lead to social withdrawal but having a consistent relationship may break the chain of events. The third mechanism is having *positive self-esteem and self-efficacy* produced through secure and rewarding personal relationships and successful personal accomplishments (Rutter, 1987). The fourth protective mechanism is opening *opportunities for development and achievement* (Rutter, 1987). Research points to education as a good example where success at one level opens opportunities at the next such as good grades and test scores in high school yielding acceptance and scholarship offers to college (Rutter, 1987). In contrast, dropping out of school negates opportunities to advance and develop marketable skills, thereby increasing vulnerability to risk related to low-SES (Rutter, 1987).

Youth development scholars advocate for interventions that enable high-risk youth to successfully adapt to adversity and achieve positive outcomes (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Such interventions should utilize multiple protective mechanisms to produce multiple protective factors that develop resilience in the face of multiple risk vulnerabilities (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Effective interventions do not focus narrowly on single risk factors because high-risk youth rarely face single risk factors (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Black male youth commonly face combinations of risk factors that combine effects and require comprehensive protective mechanisms to develop broad resilience (Masten et al., 1990; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012).

Developmental theorists promote positive protective mechanisms that focus on identifying strengths for developing coping skills instead of deficit-based interventions that focus on reducing risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Yates & Masten, 2004). Additionally, protective mechanisms must account for context, especially when substantial differences between current and desired end-state context exist (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). For example, Black male youth may experience important mismatches in verbal and non-verbal communications, behavior norms, and peer relations between home and school context. Protective mechanism interventions must address such mismatches to be effective (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Scholars insist that effective youth development interventions have a positive focus on strengths and capabilities, consider context and culture, and build coping skills instead of attempt to remove risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012).

Positive Youth Development

PYD emerges from resilience research in the 1990s (Damon, 2004). Resilience models and PYD models both stem from RDST and emphasize developing positive coping abilities in the face of substantial adversity (Masten, 2014b). Resilience and PYD share the fundamental concepts of positive adaptation, individual strength, and an explicit link between individual and context (Larson, 2000; Larson et al., 2004; Masten, 2014b). Resilience models and PYD differ in focus, in that resilience concerns individual characteristics that enable life-span functioning when confronting extreme hardship while PYD focuses more on youth development and thriving in the face of difficulty vice merely surviving (Masten, 2014b; Scales et al., 2011; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Long-held, traditional mental-health models of child psychology focuses on problem behaviors and deficit outcomes; however, PYD focused on the strengths of the individual youth (Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000). PYD considers youth from an asset-perspective as a resource to be developed according to their individual potential instead of from a deficit-perspective as a problem to be managed and mitigated (Benson, 1997; Brooks-Gunn & Roth, 2014; Larson et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 1998). Furthermore, developmental psychology and evolutionary biology studies found potential for substantial adaptability, referred to as plasticity in youth that stands in contrast to traditional views of rigid, good-bad outcomes (Lerner et al., 2005). Plasticity refers to the ability of an individual's developmental path to adjust to both positive and negative influences while maintaining an overall course toward desired outcomes (Lerner et al., 2011).

Regarding adversity challenged youth, PYD theorists describe a spectrum of possible outcomes, rather than a bipolar, right or wrong option, with problem behaviors at

one end and desirable behaviors on the other (Larson, 2000; Larson et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). PYD is predicated on the belief that every youth is capable of thriving based on his or her plasticity and strength, and promotes enhancing individual strength attributes within his or her context as a means of promoting desirable outcomes (Hershberg, 2014; Larson, 2000; Lerner, Bowers, Geldhof, Gestsdottir, & DeSouza, 2012). PYD focus stands in contrast to traditional deficit models of preventive interventions that focus largely on negative behaviors and outcomes (Benson, 1997; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2011).

PYD takes a youth's complete individual-context relation into consideration rather than splitting the youth from his or her environment or culture (Damon, 2004; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). PYD context includes a youth's family, school, and neighborhood and researchers state human development is a two-way process driven by individual-context relations which in turn evolve as the individual develops (Larson et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2012; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). Furthermore, PYD views youth development as a fully interactive process in which the youth makes choices and takes actions and then reaps rewards and consequences for those choices and actions rather than merely being acted upon by a benevolent process (Damon, 2004).

PYD theory includes a framework of 40 developmental assets describing elements of individual-context relations that contribute to healthy growth (Benson, 1997). Figure 2 lists the developmental assets in eight conceptual categories. Developmental assets focus on positive factors of influence instead of negative factors of prevention and, according to PYD theory, increases in the number or intensity of developmental assets experienced by youth promotes increases in desirable outcomes (Benson, 1997; Scales, Benson,

Roehlkepartain, Sesma, & Dulmen, 2006). Benson's (1997) framework evolved from human and child development foundations of prevention science, resilience theory, and competency development; and, according to literature, PYD assets can lead to at least one of the following outcomes: (a) risk behavior education, (b) positive behavior increase, and (c) promoting resilience (Benson, 1997; Scales et al., 2006).

40 Developmental Assets	
Category	Asset Name and Definition
External Assets	
Support	1 Family Support - Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2 Positive Family Communication - Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
	3 Other Adult Relationships - Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
	4 Caring Neighborhood - Young person experiences caring neighbors.
	5 Caring School Climate - School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
	6 Parent Involvement in Schooling - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in
Empowerment	7 Community Values Youth - Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
	8 Youth as Resources - Young people are given useful roles in the community.
	9 Service to Others - Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
	10 Safety - Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	11 Family Boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
	12 School Boundaries - School provides clear rules and consequences.
	13 Neighborhood Boundaries - Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
	14 Adult Role Models - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	15 Positive Peer Influence - Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
	16 High Expectations - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	17 Creative Activities - Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
	18 Youth Programs - Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
	19 Religious Community - Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
	20 Time at Home - Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

40 Developmental Assets	
Category	Asset Name and Definition
Internal Assets	
Commitment to Learning	21 Achievement Motivation - Young person is motivated to do well in school.
	22 School Engagement - Young person is actively engaged in learning.
	23 Homework - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
	24 Bonding to School - Young person cares about her or his school.
	25 Reading for Pleasure - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Positive Values	26 Caring - Young Person places high value on helping other people.
	27 Equality and Social Justice - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
	28 Integrity - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
	29 Honesty - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
	30 Responsibility - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
	31 Restraint - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
Social Competencies	32 Planning and Decision Making - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
	33 Interpersonal Competence - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
	34 Cultural Competence - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	35 Resistance Skills - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	36 Peaceful Conflict Resolution - Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
Positive Identity	37 Personal Power - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
	38 Self-Esteem - Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
	39 Sense of Purpose - Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
	40 Positive View of Personal Future - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Figure 2. Forty developmental assets

Note. Forty developmental assets for promoting positive, healthy growth of youth. Adapted from "All kids are our kids: What communities must do to raise caring and responsible children and adolescents," by P. L. Benson, 1997. Copyright 1997 by Jossey-Bass. Used with permission (see Appendix A).

PYD developmental assets divide into internal and external categories that group relevant characteristics of the individual youth and of his or her context (Benson, 1997; Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). Internal assets are unique to the individual and specifically positive in nature, falling into four categories: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity and

include his or her talents, strengths, interests, and energy (Lerner et al., 2011).

Additionally, Benson (1997) emphasized a youth's moral perspective as being critical for positive development and included his or her concern for others, sense of equality, integrity, responsibility, and personal restraint.

Thriving in the face of adversity comes from alignment of a youth's internal assets with the external assets of his or her context (Benson et al, 2012; Theokas & Lerner, 2006). External assets relate to the youth's context grouped into four categories: support, empowerment, boundaries, and time conservation; including family, neighborhood, and school strengths, faith community, as well as social capital factors norms and expectations (Benson, 1997). Longitudinal research indicates that a youth's religious faith is particularly positively correlated to desirable outcomes regardless of the specific affiliation due to the strength of the social capital provided by the relationship to a religious community (Garmezy, 1985). The greater the alignment of assets, the greater the opportunity for not simply surviving adversity but for thriving in spite of adversity (Benson et al, 2012; Theokas & Lerner, 2006).

Numerous studies conclude community-based youth programs can enable desirable outcomes for youth when positive developmental systems interventions are used (Bowers et al. 2012; Brooks-Gunn & Roth, 2014; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). By focusing on strength-based PYD models, positive outcomes may be encouraged through the development of the *Five Cs* of PYD: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring (Bowers et al., 2010; Lerner et al., 2005). The Five Cs characteristics derived from studies and reports by youth development theorists and practitioners when describing necessary developmental

characteristics for successfully achieving life-goals (Bowers et al., 2010; Lerner et al., 2012).

Youth development researchers, examining PYD models, describe three central features of effective youth development programs, referred to as the *Big Three* (Lerner et al., 2005; Masten, 2014b). Successful youth development programs offer (a) positive and sustained relationships between youth and capable, caring adult(s), (b) life-skill development, and (c) opportunities for leadership and engagement (Bowers et al. 2012; Lerner et al., 2005; Masten, 2014b; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Similarly, Eccles & Gootman (2002) hypothesize that youth will more effectively develop internal and external assets in programs that are characterized by eight characteristics: physical and psychological safety; well-defined structure and consistent supervision; positive relationships; sense of belonging; positive norms and high expectations for achievement; sense of relevance; opportunities for skill development; and close ties to the youth's context. The desired outcome of programs, meeting either the three or eight similar criteria, is the development of personal characteristics such as the Five-Cs of PYD (competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring) which, in turn, enable desired long-term outcomes including academic persistence (Bowers et al., 2010; Lerner et al., 2011).

Studies of youth programs show that school-based and community-based developmental interventions must be designed to ensure close fit between individual youth's internal and external assets (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). While generic programs can serve as a starting point for program design, program elements must be tailored to specific environmental and cultural context to succeed in relevant youth populations

because participants base their level of activity, dedication, and persistence on fit (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner et al., 2011; Wilcox, 2015). However, Larson et al. (2004) observe that “no single program is going to succeed in helping every participant” (p. 8).

Accumulation of social capital was noted earlier as an important element of successful youth development because the norms, sanctions, and expectations included as social capital serve to guide and bound the choices and behaviors of individual youth (Akdere 2005; Coleman, 1988). Researchers note social capital is principally developed within family relationships and enhanced or reinforced at school and within religious and secular communities (Benson et al., 2012). Regarding Black youth, who commonly lack strong sources of socialization, PYD theorists observe that families, for better or for worse, are not segregated from communities and that non-family community actors may be able to step in a supply necessary socialization (Benson et al., 2012).

Youth Development Complexity

Youth mentoring is one method studied by human development researchers and applied by youth development practitioners for passing knowledge and providing support as a means of creating both human capital skills and social capital support mechanisms (DuBois et al., 2002). Mentoring is defined as a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 2005). Mentoring originated as a workplace program for developing new employee's human capital through skill and process training and preserving organizational social capital by passing down established norms and culture (Gaddis, 2012; Kram, 1985). Mentoring interventions included a varied description of relationships between junior members

needing new skills and senior members needing an apprentice, newly hired members and long-time members, advancing members and those nearing retirement or transfer, one-on-one peers, and among groups of peers (Hazlett & Gibson, 2007; Kram, 1985).

Regardless the nature of the relationship, historic mentoring programs supported organization stability and long-term health (Kram, 1985).

Mentoring to build Social and Human Capital

Human development researchers found statistically significant correlation between mentoring and career growth through six potential categories of outcomes for the mentee including behavioral, attitudinal, health-related, relational, motivational and career outcomes (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). Behavioral outcomes provide norms that promote desirable actions such as being on time, reducing waste, improving innovation, and discourage undesirable actions such as theft, carelessness, unreliability. Positive attitudinal outcomes from mentoring may include higher morale, increased loyalty to the organization, and improved dedication to the organization or team's mission. Mentees may experience health related outcomes such as decreased stress and increased confidence and relational outcomes such as reduced misunderstandings and frustration plus increased trust in peers, coworkers, and family. Motivational outcomes refer to mentees developing desire and belief in the value of education opportunities, goal setting, and task focus. Finally, career outcomes include on-the-job skill training and organizational learning passed from mentor to mentee that researchers have found relate to increased earnings and advancement (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Eby et al., 2008).

Modern human development researchers expand traditional mentoring theory and practice by differentiating mentoring programs according to application including three categories: academic, youth, and workplace (Kram, 1985). Mentoring studies indicate academic mentoring have the strongest associations with positive mentee outcomes followed by workplace mentoring with youth mentoring applications having the weakest association (Eby et al., 2008). Researchers speculate the complex requirements of youth mentoring, considering most youth involved in mentoring programs have troubled home-lives and broken relationships, to partially explain the weak link to positive outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Rhodes and DuBois (2008) state that human development researchers have only recently begun to focus on the challenges of child and adolescent mentoring.

Mentoring Youth

While youth mentoring interventions have gained in popularity, questions about effectiveness and optimal application remain to be answered by youth development researchers (DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes et al., 2006). Literature points to program factors such as the amount and quality of interaction time between mentor and mentee, level of trust, depth of expectations, and program content tailoring as key elements of effective youth mentoring (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Gaddis, 2012; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007; Kram, 1985; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008).

Studies of formal one-on-one, school-based, youth mentoring programs show mixed results but researchers generally found positive correlation between youth mentoring and reducing negative risk behaviors (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes & DuBois; 2008). Reporting on a meta-analysis of 73 separate reviews of mentoring

studies, researchers found that mentoring is an effective intervention for improving mentee outcomes (DuBois et al., 2011). Associations between mentoring and behavioral, social, and academic outcomes were statistically significant but the effects were relative small, particularly when compared with other youth prevention programs. Positive effects of traditional mentoring interventions were subject to erosion once the youth left the mentoring relationship (DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Studies of youth mentoring effectiveness show programs have the strongest associations with positive outcomes when mentees are gender matched, are paired with mentors who share interests, are good models of the youth's interests and goals, and participate in well-structured programs providing substantial contact time and long enrollment duration (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006). Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain (2011) emphasize the importance of combining an element for which the mentee feels a deep passion or a "spark" to provide focus for the mentoring relationship. Simply agreeing on goals for mentoring programs is not enough, adult mentors need to spend time learning about the youth to discover what truly motivates him or her and then focus on that spark to create deep interest and commitment to the mentoring process (Bowers et al. 2012; Scales et al., 2011; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Karcher and Nakkula (2010) examined a variety of mentoring relationships with the goal of describing effective and ineffective styles. Two "effective" mentoring relationship styles are "developmental" and "instrumental" (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Developmental mentoring relationships begin with primary focus on building a strong,

trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee and, as time progresses, focus shifts toward skill and protective factor development (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Instrumental relationships are essentially the opposite in that mentor and mentee come together to developing a specific set of skills and a trusting relationship develops through the skill development process (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Both relationship styles are goal-oriented and structured with agendas developed via collaboration and focused on the youth's interests and talents. Two ineffective styles, according to literature, are *laissez-faire* and *prescriptive* mentoring relationships (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Laissez-faire relationships are generally unstructured, lack goals, and fail to address the needs of either the mentor or mentee (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Prescriptive relationships lay at the opposite extreme being dominated by the mentor and narrowly focused on fixing the youth's problems instead of building up strengths and developing resilience (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Neither of these styles fits the description of an effective mentoring intervention (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Karcher & Nakkula, 2010).

Rhodes (2005) proposed a youth mentoring model (Figure 3) in which beneficial outcomes for youth are linked to the quality of the mentoring relationship. Relationship quality is, in turn, linked to mutual trust, empathetic understanding, and a high degree of respect between the mentor and mentee (Rhodes, 2005). Developing a quality relationship requires a substantial investment in time from both the mentor and mentee. Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that mentoring had increasingly stronger associations with positive outcomes as contact time increases and outcomes were less likely to erode when the relationship lasted one year or longer. Conversely, study results

show short-duration mentoring can adversely affect outcomes as youth may feel rejected by relationships that were progressing well and then abruptly ended (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). In addition to time commitments, researchers found that how time was spent was important to the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee connection. Youth outcomes improved in relationships that were structured but flexible, with mentoring activities and goals closely aligned to youth's interests and goals (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, 2005).

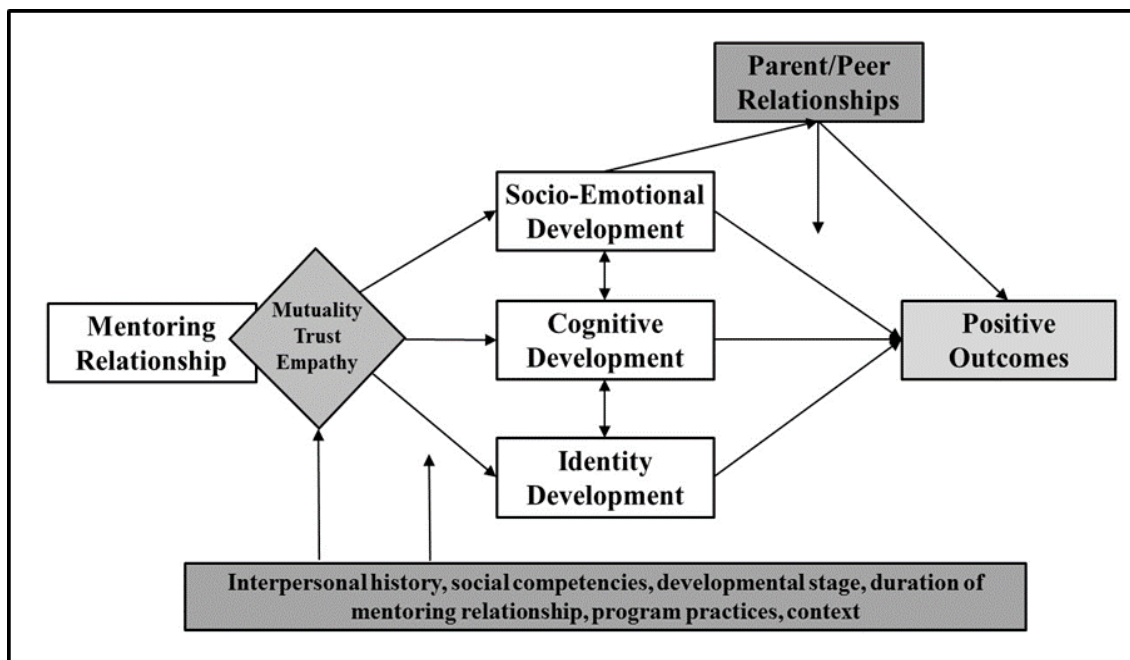


Figure 3. Model of Youth Mentoring

Note: Model of youth mentoring illustrating trusting, long-duration adult-youth relationships influence outcomes through socio-emotional, cognitive, and identity developmental functions. Adapted from “A Model of Youth Mentoring,” by J. E. Rhodes, 2005. in “Handbook of Youth Mentoring” (pp. 30-43) by D. L. DuBois & M. J. Karchner (Eds.). Copyright 2005 by Taylor & Francis. Used with permission (see Appendix B).

Rhodes (2005) model shows quality mentoring connections lead to positive youth outcomes through three inter-acting processes labeled *social-emotional*, *cognitive*, and *identity development*. Effective mentoring programs teach youth how to successfully

communicate and express themselves and to develop good relationships with other adults and peers. Mentees in effective relationships have been shown to adopt positive perceptions and adult values for education more readily with related improvements in academic achievement (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Finally, mentees participating in a close relationship following Rhodes' (2005) model develop improved outlook of their current and future self. Mentors in a quality relationship can challenge a youth's negative self-perception and guide youth to see and believe in more positive opportunities and outcomes for themselves than youth who are not being mentored (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, 2005).

Quality, long-term connections with adult mentors can serve as protective mechanisms helping youth develop protective factors to overcome risk and conflict by modeling appropriate coping behaviors (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2000). Years-long adult-youth connections can be especially powerful in with youth whose families are missing a parent, who live in dysfunctional neighborhoods, and who lack sources of social capital available to most youth. By providing protective mechanisms, researchers believe that mentoring can indirectly improve family and peer relationships which may, in turn, provide positive outcomes in other areas such as academics (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2000).

Researchers found youth who experience problems with learning at a young age, particularly those from a low-SES background with weak social capital, commonly begin a progression towards disengagement from academics (Herrera et al., 2011). Early learning failures create feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that sabotage learning skill development and lack of learning skills leads to continued failures until the youth

eventually gives up and drops out (Herrera et al., 2011). The external changes youth experience exacerbates internal challenges as they progress from elementary to middle to high school. Small class sizes and intimate learning environments are replaced by multiple teachers instructing different subjects in numerous classrooms spread across campus. Familiar styles of dress, peer interactions, and even in-class communication with teachers may be viewed as inappropriate as students move to regional middle and high schools that are more integrated and tend to reflect majority White norms vice ethnic neighborhood culture (Herrera et al., 2011). For many Black male youth lacking protective factors to adapt to change and risk, such cultural challenges may become overwhelming and contribute to increased dropout rates (Coleman, 1988; DuBois et al., 2011; Herrera et al., 2011). For some, cultural mismatch may be so weighty that academic environments seem hostile and generate defensive reactions that short-circuit academic performance (Gordon et al., 2009). Researchers believe effective adult-youth support relationships can serve as a protective mechanism for Black youth and promote academic success (Herrera et al., 2011).

Addressing Minority Challenges

Designing interventions for improving Black male youth academic performance requires accounting for the unique and complex risk variables confronting them (Gordon et al., 2009; Ledlow, 1992). Additionally, studies show Black male middle and high school students are more frequently categorized as low-ability and held to lower academic expectations by their teachers, receive more and harsher disciplinary treatment, are economically disconnected from White peers, and culturally mismatched to “average” middle-class academia (Gordon et al., 2009). Morales (2008c) describes the divide

between familiar home and neighborhood context and academic context into which youth enter and are expected to adapt as *cultural discontinuity*.

Adapting to cultural discontinuity leads minority Black youth to adopt two personalities: the natural ethnic personality and the artificial academic personality (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu, 2004). Minority culture in the United States do not mesh well with majority, middle-class White culture (Morales, 2008a, 2008b). African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American populations dress differently, communicate differently, exercise different norms and sanctions, view responsibilities, accountability, and even time in ways that are often at odds with a formal academic environment (Garrett, 1995; Ledlow, 1992; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu, 2004, Wilcox, 2015, Yosso, 2005). For example, students are expected to be competitive, self-motivating, and to assertively seek out solutions to demonstrate growth and competence; however, many minority cultures stress deference and communal cooperation as central themes so minority youth are naturally uncomfortable in the European-centric culture on an average campus (Garrett, 1995; Kearney, Fletcher, & Dobrenov-Major, 2011; Ledlow, 1992; Wilcox, 2015). The greater the differences between the youth's natural context and academic context, the greater the stress from cultural discontinuity and vulnerability to risk and negative outcomes (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Yosso, 2005).

Cultural discontinuity often leads to feelings of isolation where minority youth see themselves as existing outside the academic context (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015). A study of Samoan youth academic performance found teachers did not understand Samoan culture and that teaching methods and resources did not fit native communication styles, communal priorities, or shared sense of responsibility (Kearney et

al., 2011). Similarly, studies of Native American students show teaching methods commonly fail to account for primary tribal languages, seasonal time concepts, definitions of success, and tribal versus Anglo developmental priorities (Ledlow, 1992; Wilcox, 2015). The effects of cultural discontinuity compound year after year until students no longer see a real purpose in continuing their education and drop out of a system they view as foreign (Ledlow, 1992; Ogbu, 2004; Wilcox, 2015). Even when more than one minority youth is present, they often view themselves as not belonging in the academic world and may hold themselves apart, seeking comfort in the familiar and contributing to their sense of disconnection (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015; Yosso, 2005).

Minority youth frequently feel that they represent their race and sense an overwhelming burden to uphold the dignity and reputation of their ethnic culture (Kearney et al., 2011; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015). They frequently feel academic achievement is a form of disloyalty to their culture and are often accused of selling out and acting White by succeeding in school (Garrett, 1995; Kearney et al., 2011; Ledlow, 1992; Morales, 2008a, 2008b). These risk factors combine their effects and compound their pressure toward negative outcomes (Morales, 2008a, 2008b). Self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of control, family, peer, and community support, and sense of relevance all suffer, eventually leading to academic attrition (Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu 2004).

A large body of youth development research shows many Black male youth face exceptionally high levels of risk during development. Nearly 70% of Black youth between the ages of 5 and 18 live in fatherless households and fewer than 50% ever see

their father during childhood (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Morales, 2010).

Dysfunctional families, characterized by increased violence, abuse, and neglect increase undesirable behaviors that hinder or prevent developing the necessary human capital for entry to the workforce and failing to enter the workforce is statistically linked to additional risk behaviors commonly leading to prison sentences or violent death and, in turn, leave the next generation of Black youth in yet another dysfunctional family (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Kaslow, 1996). Violence in the home or neighborhood, adult and peer drug use, sexual promiscuity, poverty, lack of adequate food and clothing all represent adversity risk to successful Black male youth development (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Kaslow, 1996; Morales, 2010; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008).

Protective mechanisms promote development of protective factors to mitigate vulnerability to adversity risk and positive support from non-family adults can be an effective protective mechanism for mitigating vulnerabilities unique to Black male youth (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Rutter, 1987; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014; Werner, 1993, 2012). Minority mentoring research shows that non-family mentors and male role models who spend substantial time with Black male youth can help develop protective factors for reducing risk behaviors and promoting good outcomes including high school persistence (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Gaddis, 2012; Gordon et al., 2009; Morales, 2010; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014). Hurd and Sellers (2013) found young Black males are strongly influenced by adults with whom they had caring, long-term connections, enabling the adults, often non-family adults, to fill the void created by a dysfunctional family.

John Ogbu (1990) developed a framework for Black youth development based on studies of successful and unsuccessful programs. He stressed youth interventions must consider specific distinctions, even among minority groups, to ensure individual-context relations are accurately matched to intervention elements (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Yosso, 2005). Ogbu and Wilson's (1990) study focused on Black youth only because of the uniqueness of various minority cultures. Ineffective programs did not meet the requirements set out in Rhodes' (2005) model in that they were short lived, did not focus on mentee priorities or interests, were not structured, and did not build strong, trusting adult-youth relationships (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Youth participants did not buy in to the program so positive effects commonly eroded with time once the adult-youth relationship ended (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). An important observation of ineffective programs was Black youth were considered underclass and that something about them needed to be fixed which was identified as a program focus that inflamed rather than mitigated the risk of low expectations (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990).

In contrast, minority youth development programs must view youth participants as assets with valuable strengths and talents to be nurtured and enriched, rather than as deficit-based problems to be managed and fixed, a view mirroring that of PYD (Gaddis, 2012; Lerner, 2006; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014). Interventions must be constructed to respect and take advantage of minority cultures and context to guide engage youth and create program buy-in. Interventions must engage minority youth in a way that convinces them that academic success does not demand abandoning personal identity or culture. Instead, minority culture should be embraced as valuable and combined with mainstream culture to create a more valuable whole (Ogbu

& Wilson, 1990; Yosso, 2005). Black youth and their families must believe an intervention and its promised result have value from the youth's perspective so the intervention must target family and community for its effects, not just the youth (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990).

Young Black men hold the same promise of productivity, innovation, and ingenuity as every other young person in the United States, so their participation in the American workforce should be viewed as a critical element of national economic prosperity (Nafukho et al., 2004). Youth programs intended to improve Black male academic performance and eventual entry to the workforce have a rich source of intellectual guidance for program design from which to draw. Youth development scholars, particularly those who focus on minority issues, call for programs to utilize a complex set of elements to engage youth and create commitment to the program and the eventual goal of academic achievement (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Gaddis, 2012; Gordon et al., 2009; Morales, 2010; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Rutter, 1987; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014; Werner, 1993, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1982). Such a program could be classified a CYDP and a study of its influence on program participants for enabling resilience to adversity and promoting high school graduation might enhance the body of knowledge on the youth development topic.

Summary

Chapter II presented a review of the scholarly literature examining and recommending elements of effective youth development programs with additional considerations for addressing the needs of minority youth. HCT, SCT, and RDST provide a foundation for conceptualizing Black males as a resource to be developed via a

holistic system of individual and ecological context. Resilience and PYD Theories promote Black male youth as a strong and talented resource with capacity to overcome adversity that must not be viewed as high-probability failure to be managed, regardless the severity of adversity during growth.

Successful youth development programs must include trusting and long-duration adult-youth relationships, have youth-focused goals, provide meaningful tasks with high expectations, and embrace relevant ethnic culture. Such a youth program would be more comprehensive in design, containing a mix of theorized program elements to address the myriad needs of youth, particularly youth who regularly face adversity. Chapter III presents the research methodology for examining a proxy CYDP for enabling resilience to adversity and promoting high school persistence. Chapter III topics include study design, participant selection, data collection and analysis techniques, and discussions of trustworthiness and ethics concerns.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology to determine student perceptions of the influence of a comprehensive youth development program (CYDP) for increasing high school persistence among Black male youth. The chapter reviews the research objectives, provides details of the study participants, research design, data collection and analysis techniques, and discusses data trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study methodology and an introduction to the study results presented in the next chapter.

Research Overview

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceived influence of a CYDP for increasing the high school graduation rates of Black male youth. The research objectives guide the examination of the experiences of Black male youth who participated in a proxy CYDP and graduated from high school. The following six objectives direct the study:

RO1 Describe the study participants in terms of age, years since high school graduation, length of time spent in a CYDP, and leadership positions held within the CYDP.

RO2 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the cultural discontinuity experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO3 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the neighborhood dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO4 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the family dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO5 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP on the low neighborhood and school expectations experienced by Black male youth program members.

RO6 Determine the perceived influence of a CYDP to promote high school persistence among Black male youth program members.

Research Design

Choosing to stay in high school until graduation is a complex decision that may be re-evaluated many times between a student's freshman and senior years (Morales, 2016). The choice is based on a student's lived experiences during high school years and how those experiences influence perception of the importance of school for his future. To understand why Black male youth choose to either remain in school and graduate or to quit school without a diploma, researchers study the experiences that lead to and support the repeated choices to stay in school (Smith et al., 2009).

The study examines the experiences of Black male youth who have participated in a CYDP and graduated from high school. Such an exploration of experiences requires research methods designed to observe, interpret, and evaluate the relevant lived experiences of the study population (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012; Moustakas, 1994; Richards & Morse, 2013). Phenomenological study is founded on the assumptions that lived experiences reveal the reality of an individual's "world," and that individuals can be understood only when seen in conjunction with their context (Given, 2015; Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012; Moustakas, 1994; Lerner, 2006; Richards & Morse, 2013). Phenomenological researchers study experiential details of participants via verbal and non-verbal communications to better understand the event or phenomenon of interest as well as the associated

individual-context relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Finlay, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012; Richards & Morse, 2013). This research project uses phenomenological methods to discover how the CYDP experiences of Black male youth interact with family, neighborhood, and school experiences to promote high school completion.

A primary challenge for phenomenological inquiry is sifting through individual recollections of events to glean useful, accurate details. According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), individuals do not simply narrate the correct details of an experience. They instead filter true details through personal frames of reference to produce an interpretation of the experience and the effects of the experience related to the phenomenon. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an extension of phenomenological methodology that examines individual interpretations of important life experiences and how those experiences affect life outcomes (Smith et al., 2009). After an individual has experienced an important transition point in life, they examine the experience to understand both the event and the related outcomes of the event. IPA seeks to uncover the results of such a self-examination through the eyes of the individual (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA was selected for this project for two reasons. First, choosing to remain in high school and graduate is a decision influenced by a myriad of factors that only the individual can identify, because the reasons may be different for every Black male youth who arrives at the same decision. IPA is suited to exploring the complex details of individual choices, the experiences that lead to those choices, and the relationships between the influencing contextual factors as interpreted by each young man (Finlay,

2009; Given, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). Second, because each participant provides a unique perspective of similar experiences, perhaps many lived in the same neighborhood and went to the same school at the same time, analysis can coalesce the potentially broad spectrum of details into workable groups of related themes or concepts. IPA allows for researcher interpretation of participant responses, defined as a “double-hermeneutic” method, where the researcher interprets responses from a participant who is, in turn, interpreting his personal experiences with a phenomenon (Given, 2015; Hays & Singh, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Double-hermeneutic interpretation allows for collecting information from several individuals, comparing the information, and then identifying and examining links between the individual, their experiences, and their outcomes (Finlay, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Relating the CYDP experiences of a sample of Black male youth members reveals the relationship between their experiences in the program and choices to stay in high school.

Examining the perceived effectiveness of a CYDP for promoting high school persistence requires a proxy CYDP to be identified. To be accurately classified as a *comprehensive youth development program*, such a program should contain most, if not all, of the features identified by youth development scholars such as long-term adult-youth relationships, quality peer interactions, flexible, adaptable program content, demanding activities and expectations for results (Hershberg et al., 2014). Extensive research examines the effectiveness of different youth programs, but many studies of minority youth development focus on programs with only one or two features such as mentoring or peer interactions (Lerner, 2016; Morales, 2008a, 2008b). The Big Brother Big Sisters (BBBS) youth program is a common subject of study, but BBBS is primarily

a one-on-one mentoring program that lacks many of the other features needed to classify the program as a comprehensive intervention (Hershberg et al., 2014). To examine the effectiveness of a program that includes a comprehensive set of features, this study uses the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) as a proxy CYDP.

The BSA was chosen because of the comprehensive offering of many program features appearing to match those identified by youth development scholars, including structure, adult mentoring and leadership, peer interactions, multi-year relationships, and program adaptability (BSA, 2006; Boy Scout Handbook, 2016; Masten, 2014a, 2014b; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Parenti, 1993; Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013; Ray, 2015, 2016; Rutter, 1987). BSA volunteer adult leaders are screened for suitability and trained in both program processes and leadership skills. The BSA program is structured, consistent, and tested, yet flexible enough to be tailored to local priorities and interests (BSA, 2006; Parenti, 1993). Youth may join the BSA as early as kindergarten and remain until they reach 18 years old. The program usually operates year-round to include summer-time activities allowing adult-youth and youth-youth relationships to typically last for years. Program meetings are commonly held once or twice per week with large-scale activities occurring at least once per month (Boy Scout Handbook, 2016). Individual BSA youth groups, called troops, are primarily youth led with meeting and activity topics chosen by members and tailored to youth interests and priorities. Finally, youth are required to fill troop leadership positions with specific responsibilities for peer performance, behavior, and achievement (Boy Scout Handbook, 2016). These characteristics mark BSA as an appropriate proxy CYDP.

Population

High school dropout is a problem in most United States minority populations including Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, not just the Black community (NCES, 2016). For this study, Black male youth were chosen because predominately Black troops are more common and provide a larger population from which to draw a sample of participants. Additionally, each minority community has unique characteristics and a study attempting to include all minority populations will be challenged to control for the differences in culture, history, and norms (Gordon et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2014; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Wilcox, 2015). While many themes that emerge from participant interviews might cross and merge, data analysis for all minorities could be unnecessarily complicated. Results drawn from multiple ethnic groups would have to account for cultural differences and the intended focus on CYDP influence for high school graduation could be diluted or lost.

The study examines the experiences of CYDP participants who are as similar as possible in background to derive detailed experiential similarities and differences. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) state that IPA is idiographic, meaning IPA research focuses on specific experience detail provided by individuals instead of generalities of groups. IPA studies regularly have small sample sizes of reasonably homogeneous participants in order to delve more deeply into experience details (Richards, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013). Creswell (2013) agrees, stating that phenomenological studies typically use homogeneous small-group samples with similar phenomenon experiences to derive detail and common themes. Accordingly, the study applies *purposefully homogeneous sampling* to intentionally target individuals with similar demographics, background, and

experiences. Homogenous sampling provides a focus on important themes, noteworthy variations, and connecting relationships to derive experiential similarities and differences while minimizing variables unrelated to the study topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith et al., 2009).

Sample Description

Study participants are Eagle Scouts from Washington DC who have earned a high school diploma within the last five years and are Black males, 18 years old or older. A sample of Hispanic or Native American males would be equally valid for the study. However, the researcher chose Black male youth because, according to NCAC, predominately Black troops are more numerous than troops with other at-risk minorities and they have more Eagle Scouts from which to sample. Age eighteen was chosen because youth are required to leave the Boy Scouts by their eighteenth birthday so they would have experienced the maximum exposure to the Scouting program (Boy Scout Handbook, 2016). Finally, sampling youth who have graduated in the last five years promises to offer clearer and more accurate memories of their Scouting and high school experiences.

Study participants are former scouts who have earned the rank of Eagle Scout. Eagle Scout is the highest rank a youth can earn in BSA and indicates substantial engagement in the program and interaction with other youth and adult leaders (Boy Scout Handbook, 2016). Eagle Scouts have been exposed to the maximum benefit offered by BSA. Eagle Scouts who have graduated high school are best suited to relate their BSA experience to their high school graduation.

Eagle Scouts who earned a GED or other high school equivalency were not considered for participation. Graduating high school is often considered an indicator of individual motivation and persistence and frequently serves as an employment qualification beyond knowledge or skill attainment. For example, the U.S. Navy categorizes youth with GEDs in a lower education attainment level and strictly limits their numbers for enlisted recruitment (Navy Personnel Command, 2012). Navy statistics show GED students have a higher probability of failing to complete their first term of enlistment than high school graduates. They must, therefore, meet higher standards such as earning higher entry test scores and spending more time in preliminary training before entering active duty. Because employers might view individuals who earned a GED differently, the study did not include GED students to maintain the homogenous sample.

Sample Location

Participants are from the Washington DC District of the National Capital Area Council (NCAC) of the BSA. NCAC encompasses Northern Virginia, parts of Southern Maryland, and the city of Washington DC. NCAC is subdivided into Districts, one of which is the Washington DC District. The Washington DC District is predominately Black, urban, suffers from many of the ills that plague minority communities, and has many troops from which to recruit participants. Scouts from the Washington DC District are more likely to live in high-risk, “dysfunctional” neighborhoods characterized by the adversity risk factors of violent crime, drug use, gangs, teen pregnancy, and high school dropout. Youth who succeed despite such substantial adversity are, according to the literature, resilient and can provide valuable insight to the link between a CYDP and high school persistence (Garmezy, 1985; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Werner, 2012; Werner &

Smith, 1982). Several cities could also be used for sampling; however, NCAC is the second largest BSA Council in the country with a large urban, minority population and an active Eagle Scout program, so it offers good opportunities for sampling.

Sample Recruitment

The researcher met with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the NCAC to review the project and gain his support for conducting interviews. Appendix C is a letter pledging NCAC support for the project. The demographics questionnaire (Appendix D), interview guide (Appendix E), and informed consent (Appendix F) were reviewed to ensure the questions and interview plan follow BSA standards. Following the meeting, the NCAC staff provided a list of candidates within the Washington DC District matching study criteria. The list was divided by troop and the COO introduced the researcher to each troop Scoutmaster via email. The researcher discussed the study with each of the three Scoutmasters to explain its purpose and processes (see Appendix G).

Each Scoutmaster was asked to recommend participant candidates from the list of Eagle Scouts from their troop according to how the former Scouts match the participant criteria of coping with adversity risk during their high school years. The number one ranked youth from each troop was selected for the study, followed by the number two, and so forth. The initial group received an introduction email and study recruiting information (see Appendices H & I) followed by a telephone call from the researcher. Each participant also received a \$25 gift card as an incentive for participating. Because the researcher is not Black or from the Washington DC area, and because the Scoutmasters are best acquainted with the participants, they were asked to encourage participation in the project. The Scoutmasters were instructed not to pressure the

prospective participants in any way but to instead explain the study and address any concerns the Eagle Scouts might have. Both the Scoutmasters and the interview candidates were informed that any participant who initially agreed to interview but withdrew during or after the interview could freely do so and still receive the incentive.

According to NCAC membership records, between 2011 and 2016, 63 Scouts in the Washington DC District earned the Eagle Scout rank. Demographics records show that 16 of those 63 self-identified their race as Black (see Appendix J). Of those 16 potential participants, 10 were identified by their Scoutmasters as coming from affluent families and not experiencing adversity during high school so the remaining six Eagle Scouts were approached to participate in the study and three were interviewed. The other three eligible candidates were out of the area or at college and therefore unavailable.

Following the study plan in case the Washington DC District did not provide an adequate number of interviews, the researcher requested the same membership data for the adjacent Patuxent District of the NCAC. The Patuxent District is one of the largest single districts in BSA nation-wide and is very diverse in terms of adversity that an individual youth might experience. Some areas immediately adjacent to metro Washington DC have similar levels of neighborhood dysfunction while other areas are quite rural and include farm lands and typical sub-urban residential neighborhoods with large numbers of mid to upper-level state and federal government employees. NCAC membership records show the Patuxent District had 50 members earn Eagle Scout rank who self-identified as Black during the 5-year period utilized in this study. Scoutmasters identified 34 former Scouts as not experiencing adversity and the researcher approached

five of the remaining 16 highest ranked candidates for interview. Two of those candidates were unavailable and the remaining three were interviewed for the study.

Sample Size

Considering the homogenous nature of the population made up of nearly the same age, social background, and CYDP experience, no sample size was set for the study. Instead, participants were selected for interviews until a saturation of themes related to the research objectives was achieved. Data saturation is achieved when additional data collection does not reveal any new ideas or themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Creswell (2013) suggests phenomenological studies might use up to 10 participants to reach saturation and other scholars have found samples as small as three or even one participant as adequate, particularly when dealing with very homogenous populations (Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012; Smith et al., 2009). For this study, the researcher determined that a saturation of themes had been reached with the fourth interview and two additional interviews were conducted to validate that determination. Following analysis of the six interview transcripts, the researcher provided the research chair with supporting data of saturation. The research chair reviewed the data with members of the committee and agreed that saturation had been reached.

Researcher's Role

The study determines the perceived influence of a CYDP for increasing the high school graduation rates of Black male youth. Phenomenology, and specifically IPA, examines the experiences of individuals to reveal important details of a phenomenon or event of interest (Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012). In this case, the phenomenon of persisting in high school despite facing substantial family, neighborhood,

or school adversity is observed through the lens of Eagle Scouts to reveal how membership in a CYDP influenced choices to complete high school. The role of the IPA researcher is to evaluate and interpret the participant's experiences according to the research objectives.

The focus of this IPA study is the lived experiences of Black male youth who were members of a CYDP during their high school years. An investigator may or may not have any connection with this phenomenon, but not having personal experience does not mean that he lacks personal perspective. The researcher for this study has personal experience with the BSA program, serving as an adult leader for six years, from 2011 to the present; however, he does not have experience working with CYDP groups of predominantly minority youth or youth from high-risk backgrounds. For IPA research, this BSA experience is considered an asset rather than a source of bias.

Smith et al. (2009) point out that IPA research is guided by *hermeneutics* or the theory of interpretation in which the study participant does not simply describe an experience as it truly happened. Rather, a participant interprets the event using his total life experience as a frame of reference for understanding the experience. Furthermore, an IPA researcher engages in double hermeneutic research in which he or she interprets the data provided by the participant based on his or her own life experiences (Given, 2015; Hays & Singh, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). The intent of this dual role of the researcher is not to introduce personal experience to the data, but to acknowledge the role of personal experience in interpreting or making sense of the data during analysis and minimize distortion of the data caused by misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Finlay, 2009; Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenological inquiry is guided by *researcher reflexivity* in which the investigator adopts an active role of self-reflection when gathering and interpreting data from study participants (Hays & Singh, 2012; Husserl, 1931/2012). Reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher's reactions to the data are not avoidable and thus serve as an identifiable, knowable process variable. Researcher reflexivity has either an insider or outsider perspective (Hayes & Singh, 2012). An outsider has no prior experience with the phenomenon while an insider has some level of background experience but is not profoundly involved in it.

The researcher acknowledges insider experience with BSA does affect subjectivity regarding the application of a CYDP as a youth development intervention. However, subjectivity in this case is a measure of the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being studied and is considered by scholars an asset because it provides a more accurate understanding of the experiences described by participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). Personal experience as a CYDP adult leader offers a common frame of reference, credentials, and a measure of trustworthiness with the participants who are very familiar with their own program leaders but do not know the researcher personally. Such *virtuous subjectivity* affords a shared language with the participants, enables better understanding of participant stories and experiences, permits more effective direction of the interview, and supports accurate interpretation of the data.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Because the study examines human participants, it follows The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for informed consent, participant anonymity, and minimizing risk to participants while enhancing

potential benefits from the research. The proposed study was submitted to the USM IRB for approval following project approval by the dissertation committee. The IRB application package included a copy of introductory emails to leadership at the NCAC of the BSA, a letter of cooperation for data collection from NCAC, the participant recruiting letter, demographics questionnaire, informed consent form, interview schedule, and drafts of planned email communications with participants. Data collection began after IRB approval was received (see Appendix K).

Data Collection

The path to understanding how being a member of a CYDP might influence Black male youth to cope with adversity and finish high school is drawing out stories of his experiences in the program and high school and seeking the links between those stories. IPA methods are intended to evoke detailed stories, beliefs, and interpretations of experiences from participants, and achieving that aim requires time, flexibility, and a measure of trust between researcher and participant. While there are many techniques available for in-depth data gathering, personal interviews are most commonly and effectively used to meet the demands of IPA study (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2007).

The study uses face-to-face interviews to collect data related to participant's time in the CYDP and how those experiences influenced their decision to complete high school. Interviews are semi-structured and one-on-one, in a location selected as most comfortable for the participant. Each interview is viewed as a conversation with a purpose that initially builds rapport and enables a deeper discussion of details that reveals each participant's perspective (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

Additionally, the semi-structured format permits modifying questions to draw out greater detail or redirect the conversation if it goes astray.

IPA methods view each participant as the expert in the field of his personal experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). No two participants experiences with the CYDP and high school, even the same troop or school, are the same, and no two resulting interview data sets are the same. Each interview reveals a unique view of how the participant's program experience affected them personally. Differences in family and neighborhood function, peer and teacher interactions, and cultural conflicts dictate variation in how each young man responded to similar events and the personal interviews capture and reveal those variations for analysis.

Pilot Study

A pilot interview was conducted to validate the content and process of the study interview guide. The candidate for the pilot was drawn from the researcher's own BSA troop because the population pool of eligible participants in the Washington DC District is small and every eligible candidate was needed to build the study sample. The Eagle Scout who participated in the pilot interview met the study criteria except he does not live in the metro Washington DC area. However, he provided valuable feedback for interview question content and format based on extensive experience in a CYDP and recent high school graduation. The participant was comfortable discussing the project and commenting on the interview plan because he was familiar with the researcher. The pilot participant did not recommend any noteworthy changes to the interview plan.

Interview Plan

Each participant had a single interview lasting between 20 and 45 minutes. The researcher used an interview guide (Appendix E) that included 10 questions and 15 conversation prompts to reveal information related to the research objectives. The researcher derived the questions and prompts from the research objectives to evoke thoughtful responses from 18 to 21-year-old males. The questions and prompts were discussed with minority adult parents who are peers of the researcher to improve their design and the likelihood of generating the desired responses. Table 1 illustrates the linkage of interview questions and research objectives. The use of follow-up prompts and questions depended on participant responses and “tone” of the interview to promote a free-flowing and comfortable conversation with participants.

Table 1

Interview Question to Research Objective Matrix

Research Objective	Interview Question
RO1: Participant Demographics	Demographics Form
RO2: Cultural discontinuity	6, 9
RO3: Neighborhood dysfunction	5, 9
RO4: Family dysfunction	3, 5, 9
RO5: Low expectations	4, 9
RO6: Promote graduation	7, 8

Interview settings were agreed upon by both the researcher and participant. The goal for the interview setting was a comfortable and convenient place for the participant to promote a relaxed and open discussion. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recording device with full consent from the participant. A third-party was contracted to transcribe the digital recordings verbatim. As each interview was transcribed, the researcher compared the transcription to the audio recording to correct errors. The

corrected copy was offered to participants for member-checking to ensure accuracy (see Appendices L & M). Each participant was given an opportunity to edit or restate any portion of his interview believed to be inaccurate. Once the participant accepted the final corrected version of his transcript, personally identifiable interview data was scanned as an electronic file, saved to a password protected directory on the researcher's computer, and all hardcopies were shredded. Personally identifiable electronic data will be retained by the researcher for three years after the study's publishing date and non-identifiable information will be retained indefinitely. A final thank you note was sent to all participants via regular mail in appreciation of their support along with a gift card (see Appendix N).

Data Analysis

Following the interview and transcription process, the data analysis began with a review for common themes and concepts related to the research objectives. Scholars call for healthy flexibility in data analysis with the goal to accurately interpret participant's recollections and explanations. Understanding the nuance and depth of meaning of each young man's CYDP, high school, and cultural experience is more important than merely cataloguing protective factors provided by the program (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The literature states that this level of understanding can be reached only through repeated evaluation of the data and disciplined interpretation of the verbal and non-verbal responses (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

No single, fixed process exists for IPA data analysis; however, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) present the following six steps as a guide for analyzing interview data. The first step is reading the data. The first transcript was read twice before any notes

were made. These readings included comparison to the original audio recording for accuracy. Transcription mistakes were corrected to create a corrected copy. These readings also improved familiarity with both the transcript details and participant audio cues.

The second step of analysis is notating the transcript. Notes regarding emphasis and importance of certain statements and non-verbal reactions were made and aided subsequent analysis. Each reading yielded new remarks regarding participant comments or non-verbal cues and revealed patterns of similarities and differences for each participant and among the sample. Appendix O presents an excerpt of Tyler's interview transcript illustrating the researcher's notes made during each reading. Transcripts were also annotated for relative emphasis (Smith et al., 2009).

The third step is a review of the data for emerging themes among the verbal and non-verbal comments, emotions, and descriptions (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Emerging or emergent themes are repeated ideas or feelings derived from the interview transcript that reveal something of importance to the participant such as a concern or reaction to a question or prompt. Emergent themes provide concise meaning for complex recollections (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This is a step away from the original transcript and closer to the notes about the transcripts while elevating the analysis above merely recounting the interview. The emergent themes were documented in the right-hand margin of the transcripts and linked to specific text that was underlined for later use in the theme cluster table and results report in Chapter IV. Appendix P presents the emergent themes.

The fourth step is examining the emergent themes for connections to cluster similar themes together (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Organizing themes into clusters helps bring clarity and demands a deeper study of the transcript, notes, and emergent themes. Theme clusters, also known as super-ordinate themes, require new grouping under a higher-level naming structure and supports cross analysis between multiple participants. The theme clusters were documented in the left-hand margin of the transcript and later recorded in the theme cluster table (see Appendix Q).

The fifth step is repeating the previous four steps with each subsequent participant interview transcript as it becomes available. The literature explains that the researcher can either treat each transcript as a fresh, standalone document or use the themes identified in the first analysis as a guide for the second, third, and so forth (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). The latter method was used because acknowledging preceding analysis and applying the themes demonstrates an open mind, promotes an awareness of potential bias, and reveals new themes, repeated themes, and contradictory themes, thus increasing rigor and trustworthiness (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

The sixth and final step is searching for and identifying patterns between the participants. The challenge of this step is prioritizing among the clustered themes, looking for richness and explanatory value instead of simply counting occurrences in the data (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This step requires the researcher to prioritize themes according to the strength of relationship to the research objectives and weighting themes that, according to the researcher's interpretation of participant statements and non-verbal cues, had the greatest influence. The super-ordinate themes revealed in this study were

examined for repetition and participant emphasis and the themes repeated by at least three of the six with relative importance were included in the theme cluster matrix.

This six-step analytical process follows guidelines provided by IPA scholars to improve the quality and consistency of qualitative, phenomenological research (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Table 2 outlines the overall data collection and analysis timeline. While collection and analysis processes may vary among studies, adhering to core guidelines introduces discipline and formality to a seemingly informal method to produce an academically trustworthy study.

Table 2

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Study Timeline	Primary Event(s)
Week 0	Receive IRB approval
Week 1	Coordinate with NCAC for sample nominees
Week 3	Meet with Scoutmasters Select participants and send invitations Verify Scoutmaster support with selectees Conduct pilot interview
Week 5	Schedule interviews Conduct interviews Transcribe audio recordings Validate transcripts Member checking
Weeks 8-10	Data analysis Determine saturation
Weeks 11-14	Results and conclusions writing
Week 15	Submit draft results and conclusions Draft editing and revisions

Note. Timeline of events reflecting study data collection, analysis, and reporting process. IRB refers to The University of southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board. NCAC refers to the National Capital Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a phenomenological study is a measure of the truthfulness of results about the collection and interpretation of participant data (Hays & Singh, 2012; Richards, 2014). The more accurately the researcher represents the original voice of participants in the data, including personal details and perspective, the greater the trustworthiness of the study. Achieving trustworthiness enables the study to add value to the body of knowledge of minority youth development.

Hays and Singh (2012) list ten criteria of trustworthiness related to a phenomenological study. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, coherence, sampling adequacy, ethical validation, substantive validation, and creativity. Enhancing trustworthiness in a qualitative study is the responsibility of the researcher and applying these criteria to the study methodology promises to yield increased rigor to data collection, analysis, and evaluation. Multiple strategies will help increase study trustworthiness. Researcher involvement in data collection and interpretation presents both an opportunity to enhance accuracy in data evaluation and a threat of bias and leading (Smith et al., 2009). A *reflexive journal* was used to track personal reactions to participant conversations during the interview process and enabled the researcher to ensure comments were drawn from a participant and not colored by any familiarity with the CYDP or lack of experience with minority, urban youth. Data collection included audio recordings with verbatim transcription to avoid missing data and allow validation of reactions noted in the journal. Transcripts were provided to participants for member-checking before analysis began. Of the six participants, only one chose to revise his transcript. Regarding sample selection,

participants who meet the research criteria were chosen through purposive, homogenous sampling to ensure best fit to the study's purpose (Corbin & Strauss, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Richards, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

Ethical Considerations

Researchers are admonished to anticipate ethical challenges that may arise during the study process and to openly discuss and plan to alleviate those challenges (Creswell, 2013). The most important ethical considerations for this study involve the reactions of the youth participants to the interview process. The study does not involve any experimental methods but it does call for interviews that have the potential for recalling unpleasant or disturbing memories of family or neighborhood discord or negative experiences at school.

To safeguard the wellbeing of the youth participants while enabling quality data collection, the interviews were structured to minimize stress and provide a sense of control for participants. Interview questions are open-ended, allowing the youth to discuss an experience but avoid troubling details. Questions and prompts are written to elicit details related to the research objectives without prying into personal challenges. Interview settings were chosen by the participants and included public libraries, a youth center, a workplace common room, and two homes. There were no incidents of discomfort, either from the setting or the interview material. Additionally, participants could protect their identity by selecting a pseudonym that was used in all data collection, analysis, and reporting. Only the researcher and participant knows the connection between actual identity and the pseudonym. Finally, the study, including the data

collection process was reviewed and approved by the USM IRB to ensure academic standards for human subject interactions were met.

Summary

Chapter III presented the study methodology, including the rationale for the study design, data collection and data analysis processes. Phenomenology and specifically IPA were discussed as methods for developing understanding of the influence of a CYDP for promoting high school graduation by examining the experiences of program members. The rationale for selecting the BSA as a proxy CYDP for the study was presented as was the selection of Eagle Scouts to serve as the study population. Sample size for IPA research was discussed including the specific sample selected for this study. The interview process was reviewed and the six-step data analysis process was outlined including tables for theme development and analysis. Strategies for maintaining study trustworthiness and for mitigating ethical concerns were also presented. Chapter IV follows with a discussion of study participants and a presentation of study results related to the study research objectives.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Chapter IV presents participant demographics, interview data, and analysis.

Participant comments and non-verbal expressions are examined as they relate to the study research objectives. The research objectives guide the exploration into the influence of a theoretical CYDP for promoting high school persistence among Black male youth. One-on-one interviews reveal for examination the experiences of six former members of the BSA as a proxy for how a CYDP might enable coping with dysfunctional families, dysfunctional neighborhoods, cultural discontinuity, and low-expectations.

IPA methods enable the researcher to extract personal stories from the participants about their experiences with the BSA during their high school years to determine how those experiences influenced their decision to graduate. This qualitative data yields an interesting, colorful, and insightful picture of how a CYDP might serve as an effective tool for future youth development. Chapter IV concludes with a summary of the study results, and an introduction to the final chapter that contains the study conclusions with recommendations for application and further research.

Participant Demographics

To generate the purposefully homogenous sample, participants were selected to enable a focus on the details of the interactions between their experiences in BSA, their family, neighborhood, and high school. Following the study's data collection plan, six Black men who earned their Eagle Scout rank and graduated high school within the last five years were selected to participate in the study. All six came from BSA troops in either the NCAC Washington DC District or the Patuxent District and their Scoutmasters recommended each as having experienced adversity during their high school years. The

face-to-face interviews were conducted in a setting selected by the participant over a span of four weeks.

Participant Demographics Questionnaires (Appendix D) were administered at each interview meeting before the interview to address research objective I. Participants verified they were all 18 or older and data related to the participant's experience in the CYDP was captured. The six participants came from three different troops. Three participants came from two different troops in the Washington DC District and three came from a single troop in the Patuxent District. Two participants reported being a member of two different troops during their time in the program and the other four were in the same troop for their entire tenure.

Every participant held at least two leadership roles in his troop. Five of the six served as a Patrol Leader, responsible for guiding five to six other peer members. The same five also served as Senior Patrol Leader, the highest-ranking youth leader in the troop, answering directly to the Scoutmaster for planning, training, and conduct of the youth members. The six participants were in the CYDP a minimum of six years and a maximum of 12 years. The six participants reported attending five different high schools with two attending the same high school together. All high schools were public schools in the participant's neighborhood school pyramid. None of the participants were close neighbors to each other, even those serving in the same group. Table 3 presents data summarizing the CYDP experience of the six participants using their selected pseudonyms.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
Age at joining BSA	12	8	8	6	7	11
Age at earning Eagle Scout	18	16	15	16	15	18
Troop leadership positions held	3	4	2	3	4	3
High school graduation year	2016	2015	2015	2016	2015	2016

Note: BSA refers to the Boy Scouts of America.

Participant Summary

The following section contains brief descriptions of the six participants based on details gathered in the demographics questionnaire and drawn from notes taken by the researcher during and immediately after the interviews. Summaries offer an identity for these young Black men beyond mere numbers on a chart. Some details are intentionally blurred and pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of each participant.

Antonio

Antonio comes from a single-parent home and he joined the Boy Scouts when he was 12 at the insistence of his mother. Unlike most CYDP members, he did not join the program early in elementary school but joined in middle school. Antonio explained that his mom was looking for a program that taught character and would help keep both of her sons out of trouble. He transferred out of his original troop after two years to a troop he

described as more active and provided more challenges and opportunities to advance. His best memories of his troop are week-long summer camping trips in the Shenandoah Mountains because of the bonds that were formed between scouts and the challenges and unique activities they offer. He said that he enjoyed the differences between those weeks and his everyday life at home.

When asked about how he might improve the program, Antonio said he would find better ways to get more boys into the CYDP. He explained that most of his friends didn't understand what program members did and many of the members he knew, himself included, were embarrassed at one time or another to admit they were in the program. To address this need, Antonio created an information program to describe the CYDP to his peers in ways they would understand. He has since leveraged the experience he gained in creating the information program to employment in the marketing department of a national news organization in Washington DC.

Cameron

Cameron joined the CYDP as a Cub Scout in the second grade. He grew up in a single-parent home and he explained his mother took him to join because she was looking for a program with good activities and positive influence on boys. He advanced from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts at the same church so he stayed with many of the same boys from second grade to twelfth grade and knew many of the adult leaders for the same length of time. He went camping with both Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts which was a favorite activity along with meeting and working with new people.

Cameron described his Eagle Scout project as something to help others less fortunate than himself. He planned and carried out a renovation of an bare, unused

courtyard at a local assisted living facility. Cameron's project included cleaning and repainting the courtyard, constructing gardens for planting flowers and vegetables, building new benches and tables, and repairing lighting. Cameron emphasized his sense of obligation to help others and pointed out that he developed his empathy from working with his adult leaders and peer youth in the CYDP.

Cameron expressed concern about parental interference in the troop, stating Scouting is supposed to focus on the scout and adult leader relationship and parents need to step back. He claimed to see many boys too intimidated by parent involvement to speak up and take responsibility for activity planning and running the troop. He wants a stronger separation between the youth and their non-scouting parents. He believes such separation strengthens bonds between scouts and adult scout leaders building independence and self-confidence. When asked about why boys might not join scouting, Cameron explained that most boys he knows didn't like the uniform and were commonly embarrassed to wear it. He said that most boys who stayed in the troop learned to like the uniform and became very proud to wear it as they increased in rank and accomplishments. Cameron attends college.

Kevin

Kevin is the younger of two sons and his older brother is an Eagle Scout so he explains that his parents expected him to join Scouting and eventually earn his Eagle as well. He began Cub Scouts at 8, transferred to Boy Scouts at 11, and remained in BSA until he graduated at 18. He describes his home as a loving home with both parents present. He does not describe his neighborhood as bad but news reports of serious violent crime near his home are very common. It is informative that he travels over 30

minutes to participate with a troop outside his local neighborhood and with boys not at his high school.

Kevin was very proud of his Eagle Scout project that collected coats for homeless and needy children and business suits for needy young men who were interviewing for jobs. Kevin said he collected enough clothing to donate to multiple organizations in both Virginia and North Carolina and he was gratified to have made a difference in people's lives. Kevin has a part-time job and attends a state university.

Lacey

Lacey grew up with his parents, an uncle, and two cousins. He joined BSA as a first-grader when his mother took him to a meeting. She wanted to get him involved in a program that would help his self-confidence because he has a learning disability. Lacey states he experienced substantial bullying in his neighborhood and school growing up and his parents hoped the CYDP experience would help him cope with that challenge. Unfortunately, he explained he experienced bullying in his troop as well until a new Scoutmaster took over and changed the troop's culture. Following the change in adult leadership, Lacey claims his self-confidence increased, he sought more challenges, and eventually served as the troop's Senior Patrol Leader after earning his Eagle Scout rank.

Lacey says that he is very proud to have overcome his learning disability to earn his Eagle Scout rank and serve in several leadership positions. For his Eagle Scout project, he designed and created a practice golf course for youth in his neighborhood to learn the rules and skills of golf without having to travel to a course and pay the high fees. Lacey is still involved in the CYDP as an adult leader and says he is determined to

reach back and help young boys grow up confident and focused on others. He is attending a local junior college and has applied for a bachelor's degree program.

Robert

Robert explains that his mother took him to join BSA when he was in the second grade and that he had no choice in the matter. He describes his home and family as strong but his neighborhood was not the best and his mother wanted him to have positive influences to offset the things that went on outside the house. Robert played many different sports while going through school and says that he considered the CYDP to be just another activity for most of his time in the program. He stated he eventually came to appreciate the life skills he believes he learned, such as planning, communicating, leading, and problem-solving.

For his Eagle Scout project, Robert chose to pass on to his non-scouting peers some of the lessons he learned in the CYDP. He developed a training program to teach social skills such as how to dress and tie a necktie, how to act in a restaurant, and how to prepare for a job interview. He emphasized the importance of learning manners and respect for young men to get along in life. Robert is attending a state university on a football scholarship.

Tyler

Tyler was recruited to join the CYDP by a friend from church. He was 11 and he said his friend told him stories about sleeping in log cabins in the woods and having all sorts of sweet treats on campouts. He explained he quickly learned the stories were not quite true and his first camping trip into the Virginia woods was a frightening challenge but by the next morning, he had bonded with the other scouts and took to the outdoors.

Tyler is an only child from a single-parent home. He grew up in a small neighborhood on an isolated street. He said the area was quiet and safe but there were few kids and limited opportunities for playing outdoors due to the small area with limited resources.

Tyler said he wanted to do something special to help others for his Eagle Scout project so he went to a local retirement home and renovated their art studio. He planned the project, recruited labor, and secured all required supplies. He explained that he led a team of program members and adults to empty the studio, repair and replace damaged cabinets and shelving, clean and reorganize the supply storage area, redesign the studio layout, and reinstall the art tools and machines. He described the project as a big challenge but he had developed the confidence to face big challenges. Tyler is working full time at a job that he credits his Eagle Scout achievement for helping him land and is attending a local college.

Theme Outline

Data analysis of the participant interview transcripts reveals six clustered themes derived from the 30 emergent themes. Interview questions were designed to evoke participant reactions and stories that would address the theoretical issues underlying the research objectives. The following clustered themes with their relevant participant statements and non-verbal reactions are discussed as they pertain to the study research objectives:

Theme 1 Focus on real life beyond the handbook

Theme 2 Be real, don't split your personality

Theme 3 Personal perception becomes reality

Theme 4 Scout leaders were more effective than other non-family adults

Theme 5 The troop as a brotherhood of peers

Theme 6 Scouting as a personal development and support system

Analysis Results

Research Objective 2 determined the perceived influence of a CYDP on the cultural discontinuity experienced by Black male youth program members. Cultural discontinuity refers to perceived differences between home and school experiences including communication style and acceptable behavior that are believed to contribute to minority academic failures (Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Wilcox, 2015). Scholars theorize Black male youth commonly do not acclimate to academic environments because they do not fit and eventually drop out from under-achievement and frustration (Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Wilcox, 2015). The study explored participants experiences with cultural discontinuity and the influence of time spent in a CYDP on coping with differences between home and school context.

Theme 3, participant perception of an experience becomes his reality, is most prevalent among the participants as most did not express experience with cultural discontinuity. Some participants described high school as hard while others described it as easy but only two of the six recalled stories that fit the description of cultural discontinuity. For the rest, their perception was reality as they perceived no notable disconnect between home and school context and did not think it was an issue.

Robert and Tyler related experiences with cultural discontinuity and Theme 2, individuals should be real to themselves and not split their personality between home and school cultures. Robert spoke of seeing many friends choose to act one way in the

neighborhood and another way in school but each decided against adopting different personalities.

[Robert explained] once I started learning myself, I didn't want to have a split personality. So if I had one side at home and one side with my school friends or my school peers, then I'd be like I'm fighting two people. So it's best to keep learning myself and keep myself the same and it won't be no problems when I go home.

Robert attributed his personal maturity to support and guidance from both his parents and his adult scout leaders. When he watched his friends become different people in school and at home, he says he saw kids trying to “earn cool points.”

[He stated] but I never really looked at it like a cool thing because, it's like why [are] you playing two roles? Because it's not really you. So why are you playing that role when you get to school and when you get home, it's a whole different you? I think you should stay yourself the whole time, just learn yourself, be one with yourself, and not try to keep switching up 'cause then you'll mess your own self up.

Tyler's experience with cultural discontinuity was more aligned with literature. He described struggling with rules and adult teachers who he saw as being more interested in enforcing rules than in teaching him. His stories are very similar to those drawn from literature when he says, “so I mean like when I go to school, it's always sit down, be quiet, only speak when spoken to, raise my hand, be respectful.” Tyler continues saying “what made high school hard? I would say all the rules, actually. The rules, I mean I didn't like that many rules.” Like Robert, Tyler attributes his successful

adjustment to his time in Scouting during which, he says, “as I got older and started maturing. [I] started falling in place. Gave up control.” Tyler finished his comments on struggling with school culture with “I would say that going through Boy Scouts and going through high school, it was definitely a good changing period...I matured a lot.”

To combat cultural discontinuity, youth development scholars suggest programs with tailored content to match member needs and interests. Theme 1, that a troop should focus on real life and not just the handbook, frames this issue and one participant, Lacey, talked at great length about tailoring his troop’s program. Lacey did not speak about any specific issues with cultural discontinuity between home and school, but he did talk about experiences that support the idea of adjusting program content to local needs and concerns. He described troop meetings at which discussion and training topics followed area issues saying, “some of the stuff we talked about was kind of focused on what was going on in our area but also like... going on around the world.” For example, after the 2016 riots in Baltimore that erupted from the police shooting of Freddie Grey, Lacey said his troop spent multiple meetings discussing neighborhood - police relations. Many peer members in his troop shared stories of confrontations with police and the boys and adult leaders talked about how they should conduct themselves around local police, particularly in view of CYDP expectations and norms. Lacey described this as “going beyond the [program] handbook and reaching into real-life.”

Where there is perceived mismatch in cultures, participant experiences indicate CYDP involvement has a mitigating influence by promoting personal development and maturity. All six participants commented that program membership helped them mature, learn to deal with others, both good and bad, and adjust to different, often uncomfortable

situations. The two participants who spoke about relevant experiences with cultural discontinuity also spoke about how they learned self-confidence during their time in the CYDP and their self-confidence enabled them to not act as two different people.

Research Objective 3 determined the perceived influence of a CYDP on the neighborhood dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members. Youth development literature contains volumes of work dedicated to understanding the effects of neighborhood crime, gang violence, and drug use on youth and how to mitigate their impact. This study examined dysfunctional neighborhoods as a research objective because of the emphasis placed by scholars. Interestingly, none of the participants described his neighborhood in any terms that would allow it to be labeled dysfunctional. In fact, most described their neighborhood as “good,” “quiet,” or “safe.”

Theme 3, personal perception becomes reality, is applied to this research objective because all participants perceived their neighborhoods as good and safe and in view of IPA methodology, their perception is their reality. While Washington DC violent crime reports might show that most if not all participants live near recurring violent crime, none of the participants perceived living in or near a dangerous neighborhood. For example, one CYDP participant lives within a few blocks of a brutal murder of two young men who were shot in their car on the street in the middle of the day. Both victims were scheduled to graduate high school with honors the day after their killing, both were members of the CYDP but in a different troop. That shooting occurred a few days after the study interview with the participant. However, the participant did not mention any safety or security issues with his neighborhood during his interview.

Research Objective 4 determined the perceived influence of a CYDP on the family dysfunction experienced by Black male youth program members. This study probed participant's personal relationships with family, peers, and non-family adults to learn what influence these relationships had for promoting high school persistence. The stories told by the former program members indicate the quality and longevity of relationships are important features of effective youth interventions. Clustered Theme 4: CYDP adult leaders were more effective than other non-family adults, Theme 5: the troop as a brotherhood of peers, and Theme 6: CYDP as a personal development and support system are all relevant to Research Objective 4.

Four of the six participants were raised in single-parent homes. While the study interviews did not seek any details of participant's home-life, responses and reactions clearly indicate the former program members valued and benefited from their relationship with CYDP adult leaders. Each former program youth member related experiences with adults and peers that bonded them to each other and contributed to successfully completing high school.

Five participants described their CYDP adult leader as a father figure, even one of the two who had a father at home. Kevin said, "[my Scoutmaster] was real close... it felt like a second dad basically. He'd tell you right from wrong..., he taught us a whole lot. [He] knew everything from the jump... he was sort of like the Grand Owl." Antonio felt the same way saying, "I look at my Scoutmaster as kind of a father." Tyler repeated them affirming, "[my Scoutmaster] was like a father figure sometimes." With every participant, their adult program leader was a dominant figure who provided meaningful guidance that was taken seriously.

Study participants have close relationships with their CYDP adult leaders.

Antonio said his “Scoutmaster, the Assistant Scoutmasters, and other Eagle Scouts were always there to help.” Tyler described his relationship as, “[my Scoutmaster], I mean, he was always there for me. He’ll definitely have your back, whatever you do. Another thing [Scoutmaster] does is he won’t ever give up on you. Never.” Robert related the same saying, [Scoutmaster] was there whenever I needed him. He checked up on me, like, whatever I needed, he was there.” Lacey agreed, “my Scoutmaster and other leaders helped me when I needed help. I knew I could depend on them and the other Eagle Scouts too.”

As close as their relationships with CYDP adult leaders were, the participants described their connections to the other peer members of their troop as closer and more enduring. The most common descriptor of peer relations in the CYDP was “brotherhood.” Robert said, “Scouting is about a brotherhood and learning who you are and the leader you can be when you’ve done it all.” He continued explaining “actually, we were a pretty tight group. Like we always did everything together... it’d be the whole group that goes or none.” Kevin still experiences a very tight bond with his troop saying,

I saw the majority of my troop a couple months ago. It was like we never left. It was like what’s up bro? how you doin type thing. It was pretty cool to see, like we never lost connections at all. Even though we are very far apart, we’re close no matter what... like we are brothers for life.

Lacey recalled the same relationship relating, “I think because of what we’ve been through in Scouting, it’s kind of made us closer as friends because, like you know, we’re

basically brothers, you know? Scouting has become like a family to us.” Tyler was especially animated about how close he grew to his troop. He stated,

Yes, I’m still friends with all of them, all of them. Some of them went to my school, some of them didn’t. We were very good friends outside of scouts, very good friends. I mean I would never, I would never lose my brothers. These are my brothers.

The study participants developed close bonds with their CYDP adult leaders and peer members. According to their statements, program adults and peers provided support, encouragement, and motivation. Every participant described having long-term, strongly positive and meaningful relationships with both adults and peer youth during their entire CYDP tenure.

Research Objective 5 determined the perceived influence of a CYDP on the low neighborhood and school expectations experienced by Black male youth program members. The study examines the question of expectations and challenge by asking participants to compare experiences with their teachers and adults scout leaders. Every participant told stories of how he was not challenged in high school. While three of the six participants described high school as “hard,” none said that it was because the academic work was challenging. One former CYDP member dealt with a learning challenge that made reading and math difficult. The other two participants described early behavioral issues and lack of focus as the cause for their high school difficulties. In contrast, nearly every participant said his adult leaders and the CYDP itself continually challenged them and demanded more effort and better results than what they experienced in high school.

Tyler explained “I would say when I was with [my Scoutmaster] he definitely asked more of me [than my teachers] and I knew I could give more.” Referring to his teachers, he said “[I think] like they didn’t make me want to do better, [my Scoutmaster] did.” Tyler spoke very positively about his CYDP adult leader and his demands. He recalled his adult leader “would definitely try, like, to wipe [my slacking] away. ‘Stop slacking, get it done, just do it and you’ll be done with it.’ That’s the model I try to follow all my life.” He continued saying his leader “was always motivating, motivating us. Do better or achieve something new.”

Cameron said “as far as teachers, they don’t really push you, as far as my experience. They don’t really push you to, you know, expand your mind, and you know, strengthen your mental abilities.” He compared that experience in high school with his CYDP experience saying:

Our Scoutmaster’s goal was definitely to have all of his [scouts] well-rounded, to know about a lot of stuff, not just focusing on us but definitely focusing on other people and getting to know about other people and just being well-rounded.

Knowing a lot about different things and not just being closed-minded.

Antonio admitted he experienced early difficulties in high school primarily due to his poor behavior choices and credited his CYDP adult leader with getting him turned around. Antonio said, “in my eleventh year, when I actually started talking to [my Scoutmaster], like he made me realize that I needed to graduate... so I got help... and I just overcame.” His adult leader did more than encourage him to graduate, he worked with Antonio on the root problem. Antonio explained his leader “taught me to be honest more, not to lie a lot... he talked to me, turned to me, and gave me advice on how to be a

better person.” Such personal interaction and concern for him personally is why Antonio emphatically believes the CYDP “makes you a better person.”

Robert did not describe high school as a challenge but he was clear about his adult leaders. He said, “they were very hard on us just so we could learn... they were really helping us.” Again, “I’d actually say... my scout leaders were on me more [than my teachers] because they expected more out of me.” His stories make clear that he learned not only the immediate lesson of each experience, but learned to appreciate the methods used by his adult leaders. He continued saying, “they instilled in me that if you get on top of this, do what you have to do, they would give me extra help so basically, they pushed me.” Robert’s CYDP adult leader challenged him. According to Robert, “[he] saw the leader in me, wanted to push it out of me even when I didn’t see it. So, I can say he was really on my back... he’s see a lot in me that I didn’t see in myself at the time.” He finished his observations saying, “but now I look back at it and say ‘wow, I see why they were pushing me and why they helped me get that far and they didn’t let me down or give up on me.’”

Each former CYDP member recalled how he was challenged throughout his program experience. By meeting those challenges, each described how he learned self-confidence and the values of doing his best to achieve a goal. All the participants attributed their success in high school to these lessons of perseverance and task accomplishment.

Finally, Research Objective 6 determined the perceived influence of a CYDP to promote high school persistence among Black male youth program members. Questions 7, 8 and 9 of the interview were designed to evoke stories and reactions that illuminate

the study's central issue: CYDP promotion of high school graduation among young Black males. The intent of these questions was to encourage each participant to consider not only his experience in the CYDP but the connections between those experiences and his high school experiences. By considering how the CYDP influenced his time in school, how not being in the CYDP might have changed his outcome, and how he might describe the program to another student. Each participant was given an opportunity to think deeply about how his program experience effected another part of his life.

Transcript analysis reveals six emergent themes that fit the last research objective. These emergent themes fall into clustered Themes 4 and 6. Theme 4 describes adult program leaders as more effective than teachers and other non-family adults. Theme 6 describes the CYDP as a support system enabling personal development. Every participant recounted experiences that could be categorized into the six emergent themes and spoke forcefully and with enthusiasm about how their CYDP experiences influenced their high school outcomes.

In line with Theme 4, CYDP adult leaders were consistently viewed as more effective than teachers and other non-family adults. Antonio made the strongest statement saying his teachers "don't have any type of influence at all. They're just not good teachers." When compared to his adult program leaders, Antonio continued saying his school teachers "don't really handle our classes too well." "I think [my Scoutmaster] was better than my teachers." When asked about his coaches and other adults outside school, Antonio observed his "coaches were kind of like [my Scoutmaster] but... we didn't really have like one-on-one time." "They would talk to the whole team at once." They would basically say what [the Scoutmaster] was saying but he knew me better."

Other participants made the same comparisons, repeatedly saying their CYDP adult leaders knew them better and had stronger relationships. Cameron observed, similarly to Antonio, “I might know my teachers for that year, I might know my coach for only that season, but as far as Scouting, I’ve known [my Scoutmaster] and all the other scouts, Assistant Scoutmasters, for years, since I started Boy Scouts.” Kevin also experienced this difference in relationships with teachers and adult scout leaders.

I’d say [a Scoutmaster] is more than a teacher but like at the same level as a coach because you are with a teacher for probably 45 minutes and that’s it. But with scouts, you probably meet for an hour, but you probably do extra things after doing activities with each other... you are always with them a whole lot more so then you can build this special connection and they can give you more influence than like, a regular teacher would for like 30 minutes.

Participants explained their CYDP adult leaders used the extensive one-on-one time to effectively keep track of where the boys were and what they were doing. Adult leaders regularly spoke with parents, checked on school work, and generally kept up with the boy’s progress both in the program and out. Robert described how his adult leader “asked how I’m doing in school or staying on top of my books, like [he] actually helped me.” Robert continued saying, “my Scoutmaster, he really pushed me, like he was on my back. He emailed me every day. He probably called me every day and just stayed on top of me. He’d pull me aside, tell me everything, tell me to be a leader basically.” Kevin told a similar story saying, “I feel like [my Scoutmaster] did [keep track]. Like he always called my dad about every week just, they would talk about, you know, as ‘oh, how is he doing?’ that type of thing. He kept in touch a lot.”

Tyler also related that his adult leaders were very engaged with him saying, “my [Scoutmaster], he was always on top, [he] would keep us in line. When we weren’t at scout meetings, he would call our mothers... ‘where is he? Where is he?’ It was great.” Antonio told similar stories saying, “my [Scoutmaster] was always on top of us, our work, and making sure that we all have our stuff done.” “He did track my school work. I started doing better when I came to my new troop. My grades went up.”

Cameron went further saying his adult leader “was definitely involved. We still keep in touch and he wasn’t just, you know, Boy Scouts, he was also, you know, concerned about us personally. Just how we’re doing and he always kept in touch, always making sure we’re doing things right.” He continued saying, “once we got into high school, [our Scoutmaster] always made sure we are on top of everything and kept us motivated.”

To the question of CYDP influence in high school, the former program members all talked about the value and importance of the personal development they had experienced and how it contributed to their academic success. Tyler was very emphatic about how the CYDP positively influenced him. He explained without the program “I wouldn’t have as many leadership skills, I wouldn’t have as many camaraderie skills, like team building.” I would definitely say I’m more confident now.” “Without Scouting, I don’t think I would be as good at all because, I mean, right now, I just have so many great character [traits]. It made a big impact, I’d probably still [be] jobless right now without Scouting.” Lacey was equally clear in his description of CYDP influence relaying, “overall, Scouting helped me get through high school and also kind of get

through college [so far].” He added, “I think overall the goal of Scouting is to like make better men.” In view of overcoming his learning challenges, Lacey stated,

Scouting basically has taught me that, you know, I’m not gonna be perfect, but so long as I’m true to myself and I recognize that my shortcomings... don’t define me as a person. They don’t define how smart I am or how capable I am at getting the job done. They just make it a little harder but they don’t make it impossible. So that’s what honestly Scouting kind of taught me.

Robert describes the value he believes he gained from his time in the program when he says,

You learn life-skills. Like camping and different knots, that’s like the basics everybody sees in boy Scouts. ‘Oh, they camp, that’s it.’ But there’s a lot more to it. There’s organization cause there’s different leader roles and different positions in the troop... so it’s like life and a business, it’s different levels... so I think Boy Scouts can be applied to real life.

Antonio talked at length about how the CYDP taught him empathy and developed a desire to help others. Despite any needs he might have himself, Antonio said, “before [joining the program], I didn’t really care about, like other people but, like doing all the community service and seeing a lot of other people don’t really have [an] easy life, that made me want to change.” He continued saying, “[scouting] makes you a better person and you have a lot of great experiences... and you get to do a lot of good stuff for people. Like you see how bad people have it and not everybody is blessed like we are.” He finished with “Scouting helps you out with what you want to do later in life.” For Antonio and the other participants, that included graduating high school.

Summary

Chapter IV presents a review of the participant demographics and data analysis. Transcript analysis yielded 30 emergent themes and those themes fell into six theme clusters that align to the six research objectives. Participant comments and reactions enlighten each research objective and support the idea that a CYDP can promote high school persistence among Black male youth. Chapter V presents a comprehensive discussion of findings and conclusions drawn from the results as well as recommendations for implementation. Topics for additional research to advance the topic of minority youth development are also presented.

CHAPTER V – FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapters I through IV present Black male high school dropout as both a national and individual problem. A theoretical CYDP based on an extensive body of youth development literature for improving youth outcomes is described. A proxy CYDP's perceived influence on Black male youth is examined. Chapter V presents a summary of the study and researcher conclusions related to the research objectives.

Recommendations for additional research are also provided.

Study Summary

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceived influence of a CYDP for promoting high school graduation among Black male youth who experienced adversity risk from broken families, troubled neighborhoods, or under performing schools during high school. IPA methodology, informed by hermeneutics and idiography, guided experiential data gathering from six participants via one-on-one interviews. Study participants formed a purposively homogenous sample of Black male Eagle Scouts, age 18 or older, who live in the Washington DC area, and graduated high school within the last five years. The BSA serves as a proxy for a theoretical CYDP.

Study Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This section presents study outcomes derived from transcript theme analysis related to study research objectives. The researcher's findings and conclusions are based on interpretation of participant responses, both verbal and non-verbal, to the interview questions and personal experience in the proxy CYDP. Discussions of conclusions include recommendations for possible application to current and future youth interventions.

Finding 1: Personal connections are crucial for youth coping with adversity.

Family dysfunction risk derives from broken connections between family and child; youth may not find the personal support they need to learn to cope with the challenges of growing up (Kaslow, 1996). Study participants found support in scouting. Personal connections that may have been lacking at home are compensated for by close, quality relationships with scouting adults and peers. Five of six study participants come from single-parent homes. None referred to or hinted at any type of family adversity such as abuse, drug use, or violence at home but no interview questions probed those topics directly. However, all six former program members extensively and vividly discussed the personal connections they developed through the CYDP. They emphasized knowing their adult leaders and peers for many years. They referred to peer members as brothers and their troops as brotherhoods. They consider their CYDP adult leaders as father figures and told stories of fatherly behavior that goes beyond the requirements of volunteering as an adult leader.

Conclusion 1: A CYDP can provide support for coping.

Every former program member explained his adult leaders were instrumental in guiding, tracking, holding accountable, and encouraging school work. Study results show the close, long-term relationships developed between participants and their program adults and peers strongly influenced personal development and academic achievement. Based on participant experiences and perceptions regarding family dysfunction and low expectations of teachers, a CYDP does appear to positively influence coping with adversity risk .

Recommendation 1: Youth programs should provide opportunities to build meaningful, long-term connections between youth, peers, and adults.

In view of study results, youth interventions for improving academic performance should develop and maintain strong, long-term relationships between youth and adults, and also between youth and peers. These connections need to be as permanent as possible, extending across school years to give youth stability and cohesion with close adult guides and peers. Effective relationships must also be significant. Time spent between youth, peers, and adults cannot be spent on superficial topics but must delve into subjects that youth members find interesting and important, aimed at producing meaningful results such as high school achievement.

Finding 2: Youth need to be stretched with challenging assignments and demanding expectations for results.

According to youth development scholars, minority students are commonly subject to low expectations for academic performance by teachers who believe they are helping youth who face adversity by giving them a break or not asking too much (Masten, 2014a; Morales, 2008a, 2008b). Literature shows the opposite is needed however, in that youth need challenge and high expectations to learn both school lessons and the value of education itself (Morales, 2016; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008). The study participants all vividly recounted how their CYDP adult leaders expected far more from them than their teachers.

When asked to compare his teachers to his CYDP leaders, Tyler said of his teachers, “they didn’t make me want to do better, [my Scoutmaster] did.” Tyler’s response was typical of every participant and concisely shows the difference in perceived

influence of teachers and adult scout leaders. Each participant perceived their CYDP adult leaders cared more, pushed more, and asked more of his member youth than teachers did of their students.

Five of six participants attribute much of their success to personal involvement and high expectations of CYDP adult leaders. The other participant explained he has both parents at home who made high demands of him all through school and he would have graduated regardless his program adult leader's influence. However, he continued saying he believed his CYDP adult leader would help other young men who didn't have such support. In each case, adults outside the classroom provided necessary motivation and guidance for completing high school.

Conclusion 2: A CYDP can provide challenges that youth thought were beyond their abilities.

Transcript analysis show study participants perceived low expectations for academic performance from teachers and high demands for both program and academic results from CYDP adult leaders. According to every participant, motivation and expectations for high performance came either from home or the CYDP adults rather than a teacher. Participant experiences and perception indicate a CYDP can overcome low expectations at school to promote high school persistence.

Recommendation 2: Youth programs must challenge members to take on activities and produce results they do not think they can achieve.

Youth development theory makes clear giving minority students a break by asking less of them is not an effective solution for increasing school performance (Masten, 2014a; Morales, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; Werner & Smith, 1982). Programs

intended to promote academic achievement must emphatically acknowledge Black male youth are equally as capable as any other youth and demand high levels of accomplishment (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Youth programs must challenge members with weighty tasks that are interesting and relevant. Youth members must also be consistently held to a high standard for results. Programs meeting that standard develop youth who are confident, thoughtful, imaginative, and see a task through to completion.

Finding 3: Adversity risk influence varies with individual perception of risk.

Youth development literature documents the negative effects of cultural discontinuity, family and neighborhood dysfunction, and low-expectations at great length (Mastin, 2011; Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015). In view of literature, the study participants were expected to describe experiences at some level with all four adversity risk factors. However, while the participants commented extensively on their experiences with family dysfunction and low expectations, they did not talk about experiences with cultural discontinuity or neighborhood dysfunction to the degree suggested by research.

Cultural Discontinuity. Regarding mismatches between home and school context, Robert spoke about other youth in his school who “split” themselves into neighborhood and school personalities but he avoided doing so himself. Tyler related how he battled with school rules and norms versus his home context and how his CYDP experience helped him mature and change his behavior. Lacey described his troop tailoring itself to local events and concerns to be more relevant to member needs.

These experiences fit within scholarly descriptions of cultural discontinuity and provide evidence, if somewhat limited, of positive influence against adversity risk

(Morales, 2008a, 2008b; Wilcox, 2015). However, none of the participants emphasized the idea that differences between home life and school life presented noteworthy challenges. It is not clear if the six participants actually had limited or no experience with cultural discontinuity or if the influence of their CYDP group, family, coaches, or friends mitigated its effects. The lack of participant comments about cultural discontinuity risk does not mean that risk was not present. Perhaps stress caused by differences between home and school is known to the point that the risks and coping mechanisms have become enculturated and expected. That concept is beyond the scope of this study.

Based on the relatively superficial discussions of cultural discontinuity in the transcripts, it appears that CYDP membership had a positive influence on the potential effects of mismatches between neighborhood and school context. Tyler's experiences appear to best illustrate the type of frustrations youth development scholars warn of, but his struggles against rules and authority may have originated from other causes than cultural discontinuity. Tyler claims his experience in the CYDP and with his adult leaders helped him mature and stop fighting against authority. Unfortunately, his story is not unusual for teenage boys of any ethnic or economic background and cannot exclusively support an assertion that the CYDP influenced coping skill development. Study results are not definitive so youth development program designers and practitioners should study this complex risk to better understand its origins and effects.

Neighborhood Dysfunction. An examination of the six participants' interview transcripts reveals no signs of perceived dysfunctional neighborhoods. All six former CYDP members described good neighborhoods in which they felt safe. As with the

subject of cultural discontinuity, the issue of neighborhood dysfunction does not appear to be a substantial concern for the former members. Even in areas that are demonstrably prone to violent crime, the participants made no mention of violence as an issue during their high school years.

Conclusion 3: Youth perception of risk may be a more important measure of risk influence than the reality of risk.

Participant perceptions of neighborhood dysfunction risk appear to diverge from real incidents of dysfunctional neighborhoods (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008). Because the study uses IPA methodology, participant perceptions guide study results and conclusions so an absence of perceived neighborhood risks indicate an absence of risk. If the youth perceived no danger, then any danger that may exist had no influence on him.

Recommendation 3: Interventions for mitigating adversity risk influence should focus on creating a sense of security among member youth.

The researcher is not claiming the participants in fact faced no risk. However, for the purposes of the study, because the participants perceived no risk there was no negative influence to be mitigated. It may be sufficient for peer and adult program members to provide a sense of security through strong, trusting, stable relationships. Such personal connections might enable at-risk youth to compartmentalize neighborhood risk and function well both at home and school, and achieve positive outcomes like high school graduation.

Recommendations for Additional Study

This study is intentionally limited in scope, using IPA methodology to produce a vivid picture of how a CYDP might influence Black male youth to overcome challenges

and promote high school persistence. Because the study examined a narrow set of variables, numerous opportunities to challenge, validate, or expand its results are available to follow-on researchers. Three interesting questions follow that pick up where this study leaves off and promise valuable additions to the youth development body of knowledge.

What do other youth populations think?

This research was limited to a single ethnic group, a single gender, and a single location. Follow on study can repeat this methodology by changing any of these variables to provide a valuable comparison. Repeating the study by changing the proxy CYDP can also provide valuable information.

What do former scouts who didn't earn Eagle Scout rank think?

CYDP members who earned Eagle Scout rank were chosen because they experienced the maximum benefit offered by program membership. Future research might consider if other former members who, for a variety of reasons, did not earn Eagle rank describe similar experiences. Follow on studies could also examine the experiences of Eagle Scouts who did not graduate high school.

Perception versus Reality: Does meeting needs change perception of risk?

Most study participants appear to live close to areas of regular neighborhood violence yet none talked about experiencing the effects of neighborhood dysfunction described in literature. Follow on research can study if at-risk youth do indeed know risk factors are present but learn to cope or compartmentalize it to the point the risk has no or limited influence. A comparative study of real versus perceived risk might provide valuable information for establishing youth development program goals and expectations.

Knowing how much or what type of risk and its influence a program can be expected to mitigate can provide important guidance to program designers and practitioners

Summary

Chapter V presents study outcomes including findings, conclusions, and recommendations related to the research objectives. Numerous themes revealed through IPA show personal connections between youth, program adult leaders, and member peers are very influential for promoting high school persistence. Adversity risks such as low-expectations from teachers appear to be offset by challenging tasks and high-expectations from CYDP adult leaders. Dysfunction at home may be countered by strong relationships with program adult leaders and peers. Perception of adversity risk from neighborhood dysfunction and cultural discontinuity appear to be discounted or perhaps compartmentalized if connections to program adults and peers are strong, trusting, and enduring. Participants uniformly claim involvement in a CYDP positively influenced their high school graduation among other desirable outcomes.

According to the six former CYDP members, strong, long-term relationships with caring, involved adults were a very positive influence. Close, long-lasting ties to program peers were a powerfully positive influence. Having challenging tasks assigned by adult leaders and being held to account for results also positively influence youth. CYDP groups with tailored program content were a positive influence but not as important as other program elements. These findings align with literature. In view of participant perceptions and experiences, a CYDP appears to be an effective intervention for mitigating the effects of adversity risk, promoting high school persistence, and enabling workforce entry.

Interventions intended to help youth cope with adversity risk and realize desirable, positive outcomes need a full array of program elements to be effective. Mentoring alone, short-term sports teams, and unchallenging projects cannot provide the support, guidance, and personal development described by study participants. This finding does not claim all youth could or should join BSA. Rather, youth development program planners and practitioners should review youth development research findings and recommendations to understand how risks and interventions influence each other. Comprehensive programs such as BSA should be examined and program elements applied where they fit local context and need.

The central finding of this study is personal connections between youth, adults, and peers are the most effective product of youth development interventions. In view of the experiences and related stories of the six participants, relationships developed with both adult leaders and peers were invaluable for promoting high school graduation and other positive choices during and after high school. In each case, the Eagle Scouts recounted how they were influenced by caring people who believed in them and pushed them to succeed. The specific program elements experienced in the CYDP were not as important as the bonds formed with the people in the program. Based on this finding, youth development designers and practitioners must ensure that the ultimate outcome of their program is creation and maintenance of the type of relationships described by this study's participants. Building a sense of "brotherhood" is more effective than any specific program policy or activity. The value of a CYDP is its ability to strengthen human connections among its members and leaders. These connections are the ends towards which all program means should be directed.

Frederick Douglass advocated for positive interventions on behalf of Black Americans to improve their life and reduce society's need to fix "broken men". Modern youth development practitioners who seek to improve outcomes for Black youth will first seek to strengthen the quality relationships between Black youth and the adults and peers who surround them. CYDP adult leaders and peers will challenge youth to achieve more than they think they can achieve, will believe in them when they don't believe in themselves, will check up on them when they think no one is looking, and teach them to lead when they think no one will follow. Such a program can accomplish more than improving high school graduation rates. A CYDP can contribute to increasing the human capital value of Black men and promote their entry to the American workforce. This outcome advances Douglass' vision of strong Black men who contribute their skills and talents to the nation and their strength and achievement to their families for the benefit of both.

APPENDIX A Permission to Use Figure 2



Permissions

T & F Reference Number: P032917-05

3/29/2017

Richard Walker
6905 Brisbane St.
Springfield VA 22152
iragator92@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Walker,

We are in receipt of your request to reproduce Table 1 from the following article

Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth (2012)
Beyond the "Village" Rhetoric: Creating Healthy Communities for Children and Adolescents
Applied Developmental Science 16 (1): 3-23.
DOI: 10/1080/10888691.2012.642771

For use in your dissertation

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Sincerely,

Mary Ann Muller
Permissions Coordinator
E-mail: maryann.muller@taylorandfrancis.com
Telephone: 215.606.4334

APPENDIX B Permission to Use Figure 3

Richard Walker <iragator92@gmail.com>
To: jean.rhodes@umb.edu

Fri, Feb 17, 2017 at 12:17 PM

Dr. Rhodes,

Good afternoon. I am a PhD student with the University of Southern Mississippi in the Human Capital Development program. For my dissertation, I am referencing an article published in Current Directions in Psychological Science and request your written permission to use figure 1 from the following article:

Rhodes & DuBois (2008), Mentoring relationships and programs for youth. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17(4).

Thank you for your help and consideration.

v/r, Richard Walker

Jean Rhodes <Jean.Rhodes@umb.edu>
To: Richard Walker <iragator92@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 17, 2017 at 12:51 PM

Yes, thanks for asking!

Thanks,

Jean

Jean Rhodes
Frank L. Boyden Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Massachusetts, Boston
Office: (617) 620-9147
Fax: (617) 287-6336
Assistant: Mania.Mahoney@umb.edu
[Lab website](#)
[Center website](#)

APPENDIX C BSA NCAC Data Collection Authorization



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL

February 28, 2017

Regarding: Richard G. Walker PhD candidate

Dear Sir or Madam,

Richard has been in conversation with us and our National office in regard to his proposed dissertation regarding the impact of Scouting with specific groups.

Upon approval of his topic, we will be directly aiding him in connections with Scouting leaders meeting the desired target market. In addition, we will also be encouraging their participation to help us further promote the program and its proven outcomes.

To further aid in the comfort level of acceptance of the project, we wish to review the questions and share them with the adult leaders before approaching the young adults. This access to the leaders and former youth members would only be permitted after approval of the dissertation topic.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Berger".

Jeffrey Berger
Chief Operating Officer

9190 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814
P. 301.530.9360 | F. 301.564.3648
www.NCACBSA.org
www.BeAScout.org

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APPENDIX D Participant Demographics Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions by either filling in the blank or selecting the most appropriate response:

- 1) I am 18 years old or older: Yes No (if “No,” then stop interview here)
- 2) I joined Scouting at the age of _____.
- 3) I was a member of Boy Scout Troop _____.
- 4) While in my Troop, I served in the following leadership positions (circle all that apply):

Senior Patrol Leader

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader

Patrol Leader

Den Chief

Troop Guide

Quartermaster

Scribe

Librarian

Historian

Chaplain’s Aide

Other _____

- 5) I earned Eagle Scout at the age of _____.
- 6) I graduated from high school in the year 20_____.

Thank you for your important input to this study.

APPENDIX E Interview Guide

Introductions and thanks for participant's time and cooperation

Explain the purpose of the study.

Provide two copies of the Informed Consent (Appendix I), the participant and researcher each signs the form, and each retains one copy.

Explain the interview will last approximately one hour and the researcher will record the interview and take notes.

Explain the right to withdraw at any time.

Opening Statement

We've reviewed the consent form and are ready to move ahead with the interview. I will ask you some questions about your time in Scouting and your time in high school. After I ask a question, I'm just going to let you talk. If you need me to repeat or re-phrase a question, I'm happy to do that, just ask.

Please take your time and remember that there's no right or wrong answer to these questions. You shouldn't think that I'm looking to hear anything especially positive or negative about your Troop or Scouting or that you should avoid saying anything good or bad about your Troop or Scouting. I need you to tell me about your experiences in Scouting and high school just the way you remember them. No one except you and me will know what you say here today. If I ask something that you don't want to answer, you don't have to answer.

Do you have any questions for me before we start?

If you're ready, then we'll begin.

(Start the audio recorder)

Today is (day), (date) of (month) 2017 and this is Rick Walker speaking with (participant pseudonym).

Interview Questions

- 1) When did you earn your Eagle?
 - a) Tell me about your Eagle project.
- 2) Describe how you originally came to join the Scouts?
 - a) Thinking about your Troop, what was best?

- b) What would you change if you could?
- 3) Tell me about your time with the other Scouts in your Troop.
 - a) Are you still friends with many of them?
 - b) Can you tell me if you guys hung out together outside of Troop meetings and what kind of things you did together?
- 4) Tell me about working with your Scoutmaster.
 - a) How did he influence you outside of Troop meetings and outings?
 - b) How would you compare working with him to working with your teachers?
- 5) Tell me about growing up in your neighborhood.
 - a) Tell me about some of the good times and best memories.
 - b) Can you share some of the challenging times, either with family, friends, or maybe some people who were not your friends?
- 6) Describe what high school was like.
 - a) Tell me about some of the good times.
 - b) Tell me about some of the not so good times.
 - c) What made it easy?
 - d) What made it hard?
- 7) How did your time in your Troop influence how or what you did in high school?
- 8) Imagine not being in your Troop during high school. How do you think your high school experience would have been different?
 - a) What might you have done instead?
 - b) Who might you have hung out with?
- 9) Think of a friend or someone you know in your neighborhood just entering high school. What would you tell him about Scouting as a way to help him do well?
- 10) Finally, is there a question you wish I had asked or anything else you would like to share regarding your Troop and how it influenced you in high school?

Closing Statement:

I can't thank you enough for your time and help. In the next step, I'll ask you to review the paper transcript of this interview to be sure it's accurate. I'll also send your gift card and copy of results when they are ready. Do you have anything to ask or add before we wrap up?

APPENDIX F Informed Consent Form



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STANDARD INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES
<p>This completed document must be signed by each consenting research participant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Signed copies of the long form consent should be provided to all participants. <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Last Edited February 20th, 2017</p>

Today's date:
PROJECT INFORMATION
Project Title: Examining the Perceived Influence of a Comprehensive Youth Development Program for Promoting Black Male High School Persistence
Principal Investigator: Richard G. Walker Phone: 228.265.3094 Email: richard.g.walker@usm.edu
College: Science & Technology Department: Human Capital Development
RESEARCH DESCRIPTION
<p>1. Purpose:</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of how being a member of the Boy Scouts might influence high school graduation among young black men.</p> <p>2. Description of Study:</p> <p>This study is an exploration of your experiences in the Boy Scouts and how those experiences influenced you during your high school years. There will be a single, face-to-face interview that should last about one hour. Your interview will be recorded and a paper transcript will be made available for you to review for accuracy.</p> <p>3. Benefits:</p> <p>Your participation may improve understanding of how youth programs can influence high school graduation among young black men to help improve existing programs and design better programs in the future. You will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card in appreciation of your time and assistance. You will also receive a copy of the study results.</p> <p>4. Risks:</p> <p>There are no known risks associated with this study.</p> <p>5. Confidentiality:</p> <p>Your information and answers will be confidential. Before your interview, you will choose a substitute name for the study and only you and I will know the connection between your substitute name and your real name.</p> <p>6. Alternative Procedures:</p> <p>No alternative procedures are available. If you choose to not participate or to stop after we have started, you</p>

are free to do so without giving any reason and with no consequences.

7. Participant's Assurance:

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601-266-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided in Project Information Section above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant's Name: _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in this research project. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose, including any experimental procedures, were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to the Principal Investigator with the contact information provided above. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

Research Participant

Person Explaining the Study

Date

Date

APPENDIX G Instructions to Scoutmasters

Introduction

My name is Richard Walker and I am a student at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am conducting this study as a part of my work toward a Doctoral degree in Human Capital Development. I have been a BSA adult leader for 7 years, I was Cubmaster of Pack 641 in Arlington, VA, and I'm currently an Assistant Scoutmaster with Troop 1140 in Springfield, VA.

Purpose of this study

This study is intended to increase understanding of how being a member of the Boy Scouts might help increase high school graduation among young Black men.

Your role in helping me

I plan to interview Eagle Scouts from Washington DC who have graduated high school to find out how they think their time and experience in Scouting influenced their high school years. I especially want to learn how they think BSA helped them cope with adversity during their high school years.

I have a list of the Eagle Scouts from your Troop who graduated in the last five years. I need you to look over the list and help me rank them according to how much adversity, at home, in their neighborhood, and at school you think they experienced. I specifically do not want to rank them according to how "good" a Scout they were. I need them ranked according to the challenges they faced during high school.

Next, after they are ranked, I will send the highest ranked young men a recruiting letter to be interviewed for the study. Because they don't know me, I hope you can help introduce me and encourage their participation. I don't want to pressure them to participate, but if they have the time and are interested in sitting down with me, I will appreciate their help.

How the interviews will take place

For the study, I will conduct one interview with each participant that will be one-on-one and last about one hour. I have a short list of questions and I need each young man to freely talk to me about how his experiences in Scouting influenced him during high school. I will emphasize to the participants that I'm not looking for answers that make BSA look good or bad. I just want to know about his experiences during his high school years. The interviews will be audio recorded. Each young man can use a substitute name if he wants and no one other than he and I will know what he says. He can change his mind and withdraw from the study at any time.

After the interview, I will have the recording transcribed onto paper and the participant will have a chance to look it over for accuracy. When he is satisfied with the

transcript, I will provide him a gift card in appreciation for his time and cooperation. I will study the interviews to understand how these Scouts' experiences influenced them to stay in school and graduate and will then write up my findings. When my results are completed, I will provide a copy to the participants. I'd like to discuss any questions or concerns you have.

APPENDIX H Invitation to Participate Email

Dear (name)

You have been nominated by your former Scoutmaster, (name) to participate in a research project examining the influence of the Boy Scouts on young Black men to graduate high school. You were selected because, as an Eagle Scout and a high school graduate, you have a unique perspective on this important topic. Please take a moment to read the attached information page about myself and this project. I've spoken to your former Scoutmaster so feel free to talk to him about it as well.

If you agree to participate, then the next step is to coordinate a place and time to meet for a single, face-to-face interview. The interview will be between you and me and it should last about one hour. The place and time should be comfortable, convenient, and safe for both of us, and quiet so we can talk without interruptions or distractions. We will discuss some of the rules that I must follow, how the interview will be conducted, and how the information will be used afterwards. We will then talk about your time in the Boy Scouts and how that time influenced you in high school.

I hope that you can participate because your stories about your experiences in Scouting and high school are important. Please contact me directly or provide me a phone number and email (if different from this one) where I can reach you and we can arrange a meeting time and place. Thank you for your time and I look forward to working with you very soon.

APPENDIX I Participant Recruiting Information Sheet

EXAMINING THE PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR PROMOTING BLACK MALE HIGH SCHOOL PERSISTENCE

Introduction

My name is Richard Walker and I am a student at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am conducting this study as a part of my work toward a Doctoral degree in Human Capital Development.

Purpose of this study

This study is intended to increase understanding of how being a member of the Boy Scouts might help increase high school graduation among young Black men.

How were you nominated to participate in the study?

You were nominated by your former Scoutmaster as a high school graduate and Eagle Scout.

Your role in the study

If you choose to participate in this project, you will be selected for a face-to-face interview with me that will take about one hour. We will discuss your time in the Boy Scouts and in high school.

What will happen to the answers and comments you give?

Your interview will be recorded and a paper copy of the interview will be created. You will have a chance to review the written copy of your interview and make changes. I will keep all copies of the interview and they will not be shared.

Will your input to the study be confidential?

Yes, all your information and answers will be confidential. Before your interview, you will have an opportunity choose a substitute name for the study if you wish. Only you and I will know the connection between your substitute name and your real name.

What are the potential benefits of participating?

Your participation may improve understanding of how youth programs can influence high school graduation among young Black men to help improve existing programs and design better programs in the future. Participants who interview for the study will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card in appreciation of their time and assistance. They will also receive a copy of the study results.

What are the potential risks of participating?

There are no known risks associated with this study.

Do you have to participate?

No. You do not have to participate, and even if you do agree to help, you may change your mind and discontinue participation at any time without giving a reason.

Can you choose to withdraw from the study?

Yes. You can withdraw from the study at any time for no reason and with no consequences. Simply contact me and let me know that you want to withdraw. If you withdraw, you will still receive the gift card.

What if you think there is a problem with the study?

If you are troubled or concerned with any part of this study, you can contact me and I will try to answer your concerns. If you are not comfortable talking to me or not satisfied with my responses, you can contact either my research supervisor, Dr. Cyndi Gaudet, your former Scoutmaster, or the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board to discuss the issue.

Contact information:

Richard Walker
(228) 265-3094
richard.g.walker@usm.edu

Dr. Cyndi Gaudet
(228) 214-3517
cyndi.gaudet@usm.edu

USM IRB
(601) 266-5997
irb@usm.edu

s/ Rick Walker

APPENDIX J Email with Washington DC District Eagle Scout Statistics

From: Richard Walker [mailto:iragator92@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2017 2:36 PM
To: Jeff Berger <Jeff.Berger@scouting.org>
Subject: Eagle Scout Statistics

JB,

Good afternoon. I am finishing up my proposal and need to know some numbers for NCAC and specifically for the Washington DC District. Can you tell me how many Eagles were achieved in the last three years (2014, 15 and 16) in the DC District? I am still planning on interviewing Eagles from that district since it is predominately African-American and those Scouts are my focus. Thank you.

YIS, Rick

Jeff Berger <Jeff.Berger@scouting.org>
To: Richard Walker <iragator92@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 20, 2017 at 3:21 PM

😊 JB

2014 – 27 Eagles

2015 – 15 Eagles

2016 - 21 Eagles

Jeffrey S. Berger, CNP | Deputy Scout Executive / Chief Operating Officer



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL

Marriott Scout Service Center
9190 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814
O 301-214-9102
F 301-564-3648
E Jeff.Berger@scouting.org

Please visit www.NCACBSA.org for up to date information.
Locate a Scouting group near you at: www.BeAScout.org
Follow us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/NCACBSA
Please consider supporting local Scouting through donor designations:
Community 1st - America's Charities | United Way Community Partner | CFC #48974

What are you doing this summer?

www.GoToSnyder.org, www.GoToGoshen.org, www.ScoutParadise.org

APPENDIX K IRB Approval Letter



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17050502

PROJECT TITLE: Examining the Perceived Influence of a Comprehensive Youth Development Program for Promoting Black Male High School Persistence

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Richard G. Walker

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Science and Technology

DEPARTMENT: Human Capital Development

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 05/05/2017 to 05/04/2018

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX L Post Interview Email to Participants

Dear (name)

Thank you for participating in the research study of the influence of the Boy Scouts for helping young Black men succeed in high school. As we discussed, your interview recording will be transcribed to a paper copy and once available, I will email or bring you a copy so you can review it to be sure it is accurate. I appreciate your continued support. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Walker
Doctoral Candidate, University of Southern Mississippi
richard.g.walker@usm.edu
(228) 265-3094

APPENDIX M Member-Checking Email to Participants

Dear (name)

Thank you for participating in the research study of the influence of the Boy Scouts for helping young Black men succeed in high school. As we discussed, your interview recording has been transcribed and the paper copy is attached for your review. Please take some time to read the entire transcript and mark any places that you think are not accurate or you would like to change. If you think it would help, I can meet with you to go over the document, simply contact me to arrange a time and place. Please get back to me by (date) so I can make your corrections. If I don't hear from you by (date), I will assume you are satisfied with the transcript and I will move ahead with my work. Thank you for your continued support. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Walker
Doctoral Candidate, University of Southern Mississippi
richard.g.walker@usm.edu
(228) 265-3094

APPENDIX N Final Thank You Letter to Participants

Dear (name)

Thank you for participating in the research study of the influence of the Boy Scouts for helping young Black men succeed in high school. The stories and descriptions you provided of your experiences in Scouting and in high school will hopefully help others do well in the future.

As we discussed, I have enclosed a \$25 gift card with this note and I will forward a copy of the study results when they are ready. I truly appreciate your time and the help you gave me with this work. I wish you all the best in your future.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Walker
Doctoral Candidate, University of Southern Mississippi
richard.g.walker@usm.edu
(228) 265-3094

APPENDIX O Transcript Analysis Excerpt

146 INTERVIEWER: And it could be just [0:08:00] to make it better. They don't have
147 to be something that was bad...

148 TYLER: Either um...

149 INTERVIEWER: ...to fix. You know, it might be something that, well this is kind
150 of cool, but I could do it if they did this. It would make it even
151 better.

152 TYLER: I guess more organization sometimes, 'cause you know, I mean,
153 I guess they weren't a lot of scouts in the troop. A lot of the
154 paperwork sometimes got a little lost and so...I mean, that-that
155 was really it.

156 INTERVIEWER: That's cool.

157 TYLER: Yeah.

158 INTERVIEWER: So talk some more about um, your time with other scouts in
159 your troop. And um...a couple, just a couple prompts, um, are
160 you still friends...

161 TYLER: Yes.

162 INTERVIEWER: ...with all of the guys in your troop?

163 TYLER: All of them.

164 INTERVIEWER: All of them?

165 TYLER: All of them.

166 INTERVIEWER: And um...did you guys hang out, out, hang out together, away
167 from the troop, away from meetings?

168 TYLER: Yes, um...these gentlemen, some of them went to my school,
169 some of them didn't. They went to archenemy schools. But all
170 the time we would see each other at basketball game. We
171 would go to the park, play basketball. We were very good
172 friends outside of scouts. Very good friends.

173 INTERVIEWER: So you guys are kind of...

174 TYLER: Uh-huh.

175 INTERVIEWER: ...your own group?

176 TYLER: Uh-huh. I mean, some of them went to middle school and
177 they...and I mean like I still talk to them to this day. It's great.
178 Uh, I mean I would never, I would never lose my brothers. These
179 are my brothers.

180 INTERVIEWER: Cool. Um...so talk about working with your scout master.

need more organization

Not big participation numbers

Troop huh!

Friends of all of them

in/out of Troop

same school diff school always together

Brothers

still to this day its great never lose Brothers

Adult Ldrs

SM
taught
prepared
checked
checked up

high expectations
follow thru
don't quit

don't give up
when hard
challenges
encourages
father figure
life skills
camaraderie

leadership skills
life skill trainings
keep us in line
call Mom
it would be great

has your back
meet obligations
stick to it

maybe really hard
keep trying
won't give up on
you
do better

w/o - wouldn't
have . . .

BA

181 TYLER: Working with my scout master? Um...Mr. Chuck definitely
182 taught me a lot. He taught me a lot of leadership skills. He
183 taught me how to...uh, definitely have a meeting or an
184 interview. 'Cause when I had a scout interview with him, he
185 would-he would always like, "Go do it like a job interview." He
186 would um, prepared me for it. He would tell me like, oh, get
187 this, get that, take some notes. [0:10:00] Um...Mr. Chuck, he
188 was always on top whatever he...he had. Um, Mr. Chuck would
189 keep us, keep us in line. When we weren't at scout meetings, he
190 would call our mothers. "Where is he? Where is he?"
191 [Chuckles]. It would be great.
192 INTERVIEWER: Cool. Um...so, and I guess that partially answers it. Um, how did
193 he influence, uh, you outside your troop meetings and your
194 troop outings?
195 TYLER: Um...
196 INTERVIEWER: You said one of them is you don't show up to something, he's...
197 TYLER: Yeah, right there. Right there probably. I mean, Mr. Hall, he'll
198 definitely have your back at whatever you do, but I mean you
199 just have to hold your obligations. You have to always follow
200 what you say you're gonna do with him and I mean just stick to
201 it. Uh, if you set a plan, do it. Don't give up. Don't...yeah.
202 Um...and also...
203 INTERVIEWER: That's something that I always tell my kids. That...
204 TYLER: It's...
205 INTERVIEWER: ...if my daughter, particularly. Never quit.
206 TYLER: Uh-huh.
207 INTERVIEWER: Never quit.
208 TYLER: I mean, some-sometimes in the moment it's maybe like really
209 hard but you just kind of keep trying at it. It's stuff everybody
210 keeps saying. So I mean, yeah, um...another thing Mr. Chuck
211 does is he won't give up on you. Never. I've seen kids xxx for
212 myself, they'll call, "Hey yo, all you gotta do is this, this and this,
213 and you first class, we could get that knocked out today. Just
214 overview it with xxx and then we move on from there." [snorts].
215 So yeah, Mr. Chuck is always motivating, motivating us. Do
216 better or achieve something. I mean, and especially I would say
217 this, um...growing up with only a mother for a certain period of
218 time [sniffs] in the scouts, Mr. Chuck was like a father figure.
219 Sometimes [0:12:00]. Um, [sniffs], he definitely took me under
220 his wings and told me like growing up and shape me into the
221 nice human being that I am today. Um...I would I wouldn't have
222 as many leadership skills, I wouldn't have as many camaraderie

APPENDIX P Emergent Theme Matrix

RO2: Cultural Discontinuity

Emergent Themes	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
HS was hard	X			X		X
Balance was a challenge	X			X	X	X
Real life not the handbook				X	X	
Don't split yourself					X	X
No issues (participant perception)	X	X	X	X		

RO3: Neighborhood Dysfunction

Emergent Themes	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
Good neighborhood	X	X	X	X	X	X
Safe but not as it seems				X		
No issues (participant perception)	X	X	X		X	X

RO4: Family Dysfunction

Emergent Themes	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
SM as father figure	X	X	X		X	X
SM, leaders always there	X	X		X		X
SM, adult leaders as allies				X		X
Troop as a "brotherhood"			X	X	X	X
Close friends	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lasting friends	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teach compassion & empathy	X			X		
Troop support system		X		X	X	
Troop reach back	X	X	X	X	X	X

RO5: Low Expectations

Emergent Themes	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
SM challenged more than teachers	X	X	X	X	X	
HS not a challenge	X	X	X		X	X
HS was easy		X	X		X	
Troop challenge and accountability	X	X	X	X	X	X
BSA unique experiences	X		X	X	X	X
BSA promotes confidence	X	X	X	X	X	X
BSA teaches leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X

RO6: Promote Graduation

Emergent Themes	Antonio	Cameron	Kevin	Lacey	Robert	Tyler
Little influence from teachers	X	X	X		X	X
Adult leaders pushed me	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adult leaders stayed on top of me	X	X	X	X	X	X
SM motivating me	X	X		X	X	X
BSA Personal development		X	X	X	X	X
BSA Perseverance development			X	X		

APPENDIX Q Theme Cluster Matrix

Emergent Themes	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6
Balance was a challenge	X					
Real life not the handbook	X					
Don't split yourself		X				
Good neighborhood			X			
Safe but not as it seems			X			
HS was hard			X			
HS was easy			X			
HS not a challenge			X			
No issues (participant perception)			X			
SM as father figure				X		
SM, leaders always there				X		
SM, adult leaders as allies				X		
SM challenged more than teachers				X		
Adult leaders pushed me				X		
Adult leaders stayed on top of me				X		
Little influence from teachers				X		
SM motivating me				X		
Troop challenge and accountability				X		
Close friends					X	
Lasting friends					X	
Troop as a "brotherhood"					X	
Troop support system					X	
Troop reach back					X	
Teach compassion & empathy						X
BSA Personal development						X
BSA Perseverance development						X
BSA unique experiences						X
BSA promotes confidence						X
BSA teaches leadership						X

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