

**The Influence of a Pre-College Culturally Responsive Program on Black Male High School  
Graduates and Transition to College**

by

**Ryan S. Scott**

B.A. Communication Studies West Virginia University, 2006

M. Ed. Educational Leadership Argosy University, 2010

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This dissertation was presented

by

**Ryan Steven Scott**

It was defended on

July 13, 2021

and approved by

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Lori Delale-O'Connor, Assistant Professor, Center for Urban Education

Dr. T. Elon Dancy II, Executive Director, Helen S. Faison Endowed Professor in Urban  
Education, Center for Urban Education

Dr. Anthony B. Mitchell, Associate Professor, The Pennsylvania State University at Greater  
Allegheny

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# **The Influence of a Pre-College Culturally Responsive Program on Black Male High School Graduates and Transition to College**

Ryan S. Scott, EdD

University of Pittsburgh, 2021

This qualitative phenomenological research study assessed the importance of culturally responsive pre-college programs in aiding Black males' academic progression through high school graduation and matriculation into a college or university. More specifically, it examined a culturally relevant program called the Black Male Leadership Development Institute. Ten randomly selected Black males that participated in the program completed a questionnaire and participated in a face-to-face interview.

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## **Appendix A Introduction to the Problem of Practice**

Historically, high school graduation has been a significant barrier for many Black boys across the United States (U.S.). The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2012) reported that 43% of Black boys enrolled in the ninth-grade will graduate high school within four years, which is the lowest graduation rate across all racial and gender demographics. Strayhorn (2008) also pointed out that Black boys who do graduate high school are less likely than non-Black students to enroll in higher education and even less likely to earn a college degree. Noguera (2003) noted, “Black males are often defined as ‘endangered species’ and expected to perform poorly in school, drop out, and disregard higher education as unimportant,” while Hopkins (1997) relatedly observed, “Black males were at the bottom of virtually every academic indicator at disproportionate rates.” Gibson (2014) also found that low college retention rates and low persistence levels are interconnected, with Black males being unprepared for college. In short, many Black boys and young men are not prepared to enter a higher education institution. Further, once they are there, they are less likely than their counterparts to graduate. According to the United States Department of Education (2011), “34% of Black males graduate from four-year institutions over a six-years. This demographic is the lowest degree attainment amongst all racial groups.” There are undoubtedly systemic issues plaguing Black boys and men in education, leading to lower graduation rates in high school and college (Hanks et al, 2018).

Despite the negative statistics and portrayals of failure among Black men and boys in education, the problems are systemic. Researchers such as Barrow (1991), Brown (1998), and

Saunders and Reed (1995), have recommended that policymakers and other education leaders address these issues; including addressing the causes of low school attendance, poor academic performance, and limited/constrained life goals. Simon (2014) reported that “the high school dropout rate is also a significant issue that negatively impacts the required scores needed for annual yearly progress” ( p.1). Scott, Allen, and Lewis (2014) suggested that one factor contributing to these outcomes is that Black boys do not have enough access to high-quality education and pre-college programs to support both their graduation and transition into higher education.

One of the factors that contribute to the lack of preparedness for higher education among Black boys is that they are disproportionately ‘first-generation students,’ that is neither parent had more than a high school education (Pascarella et al., 2016). In 2005, a disproportionate number of Black students, 20.4%, identified as first-generation college students, as opposed to white students, at 12.9% US Census Bureau (2005), which means limited understanding of the college processes. According to the Pell Institute (2006), preparedness for the rigors of college academics is the most challenging transition that first-generation students make. However, pre-college programs may help first-generation students prepare for college through tutoring, reinforcing the high school curriculum, academic enrichment, and the development of study skills (Pell Institute, 2006). While all students can benefit from pre-college programs, there is a critical need for Black boys to enroll in these types of programs (Savitz-Romer et al, 2013). Cross and Slater (2000) predicted that if the trend of low graduation and enrollment continues, Black boys and men will not be involved in higher education by the year 2070.

The purpose of this study is to analyze a culturally responsive pre-college support program exclusively for Black adolescent males and the ways this program assisted them in graduating high school and enrolling in college. As a Black man who is also an educational leader,

I am keenly aware of the support required to encourage Black males' academic success and the necessity that this support center on their racialized experiences. The goal of this study is, therefore, to identify key understandings and outcomes experienced by Black boys who participated in a culturally relevant pre-college program and its connectedness to their persistence in obtaining a high school diploma and enrolling in a college or university.

## **1.1 Contextual Information**

### **1.1.1 Definition of Terms**

To gain a better understanding of the context of this study, below are terms that have been defined by multiple content experts as they relate to adolescent Black males and persistence through high school and matriculation to a college or university. While some of these terms may have other definitions, these are the ones employed by this study.

#### **Black Males/Black Boys/Black Men**

People who identify as male and are descendants of persons from the African continent. These individuals come from all over the African diaspora, but the focus here is on boys and men residing in the United States of America (U.S.). Much of the literature uses the term "Black Males" (or interchangeably African American males); however, throughout this study I will refer to Black boys (when they are younger than 18), Black men, and Black boys and men, to avoid the frequent adultification that occurs to Black children. In addition, males/boys/men refers to individuals gender identity, rather than assigned sex.

#### **1.1.1.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Coined by Ladson-Billings (2006), “The term culturally relevant pedagogy is often used to discuss or describe the theory of culturally relevant teaching while the term culturally relevant teaching describes the practice of the theory (P.7).” Culturally relevant programs in this study focus on interventions specifically for Black boys and men.

#### **1.1.1.2 Low Income**

Individuals in families earning less money than the federal poverty line. The Department of Health and Human Services defines the federal poverty line as a measure of income issued annually to determine whether a person is eligible for select programs and/or benefits, which may include healthcare.

#### **1.1.1.3 Mentoring**

A relationship in which someone (a mentor) advises someone else less experienced (a mentee) personally or professionally, providing knowledge that will assist in the growth of the less experienced person (Bird, 1992).

#### **1.1.1.4 Persistence**

Peterson and Seligman (2004) define persistence as the “voluntary continuation of goal-directed action despite obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement” (p. 229). For this study, persistence will be referenced as connected to Black boy’s ongoing connection to high school and then to higher education.

#### **1.1.1.5 Self-Efficacy**

Bandura (2001) referred to self-efficacy as, “The foundation of human agency and involve the extent to which an individual believes she/ he has control over the environment and can pursue and accomplish a goal” (p.21). For the purpose of this study, it refers to Black boys’ and men’s confidence in their ability to complete a task or goal.

The terms listed above will be used throughout this study and are intended to assist in understanding the meaning of these concepts as it relates to the research of this project.

### **1.2 Inquiry Context & Setting**

This proposed research study employs a case study methodology. It will include interviews with ten Black male graduates from the Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI), a partnership program between the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and Robert Morris University described in more detail below. This study will additionally examine key themes and components in the program that impact high school graduation and matriculation to college.

### **1.3 Stakeholders & Population**

Black men who were former participants of the BMLDI will be the primary stakeholders in this study. The participants of this study are all over the age of 18 and have completed the BMLDI program within the last seven years while they attended high schools across the Pittsburgh region. The participants participating in the study are or were enrolled in college across the United



States. Furthermore, they also have varying socioeconomic statuses and family compositions. Other relevant stakeholders include these students' parents/guardians as well as the BMLDI faculty and staff mentors affiliated with the program. While the only stakeholders participating in the study will be the former students from the BMLDI program, the other stakeholders will benefit as the study aims to reveal the potential influence of the program and its connection to graduation from high school and enrollment in college for Black males. This study aims to examine the conceptual and pedagogical frameworks of culturally responsive pre-college programs like the BMLDI and the influence it has on high school graduation and matriculation into college for Black males.

#### **1.4 Problem of Practice**

The United States Department of Education (2010) found that 1.3 million high school students drop out annually. High school dropouts equate to one out of every four high school students not obtaining their high school diplomas. Swatson (2010) indicated that although about 70 percent of high school students overall graduate within the expected four years, African American, Latino, and American Indian students graduated at 55 percent or below in 2007. For Black males, the high school dropout rate is almost double the rate of White males (NCES, 2016; Child Trends, 2015). Harper (2006) argued that Black males struggle academically, drop out of high school, and do not attend college due to both college un-readiness or lack of preparation, and lack of supportive relationships. The research points to a variety of factors influencing attrition rates. These include teacher shortages, apathy, stress, and high staff turnover rates (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010). Culturally responsive programs such as the BMLDI have intended goals for the

academic and psychosocial success of Black male students. These programs also help these students not only complete high school but matriculate to a college or university.

## **1.5 Inquiry Questions**

Using Rubin and Rubin's (2005) "Responsive Interview Model," the study focused on interviews with program graduates who have enrolled and attended their first year at a four-year higher education institution. One of the goals of Rubin and Rubin's (2005) model is to foster a deeper understanding when asking questions rather than a broad approach. Responsive interviewing draws on interpretive constructionist philosophy "...mixed with a bit of critical theory and then shaped by the practical needs of doing interviews" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.30). This aligned with the goals of the study and supports the analysis of program experiences and trends through a critical lens to come up with recommendations for programs serving adolescent Black males. The research questions that guided the investigation are as follows:

1. In what ways do culturally responsive pre-college programs prepare high school Black male students for graduation? <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
2. What influence does a culturally relevant program have on high school Black males' matriculation and enrollment in institutions of higher education post-high school graduation?

This study analyzed and examined a culturally responsive program for Black males, and the possible connection this program had on supporting participants in obtaining a high school diploma and matriculation into the first year at a college/university. The next chapter identified scholarly literature that highlights historical barriers for Black males in education, culturally

responsive pre-college programs, and the benefits of adolescent Black males' participation in such programs. It also identified ways in which these sorts of programs help Black male students develop their self-efficacy, persistence, and academic success.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on understanding the scholarly literature that shapes the framework about Black males in education, particularly Black males who participate in pre-college culturally relevant pre-college programs, graduate high school, and matriculate into college. This chapter first provides and examines a brief historical overview of the education of Black people in the United States to provide a foundation and understanding of the barriers created to limit academic success. Second, this chapter analyzes the framework of African American Male Theory (Bush & Bush, 2013) and the tenets that are connected to Black boys in high school. Third, this chapter looks at culturally relevant pre-college models, which will be used to “articulate the position and trajectory (through life) of Black men and boys” by analyzing their experiences (Bush, 2013) as they relate to pre-college programs and matriculating to college. It also looks at the importance of mentoring and its connection to these types of programs. The chapter’s conclusion connects to Chapter 3 and the methods used during this study.

### **2.1 Historical Overview**

Current racial disparities in education stem from deeply rooted historical injustices connected to both the enslavement of Africans and the origins of the public education systems in the U.S. Formal westernized education has long been connected to power and whiteness. For instance, enslaved Africans were prohibited from learning to read or write, and educating an enslaved African was illegal (Waren, 2005). Dancy (2014) noted, “Following the liberation of the

enslaved, white supremacy fashioned a concept of both black men and boys as menaces to society, to create a new way of knowing bodies that were no longer controllable assets (P. 52).” Furthermore, after the Civil War, many formerly enslaved people received reading instruction, a situation which Williams (2005) described as “manag[ing] to steal an education,” indicating that white people during that time did not want Black people to receive education (p. 20). When Black Americans were finally legally permitted to receive an education, this education undermined and disparaged their cultural and community understandings and heritage, forcing assimilation to white, middle-class norms. The era of “Black Codes” and *Brown v. Board of Education* furthered the educational disparities and cultural mismatch between Black and white students (Williams 2005).

Due to inequality in education laws, rulings such as the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974 were set in place to ensure that equal opportunity was open to all. This act declared that no state could deny equal opportunity to education based on race, color, sex, or national origin (ACLU, 2019). However, in practice, schools continued to perpetuate disparate systems of education. Black children, especially Black boys, continue to face numerous hurdles in their pursuits to graduate from high school and enroll in a college or university.

## **2.2 Black Male Education Historically**

The historical perspective of the Black male in education is needed to measure the impact of culturally responsive pre-college programs for Black boys and men. The historical perspective also provides context surrounding the barriers Black males have faced in education in U.S. society for many years. In addition, the historical perspective helps explain the need for

culturally responsive pre-college programs serving Black males. United States history has shown that Black males have had to overcome many forms of adversity, particularly within the education system.

Throughout US history, many school policies, curriculum development, and other forms of education have been dominated by the Eurocentric image (Pirnhai-Illich, 2017). Ladson-Billings (1998) stated that Eurocentric curriculums “legitimize white, upper-class males as the standard to knowledge students need to know” (p.18). This presents a barrier for people who do not fit that demographic, including Black men and boys. Although Black women and girls face many of these barriers as well, this study focuses solely on Black men and boys because of the focus of the pre-college program being studied. Many of these disparities are correlated with low academic achievement and low graduation rates (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012). The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2010), for example, reported that during the 2007-2008 school year, 78% of white male students graduated high school as compared to 47% of African American male students.

Many of the disadvantages adolescent Black boys face today have a direct correlation to historical inequalities in American education and society. The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2010) reported that the rates associated with dropping out of high school for African American males are approximately 50% in cities around the nation. Additionally, a disproportionate number of African American young adult males are exposed to the juvenile justice system, which may result in multiple offenses, including early criminalization, recidivism, and institutionalization (Anderson, 1999).

Previous researchers (Allen, 1985; Rodriguez et al., 2000; Strayhorn et al., 2010) align when reporting that Black male students have historically faced challenges that have negatively impacted

their success before starting college as well as during their progression through college. According to Brooms (2016), “Two-thirds of Black undergraduate men who start at public colleges and universities do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in U.S. higher education (P.49).” There is a need for a mechanism to combat many of the barriers associated with academic achievement by men of color, particularly African American young men. While all students can benefit from pre-college support and other related interventions, Black males are in desperate need. Many of these obstacles Black males face are happening during a time when national educational policy continues to call for students to graduate high school college-ready (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Although there is much research on race and gender as the primary indicator of academic success, some researchers suggest that race is not an indicator of academic success. Rumberger and Palardy (2005) concluded that it is the socioeconomic status of the school and not the racial make-up that matters concerning academic achievement. In contrast, other researchers argue that race and socioeconomic status go hand in hand. Hall-Mitchum (1976) argued that African American and Latino males are not performing to the extent of white students due to issues of racism and socioeconomic status. McCready (2010) would argue that gender would also play a role. Black males that identify as gay or are gender non-conforming have further limitations and challenges within the school system which can also impact their academic success (McCready, 2010).

High school graduation of Black males at lower rates consequently results in economic disadvantage. Bridgeland et al. (2006) note, “Black males earn an average of \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates.” (p.2). In addition, Hall-Mitchum (1976) insists that “Black, Spanish surnamed, Appalachian, and rural students are generally poor, and that socioeconomic status is an

important phenomenon” (p.8). Issues such as these contribute to the reasons that many of these students are missing the mark. Kuh et al. (2006) added that one of the significant issues is the lack of quality in high school’s preparation to “keep with the pace” of enrolling in a college or university.

Additional matters influencing Black male success, such as shortages of supportive teachers, apathy, stress indicators, and high staff turnover rates, also complicate the educational underachievement of African American and Latino males (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010). Fordham et al. (1986) analyzed factors such as structural social oppression, including racism and institutionalized, systematic schooling disparities, and inequalities, such as standardized assessments. These policies further alienate Black boys and men, which leads to disengagement and, sometimes, dropping out of school (Noguera 2003).

The disparities these Black males are facing are a direct result of systemic racism. Many of the challenges presented have been embedded in the fabric of United States society. Black males are often analyzed from a deficit perspective (Forham & Ogbu, 1986; Harper, 2012, 2015). Harper (2012) described the deficit model as a dialogue based on Black males’ shortcomings and mishaps rather than positive attributes, abilities, and successes. Mitchell and Stewart (2012) agreed that deficit theories in addition to factors such as media and educational or “schooling” practices contribute to the underachievement of Black males. Anderson & Noguera (2008) inferred, “that Black males continue to be one of the most academically and socially marginalized students in United States schools.”

According to Howard (2013) data, “Black males’ experiences and outcomes in U.S. schools these data are laid out in a manner that suggests that the deficits may lie in the structures, policies, practices, and programs in schools that Black males attend (P.60).” He further noted,



“The focus of this work is not centered on how to fix Black males; rather, the suggestion is that these data may lead us to question how we fix schools and practices that serve Black males (p. 60).” Historically, the education system was not designed for people of color, particularly Black males. As a result, there is a critical need to analyze how Black males experience education.

### **2.3 Barriers in K-12 Education**

While many organizations and support programs are designed to lead to academic success for all students, this research will focus primarily on Black males because of the historical injustices and disparities in education experienced by Black males. Though there have been many mechanisms put in place to help remove barriers for these students, the need for these efforts continues. A paradigm shift also needs to take place in many existing support programs because they fail to provide culturally diverse and relevant curricula. Ensuring that culturally responsive pieces of training are woven into these types of programs’ curricula will make it more likely that students connect to the material, leading to a sense of belonging and a stronger positive self-identity. Hammond et al. (2004) concluded that racial identity for African Americans deals with the notion of being “Black” and all of the components that come with it, “good or bad”: personal beliefs, pride, and attitudes towards others as well as social and political implications.

Many Black male students around the nation lack the opportunity to succeed. Hall-Mitchum (1976) insisted that these students were failing because of a lack of culturally relevant support systems for students of color within the United States education system. Test results also reveal that the school system has failed these students. McGee and Pearson (2014) in referencing Borman and Overman’s (2004) study on academic resilience and Black male elementary students suggested

that Black boys had a more positive experience in their early years, such as kindergarten than their experiences in middle and high school, where the same students were stereotyped as failures.

All students, regardless of their resources and/or circumstances, should have access to a high-quality education. Yampolskaya et al. (2006) indicated in their research that low academic performance and the failure to complete the required criteria for high school graduation can be closely correlated to unfavorable outcomes individually, economically, and socially. Although researchers suggest that high schools are making strides to improve curriculum to improve Black male academic high school graduation and matriculation to college, culturally relevant programming and specifically mentoring programs fill in the gap for high schools lacking the skillset to help the drive of self-efficacy and persistence Black males need to graduate high school and enter college.

## **2.4 Self-Efficacy**

While the above literature makes it clear there is a strong need for systemic reforms to better align the work of schools with the needs of Black students, in the present supporting Black students in doing what they can to forward their success in the face of these disparities. Self-efficacy of Black males may reflect confidence in the ability to exert control of motivation, behavior, and the social environment (Martin & Rimm-Kaufman, 2015). One's self-efficacy impacts every sector of a person's life because it strongly influences how one faces challenges, as well as how long one will persist in the face of difficulty (Kolbe, 2009). According to Bandura (2001), self-efficacy refers to "the beliefs are the foundation of human agency and involve the extent to which an individual believes she/he has control over the environment and can pursue or

accomplish a goal.” Few scholars would agree that perceived self-efficacy beliefs behavior is heavily dependent on social influences and their ideologies of the world as just and fair (Erickson 1995, Sanders-Philips et. al. 2009). Researchers Argyropoulou et al. (2007) and Lindley and Borgen (2002) noted that research provides evidence of self-efficacy beliefs in academic achievement and the indirect influence through psychological outcomes can produce favorable outcomes in achievement. Pajares (2002), found that self-efficacy beliefs are derived through four primary components, all of which can affect the level of self-efficacy:

- Progressive performance accomplishments (i.e., academic success)
- Vicarious experiences (i.e., role models)
- Verbal messages and social persuasions that affirm one’s capabilities in the domain or task
- Psychological states (i.e., anxiety, fatigue, stress, moodiness)

Though many researchers have suggested that there are links between self-efficacy and academic achievement, Butler et al. (2013) argue that these links have not been empirically explored. Caldwell & Siwatu et al. (2003), would agree that Bandura’s social learning theory model on self-efficacy and academic achievement needs further research. The positive experiences that are associated with people who look and identify with them assist in students obtaining a greater sense of purpose and aims to increase their engagement in positive activities themselves (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Palmer et. Al (2014), would agree that Black male students enrolled in post-secondary education a sense of belonging and lack self-confidence due to the lack of diversity amongst K-12 teachers. Also, similarities within the group that exist that have a cultural connection and engaging activities have been correlated with Black males persisting through school (Guiffrida, 2006). While supporting Black boys in improving their self-efficacy

will not change systems, in the short term it may support them in navigating a system not designed for them.

## **2.5 Persistence**

Students of color (particularly Black males) face significant challenges within higher education. Black male students, on average, are less successful than other racial/ethnic groups, including African American women (Dulabaum, 2016). Black and Brown male students' have the lowest persistence rates (Elgin Community College, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2016) would agree that between 1967 and 2013, the gap in persistence between Black and white males between the ages of 16 to 24 is significantly higher for Black males. Persistence is significant in this study due to the connection it has with high school completion and enrollment in college.

Jones (2001), Moore (2001), and Tinto (1993) suggested that for students to succeed in school, there must be a connection both socially and academically. Students who were closely connected to the institution and viewed it as a "fit" were more likely to excel and graduate (Brown, 1995; Lights 2011, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Wood & Williams (2013) conducted a regression analysis that indicated that students' participation in intramural sports, extracurricular activities, conversing with faculty members, effective study habits, supportive peers, and life stressors (reasons to want to do well in school and not return home) were predictive of persistence. They further researched persistence in four domains as they relate to Black males' academic success:

1. Background/Defining Variables: Factors that occur before the student's enrollment in a higher education institution and have the expectation of affecting the outcomes of the student academically (Bean and Metzner, 1975; Mason, 1994) [SEP]
2. Academic Variables: Mason (1998) noted that additional time allocated to studying and additional time in the class contributed to persistence. [SEP]
3. Social Variables or Psychological Variables: Studies found that students are more likely to persist when they feel a heightened sense of belonging at the school (Perrakis, 2008); and feel satisfied with their institutional experience (Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood 2012); Also, when students are committed to their academic goals and make internal goals to persist and achieve academically, their persistence is heightened (Hagedorn et al., 2001-2002; Mason 1998; Perrakis 2008). [SEP]
4. Environmental Variables: Also known as "environmental pull" (Bean & Metzner, 1985), or factors outside of the institution that affects the students' success while attending it [SEP]

Tinto's model (1975, 1987, 1988, 1993) indicates persistence as a "longitudinal process" in which the student interacts with the higher education institution's academic and social systems. In other words, the more connected a student is to the systems within the school, the more connected they will be to the institution. Therefore, the more committed the students are to the institution, the higher their persistence level will be (Tinto 1993). Bean and Metzner's model (1985) argue that environmental factors affect persistence in that variables can pull students away from academic pursuits. In addition, their model does not focus solely on the social aspect of persistence but rather on the environmental and psychosocial factors of persistence.

Due to the lived experiences and environmental factors mentioned by Tinto (1993), Bean and Metzner (1985), Bush & Bush (2013) introduced African American Male Theory that focused

solely on the Black male experience and how the historical educational experiences play out in the trajectory for Black males.

## **2.6 African American Male Theory**

Throughout history, the identity and depictions of Black males have been orchestrated by popular media culture, which has been portrayed negatively throughout the world (Parker & Moore, 2014). The lived experiences of Black males from Black males is a story sometimes untold. “African American Male Theory (AAMT) is a theoretical framework that can be used to articulate the position and trajectory of African American boys and men in society by drawing on and accounting for pre- and post-enslavement experiences while capturing their spiritual, psychological, social, and educational development and station (Bush 2013).”

AAMT offers six instrumental tenets or concepts that provide a critical lens for academic analysis (Bush, 2013). This lens is important to recognize when exploring programs that serve Black males. First, the individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectories of African American boys' and men's lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach. The Ecological Systems theory states that human development is influenced by the different types of environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Scholars (Wood & Williams, 2013) have explored how institutional variables, including the environment, can lead to adverse outcomes for students. Stewart (2007) noted that a lack of academic achievement amongst Black students is attributed to the difference between the students' environmental and cultural backgrounds and those espoused by institutions of higher education.

Second, there is something unique about being male and of African descent. This tenet's primary focus is to examine and investigate what is distinctive about Black males with the clear understanding that there are individual characteristics that exist within the group (Bush, 2013). These group characteristics are essential in creating programs, pedagogies, and curriculum in education. They also can help to assist in psychological and biological research, as well as "account for contributions of African American men to forward progress of humanity in history (Bush, 2013)."

Third, there is a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology that influence the experiences of African boys and men. AAMT claims that the study of Black males must have a foundation that is rooted in Africa (Franklin, 1994; Harris & Ferguson, 2010; White & Cones, 1999) due to the influence of African culture on Black men and boys in America (Fortes, 1967; Herskovits, 1959; Hill, 1997; Kenyatta, 1983; McAdoo, 1988; Nobles, 1980; Sudarkasa, 1980).

Fourth, African American boys and men are resilient and resistant. This tenet proposes that Black boys and men are born with an inherent fascination for self-determination with an endless capacity for morality and brilliance (Bush, 2013). Many researchers (Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Howard, 2008, Price 2000), found that high achieving Black males consistently show levels of resilience. However, Leak (2003) found "resilience theory identifies the protective factors within the family, school, and community that assist children in maintaining self-concept and self-efficacy when faced with the type of adversity that causes other students to give up" (p. 27).

Fifth, racism, coupled with classism and sexism, have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men. Notably racism, sexism, classism and their intersection profoundly impact Black women and girls disproportionately. Black girls and women

are systemically and systematically devalued across spaces, including education. As noted above, while this is also critical work, it is beyond the bounds of this study of one program associated with Black boys and men. Racism is a critical aspect in the lives of Black men and boys (Bush, 2013). AAMT is mainly concerned with how racism is a factor in the trajectory of Black males. AAMT aims to analyze how being male and from a particular class could potentially give certain Black male privilege in some spaces and subsequently would like to engage with such experiences (Bush, 2013). Wood and Palmer suggested that recognizing and dialoguing about the experiences of Black males in diverse spaces is vital because their experiences vary (Wood & Palmer, 2015).

Sixth, the focus and purpose of studies and programs concerning African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice (Brown, 2013). Young (1990) noted that the purpose of AAMT is to undermine oppression by purposely “investigating, exposing, and correcting those practices, policies, programs, systems, concepts, and institutions that promote its continuation (p.12).”

The purpose of AAMT theory is not to respond to racism, however, to draw upon the historical and current culture, consciousness, and community to determine what is and strive to achieve social justice for African American boys and men (Bush, 2013). Analyzing the influence of culturally responsive programs for Black males through an AAMT lens helped to better comprehend the role gender and race play in the experiences of the Black male high school student with the hopes of their enrollment in a college or university post- high-school (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).



## **2.7 College Readiness/Pre-college Programs Culturally Relevant Programming and Enrollment and College**

### **2.7.1 College Readiness**

Black males often lack access to college preparatory programs (Scott et. al., 2014.) As a result, Black males are not adequately prepared to enter the first year of college nor able to complete college-level coursework. During the 2010-11 academic year in New York City, an study found that only one in four students that entered high school was ready for college within four years. Santos (2011) further found that neighborhoods that consisted of 100% Black and Brown residents, only 10% of students graduate from high school. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) indicated that Black students consistently have a lower rate of academic preparedness (2015). Researchers Farmer et al.(2015) noted that while there have been improvements in districts around the country to improve college readiness for Black males, many academic struggles for these students remain. Success in college has a strong correlation to pre-college academic preparation and achievement (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Due to the lack of preparation, there is a higher need for academic pre-college interventions for Black males (Gewertz, 2007; Mishel, 2006).

### **2.7.2 Pre-college Programs**

Pre-college programs are designed to help disadvantaged and underrepresented students enter college (Glennie et al. 2015). In 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act was passed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. This act initially pushed for basic level literacy training for various

reasons, including income levels, media influence, and political agendas (Ellis, 1984). This act also led to the creation of Upward Bound, one of the longest-standing pre-college programs in American history. Upward Bound was created to serve high school students with low socioeconomic status and whose parent(s) had never received a bachelor's degree (Glennie et al., 2015). Other important factors that should be considered are race and gender.

The constructs of race and gender are essential factors in pre-college success because various lived experiences lead people to experience programs and interpret messages differently based on their backgrounds (Bryant, 2015). Other indicators for pre-college success include socioeconomic status, college preparation, and financial resources (Allen, 1985; Rodrigues et al, 2000; Bonner, 2010). Culturally centered programs, however, are lacking, and pre-college support programs must provide culturally responsive practices to generate impact. A myriad of resources supports the argument that interventions are necessary for underserved students to succeed in school, work, and life. One example of these interventions is a program named The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness program, better known as "GEAR UP," which aims to assist students from low-income elementary and secondary schools. This initiative is funded by the Department of Education as a result of the Higher Education Act (Kuenzi, 2008). The program has an intended goal of assisting students in graduating from high school by providing resources such as college prep classes, academic counseling, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities. Glennie et al. (2009) would agree that while elementary and secondary schools should be able to adequately prepare students for higher education institutions, the statistics of students that graduate from high school and enter post-secondary education vary due to factors which include socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, as well as family background.

While high school programs such as these are laudable, many pre-college programs focus on high school students; however, evidence supports the need to begin these programs at earlier ages. Of all Black fourth-graders, for example, 86% read at below grade level (CARES, 2016). Meanwhile, every day, 1,000 Black children are arrested, and one in every eight African American males 25-29 is incarcerated (CARES, 2016). While Black boys do not receive adequate college preparation in high school years, the more significant problem is that high school is too late to remediate educational deficiencies from earlier years.

Another criticism of pre-college programs for students of Color is the lack of focus on culture (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005). While pre-college programs aim to help students Gándara (2002) noted, “it is virtually certain that they [pre-college programs] could meet with much greater success if the research were able to better identify which strategies are most effective for which types of students, under which conditions” (p. 100). Swail and Perna (2002) conducted a review of pre-college programs and revealed that most programs included a strong emphasis on building academic preparation, but very little to no emphasis on integrating students’ cultural identity, cultural needs, or cultural assets into the program. The next section will explore culturally responsive pedagogy, its importance, and programs that have been identified as culturally relevant programs for Black male students.

### **2.7.3 Culturally Responsive Pre-college Programs**

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is one method to combat the deficit model schools and programs engage to educate males. Gay (2000) defines CRP as “a pedagogy that uses students’ experiences, cultural knowledge, and performance styles to affirm students’ strengths (p.1).” She also recommends that both students and teachers in the classroom should consider

themselves researchers who reveal the problems with the current curriculum and create their curriculum through exposure to multicultural communities, history, research, and cultural visits. Gay further noted that all of these elements contribute to high school graduation and the college readiness of Black males.

Villalpando and Soloranzo (2005) revealed that pre-college programs that frequently focused on culture included an emphasis on the development of academic skills and increased knowledge about enrolling in college. Today, there are more culturally responsive programs than in years past. Many of these programs and institutions focus on providing a culturally responsive pedagogy to influence high school graduation and enrollment in a college or university. According to Lockwood et al. (1999) as cited in (Tierney, 2005), “Most of these programs strove to improve students’ chances for enrolling in college by emphasizing some dimension of students’ culture and by attempting to improve their academic preparation” (P.19). For instance, three such programs include Eagle Academy for Young Men, the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, and the Urban Prep Charter School, below are a brief description of these programs, each of which demonstrates success in using culturally responsive or sustaining curricula and practices to support adolescent Black boys in academic success.

#### **2.7.4 Mentoring**

In addition to using a culturally responsive pedagogy to design a program that uses students’ experiences, cultural knowledge, and performance styles to affirm students’ strengths and build on their success in college, programs also need to include mentors to support students. Gándara and Mejorado (2002) found that many college pre-college programs incorporate mentoring into their strategy to benefit students and assist in their academic matriculation from

high school to college. Levin and Nidiffer (1996) further suggested that by “providing information, guidance, and encouragement, mentors can play an important role in nurturing students’ college aspirations, helping them prepare for college, and advising them on how to successfully transition from high school to their first year on campus (p.1).”

Many researchers, including Cohen and Galbraith (1995), DuBois and Rhodes (2006), and Gordon et al.(2009) have argued that effective mentoring programs must have specific components embedded including a strong emphasis on the relationship of the mentor and mentee, a focus on the exchange of information between the two individuals, the importance of facilitation, the emphasis on confronting issues as they arise, role modeling of the mentor, and the importance of the mentees overarching vision they see for the relationship. Mentoring is one aspect of many pre-college support programs, and Mitchell (2013) found that 98% of students paired with a mentor stayed in school, and 85% of students paired with a mentor did not partake in drug-related activity during the time of his study. Tinto (1993) suggested that mentoring is one of the primary variables in success through college, while the social engagement of peer-to-peer mentorship has proven to be a silent factor in helping Black male students obtain a college degree (Bonner, 2003; Harper, 2006). As Dancy (2012) noted, “Mentoring builds Black male worldviews through communal notions of “giving back (P.20).”

The Commonwealth Fund (1994) surveyed 360 Black males and found a correlation between those students’ mentoring experience and their matriculation rates. 50% of Black male students who remained in the school participated in mentoring programs compared to 50% of students who dropped out. The US Department of Education (2017) issued a briefing suggesting that mentoring can be used to address students’ academic needs, adding that there is significant evidence that mentoring programs lead to academic progress.

National studies further demonstrate that mentoring works. For instance, Raposa et. al., (2019) noted, “a mentoring relationship with a caring adult is found to increase positive outcomes for high-risk children and youth (P.423).” The National Mentoring Partnership (2019), reported that “130% of youth mentored are more likely to hold leadership positions, 90% of students are interested in becoming a mentor themselves, 78% of youth are more likely to be volunteers, and 55% of youth are more likely to enroll in a college or university (p.1).” Mentoring programs are beneficial in improving not only academics but also helps to provide skills necessary for life beyond the classroom.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (2009) stated that “mentoring is a valuable strategy to provide students with the emotional and instrumental support they need to achieve the goal of a college degree” ( P.1). Researchers have also determined mentored children are 46% less likely to get involved with drugs and alcohol (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, 2012). Also, 59% of mentored youth improve their grades (The Mentor Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, 2006). In addition, 86% go on to higher education (The Mentor Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, 2006). Lastly, 80% of youth in the juvenile justice system do not return to the system after being mentored (The Mentor Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, 2006). Furthermore, mentored children develop better relationships with their families and other adults (Rhodes et al. 2005, Tierney and Grossman, 1995), and experience a reduction in feelings of hopelessness (Keating et al. 2002). They also have a reduction in delinquent behavior such as skipping school and class, initiating drug and alcohol use, and getting into physical fights (Grossman & Rhodes 2002, Tierney & Grossman 1995). Researchers (Whitfield & Edwards 2011) suggest that mentored students are open to new experiences, receive constructive criticism better than those who do not participate in them and develop critical thinking skills. Although there is

much literature that mentoring works, some researchers are apprehensive of mentoring programs for Black male youth if the programs are not designed to fit Black culture or bridge the gap between academics and daily life stressors outside of the classroom (DuBois et al., 2011; Eby et. al, 2008; Harper, 2009; Neblett et al., 2012; Morales, 2006; Ogbu, 2004).

## **2.8 Summary**

Although negative stereotypes concerning Black males proliferate, many young Black men are successful academics who make it through high school (Hemmings, 1996; Hubbard, 1999) and into college (Harper, 2004). And many more would follow this path with the removal of systemic barriers and proliferations of programs and experiences designed to respond to their identities and experiences. Equity in education is still a consistent problem throughout the United States (Campbell, 2003; Noguera, 2003). Though there have been efforts to address this inequity, there are still many strides needed to improve the qualitative outcomes for students who come from racially minoritized backgrounds.

Culturally responsive pre-college support programs for Black males are beneficial as they ensure that participants are prepared for higher education upon completion from high school. Many of the needs mentioned, include an Afro-centric approach to learning, mentorship, and the development of self-efficacy and persistence. These needs are present in and outside of the classroom and not only focus on academic outcomes but the psychosocial domain of the student as well. Many of the flourishing culturally responsive programs mentioned are changing the narrative for the underserved population and have a strong connection to the influence of high school graduation and enrollment in college for Black males.

Based on the available research, this proposed study will explore the Black Male Leadership Development Institute which embodies the tenants of a culturally responsive program through the lens of African American Male Theory to assess the influence of a culturally responsive, pre-college program on high school graduation and college matriculation of Black males. Chapter Three will present the research methodology that will aid in furthering the research.



### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Inquiry Questions**

The goal of this research study was to explore a culturally responsive program and its potential influence on Black male students graduating high school and matriculating into a college or university following graduation. The following inquiry questions assisted in further guiding the research and exploring the connection between culturally relevant out-of-school programming as well as high school graduation and matriculation to higher education:

1. In what way(s) does a culturally responsive pre-college program prepare high school Black male students for graduation? [L]  
[SEP]

This research question assisted in connecting aspects of the program's curriculum model to Black male participants' persistence through high school.

2. What influence does a culturally relevant program have on high school Black males' matriculation and enrollment in a college or university post-high-school graduation? [L]  
[SEP]

This research question investigated the components of the program that may have assisted in Black male students' enrollment in higher education.

#### **3.2 Qualitative Resource Characteristics**

The research questions that framed this qualitative study were addressed using a phenomenological approach and centered on experience contextualization. Using a case study

design model, I gained a greater understanding of possible connections between a culturally relevant pre-college program for Black males, high school matriculation, and college enrollment.

Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as the discovery and understanding of the meaning of the human experience, in this case, ten alumni of the BMLDI program who have matriculated to college. This method of inquiry was chosen to garner a better understating of the factors within pre-college support programs that influenced these Black males' decisions to attend and graduate from college. Creswell (2007) recommends five approaches when using a phenomenological study method approach:

1. Determining whether the research question fits the research. The research questions proposed focused on the elements of persistence and self-efficacy of Black male adolescent students who have: 1.) participated in the BMLDI program, 2.) graduated from high school, and 3.) enrolled in a college or university. Self-efficacy is known to correlate with excelling in education, performance expectancies, self-perceptions of competence (Hackett et al., 1992; Stipek, 1984), and a positive attitude towards subject matter (Bandura, 1997).

2. Selecting one or more participants who can share their stories (Creswell, 2013). This study analyzed ten participants. These informants shared their experiences in the BMLDI that helped them persist through high school and enroll in a college or university. Each of the participant's stories were unique; thus, this qualitative study provided an in-depth understanding through face-to-face interviews via the online platform Zoom. The qualitative phenomenological study utilized the Responsive Interview model for conducting the interviews to get a deeper understanding from participants about their experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

3. Collecting information about the context of the stories and providing detail that may include time and place, racial/ethnic make-up, etc. This study investigated the demographic

background and diversity of the informants to determine the impact of “similarities and differences” on participants’ perceptions of their BMLDI experiences.

4. Analyzing the story and then “re-story-ing” it in a way that makes sense and can be shared. After the informants’ shared, their experiences and the data was transcribed and coded, for accuracy, a summary of their responses were shared with each participant to verify that their responses were interpreted correctly.

5. Working with the participants and involving them in the research process. Each participant selected was directly involved, as their direct responses had an impact on the outcomes of this research study. In following this approach, I aligned with the work of Creswell (2007). His research is vital for assisting researchers in understanding and interpreting the influence of the BMLDI on student experiences. I provided a comfortable, safe space to provide participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences in the BMLDI program. This study was comprised of ten interviewees who answered a series of ten questions. The interviews took place via the online platform “Zoom”.

### **3.3 Phenomenology**

Learning and gaining an understanding of what we go through personally is the hallmark of Phenomenology. Armstrong (2005) describes phenomenology as “the Philosophy of Experience.” He adds that the lived experience of all people is the source of all meaning and value as it relates to the meaning of phenomenology (2005). Merleau-Ponty (1956) described phenomenology as “a study of essences and accordingly, its treatment of the problem is an attempt to define an essence, the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness.” Since the primary

tenet of phenomenology is the lived experience of people, this study uses this method to analyze and better understand the experiences of the participants, all of whom are former students of the BMLDI program and come from diverse families, schooling, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These characteristics and diverse backgrounds will inform the research and generate common themes from the participants' responses to the aforementioned questions. I intended to investigate the influence of culturally responsive pre-college programs on high school graduation and enrollment in college for Black males.

This study consisted of a series of ten semi-structured interviews where participants were able to discuss their experiences while participating in the Black Male Leadership Development Institute. Using Rubin & Rubin's Responsive Interview model, the participants were engaged with "probing questions" in an attempt to foster a "deeper understanding, depth, and clarity" to responses provided (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 146). In this way, they reflected on their own experiences (which is the study of phenomenology), and the study focused on their interpretation of these experiences. Although the participants were all Black males, and their experiences had slight differences, they were vastly different from those of their white and female counterparts. Von Eckartsberg (1998) noted that phenomenological studies focus on conceptualizing the essence of not just individual but group experiences, hence the group of Black male students in this study. The selection of Black males in this study meets Eckartsberg's framework for investigation.

### **3.4 Setting**

While this study was not a program evaluation, it aimed to investigate one culturally relevant program, The Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI), located in

Pittsburgh, PA, and its connectedness to the educational experiences of Black males that have graduated from high school and matriculated into a college or university after completing the program. The BMLDI is a program of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, in partnership with Robert Morris University in Moon Township, Pennsylvania. This initiative is designed to provide leadership development training to 75 African American male high school students annually in grades 9-12 in the Greater Pittsburgh region. The students come from across the region and have varying socioeconomic statuses, attended different school types, achieved a variety of grade point averages, and have different life experiences. The students begin the program in June by participating in a seven-day overnight residential experience at Robert Morris University, consisting of over 20 workshops facilitated by African American male professional community members ranging in professions such as attorneys, clergymen, educators, engineers, medical professionals, law enforcement, government, community organizers, entertainers and more.

The session topics range from leadership development, ethical decision-making, visioning, the media's portrayal of Black males, intercultural competence, discovering identity, personal branding, protecting your body through sound values, in addition to tips on achieving success in the classroom. The program continues with ongoing leadership development called the Saturday Institute, which is a workshop held once a month at Robert Morris University's downtown satellite campus. The Saturday Institute sessions comprise four main workshops that all students have to attend. Each student is required to attend two sessions per academic semester to ensure that all of the workshops have been completed. The four workshops are described in detail in Appendix A.

### **3.5 Researcher's Reflexivity**

As the principal investigator of this inquiry, I must state my connection to this study. I identify as a Black male, meaning that I have an ancestral heritage connected to Africa, and I acknowledge my gender as male. When I was younger, my family lived in a lower-income neighborhood. When I was an adolescent, we moved into a middle-class neighborhood in the Eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh. As an adult, I consider my family middle class. Throughout my life, my mother enrolled my siblings and me in many programs, including pre-college programs similar to the programs studied. I was a co-director of this program for over seven years. This connection has allowed me direct contact with students, and I have been able to witness the transformative experience of the young people who participate in the program.

As the former co-director of the program, I am interested in investigating pre-college programs for Black males and the connection between these programs and both high school completion and college matriculation. Growing up as a teen in the Western Pennsylvania area, I did not have many positive Black male figures/mentors in my life. My biological father was not present, though thankfully, I had a stepfather who stepped in as “Dad.” My stepfather was the only positive male role model in my childhood. Although I was fortunate enough to have a positive father figure day-to-day, outside of my home, I was still lost and needed someone who looked like me to speak life into me and share wisdom. My mother enrolled me in a Penn State University program designed for high school students aspiring to attend college called “Opportunity Knocks.” At the time, I did not know if I wanted to attend college, although my mother told me that I had to go. After attending Opportunity Knocks, I reflected on the impact of individuals who looked like me, who also held leadership roles. Exposure to the college student facilitators (as well as resident

assistants) and young people of Color in my cohort helped me feel comfortable while living on campus for the week-long program.

In addition, another influential component was exposing us, students, to potential majors and career fields (many of which I had little knowledge of), which enhanced my thinking about career possibilities. Through the Opportunity Knocks program, I gained several mentors, including one in particular with whom I eventually lost touch through my college years. Many years later, however, as I began my journey at the Black Male Leadership Development Institute as the then Program Manager, I ran into this same mentor again at a Boy Scouts event. During the event, I expressed to him that the Opportunity Knocks program had changed my life. He looked at me in a state of confusion and had no idea what I was talking about. When I told him that I was a member of the inaugural program, he stared at me in utter shock and blurted out, “It’s you!!!” He was surprised to have seen me as an adult in a role similar to the role he played for me when I was a child. Later that evening, he sent me an email informing me that he broke down in tears at the idea that I had continued doing the work that he was so passionate about at Penn State. He also mentioned that his son was a part of the BMLDI program a few years prior. I later found out that he wrote a journal article about our reconnection experience entitled, “*What They See is What They’ll Be*” (Bailey, 2014).

During the Black Male Leadership Development Institute’s seven-day residential summit, I asked him as well as two dozen other African American males to present a specific workshop related to their expertise that catered to the needs of the 75 Black male high school students. Before my former mentor began to present his workshop, he gave me a copy of the article. I was utterly blown away at his interpretation of the re-connection. Upon reflection, his presence in my life at that time helped in shaping my views of the world and motivated me to go to college

and graduate. As I've introspected my positive experience in this culturally responsive pre-college program, it helped me understand the importance of helping every student in the BMLDI and other similar programs. Through my experience in Opportunity Knocks, I now understand that some mentors may never know their impact on their mentees.

As the former co-director of the BMLDI program, I was keenly aware of the bias that may be present. It was, therefore, critically important that I incorporated "Bracketing" (Tufford & Newman, 2010) in this study. Tufford (2010), describes Bracketing as "a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process." In other words, any judgments I had concerning the BMLDI program and/or participants' viewpoints were suspended. The utilization of bracketing provided objectivity to my interpretations of informants' responses by removing my assumptions and opinions about the informants' responses from my analysis. In this study, I focused objectively on what the participants are saying and their lived experiences. In the interviews, I demonstrated bracketing by repeating the participants' responses back for accuracy to ensure that I interpreted and recorded their responses correctly. In effect, I will made every effort not to display a level of bias (as it is impossible to remove all biases) and subjectivity to participants' responses.

### **3.6 Inquiry Approach/Methods**

According to Abercombie (1984), "The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases (p.390)." This case study was



comprised of a series of face-to-face interviews recorded via the online platform Zoom. Eisenhardt (1989) noted that case studies are beneficial when there is an exploratory approach to an area that is new or has not been fully explored. This study used a phenomenological approach and coded the data, which were audio and video recorded and transcribed. I took notes throughout the interview on each participant. Next, I began to identify common themes that emerged throughout the various interviews. After themes were identified, I created thematic memos that described the lived experience of each participant (Van Manen, 2014). Creswell et al. (2007) described qualitative research as conclusive, and efficient. In Creswell et al (2007)'s description of qualitative research, they also include the examination of cause-and-effect relationships and identify attributes of relevant groups with a focus on exploring hypothetical relationships and testing theories. Participant data was coded, aggregated, and analyzed to produce findings and recommendations for programs serving adolescent Black males.

### **3.6.1 Sample**

The participants in the study consisted of ten Black males between the ages of 18-25 who:

- have completed the BMLDI program within the last seven years,
- have graduated from high school, and
- were enrolled in college or university the semester immediately following graduation.

Students who did not immediately enroll in a college or university upon high school graduation were ineligible for the study. With written permission from the Urban League and Robert Morris University, potential program participants were identified. The identified

participants were contacted via a letter written by the researcher (Appendix B), and upon consent to participate, the first ten respondents to the invitation to participate in this study were selected. The letters were sent out via email (with read receipts, to ensure participants have received the message) attached to outgoing correspondence. Each response was collected for participation, as stated in the letter; therefore, a printed name and signature were required for acceptance and were returned via email or US mail.

### **3.7 Data Sources**

I conducted face-to-face interviews via the virtual program “Zoom” with the selected participants. All participants in the study were reminded of what the study entailed, in addition to a reminder of what the consent form stated. The participants were also informed of how they were selected to participate. The study included a protocol with the same set of questions that each participant received. However, because the protocol was semi-structured, I clarified questions if they were unclear or warranted a follow-up question. The data collection involved recording each interview (with permission from the participant) that followed a series of questions (Appendix C). Following the recorded interviews, I transcribed the interviews using the transcribing software Otter. I followed up with each participant immediately after the interview was completed to check for the accuracy of the participants’ statements. Once the responses were verified, I identified common themes from the interview transcriptions and coded the data provided. The data the respondents provide was analyzed to assist in:

- addressing the problem of the need for Black males’ participation in culturally responsive pre-college programming

- its association with high school graduation and
- enrollment in a college or university.

Within this context, I developed a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black male students who have participated in culturally relevant pre-college programs.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Analyzing the responses from these qualitative phenomenological interviews further assisted me in determining recommendations to enhance the BMLDI program and programs with similar design models and objectives. This method was used to capture the “lived experience” of Black males who participated in the BMLDI program. The intended goal was to assess how the BMLDI program has influenced participants’ interest to enroll in college and to identify areas of connectivity or common themes in their lived experiences in the program. After the data was collected, I identified and reviewed the common themes and trends from the transcribed interviews through coding methods. I looked for commonalities that occurred in the themes and language the participants used throughout the interviews. Identifying these themes through interview responses, observations of participants, and program curriculum helped me to code the associated data. The codes were grouped into several categories and broken into sub-categories as the themes emerged. After narrowing down the codes in chronological order based on the identified themes, I began to include both structural and textual codes. The structural codes included the feelings and textual codes described the student’s experience (Van Manen, 2014).

### **3.9 Demonstration of Scholarly Practice**

After my inquiry project, I plan to create a yearlong intervention model that encompasses best practices for adolescent Black male programming. The intervention will be composed of the completed study, culturally relevant academic enrichment materials, as well as a resource guide that will help adolescent Black high school males succeed within culturally relevant program models. This model will be used for programs around the nation looking to incorporate successful pre-college components into their program design. Utilizing these tools, I plan to promote this model to replicate this into a nationwide phenomenon with the expectation of continuing to research additional components not considered while conducting this project.

### **3.10 Limitations**

There are a few limitations in conducting this study. One major limitation is that contact information for many of the earlier participants was outdated and may be lost. Many of the students and families associated with the BMLDI program have moved; therefore, some of the former participants who qualified for this study were not contacted.

Additionally, the time associated with the study was a limitation. Having such a large pool of past participants in the database made it difficult to reach the majority of students served throughout the life of the BMLDI program. There have been over 1,000 participants in the program, and there was not a data tracking system on past participants until 2018. The lack of a proper data management system made it difficult to track these participants. A limitation also existed in the way that every experience each participant has had is different, and study results

varied from cohort to cohort; therefore, what may work for one cohort group will work for another. The program has evolved over twelve years and has included many different mentors and structures within the BMLDI. For example, the “Guys’ Night Out” component of the program was added to the BMLDI program model in 2016; therefore, students in prior cohorts in this study did not participate in this formal aspect of the current program structure.

An additional limitation was that although the program/study itself focused on men and boys and did not include women and girls, that alone is a direct commentary on gender. The role that women played in the lives of the Black men was not the focus, however, women were a major part of Black boys’ and men’s growth and development. Most of the participants in the study noted their mothers or another female in their lives signed them up and ensured that they participated in the experience through pick-ups and drop-offs. Participants indicated that the women who got them involved in the program wanted positive Black male role models in their lives. It is because of that notion alone, that the role of the women in their lives was crucial because they saw the need for connectedness of their young men to older Black men and made the connection a reality for them.

Another limitation was the personal bias as I am the former co-director of the program and have participated in a similar program model. Through the construct of phenomenology, my personal bias was managed in the interpretation and analysis of the findings. In this study, the analysis of the participants’ experiences was the primary focus.

Finally, a limitation was that this study is focused on adolescent Black males and did not include data in any other groups including Black girls and women who also are faced with many barriers. This study will be from Black men’s perspective. In addition, the BMLDI curriculum is based on hetero-sexual adolescent Black males because the program does not inquire about sexual

orientation, and there is not a specific curriculum that focuses on the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the gathering and analysis of data to provide recommendations for programs serving Black male students in culturally relevant pre-college program settings. This qualitative study was designed to investigate how programs such as the BMLDI could influence Black males' persistence through high school and enrollment in a college/university following graduation. The findings of this research study are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will include the implications, recommendations, and conclusion of this project.

## **4.0 Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The goal of this research study is to explore a culturally responsive program and its potential influence on Black male students graduating high school and matriculating into a college or university following graduation. The following inquiry questions guided the research and explored the connections between culturally relevant out-of-school programming and high school graduation and matriculation to higher education:

1. In what way(s) does a culturally responsive pre-college program prepare Black male high school students for graduation?
2. What influence does a culturally relevant program have on high school Black males' high school matriculation and enrollment in a college or university post-high-school graduation?

Chapter 4 offers results from this phenomenological study of the Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI). Chapter 4 is designed to take a deeper look at the many experiences of former participants of the BMLDI. While the BMLDI experience of the participants varied, all the participants provided an authentic view of their lived experience. Through a thorough analysis of the study's findings, the goal is to better understand the impact of participating in culturally relevant programs for Black males and ways that their experiences correlate with enrollment in a college or university. The data was collected from former BMLDI participants via online (Zoom) interview (Appendix 1). The questions for the interview were formatted based on Creswell's model (2007) in which the data was analyzed consisted of organizing the data and

identifying the themes through the coding process. After being coded, the data included tables and discussion.

## **4.2 Participants**

In this section I briefly introduce the participants in this study, providing both demographic information as well as insight into their high school experiences. This section also discusses the participants' rationale for participating in the BMLDI program. All participants are identified using pseudonyms.

### **4.2.1 Craig**

Craig is originally from the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh, PA. He attended two different high schools, one Christian school and the second a public school after his father acquired health issues and the private school was no longer affordable. Craig considered his high school experience a “3” out of “5” (on a scale of 1= “terrible” to 5 = “excellent”). Although he believed his experience was average, he felt he was academically strong throughout his high school career. He discovered the BMLDI program through his mother who encouraged him to get involved with the program. In signing up for BMLDI he did not have many expectations, although he did note that outside of his father he did not grow up with many Black male role models, so the name of the program “Black Male Leadership Development Institute” certainly piqued his interest. He participated in BMLDI all four years of high school.



#### **4.2.2 Jay**

Jay was a very active teenager who viewed high school to escape the realities of being home. He believed that school “allowed me to do what I wanted to do, and be who I wanted to be,” and ranked his high school experience very highly at a score of “5”, as he believed the experience made him better as a person. Jay noted that “School was my outlet; it was my escape from home.” Although Jay’s enjoyed his high school experience, his grade performance declined tremendously during his junior and senior years due to family problems. These problems caused Jay to take on many additional responsibilities. In addition, Jay participated in numerous teen programs through the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh through which he found the BMLDI. The Program Director noticed leadership ability from previous programs that Jay joined and encouraged his continued participation in the BMLDI. Jay’s appreciation for the program was so grand that he participated in the program from his freshman to his senior year in high school.

#### **4.2.3 Damon**

Damon was a high school swimmer who moved multiple times around the inner city of Pittsburgh and eventually settled with his single mother in suburban Turtle Creek. Damon mentioned having a positive experience while in high school and scored his experience at a “4” out of “5”. Damon said, “I will admit that there were times when I was a slacker, but I was the type of students who had certain expectations placed upon them because I was in the “GATE program” (Gifted and Talented Education Program). So, I used that as my driving force and motivation to push myself to always do better than what was expected of me.” Damon also was committed to breaking the “lazy” stereotype of Black males as he received it. Damon got involved

with the BMLDI when he mentioned to one of his eighth-grade teachers that he wanted to do more extracurricular activities and the teacher encouraged him to participate. He admitted to being “apprehensive” when he first heard about the program and was in disbelief initially that there was a program specifically designed for adolescent Black males. The idea that there was a program like BMLDI led him to ask himself, “What can I do?” and “How can I contribute?” His contribution to the program consisted of two years.

#### **4.2.4 Korey**

Korey was raised on the west side of Pittsburgh by his single father. Korey had an above-average experience of a high school ranked at a “4” out of “5” because of the (racial) diversity in which his high school represented. He loved learning about various backgrounds of people and was not afraid to ask questions when necessary. A student-athlete, Korey was injured in high school, and it took him a while to recover both physically and academically from the effects of the accident. He mentioned the people who influenced him in school were the BMLDI mentors as well as his football coach, and a mentor from another culturally relevant mentoring program he participated in. This mentor from another program that worked specifically with Black high school males recommended Korey to the BMLDI. He noted, “I was sold on the program so good [by his mentor] that I couldn’t wait to join.” He also mentioned he liked the idea of being connected to other Black males around the Pittsburgh area. He was so involved in the program that he participated for three years consecutively.

#### **4.2.5 Amir**

Amir was raised in a predominately Black neighborhood in the south side of Pittsburgh. Contrary to many of the participants in this study he grew up with both a father and grandfather as pivotal role models in his life. An introvert, he reluctantly joined the BMLDI only to find that he left the program after a few years of participation as an extrovert. He believed he had a positive experience while in high school (ranked at a “4”) although he said he developed severe “senioritis” (he lacked the motivation to complete academic work) during his final year in high school. He mentioned he joined the BMLDI because he asked his stepmother to help him to find an after-school activity that would look good on his resume for college. She discovered the BMLDI, in which Amir participated despite his hesitation. He entered the program as a rising junior and continued the program through his senior year.

#### **4.2.6 Steffen**

Steffen grew up in the west suburbs of Pittsburgh raised by a single mother. He overall enjoyed his high school experience and excelled in subjects like history and math. He was a member of the German club for many years but did not participate in any culturally relevant programs connected to being Black except for BMLDI. Although he excelled in school and participated in extracurricular activities, he ranked his experience in high school with an average score of “3” out of “5”. He emphasized that he was influenced in high school by his mother, another BMLDI student, plus the mentors of the BMLDI which is why he participated in the program for three years beyond the one-year commitment of the program. He mentioned, “It was great to be around many other brothers to connect with, along with mentors as well.” He

particularly was fond of the 7-Day overnight experience at Robert Morris University. He was so fond of the experience that he enrolled at Robert Morris University immediately after high school graduation.

#### **4.2.7 Tyler**

Tyler, a high academic achiever and AP student, joined the BMLDI in his senior year of high school. This city of Pittsburgh native attended the Pittsburgh Public Schools and rated his experience in college at a positive score of “4” out of “5” because of the extra-curricular programs he was a part of while in attendance. He said, “I was a good student academically.... I graduated with high honors from school and ended up becoming the Vice-President of my class and was the Captain of the Robotics Club.” He got involved with the BMLDI at the beginning of his senior year after meeting its Program Director at another culturally relevant STEM program in the region and he encouraged him to participate. He mentioned that he was “hooked” from the name of the program alone as he is a Black male who desired and still desires leadership development skills.

#### **4.2.8 Jamir**

Jamir grew up in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh and had a relatively average experience in high school (self-scored at a “3”). A student with academic potential, Jamir found himself falling short in his academic studies. Jamir noted, “I feel like I barely met the requirements...I definitely could have applied myself more. I was really bad at staying on top of my homework, it was not my thing.” He attributed his push and reminder of the importance of education to the BMLDI and the leaders and mentors of the program. He also discussed his jazz teacher serving as a “school

mom” to him and being someone, he looked up to, particularly when he found school too stressful. When he was younger, Jamir was bullied and assaulted by a classmate. He later joined another mentoring program in the area, as well as the BMLDI which was his first culturally relevant program. He joined the BMLDI program because his older brother participated in the program a few years prior. His mother mentioned that she saw a huge positive difference in her older son after he completed the program. He clearly remembered his brother graduating from the institute but emphasized that his mother insisted that both he and his brothers would be participating in the BMLDI program as they were of age to participate hence his three-year participation in the program.

#### **4.2.9 Elijah**

Elijah grew up in the city of Pittsburgh attending one of the Pittsburgh Public high schools. Overall, he ranked his high school experience at a “4” although, he discussed having poor grades early on in his freshman and sophomore years. His grades vastly improved throughout his junior and senior years in which he contributed much of his success to his participation in the BMLDI program. Elijah reported, “It really helped with my experience, and it (BMLDI) helps with a lot of things throughout your high school career.” He mentioned he was a “loner” in high school because many people he grew up with began to change and exhibit negative behaviors, and he did not want to be involved with them. His Godmother told him about the program. Once he and his mother attended an information session, both he and his brother enrolled in the program. He said, “My mom kind of forced me into it. At first, I didn’t know what to expect, but after a while I really enjoyed it, even getting up for Saturday morning sessions. It really helped me with my progression through high school.” Elijah participated in BMLDI for all four years of high school.

#### **4.2.10 Kymani**

Kymani, a native of Detroit, MI moved to the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh at the beginning of his sophomore year in high school. He indicated having a positive experience overall in high school and rated it a “4”. A strong student academically Kymani mentioned that he had a very strong support system at home with his mother, father, and extended family members. “They inspired me to do better,” he mentioned. He also gives credit to God for influencing who he is and for daily inspiration. He also mentioned a counselor he had growing up that was very instrumental in his development both physically and academically. He admitted that when he discovered the BMLDI, it was not a program that interested him. Kymani attended a predominately white school where he did experience some racism and prejudice. His mother’s friend had a son that completed the BMLDI program and strongly encouraged him to participate. Although a reluctant high school senior at the time, Kymani decided to join the program for one year and stated, “It [the program] went above and beyond my expectations.”

Below is a table (Table 1) that references the participants' attitudes toward high school on a Likert scale of 1-5 (1= “terrible” to 5 = “excellent”), as well as the number of years each participant was enrolled in the BMLDI. Although the BMLDI program is a one-year program, a limited number of students apply and return as they have been eager to re-enroll, parents/caregivers saw a change in them that they wanted to keep them enrolled, or the program saw a need for the student to continue as a support mechanism to get them through high school. All of the participants in this study wanted to re-enroll on their own each year beyond the one-year requirement.

**Table 1. Attitudes Towards High School & Number of Years Participated in the BMLDI**

Participants	Attitude towards high school	# Years participated in BMLDI
(Scale 5=very positive, 4=positive, 3=average, 2=below average, 1=terrible)		
Craig	3	4
Jay	5	4
Damon	4	2
Korey	4	3
Amir	4	2
Steffen	3	3
Tyler	4	1
Jamir	3	2
Elijah	4	4
Kymani	4	1
Average	3.8	2.6

Overall, the participants had a favorable attitude toward high school and averaged a 3.8 out of a possible 5; most of them felt they had an above-average experience. The data also revealed that most of the students participated in the BMLDI for multiple years and averaged 2.6 years between all participants. Three of the students participated in the program throughout high school, two students participated for three years, three students participated for two years, and two students

participated for one year. The two students that participated for one year discovered the program as rising seniors, therefore one year was their only option.

### **4.3 Themes**

Of the two research questions posed in this study, the first asked: In what way(s) does a culturally responsive pre-college program prepare high school Black male students for graduation? In reviewing the interview data, seven out of ten participants reported that the BMLDI program prepared them for high school graduation. They talked about this in a variety of ways. For instance, Elijah stated,

“My mom kind of forced me into it. At first, I kind of didn't know what to expect. But after a while, I really like... I really enjoyed it, even getting up for Saturday sessions. It really helped me with my progression through high school.”

Like Elijah, 70% of the participants interviewed mentioned that the program assisted in high school graduation. Jay was one of those students, who experienced academic struggles in high school had additional thoughts on how the BMLDI assisted in his progression and completion of high school.

“...It was still ingrained on me that I had to finish [high school]... If I didn't have that push, from BMLDI and a couple other sources. I probably wouldn't have finished. Um, because I mean, by society standards, I wouldn't have made it to see 24 because the way my life was set up, like, I wouldn't have made it to see 24 but if it wasn't for programs like BMLDI, to show a better light to young black males. You know, if it wasn't for the for this program nine times out of ten, I probably wouldn't be here.”



In contrast, three participants, Craig, Kymani, and Tyler indicated that they did not feel that the program was the primary reason they graduated high school. Both Kymani and Tyler came into the program their senior year and were already on track to graduate high school. Tyler did mention while the program did not necessarily help him academically to graduate high school, it did help him “mentally” and “socially” because he was experiencing “senior-itis”. In other words, the program helped him cope with the mental fatigue of being in school and anxiousness to complete it. Craig on the other hand mentioned that everyone in his family graduated from high school, therefore, before he entered the program the expectation was already set that he would be graduating from high school. All three participants however did admit that the BMLDI program did prepare them for enrollment into a university right after high school graduation. Of the three participants, they all projected that high school graduation was already in the plan for them while the remaining participants were encouraged and influenced by the BMLDI to complete high school.

Many of the participants discussed a positive experience while in high school. Despite the school system not being an ideal place for them. Harper (2016), discussed the educational disparity of Black boys in school beginning as early as elementary school. He noted, “that access to a high-quality education can be the difference between a pathway to the Whitehouse or the jailhouse (P.2).” Although the education system has not been ideal for Black boys, the participants in this program attributed their positive attitude towards school with the connection to programs like BMLDI and other program activities that made them feel value, worth and important. The next section will focus on the second research question.

The second research question asked about the influence of a culturally relevant program on high school Black males’ matriculation and enrollment in a college or university post-high-

school graduation. When the participants were asked about the program and its influence on them attending college, there was a resounding ten out of ten participants that felt the BMLDI program influenced their decision to enroll in college after graduation. Elijah stated:

“It [BMLDI] really made me think about college, which I was already planning to go, but it just helped me, you know, think about where I wanted to go and gave me you know, a kind of a trail way (pathway) to know what college is like and know what to expect.”

Steffen also agreed that the program influenced his decision to enroll in a university and stated:

“Absolutely the program helped me, like I said they were co-sponsored by Robert Morris. And that was one of the schools I was interested in and I am glad that I got in. Now I want to be an advocate for that program, and talk about it more at RMU.”

Not only were the students exposed to Robert Morris University where the seven-day residential experience was held, but however the BMLDI also encouraged students to identify what college/university best fit them. Korey described his experience as being “pushed” by program staff to go to college. Plus staff also helped transport students to college fairs and coached them on what questions to ask, and how to present themselves. He stated, “BMLDI played a major part in me going to college.” That statement seemed to be the sentiment across the board. Of these ten participants, they all projected the BMLDI was a pivotal part of the college decision-making process. All program staff and faculty affiliated with the program promoted enrollment in post-secondary education. These participants' responses acknowledge a core BMLDI objective that all participants learn about college, participate in, and develop a post-high school, college/career plan.

In addition to directly addressing the research questions, through further analysis of interview participants' experiences of the high school Black males' participation in the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, I also found four integral themes:

1. Importance of Black male role models and racial identity; Participants in this study were directly asked about whether the program impacted their racial identity.

2. Exposure to a college campus/residential experience, and its connectedness to attending a college/university; This theme came from the question regarding a BMLDI experience that significantly impacted them.

3. The importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and its connection to self-awareness; Participants were directly asked about the impact of culturally relevant material as well as the connection to self-awareness within the BMLDI.

4. The importance of "Brotherhood" and near-peer experiences. Participants when describing the strengths of the program revealed that creating life-long bonds with peers as well as the college mentors or "near peers" were instrumental in their program experiences.

Table 2 below offers insight into each of these themes, describing that theme, followed by a direct quote example from the participants.

**Table 2. Thematic Description of Findings**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quote Description</b>
Importance of Black Male Role Models/Educators & Racial Identity	Participants discussed the significance of Black male leadership & uncovered the importance of knowing who they are as Black men in the world.	<p>“And I would say that, because growing up, I didn't have a lot of positive black male role models. That's just how it was. And so joining the program gave me that opportunity to see successful black male professionals.” (Craig, 2021)</p> <p>“Racial identity is the foundation for who you are. It has connected me to a lot of Black leaders around Pittsburgh, and that really inspired me, It really pushes me to want to be more...and give back to my community.” (Korey, 2021)</p>
Exposure to a College/University Campus/ Residential Visits	Participants provided their lived experience and shared the impact of in person campus visits.	<p>“...It was a very good program. I loved it. That's why I stayed for so long. And it was just great to be around many other brothers to connect along with the mentors as well. Like, for instance, we had a seven day program programming at Robert Morris University. That's the school I go to now.” (Steffen, 2021).</p>
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Self-Awareness	Participants discuss the three pillars of CRP (academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness) in addition to discussing self-discovery as a result of participating in the program and if/how they have been influenced.	<p>“It (BMLDI) made me more mindful of my surroundings, especially the (racial) climate that we're in today, with the training and the tools that there were, that BMLDI provided me and the people that they have brought out to speak to us. It definitely helped me develop and grow and be more be more mindful of what is going on around me.” (Kymani, 2021).</p>
Brotherhood	Participants revealed the implications of participating in a program with other Black teenage males and their bonds as brothers created.	<p>“So just being around like-minded individuals who come from similar backgrounds, and even different backgrounds to be up there for a week and just experience that brotherhood and have, you know, mentors, aka our cluster leaders, just kind of who are not suit that are that far in age from us to just kind of guide us on</p>

**Table 2. (continued)**

		how to become a better male, better citizen, better son, nephew, whatever title you have, and then the guest speakers just enhance that experience to open our eyes to a bigger horizon.” (Jay, 2021).
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#### **4.4 Importance of Black Male Role Models**

The experiences with the roles that Black males played in their educational experiences varied among all the subjects. Eight of the participants in the study mentioned the importance of Black male role models in their lives. Fifty percent of the participants grew up in homes with their fathers and looked to them as role models, while the other half looked for Black male role models in other places, such as programs like the BMLDI. Amir mentioned that before he participated in BMLDI both his father and grandfather were Black male role models for him and that BMLDI only added to the mentors in his life. He that this “made me stand out more” (Amir, 2021). Like Amir, Craig mentioned his father being a vital influencer in his life and provided a lot of guidance for him, but what struck him as most important within the BMLDI was the impact of Black male role models throughout the program.

“And I would say that, because growing up, I didn’t have a lot of positive Black male role models. That’s just how it was. And so joining the program gave me that opportunity to see successful Black male professionals. I mean Black female professionals are great too, But I can only sympathize with them. I can’t empathize with them, like I can for an older Black male. And so, it’s kind of hard, not kind of, it’s very difficult to be something you can’t see. And so, joining the program, the BMLDI program allowed me to

see what I could be. And since then, it's been a pretty positive effect just in my college career (Craig, 2021).”

Black male presence was an influencer in the academic matriculation for program participants. For Craig, the race of the role model alone was not enough for him, he made it clear that Black male role models were necessary for his academic and professional growth. Like Craig, Damon discussed his stepfather as a role model in his life that encouraged him to participate in programs with professional Black male role models, in particular, BMLDI.

“He actually, passed away the summer before ninth grade. Something he always wanted was to see me graduate high school, see me go to college for what I wanted to do. So, one of my driving forces since he was gone, was at the very least make sure that I could make him proud for whatever he wanted me to do...when I wanted to join BMLDI any of that he always stood behind me as long as it wouldn't be something that would land me in a prison cell.”

Based on all the participants, the impact of exposure to professional Black men from a variety of professions starting with the seven-day residential experience, to the Saturday Institute sessions, and the bi-monthly “Guys Night Out” sessions, confirms that Black male role modeling is influential in their lives.

#### **4.5 Racial Identity**

Eight of ten participants mentioned the importance of exposure to the vast number of adult Black males that were facilitators of the program and the impact that it had on them. When asked about whether the BMLDI program impacted his racial identity Damon stated:

“It did...BMLDI made me proud to be an African American male. It was one of those things were growing up, especially growing up in a couple of the neighborhoods I did, like Homewood and North Braddock. They're not the most quote-unquote, reputable neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. There's a lot of gang violence where I grew up. I grew up in, an area where hit the deck drills were a thing. It was like, you're sitting at home, you hear gunshots, switch off the lights, get under your bed or on the ground, don't go to your windows or doors, that sort of thing. And for a long time, I was just like, Oh, this is what it's like to be black. This is what I should expect. But doing this program, gave it gave me an indication of other success, other successful Black males, artists, speakers, doctors, that sort of thing. And it made me proud to be a Black male, because like I can be a Black male and I can be successful. I don't have to fall into like, a general dead end, nine to five (job). And this program is actually one of the things that really pushed me along my path of wanting to be a journalist.”

Like Damon, Craig agreed that the program made him appreciate what it is to be a Black male in America. “You’re still a Black male at the end of the day, and that comes with both positives and negatives. And so, you just have to acknowledge both the positives and negatives when you’re maneuvering through society.” Jamir discussed the importance of the BMLDI and his racial identity, and it influenced his decision to get in touch with his roots.

“In my experience the BMLDI has led me to connect with myself, and other Black people in my ancestry as much as possible, especially since like, our experience as Black people is a lot different than other minorities. Like, no one else was brought from another continent. It’s like we have no connection. Not necessarily no connection, unless something was passed down. Take Jamaica or Haiti for example, like they stuck to their traditions,

values and what not... But we've had to make our own culture because we don't have anything to connect to, it was taken from us. So for me, my racial identity has been about finding myself and (my) interests. It (the BMLDI program) has made me more unapologetically Black, which was something that I wasn't before."

Exposure to Black male role models certainly correlated with the racial identity of the participants in this study. The question of whether BMLDI's influence on racial identity was directly asked during the interview process and a resounding ten out of ten participants stated that the program influenced their understanding of their racial identity, and how it impacts who they are in the world. The next theme was exposure to a college/university and its connectedness to enrollment.

#### **4.6 Exposure to a College/University Campus**

The BMLDI program exposes participants to a college campus during a seven-day residential stay. Many of the students who participated in the program found this to be a theme that enhanced their ideas of enrolling in higher education after high school graduation. Craig emphasized that coming to a college campus with BMLDI, made him realize that there are "steps are being taken to ensure that Black males are attending college." He highlighted that by coming to a college campus if you "see it" you can be it... It wasn't until I joined the program that I realized that like, oh there's people actually trying to get is to go to college and be successful on our own."

Jay stated:

"It's the vibe of the program. Like, you're taking 70-80 high school aged young males for a week in the summer to stay on a college campus before you even go to a college



campus and physically become a student. Being around like-minded individuals who come from similar backgrounds, and even different backgrounds to be up there for a week and just experience that brotherhood and have, you know, mentors, aka our cluster leaders, just kind of who are not suit that are that far in age from us to just kind of guide us on how to become a better male, better citizen, better son, nephew, whatever title you have, and then the guest speakers just enhance that experience to open our eyes to a bigger horizon.”

While Jay discussed his experience participating in the residential part of BMLDI, Steffen’s experience at Robert Morris University’s campus yielded in his decision to attend the university following high school graduation.

“It was a very, it was a very good program. I loved it. That's why I stayed for so long. And it was just great to be around many other brothers to connect along with the mentors as well. Like, for instance, we had a seven-day program programming at Robert Morris University. That's the school I go to now.” (Steffen, 2021).

Steffen’s response confirms what a majority of the participants experienced. Exposure to a university setting with slightly older students, the opportunity to be away from home for a week, access the recreational activities, all provided an experience for the participants they could not necessarily connect with if they never participated.

#### **4.7 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Self-Awareness**

Culturally relevant pedagogy and self-awareness were additional themes that were prevalent. Many of the participants discussed the importance of culturally relevant material and why it was

important to them. Amir was extremely passionate when asked if culturally relevant material benefited him during his participation with the program:

“You're gonna talk about the hard shit like, like your gonna talk about Antwon Rose, you're gonna talk about George Floyd. Like you're really gonna... get into some stuff that like, if you don't want to talk about it...you could stay away from it but like, it's shit that needs to be talked about. Um, and, like let's be honest with you, like, Antwon Rose could have been my nigga down the street, like it could have been anybody and it just happened to be my friend's cousin. So like, it, it just happens to be like, things that are perpetuated in our community. So you have to you have to deal with it.”

Amir's passionate response like many others in the group discussed similar thoughts as it related to the culturally relevant information they acquired throughout their participation in the program.

Damon's experience, when asked about if he benefited from culturally relevant material, was no different.

“I was able to find programs and meet people that had large cultural significance through this program, I was able to first of all, write a letter to President Obama. That was a big cultural shift., because that was like the first eight years we had a Black president. That was a huge culture shock for the world. I was able to meet Black journalists, Black artists, Black professors, which growing up I want you to know, I didn't have my first Black teacher until I was in ninth grade...So, I was able with this program, see the positive side of the culture with of African American males like there was a point where we did drum circles. And I was able to learn more about drum circles and the relevance and the history behind it. So, this program really helped grow a lot of my cultural understanding of

life, not only being a Black male in America, but being a Black male from around the world.”

Jamir stated:

“His first name is Majestic (referring to a BMLDI faculty member), and he would talk about like, political activism. I remember his first question (to us students) was, what is the name of Pennsylvania's two senators? Nobody could answer the question. And he basically just encouraged like political awareness, activism and making sure that you're aware of everything that's going on, but he wasn't always talking about like, politics and government and stuff like we talked about on social things as well. Like I remember he showed us this, Joyner Lucas rap video. And it was about this conversation between this Black guy, and this like, raging like white Trump supporter, and like them trying to find a middle ground, but he like rapped to their words. And like the artist acted it out. And then we had like, a really long discussion after that.”

Discussing events that impacted Black males were pivotal components of the BMLDI and held in high regard. Many of the conversations helped participants navigate through life. The program provided a place of refuge, comradery, and healing which were vital in the lives of the participants. Many of these civically engaged conversations helped participants not only learn more about the world them but have learned a greater sense of self-awareness.

## 4.8 Self-Awareness

In addition to culturally relevant pedagogy, participants of this study expounded on their responses and uncovered their self-awareness because of participation in the BMLDI and the culturally responsive curriculum with the program.

Craig stated: “Simply based off the idea that a lot of your success depends on you, when you when you're starting to move up. So, to give a little bit more description on that...So, moving on to college, because that's one of the big things that was stressed IS college, a lot of that responsibility (of attending college) is put on you. And if you don't put in the work, nine times out of ten, almost ten times out of ten, you're not going to get the result that you want. But you also have to remember that...the decisions that you make, the things you say, and the things you do also affect the people around you, and affect how those people around you treat you...You know how they say perception is reality? And so being in the BMLDI program, they kind of emphasized that both academically and socially. And because of that, I became more aware of the things that I say and do, and how my decisions affect my conditions in the long term.”

Craig also emphasized the importance of learning more about himself as a Black male and de-mystifying the negative stereotypes that Black males have.

“I forgot what session it was, but we were talking about a stereotype that there's more Black men in prison than in college. The whole session was committed to de-bunking that whole rumor and it stuck out to me. It taught me don't believe everything you hear. Like we are progressing. It's just not being publicized. Like, that was big for me!”

While Craig discussed his self-awareness Korey and Tyler both had their ideas of how the BMLDI impacted their self-awareness.

“Before the BMLDI, I was very quiet, and I wasn't really talkative. And I tend to just let other people talk. I wouldn't take advantage of the space I had in the room. And because of BMLDI I, I'm actually more vocal, I feel like I'm more of a leader. And I'm able to ask questions. Not only that I'm thinking, but for people that might be thinking the same thing. And I also know when to step back and let other people ask questions as well.”  
(Korey, 2021)

While Tyler (2021) added,

“They (BMLDI) challenged me to think differently about how I see myself, and how to walk. I like to call it projection walking. Like Brother Malcolm (one of the program faculty members) was talking about when he was saying, you should be walking like who you want to be and not who you are. That's how you should carry yourself. And so that has definitely been a big thing for me, walking into a room, walking into a job, walking into a school, like I'm the graduate, like I'm the professor. That's how I'm going to carry myself, even though I'm the student. You know like, I'm the manager, even though I'm the employee.”

Tyler was so inspired by the culturally responsive pedagogy that BMLDI taught that he started his mentoring program working with young men. One instructor emphasized the notion of “Bringing Your ‘A’ Game” (a culturally relevant curriculum developed by Dr. Anthony Mitchell) meaning bringing your best self in and outside of the classroom. “He inspired one of my favorite mantras that I like to tell myself, and my students and future kings, it is that I am great, YOU are great, WE are great!” He continued to talk about how another instructor within the program emphasized the importance of Black men having good posture in the classroom so the students would take him seriously and be seen as credible.

All of the participants interviewed gained a greater sense of self-awareness while enrolled in the BMLDI program. As a result of the responses many of the participants indicated they still implement what they have learned into their daily lives. Through this experience, many of the participants referenced their personal self-awareness, but also discussed the importance of holding your fellow brother accountable as well.

#### **4.9 Brotherhood**

Brotherhood was a theme that several of the participants mentioned, and it emerged as they reflect on their time in the program. In the interviews, the connection with other young Black male students was one of the first things mentioned by 90% of the subjects. They reflected on the lifelong bonds that were created because they participated in BMLDI. Korey believed that,

“BMLDI is more than just a program. It builds a foundation, and it builds a brotherhood with us. It's not just a program, it's...you build family there... Like, with you...I built a connection with you. I know you better because of BMLDI...me and Dean (a Program staff member) talk, like almost every day. It's more than just a program. It's not like oh, after these years, that's you're in the program you're done and then it's over with... no, once you're in BMLDI. You are always in BMLDI. You are always connected with those people.”

It was evident that Korey's mantra was “once a BMLDI participant, always a BMLDI participant.” His depiction that the program was more than just an academic course. It was a foundational tool that helped in the creation of a brotherhood that would last for years. He was not the only participant to feel this way. Tyler, who joined the program his senior year did not get the

opportunity to attend the seven-day residential program, but immediately felt a sense of “brotherhood” on his first day participating in the Saturday Institute.

“...Unfortunately, I wasn't able to go to, you know, the summer experience. And so, when I first came to BMLDI everyone had already known each other. And I was kind of just getting thrown into the mix. But it was such a welcoming experience and environment. I felt like, you know, everyone there who I was just meeting for the first time, we're all my brothers.”

He continued to tie in some of the identified themes into his next response when describing his experience with the BMLDI.

“I would say it's kind of a combination of brotherhood, and the self-awareness, like how we talked about before. So just having the value and having people who look like you, being able to mentor you, to challenge you, to push you, to build you up. Because throughout my life, I had seen kind of the crabs in a barrel mentality, where the people in my neighborhood are trying to pull each other down, where BMLDI is creating a ladder for all of us to climb up. And so that that type of brotherhood definitely spoke to me and it's a big reason why I you know, help create my own mentoring program in order to you know, continue that ladder and continue building up other young black men. And then I couldn't have done that also without doing the self-awareness and looking into myself, because you know, you can't help up all your brothers. If you're not good yourself. You always got put your mat your own mask on first. So, um, you know, I definitely had to, you know, look within myself and challenge myself to be more confident in order to tell my brothers to be more confident.” (Tyler, 2021).

Damon would agree with the sentiments of Korey and Tyler,

“Even within the guys ourselves...we had our own accountability groups who we might not have not all gone to the same high school, but we all kept in touch. We’re like hey, how’s your week going? Are you struggling with anything? That’s the other thing and it really helped push, it really pushed me to want to do better, not just for myself, But the fact that it was like I’m relying on my brothers, and my brothers are relying on me. It’s not fair to them or myself, if I’m doing the bare minimum.”

Overall, participants connected with their peers while enrolled in BMLDI, and created life-long bonds that made an impression on their lives. Many of these students discussed that the program in a short amount of time created a platform for these students to develop relationships that grew from strangers to friends, to brothers. The notion of “we” vs. “I” was very clear following the interviews. Many of the students came into the program alone but felt as though they left with long-lasting relationships that helped to shape their lives. The next section will discuss additional findings that were discovered after the completion of the interviews.

#### **4.10 Additional Findings**

This section offers additional themes that although some of these overlap with the themes above, they have also merited their section because they offer additional insights into other aspects of the program.



#### **4.11 Format of the Program**

Many of the participants discussed the format of the program. The format of the program included the seven-day residential experience followed by a monthly all-day Saturday session known as the “Saturday Institute” and the Wednesday sessions twice a month coined “Guys Night Out.” In discussing the format of the program Elijah mentioned, “the Saturday sessions really helped me to get an outlook on what it is to be, you know, a Black man in this society and just, you know, tell me it gave me to focus on school and not focus on outside things that a lot of teenagers were focused on, like the negative stuff.” Elijah was not the only participant who praised the Saturday Institutes as an added factor to his experience. Jamir also discussed his experience with the Saturday Institute sessions as “enjoyable” in addition to stating that “the Saturday Institutes challenged everyone, in a good way.”

#### **4.12 Community Service**

One-third of the participants interviewed discussed the idea of community service, and “giving back” to the communities where they lived. The participants took time to discuss changing the narrative of Black males concerning service within their respective communities. Elijah (2021) shared, “It (the BMLDI) helped me, really focus on like, community service stuff, it really helped me, you know, get exposure out there and learn a lot about my city and learn that we are doing positive things in spite of what people may think of us.” He also noted the community service opportunities he took advantage of while participating in the program which added to his professional resume. Steffen also mentioned his experience was unique in the program as he was

inspired to do more community service particularly in the Black community. In addition to the service he provided, he emphasized feeling better “prepared” to deal with race relations and racism that he might encounter throughout his life. These responses support Dr. Crawley’s (co-founder of the program) vision for wanting adolescent boys to have leadership, which is not only about serving your family but the community, in which all of the faculty and staff of the BMLDI communicates and emulates. As the program is still in existence today, and the same tenants of leadership are taught to BMLDI participants, his vision was realized.

#### **4.13 Summary**

Chapter 4 of this phenomenological qualitative study’s purpose was to analyze the data provided by participants. The analysis was presented as a result of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with participants. The two research questions for this study were addressed through interviews and analysis. Chapter 5 will provide the researcher’s recommendations and conclusion.

## **5.0 Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of culturally responsive programs on Black male's graduation from high school and enrollment in college. This research study confirms the importance of culturally relevant programs and the influence these programs have in Black males pursuing advanced degrees after high school graduation. Prior research, as well as the responses of the young men interviewed for this study make it clear that culturally relevant pedagogy should be incorporated in programs that serve high school Black males. Furthermore, this research offered the student perspective to add to the research and to provide an understanding of the importance of culturally relevant programming for adolescent Black males.

This study's framework was grounded in phenomenology through the lens of African American Male Theory (AAMT). The research study consisted of 10 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with former participants of a culturally relevant program called the Black Male Leadership Development Institute. Participants in this study all enrolled in a college or university after graduating high school. I was led to this research as I have been in the education field for ten years and in higher education specifically for four years. I experienced working with all students K-12 but more specifically focused on high school Black males more recently. It was my work with high school Black males that sparked my passion to conduct this research study. In Chapter 1, I introduced the "Problem of Practice" which provided a historical overview regarding Black males' high school graduation and college matriculation rates. In my personal and professional experiences of working with adolescent Black male students in culturally relevant pre-college

programs like the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, I found that the programs have a positive impact on students' high school graduation rates and enrollment in college. My findings are supportive of the previous literature regarding culturally-relevant programs for Black boys and its favorable connection to high school graduation and matriculation to a college university. Shaun Harper's (2012) research in his report from *The National Black Male College Achievement Study* further connects to my findings. One of the pipeline points he mentioned that closely connects is that of pre-college socialization and readiness. Through this process, Harper explores three factors that many of the participants discussed throughout their interviews. The three factors included:

1. Familial factors,
2. K-12 School Forces,
3. Out-of-school preparation resources.

When looking at familial factors, Harper (2012), analyzes the family unit and how they nurture and sustain Black boy interest in the school system. He also assesses how parents frame Black boys' college aspirations. Within culturally relevant programs like BMLDI this is also assessed when the student applies to the program. The program then fosters the level of interest and helps students prepare accordingly.

Within the K-12 system Harper looked at how teachers and other school agents prepare young Black men for college as well as how Black boys balance academic success and acceptance amongst their peer group. The BMLDI offers as part of the program a course that looks at both ideas and helps Black boys academically and socially.

The out-of-school preparation resources he examined were how low-income and first generation Black male students obtained information about colleges and universities as well as the programs and experiences enhanced their college readiness. Programs like BMLDI serve many

students from this demographic Harper (2012), researched, and heavily relied on how the program prepared students for college.

Chapter 2 focused on the literature that provided background knowledge of Black males in education, culturally relevant pre-college programs for Black males, and the introduction of African American Male Theory. Chapter 3, focused on the methodology used to conduct this body of research. Chapter 4's emphasis was on the analytical data and the findings of the study. This final chapter will provide a summary and discussion surrounding this research study. This chapter will provide recommendations for pre-college programs that serve adolescent Black males and implications for additional research.

There was not a lot of prior research that focused on the connection of these types of programs and what ways they assisted in the academic success of adolescent Black males. This qualitative study focused on ten former participants of the BMLDI in a semi-structured interview to answer the following research questions that guided this phenomenological study:

1. In what way(s) does a culturally responsive pre-college program prepare high school Black male students for graduation?
2. What influence does a culturally relevant program have on high school Black males' matriculation and enrollment in a college or university post-high-school graduation?

The data collection process was inclusive of semi-structured interviews that focused on the participant's high school experience as well as their experience participating in the BMLDI.

Three significant findings were identified:

1. In this study, most respondents felt that a pre-college leadership development program positively impacted their matriculation from high school to college for adolescent Black

males. Three-quarters of participants indicated the program had a direct influence over their decision to complete high school and enroll in college post high school. Many of the students indicated the program prepared them academically and emotionally. Analyzing the program curriculum also allowed for students to be prepared for college, by learning how to apply and the requirements needed for admission. Participants also were provided opportunity and access to a university as well as SAT preparatory classes, scholarship opportunities, and study-skills needed to aid in the high school to college process.

2. Culturally relevant curriculum can prepare adolescent Black males to develop healthy racial awareness and identity to support their successful acclimation to the academic rigors of the college classroom and social climate. Many of the participants discussed their connection to being Black young men in a society that is inherently racist. All of the participants indicated the positive influences of having programming centered around their academic, and social needs as adolescent Black boys in America.
3. A pre-college culturally responsive program can introduce participants to racial role models and prepare them for enrollment in a college or university. A majority of the participants discussed the importance of adult Black male mentors in the program that have positively influenced their high school graduation, enrollment in college and post-high school careers. Much of this research confirms the research that academicians such as Harper, Howard, Stewart, and Mitchell, and countless others have found on the success of adolescent Black male success.

As a result of these findings, interviews with participants, and the literature, I have compiled a list of recommendations and implications.

## **5.2 Implications for Practice & Recommendations**

The BMLDI presents a model that can be utilized by other programs serving adolescent Black males. The BMLDI also provides a model that can be used in other communities and organizations with similar missions such as the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. As new pre-college programs are created that serve adolescent Black boys it is very important to consider key recommendations. The recommendations for such programs would be 1. Investing in Black male instructors as many of the participants indicated their appreciation for the Black male leaders in the program in addition to their near-peer cluster leaders. The adult role models within the BMLDI helped to encourage the participants to create and plan for graduation and post-secondary plans. 2. Incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy within the program curricula as participants in this study expressed the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and the connection to a positive self-identity and racial socialization. 3. Exposure to a university setting preferably a residential component as many of the participants expressed the importance of being exposed to a college campus and the reality that college was a viable option for them since they have been there. The most significant finding of this research provides evidence that the BMLDI program impacts precollege adolescent Black boys' preparation to graduation from high school and enrollment in college.

Implementing these recommendations can aid in additional support and improve educational outcomes. These outcomes include high school graduation, and enrollment in college for Black males across the nation as we know historically many of the educational systems have failed them.

It is also worth noting that these kinds of programs can also help aid within the school system. As many of the participants noted their attitudes towards school was better because of their

participation in the program. They felt a sense of belonging and learned how to “do” school as opposed to attend a broken system that has failed many young Black men. Schools can do a better job at recruiting Black Male teachers and upper-level staff members to expose students to a demographic that is widely disproportionate. It is also important because culturally relevant programming like Critical Race Theory can help students understand history and look at forms of white supremacy in which is often overlooked and banned in many schools around the nation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This phenomenological study’s focus was to analyze a culturally relevant pre-college program for adolescent Black males and the impact the program had on their high school graduation and enrollment in a college or university directly after high school. In this study, I aimed to uncover key elements embedded in the Black Male Leadership Development Institute that impacted their journey through high school and college enrollment. Black males enrolled in this program determined that the BMLDI had a direct impact on their academic success. Over 80% of the students interviewed indicated the program assisted them in preserving through the challenges of high school in part because of the model the program provided. The seven-day residential experience offered the participants exposure to collegiate students, faculty, staff, and facilities. The residency also exposed participants to over 30 Black male professionals leading culturally relevant workshops ranging from “The Journey to Manhood,” “Personal Branding,” and “Preparing for College” workshops. Because of the exposure to the University, Black male students in this study had a realistic grasp of what a college experience may be like because they were in an environment that gave them a realistic lens of what their experience may be like.



My ultimate hope is that more pre-college programs will begin to implement culturally responsive pedagogy in their programs to respond to the needs of adolescent Black boys.

## **Appendix A.1 Workshop A: Civic Engagement through Creative Expression**

This workshop leads students through a series of interactive activities to explore community issues that are important in their lives. Students will determine their level of civic engagement and discuss barriers that hold them back from becoming more involved. They explore historical examples of how speaking out and other forms of advocacy can create community change. Various methods of civic engagement are discussed, from protest activism to serving in political office. Students in this session also learn various ways they can use their creativity to express their voice about the issues discussed. Guest speakers are invited to share with the students how they use their artistic talent to become civically engaged. In this session, students brainstorm ideas and create a Project Action Plan and complete the project by the end of the five sessions. The project plan includes the following steps:

Step 1 – Project Creation: What needs to happen to complete this project?

Step 2 – Projected Outcomes: What do we want to happen or change as a result of this project?

Step 3 – Project Assessment: How do I know if we were successful?

Step 4 – Students work in groups to complete project tasks with the goal of completing 60% of the project.

Step 5- Students work to complete the project during Session 5. The Project Action Plan will be reviewed to determine the next steps in the process. Finally, staff help students in determining how they can personally continue to use their creative talents to stay civically engaged. Personal strategies are created so that students have a clear plan to stay involved in their community and school.

## **Appendix A.2 Workshop B: Stepping In and Out: Leadership for Self, Team, and Community**

In this session, the belief is that leadership is about “stepping in,” “stepping out,” and “stepping out” again. First, the student “steps in.” In doing this, the expectation is that students should be able to discover their leadership strengths, limitations, and the experiences they possess. Second, participants “step out.” Students analyze the teams they are a part of, ranging from athletic sports, the classroom, church, etc. Next, students will investigate leadership in teams that include every member of the group. In this component, every talent is tapped, and everyone works toward the same goal. Finally, students “step out” again. In “stepping out,” they assess the schools, neighborhoods, and cities they live in. They also continue to investigate how their leadership adds strengths to their respective schools and supports promoting unity in the community. Overall, these workshops help participants develop leadership that they can exercise within themselves, the teams they are associated with, and their respective communities so that everyone brings their best effort and works to achieve a common cause. Students “step in” and “step out” so that everyone can “step up.”

- ☐ Workshop #1A: Step In – Understanding Your Leadership Style
- ☐ Workshop #1B: Step Out – Leading through Focused Teamwork
- ☐ Workshop #1C: Step Out – Leading through Effective Facilitation
- ☐ Workshop #1D: Step Out – Leading through Creative Conversation
- ☐ Workshop #1E: Step Out – Leading through Discovering Consensus

## Appendix A.3 Workshop C: “Stoking the Fire: Finding, Nurturing, and Managing the Leader Within”

“Black male leadership is the ability to develop and maintain cultural and community-centered direction while aligning others toward a common goal and motivating them to action and promoting accountability for personal and organizational transformation.” – Rex L. Crawley, Ph.D. This interactive workshop builds on the definition of Black male leadership discussed during the Residential Summit. Its major goals are to challenge all participants to find ways to discover their potential for self-leadership. The curriculum for this component is listed below in Table 1, make it their own. Each week will flow as follows:

**Appendix Table 1. Sessions of Stoking the Fire**

SESSION ONE	SESSION TWO	SESSION THREE	SESSION FOUR	SESSION FIVE
Leadership Overview	Teamwork & Followership	Perspective & Self Awareness	Networking & Initiative	Leadership Learning (Self-awareness)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Definitions</li> <li>•Roles</li> <li>•Styles</li> <li>•Challenges</li> <li>•Workshop Intro</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Team building activity</li> <li>•Definitions</li> <li>•Examples</li> <li>•Challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Anti-bias training</li> <li>•Self-reflection</li> <li>•Multiculturalism</li> <li>•Challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community building</li> <li>•Key leadership skills</li> <li>•Challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Demonstration of student learning</li> <li>•Evaluative tool for the institute</li> </ul>

#### **Appendix A.4 Workshop D: Developing A Positive Identity**

Today, despite decades of social change and governmental efforts to redress past treatment and socioeconomic disparities, young African American males continue to experience adverse social, environmental, and economic experiences in American society. This workshop addresses how leadership training and development can be used to counter-historical and contemporary cultural influences in American society that affect the self-concept and identity formation of younger African American males. This interactive session:

- Introduces participants to self-awareness concepts that enable them to better understand how to develop positive “self” identity, self-esteem, and strong character in the classroom and community.

- Provides participants with techniques and strategies for developing coping skills and resiliencies to overcome “popular sub-cultural” values and behaviors that are known to influence adolescent Black males’ self-esteem and racial identity.

- Discusses the importance of “Acting Excellent” (academic achievement) and developing a strong work ethic in the educational and life success of African American males.

- Challenge participants to develop successful strategies and practices that instill positive self- and racial identity formation and self-confidence in the tradition of the Great men in the African American experience.

In addition to the Saturday Institute sessions, students meet two Wednesdays a month at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh office to participate in “Guys Night Out,” a social and academic support network within the BMLDI cohort. The year-round activities, including “Saturday Institute” and “Guys Night Out,” operate from July to May. Annually, the BMLDI

program culminates with a Graduation and Rites of Passage ceremony to highlight participants' accomplishments and the 140-hour requirements for successful completion.

## Appendix B

Interview Consent Form University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board Approval

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ IRB Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Participant,

I am Ryan Scott a Doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting for the Ed.D. program. This study is designed to learn about your experience with the Black Male Leadership Development Institute. With your voluntary consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-minute interview. All of the answers you provide will be used for research purposes only and may be used in future publications. All of your answers will be recorded and transcribed to ensure your responses are documented properly. Your identity will be completely confidential should you decide to participate. There are no risks to you or anyone else while conducting this study and will be informed of the date and time of the interview.

Your voluntary response and signature signify your informed consent to participate in this research study. You are not required in any way to participate in the study and can choose to opt out of the study at any time. If you have any inquiries please feel free to contact me at (412)608-4082 or [ryanscott@pitt.edu](mailto:ryanscott@pitt.edu). The Institutional Review Board office can also be contacted at (412)383-1480 to answer any questions.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Ryan Scott

Doctoral Student

University of Pittsburgh



## Appendix C

Interview Guide Protocol Interview #\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in this research study. My name is Ryan Scott, and I am a doctoral

student at the University of Pittsburgh in the school of Education. I am also the former Director of Education Initiatives at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, and now the Director of the Social Justice Institutes at Carlow University. I would like to talk to you about your experience in the Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI), and how it has

affected your choice to go to college, and the elements you've taken away to matriculate through high school and enroll in your first year at a college/university. The interview should last approximately 30-45 minutes on questions about school and your experiences as a participant in the BMLDI. Before we begin, I would like your permission to audio record the interview so I can accurately document the information you share with me later.

I would also like to ensure the logistics of the interview. There will not be any correct or incorrect responses. If you do not have an answer to the question you can feel free to abstain from answering. Please answer all questions as candidly as possible and if you need clarification on any of the questions, please notify me and I will clarify/repeat the question as needed.

This interview is confidential and will only be used for educational purposes. Your name will not be used in this research at any time. At this point, I would ask for your verbal consent that you agree to the interview. By your participation in the interview process, your consent to

participate will be implied. This is a voluntary interview and you can feel free to end participation at any time. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin the interview process?

Questions:

1. We will begin by learning a little bit about your high school experience.

a. Where are you from, (where did you go to high school) & do feel like you were a good student academically?

b. What was high school like for you?

c. What do you believe assisted you in graduating high school and attending college?

d. How involved were you in pre-college programs or other activities (what were they)?

Now let's switch gears and talk about the Black Male Leadership Development Institute in which you were a participant:

a. How did you get involved with the program?

b. How many years did you participate in the program and what grades were you in when you were a part of the program?

c. Did the program help or hurt you? Explain.

d. What skills did you acquire from the program if any?

e. What has the program taught you overall?

f. Did this program help you in completing high school and enrolling in college directly after graduation? If so, how? If not, what did the program need to improve?

g. Are there any additional comments you would like to add?

## **Appendix D**

The Eagle Academy for Young Men is a New York City Department of Education all-boys public school educating young men of the Bronx in grades 6 through 12 (Eagle Academy, 2020). Since 2004, the Academy has grown significantly throughout New York City in addition to Newark, New Jersey, reaching over 3,000 young men (Eagle Academy 2020). The Eagle Academy uses a culturally responsive-sustaining education (CR-SE) curriculum and states, “It is a way of seeing diversity as a source of knowledge.” (NYC Department of Education, 2020). The approaches the schools take to implement this type of curriculum are vast and require the following elements: See and value the background, views, and needs of all students, including experiences related to race, culture, language, or ability.

Currently, The Eagle Academy Foundation’s public-school network is a national model of a culturally relevant institution for urban young men (Eagle Academy 2020).

Its high school graduation rate is 84% surpassing both New York City and national rates for young men of color. Also, approximately 98% of Eagle Academy students were accepted to college including higher education institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University, Morehouse College, the University of Pennsylvania, the United States Military Academy at West Point (Eagle Academy 2020). The Schott Foundation (2020) described Eagle Academy as one of the “beacons of light with outstanding leaders that are doing a great job, saving hundreds of children.” (p.1)

5000 Roles Models of Excellence Project

The program teaches young boys about healthy living, responsibility, respect, and how to attain their future goals. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project’s Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Scholarship Breakfast provides thousands of boys with scholarship funds

to further their education. Their graduation rate was 83%, which was higher than the school district's overall graduation rate of 49% (5000 Role Models, 2020).

The mission of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project is to give minority boys hope, as well as the vision of greatness to emulate in their everyday lives, and has formed a fraternal aura of brotherly love throughout Miami-Dade County. (5000 Role Models, 2020)

### ***Urban Prep Academy***

“Urban Prep Academies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates a network of all-boys public schools, including the country's first charter high school for boys.” The Urban Prep Academy website states (2020), “Urban Prep Academy schools are a direct response to the urgent need to reverse abysmal graduation and college completion rates among boys in urban centers.”

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