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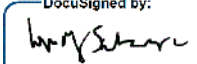
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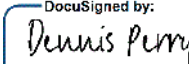
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Extracurricular activities and African American and Latino males in middle school

Extracurricular Activities and African American and Latino  
Males in Middle School

by

Morell Jones II

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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Summer, 2018

## **Extracurricular Activities and African American and Latino Males in Middle School**

### Thesis Abstract

This quantitative study focuses on the effectiveness of extracurricular programs in middle schools that serve African American and Latino males. Surveys were given to male students from a suburb just south of the Greater Los Angeles Area. For many years, these two subgroups have found themselves at the lower end of most positive academic data while topping the charts in negative data such as suspensions, attendance issues, and drop out rates. Historically, these students have been drawn towards activities at school that involve sports or entertainment. The findings show that, whereas, students feel a sense of safety and acceptance in afterschool or enrichment programs, the students do not express a strong interest in the programs that are available to them. The study also looks into how Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs can assist in improving relationships and self-efficacy amongst these young men. This work contributes to the educational research discourse by attempting to discover significant measures to close the achievement gap that exists between African American and Latino males and their age and grade level counterparts.

*Keywords:* achievement gap, African American and Latino males, correlation, extracurricular activities, PBIS, student achievement

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This is only the beginning.....

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Extra-Curricular Activities and Student Achievement for African American and Latino Middle School Boys**

Sports have always been seen as a valuable way for students to release energy, build social skills, and increase self-esteem. “Previous research has shown that participating in extracurricular activities protects young men and women from risky behaviors and delinquency” (Northeastern University, 2008, p.1). In urban areas, sports have been proven to be a positive outlet for many African-American boys. They have also been a form of useful escape for at-risk behaviors that are prevalent with this subgroup. Research shows that in almost every category of academic failure, African American male adolescents are represented much more than their peers. (Dallmann-Jones, 2002; Entwisle, 2004)

In today’s world, there are many societal benefits to playing sports, which manifest visually in the media and similar outlets. Most of these benefits are seemingly financially related. Thus, many boys steer and/or steered towards athletic endeavors. However, there are many more opportunities for African American and Latino males beyond just being good at athletics and sports related accomplishments. This research seeks to explore what extra-curricular activities are being offered to African American and Latino males in middle school and how being involved in them affects their student achievement, and, in turn, the overall school climate.

### **Contextualizing Background**

This researcher has worked in education for over 20 years. Most of that time has been spent working in what would be considered the inner city. Most of the students served were from low socio-economic households. Many of the students lived in an environment of poverty, drug abuse, and violence. That being said, some of the most resilient youth imaginable have come from these environments. Many students did not succumb to the ills of their environmental situation, but rose above their circumstances with hard work and support. Unfortunately, however, systematically in the United States of America, African American and Latino boys, particularly those of Mexican descent have consistently brought up the rear, as a group, in terms of academic success.

From this researchers experience, even though, many African American and Latino boys were athletically gifted and had the opportunity to become involved with sports, there still seemed to be a deficiency in the students' desire or ability to perform well in school. As a coach, one often attempts to convince athletes to understand the importance of commitment to team and excellence, not just winning and losing. It was much harder to get African-American and Latino boys to get involved in other programs outside of sports, such as leadership, mentoring, after school programs, and the like. It would have great to see these boys get involved in more social/academic activities at the school, but it was good to just include them in whatever programs that were available to result in a positive influence in their lives.

### **Statement of Problem/Research Question**

African American and Latino male students in the middle school years are still the lowest subgroup in terms of student achievement based on standardized test scores. They constitute, however, the highest number of suspensions and are overrepresented in other disciplinary data. (Noguera, 2012) Their behavior, also, has a profound effect on school climate.

Research questions for this study seek to answer the following:

How do extra-curricular activities correlate to the academic success of African American and Latino males in the middle school years? Sub-question: What types of extra-curricular activities are being offered that interest African American and Latino males in middle schools and how involved are they in them?

### **Preview Literature**

The review of literature in Chapter 2 identifies four important areas in the connection of extracurricular activities in middle school and the academic achievement of African American and Latino males and cites relevant research on the topic. These areas include: African American males in middle school, Latino males in similar/same environments, and the benefits of extracurricular activities in middle school. Some of the most significant findings come from Fredricks and Eccles 2008 contribution regarding extracurricular activities and African American males as well as research by Alia Wong (2015). The chapter ends with a look into Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) and how they affect school climate and culture in urban schools. Sugai and Horner's (2002) work was very informative in this regard.

### **Preview Methodology**

The research that will be conducted will be quantitative with primary using survey data. The data collection instrument was based on a 10-question survey administered to male students during the summer session (late June-early July 2018) at two middle schools. The researcher will also use extant data from the previous year (2017) collected by the afterschool program.

The goal is to analyze reasons for the achievement gap separating African American and Latino males from their age and academic grade male peers so that activities and programs can be designed and implemented to close that gap. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen the



home-to-school connection with these and other systemically marginalized subgroups. For, not only do they face challenges academically, these two subgroups are disproportionately represented in negative discipline data. Noguera (2012, pg. 8) states that “On all of the indicators of academic achievement, educational attainment, and school success, African-American and Latino males are noticeably distinguished from other segments of the American population by their consistent clustering at the bottom.”

### **Summary of Chapter**

This research will investigate the relationship to involvement of middle school, African American and Latino male students in various extra-curricular activities to their academic success. By researching studies, articles, and empirical research that address the topic, the hope is that programs and activities can be implemented to close the achievement gap. Chapter 2 will go further into that research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

In his book, *Overcoming the Achievement Gap*, Anthony Muhammad (2015) defines the achievement gap as "...real measurable differences among the levels of educational benefit that various groups of students receive" (p. 13) Nowhere is this gap more profound than with the academic achievement of African American and Latino male students, many who are of Mexican descent in the United States of America (USA). African American and Latino male students drop out at a much higher rate (6.4% & 9.9%, respectively) than their White counterparts (5.3%) (NCES 2016). To this end, Yaffe (2012), a researcher on the subjects asserts,

"I can think of no other group in our country that is at such peril as African-American males, not only in terms of education but in so many other aspects of our society: health, civic participation, employment, and the victimization of violence." (p. 1)

Culturally and linguistically diverse (e.g., African American, Native American, Latin, Asian Pacific Islander) and low socioeconomic status children are over-represented among students who enter formal schooling with low academic readiness skills and continue to be over-represented among students who repeat grades and leave school prior to earning a high school diploma. What significant steps are educators and society, in general, taking to close the academic gap before it becomes hopeless? What is being done inside and outside of the classroom to affect positive change for these young people and in particular the young men? This study seeks to determine whether or not extra-curricular activities have a positive effect on the academic achievement of African American and Latino middle school students. The research question seeks to determine ways in which extra-curricular activities correlate with the academic success of African American and Latino males in their middle school years.

The goal of this research is to find ways to connect school and home for this subgroup of students in a positive and productive way.

This chapter will review literature pertaining to the research question posed. Although, there is not much, current, research on the topic, past research has found that “students who are involved in extracurricular activities in middle school have a more positive ‘school identity’ and are more productive in high school.” (Im, Hughes, Cao, & Kwok, 2016) Common sense would tell us that this would decrease the drop out rates of these subgroups. Thus, the research initially reviewed was considered from four different perspectives or themes: African American students’ home life and extracurricular activities; Latino American students in the same environment; The effects of extracurricular activities as a whole in middle school; and Ways in which extracurricular activities/Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) effect school culture in urban schools.

### **African American Males in Middle School**

In almost every category of academic failure, African American male adolescents are disproportionately represented. Recent studies have indicated that African American adolescent male students are more prone to truancy and aggressive behavior in school environments than peers of other races (Martin, Martin, & Magy, 2007). Yaffe (2012) states:

“As they grow toward adulthood, societal stereotypes of Black men as uneducable and criminal undermine Black boys’ self-esteem and can shape teachers’ attitudes towards them.” (p.1)

One thing that is evident is that sports have played a very important role in changing the lives of African American males. Whether it is financial, socio-emotional, or merely physical fitness, there is not doubt that sports are a welcome entity and subculture in schools and neighborhoods where African American males are prominent. However, it seems as though we

think of extracurricular activities for African American males, solely as sports. If we are looking to develop the “whole” person (which should be the goal of education) then we need to enrich students’ lives in more than one aspect of it. To address and begin to close the academic achievement gap for African American males, educators need to figure out what these students’ most significant needs are and what deficits we can fill with activities and programs outside of the regular school curriculum.

School and community-based organized activities provide a context for middle school youth to use their leisure time in productive ways, connect with supportive adults and pro-social peers, and learn competencies and skills (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008). The only downfall to that statement is the frequency in which African American males have “supportive adults and pro-social peers” in their lives during their adolescence (p. 1042). “Black children (55 percent) and Hispanic children (31 percent) were more likely to live with one parent than non-Hispanic White children (21 percent) or Asian children (13 percent) (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013, p. 2). However, “[t]he consistency of positive home structural factors contributed to the academic success of boys in the families studied in spite of negative factors such as economic deprivation, parental unemployment, previous parental incarceration and lack of transportation.” (Woods Jr. 2012, abstract, p.1). Based on these perspectives from the literature reviewed, even though, a father may not be present in the lives of males of color, if their home life has structure, there may still be a chance of success for that student.

The literature suggests that there needs to be a strong connection between home and school for the students in question. There are a number of mechanisms through which parental involvement in the home and at school may promote academic success that are being examined: parental involvement in school activities, expectations that parents share with their sons and for which they hold them accountable, and parental trust and support for both their sons and their

sons' schools. According to Woods Jr. (2012), there are, also, certain social skills that come from home that school does not, generally provide. Furthermore, these skills do not necessarily fit into the normal, daily curriculum as prescribed by any given state in the U.S.

The relative neglect of family variables in evaluating the plight of African American boys in the education system has contributed to the lack of effective federal, state, and local governmental policies, programs and social interventions that could help families by building on resources readily available to them (Wood Jr. 2012). Therefore, in schools that primarily serve African American and Latino students, there are fewer extracurricular/after school programs than those that exist in more suburban settings with the majority of the programs in urban areas being sports related. This finding may reflect differences in the type of school clubs in which male and female and African American and European American youth choose to participate in (Fredricks & Eccles 2008).

#### **Latino males in similar/same environments.**

Latino males of Mexican, South American, and Central American descent in the U.S. suffer a similar plight in their adolescent years. They rank just above their African American counterparts in many categories (e.g., graduation rates, drop out rates, school to prison pipeline). Nationally, African American and Latino males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school (Fergus & Noguera, 2010). In most American cities, dropout rates for African-American and Latino males are well above 50%, and they're less likely to enroll or graduate from college than any other group.

Noguera (2012) says:

“African-American and Latino males are more likely to be classified by educational research as mentally retarded or to be identified as suffering from a learning disability and placed in special education. They're more likely to be absent from gifted and talented

programs, Advanced Placement and honors courses, and international baccalaureate programs. Even class privilege and the material benefits that accompany it fail to inoculate black males from low academic performance. When compared to their white peers, middle-class African-American and Latino males lag significantly in grade point average and on standardized tests“ (p.1).

Latino males, however, sometimes have a little more of a challenge than African American males. Sometimes there is a language barrier. There may be the question of citizenship status. And, even, more personally, the image that one must uphold in the Latino culture, what is known as “machismo”(Newman, 2011). Machismo is a word that the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines as "a strong sense of masculine pride; an exaggerated masculinity." As such, adolescence is a critical period in the development of machismo, as it is during this stage that young Chicano/Latino males of Mexican descent go through rites of passage in which they must prove their masculinity. While boys have learned different scripts regarding what is right, wrong, tough, and weak from their families; during adolescence, young men encounter others who are also attempting to become men and who attempt to assert group dominance (Martinez, 2014). Mac An Ghail (1994) argues that schools participate in the construction of masculinity as they teach boys who to be, what to value and how to negotiate and differentiate codes of the school in order to establish their masculinity. Feeling a strong sense of masculinity can supplant academic performance amongst males who are academically gifted. Feeling a strong sense of masculinity can make males who are academically gifted feel a sense of anxiety about being successful. In their research on the topic, Shepard, Nicpon, Haley, Lind and Liu, (2011) discovered similar results with regard to African American males.

Eligio Martinez’s (2014) study showed that “Students who had stronger identification with Chicano/Latino culture often encountered lowered academic expectations and increased

disciplinary practices from teachers.” The researcher goes on to reveal that even within their culture, these students tend to divide themselves. In this study, the boys self-categorized themselves into four groups: “Soccer Players, Average Kids, Nerds, and Lost Boys. Each group developed and adopted a particular set of behavior, style of dress, and attitude towards school.” (Martinez, 2014, p.1) Just as with African American boys, middle school serves as a critical turning point in the development of Latino male students. It is during this period that students begin to experience a greater need for autonomy, identity exploration, and peer-orientation. Students generally seek to find answers about who they are, which will influence how they behave, socialize and perform academically. Additionally, middle school plays a key factor in determining the social hierarchy within schools as students are made aware of the role that race plays in their schooling and places males of color at the bottom of the hierarchy (Martinez, 2014)

Increased racial grouping and a racial hierarchy can cause students to develop animosity towards other ethnic groups, particularly white and Asian American students, who may be viewed more favorably by teachers and school administrators. Teachers also see white and Asian American students as being more committed to school than African American and Chicano/Latino students, and thus are more willing to engage with them academically than students from other background (Martinez2014). The hierarchy remains, but it shifts based on the community. As community demographics change, you tend to see a shift in the “dominant culture” emerges and those biases tend to swing that way as well. The current researcher has had years of experience working in Title 1 schools. Other than teaching, other professional functions were to create and implement intervention and extracurricular programs for students. The challenges that I faced were, usually, a lack of financial and/or parent support, and a lack of connectivity with the school. This researcher feels extracurricular programs can reach their

ultimate potential if provide a structured and very deliberate link between the regular school program and the home.

### **The benefits of Extracurricular Activities in middle school**

There is plenty of research that shows the positive impact that extracurricular activities have on students, as well as, school climate and culture as a whole (Bush, 2003, Espinoza, 2011, Fredericks & Eccles, 2008, Freeman-Garner, 2012). For example, Holloway (2002) found through his research that there are several reasons that extra curricular programs are so successful in engaging students. Some of them include: Appealing to students' interests; Encouraging peer interaction; Promoting cooperation; Building positive student-adult relationships; Providing structure and challenge; Connecting students to school; and Drawing students-especially minorities and women-to science. All of these reasons can have a profound affect, specifically, in the lower-income communities, which house a majority of African American and Latino students. In early adolescence, youth are beginning to make their own decisions about how to spend their after school time, and these choices can have important implications for their future developmental trajectories. (Fredrick & Eccles, 2008) Involvement in supervised and organized activities during the after school hours is associated with positive outcomes, while participation in unsupervised and/or unstructured contexts is related to less favorable adjustment.

Generally, students of color don't participate in extracurricular activities that aren't sports related in comparison to their white counterparts (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Even then, sometimes that might not be an option. For many children, the rising costs of sport teams and campus clubs have made after-school activities a luxury their parents can't afford (Wong 2015). While upper- and middle-class students have become more active in school clubs and sports teams over the past four decades, their working-class peers "have become increasingly



disengaged and disconnected," particularly since their participation rates started plummeting in the '90s, the study found (Wong 2015, Web).

Middle school, in itself, can be a tough place for adolescents. Specifically, at a developmental period when youth desire increased autonomy and experience a heightened sensitivity to peers' reactions to them (Brown & Larson, 2009), the middle school context provides less choice over academic tasks, an enhanced focus on competition, a larger and more diverse peer context, and increased demands for organization and planning skills. In their research, Hughes, Im, and Allee, (2015) found that students can experience a higher rate of success if they have a sense of belonging, which he defined as "the extent to which students feel personally accepted." (p. 1). Extracurricular activities can help with that acceptance. Whether it is being part of a team or club, students can join with other students who share their same interests. Hughes, and team, (2015) also state:

"Empirical studies have documented positive associations between school belonging and academic motivation and achievement from elementary school through high school.

However, school belonging has been most extensively studied in the middle school grades. As students transition from elementary to middle school, their school belonging often declines, with a corresponding drop in their academic effort and achievement." (p.

2)

This has been seen in the professional experience of the current researcher, as well. Having the benefit of working at both the elementary and middle school in the same neighborhood over a 12-year span, this researcher was able to see (and oversee) the transition of many students. Many students were overwhelmed with the change in atmosphere, new friends, and the increase of teachers. This is what led this researcher to want to create programs for students to help them feel a sense of "belonging", which, in turn, has led to and inspired this research.

### **The impact of Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) on school culture and climate in urban schools**

PBIS is a school-based intervention that addresses problem behavior and academic performance by improving school climate (Sugai & Homer, 2002). Schools that implement PBIS accomplish this through a system of rewards and punishments for student and staff behavior (Sugai & Homer, 2002). Schools that implement PBIS with fidelity have found success. “Through the implementation of the PBIS program at the school site of this study, teachers taught students normed expectations, incentivized those who met the expectations, and had specific discipline steps in place for those that did not meet the expectations. The researcher uses his finding to suggest that when implemented with fidelity, teachers perceive students to be more motivated to complete assignments and avoid discipline infractions.” (Crutchfield 2014, p. 116). Crutchfield’s study was one of few that I could find regarding the impact of PBIS on schools with a significant population of African American and Latino boys. She found that if the program is implemented with “fidelity” then you would get the best results. Unfortunately, from this researcher’s experience, PBIS is rarely implemented with fidelity in urban settings. From its own website (pbis.org) there is an article that states that the implementation of PBIS in inner city schools met with certain challenges. Among these issues are methods for the facilitation of school-university partnerships, the incorporation of PBIS into existing school improvement efforts, the maintenance of school-wide PBIS efforts, and the formalization of exit strategies and arrangements for subsequent technical assistance. For PBIS to be successful, everything hinges on the strength of Tier 1 (Ripp, Jeanne-Pierre, & Fergus, 2009). Tier 1 of your PBIS plan is school-wide implementation of the program. The struggle that many inner city schools face with this is the ability to maintain a common language spoken throughout the

school. A big misconception about PBIS is that it is only for the students with behavior issues. However, your Tier 1 program is for ALL students at the school. Tier 2 and 3 interventions are more specific for students that require them.

### **Summary**

The review of literature dictates that much more, up to date, research on the topic presented for researcher is needed. To restate the question: How do extra-curricular activities affect the academic success of African American and Latino males in their middle school years? Most researchers agreed that extracurricular or afterschool programs can have a positive effect on student outcomes (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008, Wong, 2015). Even in those areas where there is violence and poverty, there has been success. However, to what fidelity are those programs being implemented and are they provided with comparable resources as those schools in more affluent areas? This question significant and worthy of scholarly exploration in the sense that a majority of students in low-income areas or Title 1 schools are African American and/or Latino or of African American and/or Latino descent.

Additional questions: What types of extracurricular activities/programs are we providing to those students who reside in low-income areas? And, are the activities/programs being implemented with fidelity? The study begins with the hypothetical premise that ALL students should be exposed to a wide range of activities and interests at their school. Unfortunately, sports and music seem to be the majority of programs offered. In this new age of technology, ALL students need access to the tools and resources that can help them advance in this arena. The research suggests that proper implementation, even in those areas can produce positive results.

One more question for consideration is, in what ways might the addition and proper implementation of these extracurricular programs, coupled with, a school-wide PBIS system

enhance the school culture and climate in these schools? The limited research in this area drives this researcher to look further into this question.

### Chapter 3

In today's world, there are many visual benefits to playing sports or being an entertainer. Most of which, are financial. Thus, many black and brown boys are steered towards these endeavors. However, there are more opportunities for African American and Latino males than just being good at athletics. This research seeks to explore what extra-curricular activities are being offered to African American and Latino males in middle school and how being involved in them affects their student achievement, and, in turn, the overall school climate.

African American and Latino male students in the middle school years are still the lowest subgroup in terms of student achievement based on standardized test scores. They are, however, the highest number of suspensions and other disciplinary data. Their behavior, also, has a profound effect on school climate.

The aforementioned leads this researcher to this question: *How do extra-curricular activities correlate to the academic success of African American and Latino males in the middle school years?* Sub-question: What types of extra-curricular activities are being offered that interest African American and Latino males in middle schools and how involved are they in them?

The rationale for the selection of the research method is included in this section. Other topics of importance addressed in this chapter include the role of the researcher, research design, context of study, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and trustworthiness

### Design

To collect data, the researcher used quantitative methods. There was a survey created for the students, regarding their interest, the availability, and implementation of extracurricular

activities at their school. The students took the survey online during their summer school class. Extant data from the district's previous year will also be used.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were students that identify as African American and Latino male middle school students (6th-8th grade) from a school district in a suburb just south of the Greater Los Angeles area. They took a general, online, survey regarding their want for and involvement in extracurricular activities. These students were enrolled in the district's summer school program.

### **Setting**

The research took place at 2 middle schools in a suburb just south of the Greater Los Angeles area during their summer school program. The city has a population of 33,231 people with a median age of 32.8 and a median household income of \$47,540. Between 2014 and 2015 the population grew from 33,155 to 33,231, a 0.23% increase and its median household income declined from \$48,376 to \$47,540, a -1.73% decrease.

The ethnic population of this city is 65.8% Hispanic, 14% White, and 8.46% Asian. 64.2% of the people in this city speak a non-English language, and 78.3% are U.S. citizens. There are two large community colleges in the area, one with 2,387 graduates, and the other with 730 graduates. There is also an American Auto Institute, with 566 graduates. The median property value in this city is \$378,500, and the homeownership rate is 32.5%. Most people in this city commute by driving alone, and the average commute time is 23.9 minutes. The average car ownership is 2 cars per household.

One of the middle schools where the research is being conducted is a decent sized middle school with 917 students enrolled during the regular school year. The majority of their student population is Hispanic or Latino (82.6%). African Americans make up 7.6% of the population. The majority of their students are also classified as “socioeconomically disadvantaged” (79%). The next highest classifications are English Learners (16%). The school scored very near the district average on the state tests. Their lowest group regarding test scores was their English Learners. All of the other groups were similar in their scoring. According to the scores, 8th grade African-American boys are in need of the most intervention. The majority of this school’s teachers are fully credentialed and considered “highly qualified teachers”. They don’t have teachers outside of their competence this year and only two vacancies at the moment. Both are in 6th grade.

### **Instruments**

The students were given a survey that gauges their interest and involvement in extracurricular activities. This survey was created on surveymonkey.com and administered in the students’ summer school classes. There was an indicator on the survey for students to put in their ethnicity and grade. The students will not be required to give their names.

The researcher also gathered extant data from the afterschool program office that was gathered from surveys from the previous year. This data has already been collected and analyzed. The researcher obtained the report as well as the actual surveys.

### **Procedures**

First, permission was obtained, from the Director of Afterschool Programs for the district. Then, parents of all male students were given an Informed Consent form to conduct the research. The students were, also, asked to sign a Student Assent form. The surveys were

administered in their summer school courses. The surveys were on surveymonkey.com, so the data will be compiled online. That data was analyzed through surveymonkey.com.

The researcher collected the surveys and reported from the previous school year. He will not be allowed to take the surveys home. The data was analyzed in the Director's office and copious notes were taken. The researcher received a copy of the report, however.

### **Analysis**

The goal of this research was to ascertain the correlation between extracurricular activities and African American and Latino male students. African Americans make up approximately, 7.6 percent of the district population and Latino/Hispanic students make up 83.4 percent of the population. Males make up about half of each subgroup.

The surveys were given to all African American and Latino males in their, respective, classrooms on the computer. Using, surveymonkey.com made it easy to compile the survey responses. The researcher was able to decipher the data and categorize it based on race and grade level. The researcher was also able to distinguish how many students were involved in extracurricular activities already and those who were not. Finally, from the survey, the researcher was able to glean the student's desire to be involved in extracurricular activities and what kind they would like to be involved in.

### **Conclusion**

The uses of current and previous data allowed the researcher to gain a fuller picture of how effective extracurricular activities are in this particular school district. The researcher feels like the question was necessary to inform educators on how to implement extracurricular activities for the benefit of the lowest performing populations of their school.

Chapter four will show the findings of research.



## **Chapter Four: Findings**

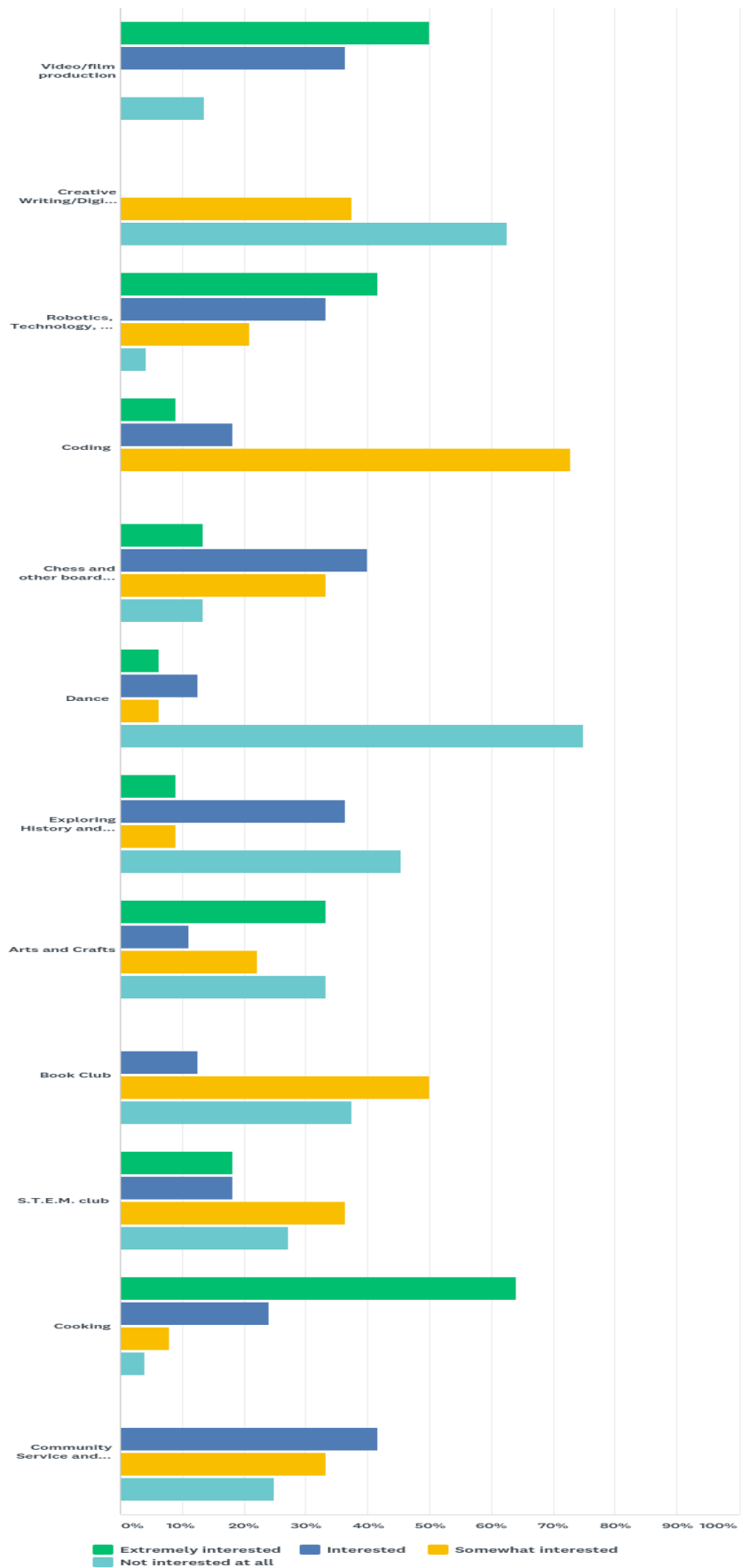
The purpose of this research is to consider how extra-curricular activities affect the academic success of African American and Latino males in the middle school years. Furthermore, to examine what activities are available to these students who are consistently on the low end of spectrum in regards to academic data. However, both of these subgroups rank among the top in the negative categories (discipline, poor attendance, etc.). This research attempts to address the need for programs and activities that are suited to fill the needs of the students by asking them.

Data was taken from two sources. First, there was an online survey that the students took in their summer school class. Secondly, the researcher reviewed data from the previous year's district survey of the Realizing Amazing Potential (RAP) Afterschool and Summer Program. This chapter will include the Data Presentation & Analysis, Interpretations, and a Summary/Conclusion of that data.

### **Data Presentation**

The students took a 10 question online survey regarding the afterschool program that they attended this school year. The surveys were only administered to the boys. In total, 56 boys took the survey. Of those students, 31 identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (HL) and 9 identified as African American (AA). Six students identified as mixed race (4 HL/white and 2 AA/white). The other 10 students identified as, White (3), Asian (4), or American Indian (3). Because the study focuses on AA and HL students, data will, also, be looked at on an individual basis. 70% of the students attended the afterschool program during the school year that just ended and approximately 66% attended the year before. Of those attending, a majority of the students attended 5 days a week.

Q9 I would attend the after school program if the following activities were offered



When asked what reason would keep the students from coming to the afterschool program, the majority response (34.4%) was that they attended some other outside activity (church, volunteering, etc.) When asked what they would like to see in the afterschool program or extracurricular activities, the top responses were cooking, video/film production, and Robotics/technology. Other activities that got some interest were S.T.E.M. Club and Chess/board game club. When asked the open ended question about what the students would like to see either during school or afterschool the main responses were cooking and video games.

In analyzing the data from this survey, the researcher looked at the responses in the order that they were written. Students were asked to identify themselves by grade and gender. The other 8 questions were asked in a progression leading up to what they would like to see in an extracurricular/afterschool program at their school. Only a few students didn't participate in any programs/activities and those questions regarding participation were asked first. However, the final question gave students an opportunity to answer in terms of what they would like to see.

The extant data that was used came from the surveys that the RAP program administered at the end of the previous school year. The questions were specific to their program. Of the 166 students surveyed, 64 (38.5%) were boys. The information that stood out the most was the fact that the students liked the program and they felt safe. They feel like that learn a lot and got to use technology quite often. The students felt supported by staff and friends. They, also, felt comfortable doing other work in the RAP program. Approximately 80% of the students felt like the RAP program made them a better student. Health and Fitness, S.T.E.M, and computers were some of the most enjoyed concepts. Students, also, felt comfortable sharing what they learned with their parents.

The students feel like they are able to be creative and make choices in the RAP program, as a whole, however, they showed that the STEAM program does not give them as much creative flexibility. Also, 46% of the students said they do not enjoy Coding and Robotics very much.

In analyzing the extant data from the RAP program, the researcher had to piece together the chronology of the questions. There seemed to be no specific order in mind in the making of the survey. For example, the gender of the students is the last question. The questions regarding the STEM and Coding portions of the program were scattered throughout the survey. Also, there were several questions about how the students felt about the program. Those were the questions that were most prevalent to this research. Further, each question only had three response choices: “Most of the Time”, “Sometimes”, and “Not Very Much”.

### **Findings Summary**

Most researchers agreed that extracurricular or afterschool programs can have a positive effect on student outcomes. (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008, Wong, 2015). In this particular case study, I wanted to find out just what programs existed for students in the suburban Los Angeles area that has a history of low achievement for African American and Latino boys. Noguera (2012) says, “African-American and Latino males are more likely to be classified by educational research as mentally retarded or to be identified as suffering from a learning disability and placed in special education.” African American and Latino males in this particular district have, consistently, performed lower than their counterparts in ELA and Math.

According to the surveys, students are looking for programs and activities that comply with their interests, but are not too academic. For example, many students said that they would like to see cooking and video game clubs for activities in the afterschool program. These can, easily, have a STEM component integrated into them

In my research, I found that many of the students want and like afterschool programs and extracurricular activities, but are not very interested in the ones that are being offered. They like the afterschool programs and feel safe and cared for, but feel like the activities are not improving their academics. Empirical studies have documented positive associations between school belonging and academic motivation and achievement from elementary school through high school. (Hughes, Im & Allee, 2015). The afterschool program has achieved the “positive association” part, but more can be done in formulating the program around enhancing the academics of students in the most need.

Chapter 5 will conclude this study. It will discuss its limitations and make recommendations for practice and further research.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion, Interpretation, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this research was to assess the correlation between extracurricular activities and the academic achievement of African American and Latino males in middle school. The research conducted sought to find out the how the students gauged the effectiveness of their extracurricular activities and programs. In this chapter I will summarize and interpret the findings along with the previous literature on the topic to discuss the significance of this research. I will, also discuss the educational implications and the limitations that I found in my study. Finally, I will give recommendations for future research on this topic.

### **Interpretations**

From this data, some insight was gained in regards to the correlation between extracurricular activities and academic achievement for African American and Latino males in middle school. In this particular district, there is a thriving afterschool program. The fact that they administer surveys every year is a good sign that they are actively trying to improve the programs based on the needs of the students.

Putting both surveys together, it can be interpreted that students are looking for more programs or activities that meet their interests. It was also interesting that the students asked for cooking and video production classes. These activities include math and science and if implemented with fidelity, can add interest to those subjects. This would fair well with these particular subgroups due to their low SBAC scores in those areas. The data also shows that students are looking for more creative choices in these areas. It is in our educators' best interest to match the interest of the plethora of visual, auditory, and technological stimuli that our students are engulfed in on a daily basis. It would, also, behoove us as educators to solidify the "home-school" connection through these programs.

In regards to African American males, the literature suggests that organized school and community-based activities help students become more productive, connect with supportive adults and pro-social peers and learn competencies and skills (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008). In the district that I collected data from, African American males are a small percentage of the total student population, but make up a disproportionately high number of discipline issues. Out of the 56 students surveyed, only 9 were African American. They also rank at the bottom in most academic categories. In correlation, African American males fail to get involved as frequently in extracurricular activities that are not sports related. One of the important outcomes of these extracurricular activities is the home-school connection. Whereas I did not research the home dynamic of the students surveyed, it would be interesting to know how many of the African American males had fathers in the home or if their parent(s) were present and supportive of the school. According to Woods Jr. (2012), there are certain social skills that come from home that school does not, generally provide. Woods Jr. (2012) further states that there is a relative neglect of family variables in evaluating the plight of African American boys in the educational systems. This correlates to the lack of effective federal, state, and local governmental policies, programs and social interventions that could help these students. However, this district is in a relative suburban area, so one would think that there would be more available to their student population.

Latino students make up a majority of the population in the district that I researched. Males are about half of that population. Latino males have similar statistics as their African American counterparts. These students, generally, do not fare as well academically, and have a high number of suspensions. However, because Latino males are a big part of the population, it was only natural that they made up approximately 60% of the students surveyed. As the surveys showed, many of the students feel safe in the afterschool program. This is relevant especially in the Latino culture due to the strong sense of masculine pride or “machismo” that exists. Mac An

Ghail (1994) argues that schools participate in the construction of masculinity as they teach boys who to be, what to value and how to negotiate and differentiate codes of the school in order to establish their masculinity. I interpret that sense of safety as a sign of these male students letting down their guard for a moment in order to gain an alternative experience or learning that is offered in the programs. This is why it is even more imperative that educators offer enriching and relevant programs that can enhance their lives.

### **Lessons Learned/Educational Implications**

I can, honestly, say that I learned a lot from this experience. The first thing is that it is not easy. It is one thing to be an educator and teach kids on a daily basis, but to, then, take a step back and analyze what exactly the kids' wants and needs are is a totally different thing. However, practically, I learned a few things.

I learned that understanding the interests of students is a very complex and abstract topic to tackle. Students are diverse in their thinking as well as their culture. We think that we know what kids need until we find out that we are not meeting their needs. As educators, we always have to appeal to the interests of our students. In order to engage students, we must keep them interested. I have found that getting students to trust you is the first obstacle in teaching. The second....BE INTERESTING!

I, also, learned that school wide communication is essential in the productive running of a school. In the middle school that I was fortunate to work with throughout the school year, I saw that they had a good system of communication and collaboration amongst the staff. The questions that my research was trying to answer were the same that school was trying to fix. They had data meetings and PLCs, on a regular basis and were gaining ground each year. However, the gap still remained. The implementation of a strong, school-wide PBIS system can



be a good foundation to build relationships and foster an increase in self-efficacy for African American and Latino males.

Finally, I learned that surveys do not give a full enough story of what you are trying to extract from students. Whereas, the data that I collected was very helpful, I think that I could have gained much more insight had I been able to interview the students. Because, the goal of my research was subjective, I believe that more qualitative data would have been helpful. I will talk more about this in the next section.

### **Limitations of Research**

Of course, the most crucial limitation that a research can encounter is time. Although, this is my first research project, I can see where time will always be a significant factor in gathering sufficient data to get to the answers that you are seeking. My dilemma was more for the fact that I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to research until late in the school year. I had been working with the school since November and had access to the entire faculty, staff, and student population. Had I known what I wanted to study from the beginning, my design would have been a lot stronger. I would have loved to get more input from administration and faculty. Educational leadership is essential in creating the inclusive environment that ensures that all of their students succeed. Not to mention the fact that I ran out of time in the end, I wanted to survey more kids, but by the time I was approved, school was out. However, I was able to get good data from the summer school students as they could reflect on their experience with extracurricular activities from that school year. Yet, it was a very small sample of the students. It was, also, a huge benefit to have access to last year's data that sought similar answers that I was seeking.

Another limitation was the survey itself. In retrospect, only having 10 questions was not sufficient. With the opportunity to do it over, I would have had more questions and more

probing questions about what exactly the students are getting in their extracurricular activities, how they are publicized and implemented, and how much input they actually have in which activities or programs are presented to them. This, again, would have been better served in a more qualitative setting. I think that creating an Independent Focus Group that was interviewed would have enhanced that data.

### **Future Research Directions**

In the future, my hopes are that educators look closely at what supplemental activities and/or programs they are implementing to ensure that they are filling the gaps in achievement at their schools. In terms, of research, I feel that much more research can be done in this area. In my experience, I find that it is very difficult to attract African American and Latino boys to activities that do not include sports and entertainment. They already have a low self-efficacy in regards to academics. I feel that it is imperative to find out what programs will benefit these subgroups of students so that they can feel a sense of pride in achieving success at school. It will also behoove us as educators if we can improve the home-school connections with these students.

An example of more research that can be done in this area is to find out how different forms of communication with parents can increase parent involvement to enhance the extracurricular programs at a particular school. I would also like to find out how a PBIS systems can be utilized to target the deficiencies in these subgroups that I have studied. It is my firm belief that African American and Latino males need to feel more included in the educational process so that they have a desire to be more successful.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

This research centered around finding solutions to an ever-present problem in our communities, our society, and our nations. African American and Latino boys have consistently been on the proverbial bottom of the barrel when it comes to academics. Where they excel are in the statistics that no one wants to celebrate; school discipline, incarceration, death, etc. What has been done in the field of education to stop this deadly cycle?

Throughout this process, I learned that much more needs to be done in this field. We are losing a significant part of our population, simply, due to marginalization. These boys have been pigeonholed into this place for years now and, some ignore the data at their own schools. Or, are not quite sure how to implement the ideas that they come up with. Some educators feel helpless that they can't do enough to help these students fulfill their goals.

In my opinion, a school needs to be in that same sanctuary status that a community gives a church. It is a place where ALL students should be able to come to become their best selves. It is incumbent on us as educators to fill these gaps so that ALL of our students can be successful. That is the calling that we responded to. That is the job.

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