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ALL DRESSED UP WITH NO PLACE TO GO:  
A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS  
IN AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

By  
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A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

ALL DRESSED UP WITH NO PLACE TO GO:  
A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS  
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This critical ethnography examined the academic and social outcomes of 115 African American male students who attended an urban school, Metropolitan High School, between 1986 and 1989. Designed as a negative critique, the main problem investigated was how effective the school was in carrying out its mission, "To ensure quality learning for all students through effective teaching in a caring environment."

Centered in radical, neo-Marxist theories of reproduction and resistance, as well as theories of empowerment, the researcher made an assessment of the roles played in the schooling of the working-class African American males by teachers, parents and the African American males themselves. Changes in the racial and social class make up of the school between 1970 and 1990 were explored to determine their impact on

the academic outcomes of the African American males at Metropolitan High.

The study provided a detailed look at the quality of education received by the graduates, as well as investigated some of the major factors which contributed to the lack of academic success, i.e., the drug subculture, in-school truancy, peer pressure, poor career planning, expulsions, lack of caring teachers, and the evolution of negative attitudes toward school on the part of a large percentage of the 115 African American males studied. The researcher identified and described, using the African American male students' own words and viewpoints regarding their responses to schooling at Metropolitan High, four groups among the 115 African American males: active conformists, passive conformists, nonconformists and the overt resisters.

The research was conducted using the traditional qualitative research strategies. Included among these strategies were participant observation, a collection and reduction of field notes, in-depth and informal interviews, analytical memoranda and an analysis of official and unofficial documents.



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1991

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"Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared (Exodus 23:20)."

This dissertation is dedicated to my recently deceased aunt, Mrs. Bearline Brooks. Mrs. Brooks reared me from the age of four. The love, kindness and support which she bountifully accorded me throughout my life could never be repaid. Her most simple, yet vital, lesson to me and all the children she reared was, "Divine love, always has met and always will meet every human need." All that I am or could ever hope to be, I attribute to her support and the grace of my Higher Power, God.

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Finally, I gratefully acknowledge those 115 anonymous African American males who allowed me to enter

their personal lives. Through their rigorous honesty, they afforded me the privilege of explaining the conditions related to their being, "All Dressed Up With No Place To Go."

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

When I received a telephone call from the associate superintendent informing me of my new appointment as assistant principal at Metropolitan High School effective in the fall, 1986, I was thrilled about the opportunity to work in a school district which had a reputation for academic excellence dating back to the mid-1960s.

I visited the district only once prior to my job interview, and at that time I learned (erroneously, as it turned out) from various family members and friends that Metropolitan City was affluent, predominantly Jewish and a relatively new community. But when the senior class arrived for registration on the first day of the school I was shocked. Seven out of 10 students were African American, and only a few were Jewish or white.

I immediately questioned how could it be that so many African Americans had moved to Metropolitan City, and I wondered what was expected of me as a African American administrator. The answers were simple. First, African Americans in Michigan have followed the migration patterns of Jews for at least eight decades (Stevenson, 1988.) Metropolitan was simply one more

example of this pattern. Second, I was expected to be a positive role model and disciplinarian for those students, mostly African American and male, who were "acting-out," that is, displaying aggressive, violent or disruptive behaviors.

I wandered about the building and grounds on those first days and tried to learn as much about my new position as possible. I observed that most of the teachers were pleasant, Jewish and advanced in years. The other assistant principal was African American. All the members of the security staff were also African American (which, I was told, were responsible for securing the building, breaking up fights, and making sure the halls were cleared of students during class time).

The building was rather dismal and in disrepair. But the two student parking lots were oversubscribed with cars, many of which were rather expensive, specialty cars and jeeps valued at \$30,000 or more.

Inside, a number of loud and unruly black males (the terms 'black' and 'African American' are used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to United States citizens of African genealogy) paraded about the building wearing heavy, solid gold chains around their necks, jogging suits valued between \$300 and \$500, and gym shoes valued as much as \$250. On the first day, one of these students called me a "black bastard" when I

verbally corrected him for cutting the registration line. Other young African American males seemed interested in their education but nevertheless experienced limited academic success. They had trouble getting accepted into the universities of their choice and could not score well on the college entrance examinations.

No, this was clearly not the affluent Jewish community I remembered from the 1960s. Instead, it was predominantly African American and working class. I came to understand within a short time, that most of these African American males, both the so-called troublemakers and the academically-inclined, were ill-prepared for college and possessed few marketable skills upon leaving Metropolitan High. They were "all dressed up" but destined to be either underemployed or permanently unemployed.

This dissertation is about these students and the school they attended, Metropolitan High School. My focus is the schooling of 115 African American males and my role as both researcher and administrator who attempted to find ways to improve the schooling of these young men.

Other researchers found that a disturbing number of African American male students exhibited apathetic, disruptive, and aggressive behaviors in the urban schools of this nation (Foster, 1987; Miller, 1986; Phelan,

1987; Raffe, 1986; Slater, 1974; Trotter, 1981; and Woodson, 1978). Although compelled by law to attend school in most states until they reach the age of 16 (Prince v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1944), these students are generally underachieving. This lack of academic success has been attributed to the quality of the education made available to them, as well as their individual and/or collective efforts to reject schooling through nonengagement and other counterproductive activities. In short, a quality education, the traditional means of upward social-class mobility for other minorities in this country, eludes far too many African American males in the United States.

The purpose of this study is to describe the changes which occurred at Metropolitan High as it went from a predominantly middle-class, white school to a predominantly working-class, black school and to understand how these changes affected the 115 young, African American males who are the focus of this study. These phenomena were analyzed from the point of view of radical theories of reproduction and resistance in school settings. The events observed at Metropolitan High School suggested ways in which reproduction and resistance theories could be revised. The study also examines a set of interventions that could alter the adverse circumstances faced by young, African American males in urban high schools.

This school's mission statement read: "The mission of Metropolitan High School is to ensure quality learning for all students through effective teaching in a caring environment." Specifically, this study sought to determine how the implementation or the lack of implementation of this educational charge affected 115 African American male students at Metropolitan High School.

This study, a critical ethnography, identified and described African American male students' reactions to schooling. The participants' academic endeavors and some relevant social interactions were studied over a three-year period. The findings show that the quality of schooling at Metropolitan High School was shaped by a number of factors, including the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, parents, and students. The findings describe conditions and circumstances which were conducive to student accommodation, unstructured opposition, as well as deliberate resistance to schooling. The study also drew comparisons between the academic and social outcomes for African American males at Metropolitan High School with other African American males throughout Michigan and the United States at the close of the 1980's.

All names and other explicit details which, if used, could disclose the identity of the school, the school district, the students, and other persons associ-

ated with this story were altered or deleted in an effort to maintain anonymity. The student participants were assigned African (Chuks-orji, 1972) and other names typically given African American males.

The field site, an urban secondary school referred to as Metropolitan High School, is located in a small urban school district in the state of Michigan.



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## AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN THE UNITED STATES

This study emerges from the bleak national plight of African American males in the United States at the close of the 1980s. According to Gibbs (1984), African American men have been distinctly an "at risk" population who encounter despairing conditions in most facets of American economic and social life. Wetzel (1987) drew several distressing conclusions from his research with African American youth. Over half of all African American youth live in the central cities as compared to less than a quarter of all white youth. The education they [African American males] receive is considered "deficient" at best. There is a scarcity of job opportunities as well. African American youth are often associated with urban crime, as the opportunities and enticements to commit crime in their neighborhoods are facts of their daily existence.

African American males suffer disproportionate health problems when compared to others in society. Dr. Mac Otten, Jr., a medical epidemiologist with the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (1990) that African American males have a significantly lower life expectancy than white males. This gap between the life expectancies of black and white males is widening, according to Otten. Smoking tobacco, obesity, high blood pressure, poverty, and poor education were cited

by Otten (1990) as reasonable explanations for the differences in the life expectancies of African American and white males.

African American males also are more often subject to criminal justice proceedings. This is reflected in their gross overrepresentation in the nations federal and state prisons (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988b). Although a small percentage of African American males, benefited from the political, economic, and educational opportunities made available as a result of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, an inordinately large portion of African American men experience little prosperity at the close of this century.

Researchers Farley (1977) and Wilson (1978) demonstrated that the small portion of African American youth who took advantage of the social reforms of the 1960s achieved academic success and mobility into skilled occupations and the American middle-class sector of society. A large portion of African American men, however, still remain poorly educated and unskilled, the outcasts of society, and contribute little or nothing to the country's labor force.

The following sections detail evidence of the dismal status of African American males throughout the United States, Michigan, and the Metropolitan High School community in the areas of employment, crime and violence, familial issues, health, and education. These

data were included to demonstrate the significance and need to study the education of African American males in this country.

### Employment Status

The National Research Council in its 1989 report, A Common Destiny: Blacks in American Society, pointed out that the increase in white-collar jobs enjoyed during the 1970s for both black and white men started to wane in the early 1980s. The trend was slower still for unskilled laborers in general and greater yet for unskilled African American men.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s resulted in a significant rise in the employment of African American males in American society (National Research Council, 1989; National Urban League, 1989). Many African American males and females alike were provided opportunities for placement in jobs and educational programs which previously were unavailable to them and other many minority groups in this country. This was an era of increased white-collar jobs for people of all races.

However, differences between black and white men's earnings and hours worked per week continued to manifest themselves. For example, in regard to the number of hours worked per week in 1987, African American men between the ages of aged 25-64 worked far fewer hours per week than their white counterparts. The men in this

age group worked 7 hours less per week than did white men of the same age group. The year 2000 will find the average black man earning 58% of the average white man's earning if the trend continues (National Research Council, 1989). According to Danziger and Weinberg (1986), in addition to fewer number of hours worked per week, African American males, on the average, are twice as unemployed as white males. The unemployed status of a large percentage of African American men contributes significantly to the problems faced by these men, their families, their communities, and society in general.

Due to the unemployed and/or underemployed standing of too many black males, their collective earning potential is far lower than that of white males. In fact, the National Urban League (1989) in its annual report, The State of Black America, (National Urban League, 1989), concluded: "For young African American men, the under 30 years of age group who were attempting to start families, their real income was half of what it was in the early 1970s."

African American males experienced an inflation-adjusted decline in real earnings of ten percent between 1978 and 1987 (National Urban League, 1989). In 1984, more than 40% of black men had an annual income of less than \$10,000 compared with white males with only 20% of their population in this category (Jaynes, Tobin, and Farley, 1986). The federal government determined an

annual income of \$10,000 or above to be beyond the poverty line for this period. Consequently, more than half of the African American male population was surviving at or near the poverty line. Many African American males who earned nearly or slightly more than \$10,000 annually were still not experiencing a middle-class lifestyle, nor were their families exposed to quality health care and nutrition (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988b).

It is essential to report here that the real extent of the austere plight of underemployed and unemployed African American males could not be represented accurately due to the fact that many lower and no-income African American males do not report their status to federal census takers. Bowman (1984) spoke of the understated predicament of impoverished young African American men in this country:

Although staggering, official statistics understate the problem of joblessness among young Black adults in several ways. Official unemployment figures fail to include discouraged workers who have stopped looking for work because of a belief that no job is available, other potential workers who are not looking, but would take a job if offered, and those who are involuntarily working part-time and want a job with more hours. (p. 70)

Since 1959 the proportion of men, both African American and white, who reported no earnings rose, but the increase was far more critical for African American men (National Research Council, 1989). In essence, half of the African American male population in the United

States lived in impoverished conditions in the late 1980's. Those who were able to find employment worked fewer hours per week and earned less than their white counterparts. Many gave up the search for employment and resorted to public assistance or crime for survival.

### Crime and Violence

Crime and violence by African Americans has increased sharply since the 1950s (Myers and Sabol, 1987). Along with the trend toward increased crime, the prison population also reflects a disproportionate percentage of African American males who are incarcerated as compared to the percentage of African American men who were in America. In 1987 Hawkins reported the prison population was 46% African American, but in 1939, African Americans made-up only 26% of the prison population and of course the overwhelming percentage of these prisoners were men (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988b).

According to MacGarrell and Flanagan (1985) black Americans were six times more often than not the victims of black crime and suffer greater injuries than do whites when they are victims of crime. Crime is generally committed near the home for all racial groups. Because African Americans generally live in communities which are predominantly African American, there is a high incident of black on black crime (National Research

Council, 1989). The poorer the community, the higher the crime rate. The highest crime rates are in communities where the average individual's annual income is less than \$10,000. The obvious linkages between economic stability and crime are most blatant with respect to crime in impoverished areas, especially African American communities.

The impact of crime on black-owned businesses in predominantly African American communities is especially distressing. Such businesses suffered repeated burglaries which result in increased insurance rates and eventually the loss of business. The loss of these businesses to their immediate community negatively impacts the employment possibilities for African Americans, especially young African American men. Predominantly African American communities and other minority communities are marred by the high incidents of crime caused by African American males (National Research Council, 1989; National Urban League, 1989).

The prevalence of violence in African American communities across the nation is most often related to drug trafficking, which is heavily concentrated in African American and Hispanic communities. Rose & Deskin, 1986, reported on the homicide rate in the nation's capital in 1987: 57% of the 228 homicides were considered related to drug trafficking. The high incidents of homicide also can be attributed to the fact



that handguns were weapons of choice in most of the criminal activities during the 1980s. In the category of robbery, guns were used in 43% of the cases.

Fingerhut and Klienman (1990) reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association that the United States had the highest homicide rate of 21 developed countries in 1990. Further, the rate for African American males is seven times greater than for white males in the 15 to 24 years-of-age group. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African American males in this age group.

In considering the crime factor, African American males are seven times more likely to die as a result of homicide than are white males. African American males made up nearly half of the nation's prison population. Viable black-owned businesses are almost nil in African American communities as a result of black-on-black crime.

### Familial Relationships

Social researchers attribute much of the dysfunctionality in the African American family to the ineffectiveness of the African American male in providing a steady economic foundation from which the family could prosper. For more than one third of the African American male population, their meager earning power negatively impacts their relationship with their family,

contributing to the common incidence of African American female-headed households. The majority of single, African American mothers reported that they receive no financial support from their children's fathers, and a large percentage of African American children are raised in destitution (National Research Council, 1989).

The fact is that a large percentage of African American men are unemployed or underemployed. Consequently, there is a scarcity of African American men, less than 60%, who are able to support families (Wilson & Aponte, 1985). The National Research Council (1989) found that lower-income African American families are predominantly female-headed households, and middle-income African American families are predominantly two-parent households.

In 1985, one third of all single black mothers reported receiving absolutely no child support from the fathers of their children, and only 11% of the "never married" category of African American women had ever received any financial support (National Research Council, 1989). Many of these women were left to resort to public assistance and/or low-paying jobs, which took them away from their children during their developmental years. The important factor here is that the black child's father is twice as likely as the white child's father to be unemployed. Even if both parents of a African American child work, they earn only 84% of what

a comparable white family earned (National Urban League, 1989).

In 1988, black teens were four times as likely as whites to have babies out-of-wedlock (National Urban League, 1989). The real tragedy is the impact of poverty on the African American child. The cycles of poverty continue to engulf large portions of the African American population, and the most persistent and pervasive impact is concentrated on African American males. The sad truth is that most African American males can barely afford a family in the United States. Their meager (if any) income explains the common pattern of female-headed households in this country.

#### Health Issues

African American males have a markedly higher death rate than do white males. The National Center for Health Statistics (1988) released findings which indicated that the life expectancy of a African American male in 1985 (65.3 years) was lower than that already achieved by white males in 1950 (66.5 years). In 1988, the Center reported that for a second consecutive year there was a decline in the life expectancy for African American men. This was the first back-to-back annual decline in this century, especially when white male life expectancy continues to increase. Cancer, homicide, hypertension, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), alcohol, and other substance abuses contribute

to the inordinately high premature death rate among African American males.

Since the 1940s, African American men have experienced consistent increases in death rates due to cancer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1986). The fact that an overwhelming number of African American males live in impoverished conditions, where daily survival is the major consideration, probably accounts for the poor attention to proper diets and increased smoking among African American men, two of the leading causes of cancer.

In 1987 the National Cancer Foundation reported differences in the tobacco smokers, when considering African American males and white males over the age of 20 years. Among African American males, 41% were smokers as compared to white males in the same age group with 32% smokers of tobacco (National Research Council, 1989). The Foundation further reported that the annual death rates as a result of lung cancer were categorically a reflection of the difference in the rate of smoking. The mortality rate per 100,000 people due to lung cancer was 95 for African American males and 70 for white males.

Poor health and health care begins in childhood for African American males and African Americans in general. The State of Black America, (National Urban League, 1989) reported:

The greatest barrier to improved health status for Black children is financial. Decent health care, including preventive care, is very expensive in this country. Few can afford health care unless they are insured, and insurance is very expensive unless it is provided through employers or public financing. Millions of families-especially lower-income working families and unemployed families were covered by neither private nor public health insurance. The recent erosion in Black access to health care is largely a result of poverty, the decline in public health programs, and a lack of health insurance.

In 1984 there were 35 million Americans without either public or private health insurance; one-third of them were children. One in every four Black children is completely uninsured. (p. 71)

As poorly-cared for African American children become adults, their health problems persist and enlarge. Consequently, African American men who reside mostly in impoverished or near impoverished conditions are clearly at risk concerning their health.

Finally, the newest health epidemic in America smacks hardest at African American men. Farley (1985) found that the epidemic, AIDS, disproportionately affects African American males for a number of reasons. However, their disproportionately high-incidence of intravenous drug use is the primary cause.

In summary, the cost of health care is exorbitant. Poor African American families experience ill health and many family members - especially children - die at extraordinarily high rates due to the family's inability to pay for adequate health care. Employment in this country is essential to procure adequate and affordable

health care insurance. As presented previously, African American males are most often unemployed and their personal health and the health of their families suffer immensely because of this.

### Schooling and Higher Education Issues

This study is about the education of African American males, a factor that is related to many of the aforementioned conditions of African American males. Otten (1990) for example found that the central factors contributing to the increased death rate for African American males are their poor economic status and poor education. The National Urban League (1989), and the National Research Council (1989) pointed out the need to improve the education of African Americans in general, with special attention to African American males.

Too many African American males are born into impoverished homes. Their chances are less than average for ever escaping the cycle of poverty into which they are born. Hofferth and Hayes (1987) studied African American children of teenage mothers and found that these children had a far higher rate of health problems than did white children. These children had greater risks of lower intellectual and academic achievement and a wide range of social problems. African American male students also were often ill-prepared for schooling and

experienced social difficulties at school and in their personal lives.

Many African American children, male and female, start school with the disadvantage of poverty. According to Ogbu (1974), these students receive little emotional support from their teachers and school administrators. Ogbu established that teachers and school administrators did not reward these students as often as they did other students. The lack of reward was often interpreted by students, as discouragement or punishment. Ogbu also recounted that school administrators and teachers often resisted African American parents' efforts to help their children. African American students, according to Ogbu, were not provided information needed to plan their futures.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Hare and Castenell (1986) studied the negative impact of peer culture on African American males. Both studies discovered that peer culture often sabotages the efforts of school and community persons to encourage goals of academic excellence for African American youths. Fordham and Ogbu found African American males in urban areas often rejected standard language usage, strong study habits, or receiving above-average grades because they associated these traits with "acting white." African American males, according to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), were more submissive to peer pressure than were white

males. African American males often shy away from behaviors which could enhance their possibilities for academic success. African American male students who do exhibit these traits are generally ridiculed by their peers and tended not to succeed in their schooling (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

The particularly high unemployment rate experienced by African Americans in general is another factor which contributed to the lack of interest in academic endeavors by many African American males. African American males observe older brothers, neighbors, their fathers and other men in their communities who are unemployed or underemployed. Their own inability to secure part-time jobs is additional confirming evidence that hard work and attention to academic matters does not necessarily result in an improved lifestyle, even if they are academically successful. Consequently, many young African American males lose interest in academic rigor and anticipated little payoff from hard mental work (National Research Council, 1989).

Recent data from the Census Bureau (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988b) indicates that a higher percentage of African American males in the 18-to-24-year-old range completes high school in the latter years of the 1980s than ever before. However, the number of African American male graduates, in general, remained significantly lower than that all other racial and



gender cohorts in the United States. African American females in this age range had a significantly greater high school completion rate than African American males in 1986. African American females' graduation rate in that year was about 80% while the African American males' graduation rate that same year was about 72%.

Higher education posed another hardship for many African American males. The National Council on Education (1989) and the National Urban League (1989) maintain that getting larger numbers of qualified African American males involved in higher education is a key to reversing the economic trends common among African American males. The vast majority of colleges and universities, however, require students seeking admission to submit their college entrance test results. These post-secondary institutions generally accept either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), administered by the College Board, or the American College Testing (ACT), an examination administered by the American College Testing Program. Both tests are designed to predict academic readiness for college-level work.

The SAT is a multiple-choice test which measures refined verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities related to successful performance in college (College Board and the Educational Testing Service, 1988). The four ACT multiple-choice tests measure educational development in the areas of English, mathematics, social

studies, and the natural sciences. The administrators of the ACT believe that the best way to predict success in post-secondary education is to measure, as directly as possible, the skills students needed in these settings (American College Testing Program, 1988).

Historically, African American males perform poorly on the two college entrance examinations. African American males as well as other minority groups demonstrate significant improvement during the past decade (National Research Council, 1989), but there were still major gaps between the national scores of African American males and other minority counterparts. The betterment is due to improved patterns of course selection and policies aimed at improving the educational status of African Americans and other minorities.

The 18-to-24-year-old population is considered the traditional college-going group (American Council on Education, 1988). The use of this age group as a standard provides an understanding of the number of persons who are actually enrolled in college by race. Although African American males historically maintain a higher "in-college" rate than their female counterparts, that began to wane in the 1980's. In 1986, the participation rate for African American female high school graduates was about 29% and about 28% for their African American male counterparts. In that same year, white

high school graduates maintained about a 34% college enrollment.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that among historically black colleges and universities, enrollment declined drastically between 1980 and 1986. The 222,000 total enrollment in these schools in 1980 declined to 213,093 students in 1986. In 1987, there was a 5,000 student gain for these institutions, and their total enrollment was 218,000 due to increased recruitment efforts on the part of this institutions and the increased tuition rate at predominantly white institutions.

A report from the National Center of Education Statistics (1989) indicated that by the year 2000 there will be a 50% turnover in faculty members in the nation's colleges and universities, and there will be fewer African American males prepared to fill many of those vacancies unless there is a concerted effort to encourage more African Americans and other minorities to procure doctorates and seek university careers.

African Americans earned 4.5 percent of the doctorates awarded in 1977 and the number declined to 3.8 percent earned in 1987 (Summary Report 1987, 1989). During that period (1977-1987), there was a marked increase in the number of African American women recipients and a decline in the number of African American male recipients. A contributing factor for these

statistics is the ability to finance education at the doctoral level. Fewer African Americans are financially able to support the expense of advanced education.

African American women, however, are more likely to receive scholarships due to pressure for graduate programs to accommodate multiple minority categories.

The National Research Council, The National Urban League (1989) reported that African Americans were overrepresented in the fields of education and the humanities but grossly underrepresented in the social sciences and engineering fields. In the ten-year period between 1977 and 1987, African American male doctorates in all fields declined by 54% from 684 to 317, respectively. This decline could be attributed to the cost factor and the retrenchment of scholarships and grants during the Reagan administration (1980-1988).

The American Council on Education (1988) articulated the need for a special effort to increase the number of African American males earning college degrees. The council listed numerous factors which accounted for the scarcity of African American males on college and university campuses of this country, namely, chronic health problems and lower life expectancy, high unemployment rates, lower teacher expectations, disproportionate discipline and expulsion incidents, and disproportionate time spent in special education classes. Even with increased educational opportunities,

there is no guarantee of economic parity with white males. Among college-educated men with degrees, 1 in 9 are unemployed for African American men as compared to 1 in 29 for white men (National Urban League, 1989).

#### African American Males in Michigan

African American males in the state of Michigan, where this research was conducted, mirror or are far worse than other African American males nationwide in the specific aforementioned categories. African American male Michiganians were disproportionately overrepresented in the prison population, the population of AIDS victims, and the population in juvenile detention, and disproportionately underrepresented in the college and university populations of the state (as shown in Table 1).

#### African American Males at Metropolitan High School

The findings presented in this study will demonstrate that the educational and social outcomes of African American males at Metropolitan High are similar to those experienced by African American males nationally and in Michigan.

As the racial composition of Metropolitan High School changed from predominantly white and middle-class to predominantly African American and working-class, the quality of the educational outcomes - especially for

Table 1

Statistics on African American Males in Michigan


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1.	Number in public colleges	8,393
	Percent of public college enrollment (fall, 1988 data)	3.8%
2.	Number in public universities	6,257
	Percent of total public universities	2.5%
3.	Number reported with AIDS since 1981	436
	Percent of all reported AIDS cases in Michigan	39%
4.	Number on General Assistance	31,065
	Percent of all DSS General Assistance (May, 1989)	32%
5.	Number unemployed in Michigan	45,000
	Percent of unemployed (May, 1989)	17.7%
6.	Number in prison	15,307
	Percent of the prison population (DOC annual report)	58.2%
7.	Number in juvenile detention centers	151
	Percent of juvenile detention population (May, 1989)	58.1%
8.	Number in juvenile training schools	328
	Percent of the juvenile training school population (May, 1989)	58.5%
9.	Number in foster care	430
	Percent of foster care population (May, 1989)	67%

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Note. From The Michigan Chronicle "Black Male in Crisis," March 28, 1990

African American males - declined. For example, of the 115 African American males studied over a three-year period, only slightly more than half actually graduated with their class, and among those who completed their education, most were significantly below-average academically and thus less likely to apply to or be accepted into four-year colleges. Many others in the cohort were not attending school regularly, while others were involved in violent or aggressive behaviors which resulted in their being incarcerated, expelled, or dropped from the active enrollment at the school. Thus, the conditions facing working-class, African American males at Metropolitan High School are comparable to those faced by young African American males in other urban areas of the nation.

## SUMMARY

This chapter provided a brief description of the negative conditions of African American males in this country, in the state of Michigan, and at Metropolitan High School in late 1980's. Clinical psychologist, Gibbs (1984) compared African American males to certain national wildlife by referring to them, ironically, as an "endangered species." Considering the facts presented in this chapter, namely, that African American males are most often involved in criminal justice proceedings; die more often from cancer, homicide and AIDS; experience the highest unemployment and under-employment rates of all other racial groups in the nation; and too often live at or near the national poverty line, one could easily conclude that African American males are indeed endangered. Even more distressing is the fact that these conditions have worsened since the 1950s at a steady annual rate.

This study, like other efforts, presents data to help explain the status of African American males and to help improve their conditions. Marshall, in his foreword to Young, Black, and Male in America (Gibbs, J.T., Brunswick, A., Connor, M., Dembo, R., Larson, T., Reed, R., & Solomon, B., 1988) concluded that:

It is...very clear that a failure to address the problems for these young men will be very costly in material and human terms to the society as a whole...[and that] we must view interventions as investments, not merely cost. (p. ii)



It is clear from the research reviewed in this chapter that one of the most important investments that our society can make in young, African American males is investment in a quality education. Yet the research also suggests that society is not making this investment. As a result, this study examined the schooling of 115 young, African American males at a typical urban high school from the perspective of critical theories of social reproduction and resistance and attempted to document interventions that could lead to improved educational outcomes for these students.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This study of the educational outcomes of 115 African American males at Metropolitan High School is grounded in the concepts of reproduction and resistance as developed in the works of noted radical theorists. This chapter will provide an analysis and synthesis of these works.

The notion of reproduction asserts that there is a "tight fit," or "deterministic," relationship between public schools and the division of labor in capitalist societies. The reproduction paradigm assumes that schools are training grounds for society's laborers, preparing them for positions of power and subserviency. Due to poor academic preparation, many other individuals are relegated to the status surplus laborers for whom there are no positions.

Theories of resistance, also, acknowledge the relationship of schooling and work for example, that working-class schools tend to produce working-class adults, while upper-class schools produce managers and persons in leadership positions of power. However, resistance theories also focus on some degree of autonomy for both the schoolhouse and human agents in mapping and shaping their own destinies. Theories of resistance, as

will be highlighted here, explain the development of the social-class outcomes defined by reproduction theorists. They suggest that students contribute significantly to their own social outcomes by resisting the values and objectives of school.

This chapter describes the evolution of radical theory from the tight fit or deterministic paradigms of reproduction, which attempt to explain the economic and social-class outcomes of public schooling, to the more widely affirmed resistance paradigms which acknowledge or account for the potential impact of human agency.

In later chapters, I will examine how well these concepts explain the case of Metropolitan High School and the educational outcomes of the 115 African American males studied. The purpose of this chapter, however, is the exposition of reproduction and resistance theories.

### ENGELS AND MARX

The theoretical perspectives which I am using were often characterized as radical theories, or simply, leftist. They take their lead and esprit from the writings and philosophies of Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). Therefore, a review of relevant literature pertaining to radical theories must begin with the contributions of Engels and Marx.

At the close of the 19th century, Engels and Marx were horrified by the working conditions of the newly industrialized Europe. Capitalism, in their view, was the causal factor behind the dehumanization and alienation experienced by workers in the factories of Europe. According to Marx (1867), men [in factories] were reduced to the status of "things," while the real power rested in the hands of the ruling classes. The government, according to both Marx and Engels, represented and facilitated the will of the minority ruling classes at the expense of the impotent majority classes. Engels and Marx were driven by their desire to have the State become actively involved in controlling and regulating industrialism and rehumanizing the work processes for the masses. This relationship between the ruling and working classes contributed greatly to the development of the "correspondence theory," which shall be presented below.

Marx (1967) published the first volume of Capital: A Critique of Political Economy in 1867 which addressed the exploitative and degrading conditions of work under capitalism. Chapter XV of that volume converged with specificity upon the deplorable and exploitive conditions of an industrial capitalist society:

The starting point of modern industry is, as we have shown, the revolution in the instruments of labour, and this revolution attains its most highly developed form in the organised system of machinery in a factory....

In so far as machinery dispenses with the muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of slight muscular strength and those whose bodily development is incomplete, but whose limbs are all the more supple.... Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family....

In order that the family may now live, four people must now not only labour, but expend surplus labour for the capitalist. Thus we see that machinery, while augmenting human material that forms the principal object of capital's exploiting power, at the same time raises the degree of exploitation. (p. 290)

Along the same discourse, Marx and Engels' manuscript, The German Ideology (1846) concentrated on the domination of the ruling classes, citing the fact that even dominant values as a whole in society were in reality the values of the ruling class, for example, the class which controls the means of material production. An ideology, as Marxism purported, was a set of values which claims universal validity and appeal, but in reality, represents the interests of a special group or class in society. Marx concluded that only an analysis

of the social function of an ideology discloses which group, class, or sector in society is being served.

Marx was particularly obsessed with the import of economic production in 19th-century Europe. He and others who supported his philosophies believed that economic production was the basis of life, and all political, educational, and religious ideas were resolved by the function and needs of economic production in society.

Marx wrote four manuscripts in 1844 which were later published in 1932. These writings further addressed his concerns regarding the role and impact of economic production on industrial societies. In one of them, Alienated Labor, he theorized that the demands of economic production came to dominate the requirements of human life. He pointed out the emotional impact of alienated labor, "...he [the worker] has a feeling of misery rather than well being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but was physically exhausted and mentally debased" (p. 21).

As a theoretical solution to the on-going tension between the demands of the capitalists and the frustration felt by the working class, Marx and Engels (1847) wrote the Manifesto of the Communist Party. In this work, they predicted the social outcome of the struggle between exploiting and exploited classes. They envisioned an overthrow of the government by the prole-

tariat and the abolition of private property ownership under the communist system of government, where the masses would rule society. By the latter part of 20th century, most capitalist governments had addressed the abominable conditions of industrial labor. The decline of communism throughout the world was fated, but the correspondence between schooling and the work world has remained a central interest of neo-Marxists in Europe, South America, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

When present-day public schools were examined and critiqued from these radical perspectives, several questions came to mind: Where did public schools take their direction for curriculum development? Did working class schools produce working class adults? Were certain schools preparing large numbers of youth for surplus labor positions and permanent unemployment, while other schools were grooming their youth for positions of power and control? If there was a deliberate and directed shaping and molding of teacher and youth in public schools, did it occur in the absence of struggle? What can be said of the reproduction of social and ideological inequities in society? What did we know about human nature and human agency? The answer to these and other questions were central to the critical thinking of radical theorists in education.

### THE REPRODUCTION PARADIGM

Theories of social reproduction attempt to address the above primary questions regarding the objectivity of schooling in capitalist societies. The theoretical writings of principal neo-Marxist theorists, such as Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) from an economic perspective and Louis Althusser (1971) from an ideological perspective, concentrated their efforts toward grasping the essence of the socioeconomic function of schooling in capitalist societies. Both perspectives appeared idealistic and simplified, as will be discussed below, but did provide a springboard for analyzing the relationship which continues to exist between the work force and the capitalists.

#### Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis

Bowles and Gintis (1976) were concerned with an economic model of social reproduction. Their text, Schooling in Capitalist America, received and continued to receive tremendous attention and criticism since the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s by radical theorists focusing on the development of a theory which better construed the relationship between schooling and the division of labor in society.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) contended that educational systems were considered successful based on how well their students "fit" into the division of labor upon



leaving school. They purported that the capitalist economy and the division of labor were both one and the same:

Making U.S. capitalism work involves: insuring the minimal participation in decision-making by the majority (the workers); protecting a single minority (capitalists and managers) against the wills of a majority; and subjecting the majority to the maximal influence of this single unrepresentative minority. A more dramatic contrast one would be hard pressed to discover. High school textbooks do not dwell on the discrepancy. (p. 54)

From this perspective, Bowles and Gintis (1976) were able to advance a discussion of students' personal satisfaction and the development of their maximum potential with respect to preparation for the division of labor.

The production of people, according to Bowles and Gintis (1976), is far more critical to the capitalist economy than the production of "things" that are made by people in industry. They claimed that, "...people production in the work place and in school was dominated by the imperatives of profit and domination rather than human need." (p.54) Capitalists, according to Bowles and Gintis, make enormous profits by eliciting high levels of output from their workforce. By maintaining the right to hire and fire employees, capitalists are able to keep their workers in a "productive" frame of mind.

Further, Bowles and Gintis (1976) view schools within capitalism as the main and obvious source of

production of skilled workers. Schools are responsible for the production of a large pool of skilled workers referred to by Bowles and Gintis as the "reserve army". This excess workforce empowers the capitalists with the tool of "selection" and leaves the workers impotent. Bowles and Gintis suggest that major aspects of the structure of schooling can be understood by studying the needs of economic production.

Bowles and Gintis took a hard look at the differences between domestic work prior to the industrial revolution and work in capitalist societies. They pointed out one main distinction: Domestic production was not geared primarily for profit, but rather toward satisfaction of the needs of the nuclear family. Capitalist production, on the other hand, was geared toward increased profits for the capitalists and not the workers or their nuclear families. Along this course, Galbrath (1973) wrote:

Decision-making and accountability are organized according to the hierarchical division of labor, where control over work processes is arranged in vertical layers of increasing authority with the ultimate power resting nearly exclusively in the top echelon of owners and managers. (p. 27)

Racial and ethnic minorities have to some extent fallen prey to the needs of production in capitalist societies. Edwards, Reich, and Gordan (1975) demonstrated that these groups have historically entered the workforce and been "superexploited" and socially brand-

ed. But with time, political organization, and the entry of a new wave of laborers into the lowest occupational slots, they were able to move up the social-class ladder. African American males, however, have consistently remained on the bottom strata of the social-class ladder throughout the 20th century.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) also categorized a primary and secondary labor forces. The primary, labor force is characterized by high wages and job security, while the secondary labor force is characterized by low wages, great employment instability, and high job turn-over. Bowles and Gintis' findings are important here for an understanding of the employment probabilities of African American males. They argued that "...secondary employment was the expected lot of the most oppressed social groups: blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, native Americans, women, the elderly, youth and other minority groups" (p. 67).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) are closely identified with the correspondence principle or theory which purports that there is an interactive relationship between what is taught in the classroom of schools and the skills which are needed in the various divisions of the workforce. In describing the correspondence theory, Giroux (1981) writes:

The correspondence theory posits that the hierarchically structured patterns of values, norms, and skills, that characterize the work force and the dynamics of the daily class interaction

under capitalism were mirrored in the social dynamics of the daily classroom interactions. (p. 262)

In other words, in addition to the curriculum which is taught in schools, there is an invisible or "hidden curriculum" which teaches the disposition and attitudes needed in the workplace. This curriculum is considered to be the source of inequality in public schools because it deprives working-class students-generally African Americans and other minorities-the opportunity to develop independent thinking skills.

In essence, Bowles and Gintis purported that the central task of public schools is the shaping and molding of their students to fit into the divisions of labor. This has a disproportionate, adverse impact on African American and other minority students, leaving them to fill secondary positions in the labor market which generally offers them poor wages, little job security, and few opportunities for advancement. This correspondence between school and the work world from an economic perspective is the major focus of Bowles and Gintis' work.

### Louis Althusser

Louis Althusser (1971) is most often associated with the neo-Marxist ideological perspective of social reproduction. He focuses attention on the reproductive aspects of labor power, while not ignoring the impor-

tance of reproducing the material means of production. "...[N]o production was possible which does not allow for the reproduction of the material conditions of production: the reproduction of the means of production" (p. 128). In referring to Althusser's (1969, 1971) writings, Willis (1987) concluded:

Education provides the necessary skills for production, the necessary graded ideologies for the social division of labour and provides for the actual formation of subjectivities through the celebrated "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." (p. 115)

Althusser was convinced that the central and driving force of capitalist societies was the reproduction of the "labor power," or the people needed to produce capitalist supplies. This reproduction occurs outside of the industry or firm, most often within the family. The motivating factor which produces and reproduces labor power is the laborers' "wages" according to Althusser (1971). This relation of laborer and his/her wages is essential to the reproduction of the labor power. Wages paid to the laborers allows for "...raising and educating the children in which the proletarian reproduces himself" (Althusser, 1971, p. 131). Althusser (1969, 1971) and others (Marx, 1844, Bowles & Gintis, 1976) considered economics as a motivator of all social behavior. "Economic determinism" is a common concept among Marxist and neo-Marxist writings.

Althusser also maintained that laborers must be properly educated in preparation for the tasks of the work world. This notion of "competencies" for the work world is critical to Althusser's model of ideological reproduction. It is within the process of schooling, according to Althusser (1969, 1971), that the division of qualities of education occurs. The education of the common person (or the manual laborer) would be distinctly contrasted by the educational needs of the future engineers and other intellectuals in society. Thus, Althusser (1971) introduced the concept of "know how" which speaks to the various types of knowledge and skills needed by laborers in society. The "know how" needed by the manual laborer, for example, was less in quantity and different in quality than the knowledge needed by skilled workers in society. In addition to the skills needed to complete the tasks of the capitalist work world, laborers also needed, according to Althusser, to possess the proper attitude(s) for work at the various stations in life:

A child learns the "rules" of good behavior i.e., proper attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is "destined" for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. They also learn to "speak proper French", to "handle" the workers correctly, i.e., actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to "order them about" properly, i.e., (ideally) to "speak to them" in the right way, etc. (p. 132)

For Althusser (1971), there is a great deal more occurring in the schoolhouse and within individual families than merely the acquisition of mental skills. He claims that attitudes about work and one's place in society are also formed in schools to ensure that all persons involved in the division of labor acquiesce to the "ruling class ideology". More contemporary radical theorists (Anyon, 1980; Olson, 1983; Willis, 1977) observe that in working-class schools, punctuality, neatness, obedience, and structure are stressed supposedly because these skills and attitudes are conducive to manual labor. Conversely, creativity, independence, and higher-level thinking skills are taught in upper-middle class and elite schools in an effort to prepare those students for jobs as managers and capitalists.

Destutt de Tracy, a French philosopher, originated the term, "ideology" at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, it was Karl Marx (1844) who advanced its significance to include the beliefs, traditions, principles, and myths of the ruling classes. The ideology of a capitalist society, according to Althusser (1971), is generally masked as representative of the needs of the majority, but in reality serves only the needs and will of a minority, the ruling class.

Althusser's (1971) model of capitalist societies as having both an "infrastructure" (the economic base) and

a "superstructure" (the politico-legal and ideology segments of society) is central to his perception of "ideology." In Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, Althusser (1971) theorized that the major ideological State apparatuses were the family, public and private school systems, trade unions, and culture, all part of the superstructure of capitalist societies. These mechanisms exist to promote the ruling ideology and the infrastructure, which are the economic base of capitalist societies, even if they must do so by means of physical or mental violence. According to Althusser (1971), "...schools and churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same was true of the family..." (p. 145).

Althusser's model of reproduction focused on the importance of wages and other economic factors in the production of specific attitudes and values needed for the capitalist society. He also suggests that "know how" or competencies are equally important in the production of laborers, purporting that workers needed to acquire the proper attitudes for work. These attitudes are learned in the family, church, and most often in public schools. Althusser stresses the magnitude of the ruling-class ideology on the working-class masses.



Pierre Bourdieu and Claude Passeron

In addition to theories of social reproduction, other radical theorists have concentrated on culture as well. The works of Pierre Bourdieu and Claude Passeron (1977a, 1977b, 1977c and 1979) in France form the foundation of the cultural reproduction paradigm. Their efforts are directed at identifying the relationships between school and the workplace from a cultural perspective.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977a, 1977b) perceived a dual-faceted paradigm: One side is the relationship between culture, class, and domination, while on the other side is the relationship among schooling, knowledge, and personal biographies. Unlike the economists, Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu and Passeron's model of cultural reproduction views the schools as being relatively autonomous institutions which are often influenced by the political and economic prowess of the ruling classes of society.

Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b) and Passeron and Bourdieu (1979) concluded that it was precisely through the external appearance of "neutrality and innocence" that schools are able to aid in the reproductive process by determining what knowledge is valuable. In other words, while schools give the illusion of being "open institutions," in reality, they are value-laden, holding certain types of school knowledge as more valuable than

others. As Giroux (1981) wrote:

Schools play a particularly important role in both legitimating and reproducing the dominant culture; for schools, especially at the level of higher education, embody class interests and ideologies that capitalize upon a kind of familiarity and set of skills that only specific students have received through their family backgrounds and class relations. (p. 268)

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977a, 1977b) this type of ruling-class preference for school knowledge is form of "symbolic violence". Symbolic violence is not overt force, but rather the subtle pressure caused by the politics and power of the ruling classes.

In essence, schools assure social disparities, according to the cultural reproduction model, by what and how they teach and the criteria used to select staff and evaluate students' knowledge and academic progress. Schools in capitalist societies tend to mask their efforts as "egalitarian". Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) theorized that those students whose culture is close to that of the school are exposed to a different set of learning experiences:

Those whose "culture" is the academic culture as conveyed by the school have a system of categories of perceptions, language, thoughts and appreciation that sets them apart from those whose only training has been through their work and through their social contacts with people of their own kind. (p. 80)

Michael Apple

The works of curriculum theorist Michael Apple (1979a, 1979b, 1980, & 1985) are likewise important for the research reported in this dissertation. Apple (1979a) gave considerable attention to the roles of ideology and hegemony in the curriculum of American schools. With an understanding that the interest of particular dominating classes are well represented in the curriculum of public schools, Apple (1979) analyzed the mechanisms which allowed a dominating ideology to filter into the mainstream curriculum by focusing on access to knowledge and the unequal distribution of knowledge.

Beyond the formal curriculum, Apple (1979) also highlighted the importance of the informal curricula which impact students by the fact that they spend a great amount of time in the school. While in school, students learn the rules and knowledge which are important for their lives in the workforce.

To emphasize the shaping and molding which occurred in school, Apple (1979a) presented ethnographic evidence of the schooling process as documented by a group of kindergarten students. He reported that students in kindergarten learned, upon arriving at school to distinguish between work and play and to categorize their belongings by work and play. Kindergarteners learned the importance of their role and deviance from

the norms. Apple's analyses (1979a) of a normal kindergarten experience was important because he believed that it was in kindergarten that children learned the "rules" which prepared them for subsequent years of schooling. Apple (1985) reported, "...there is no lack of evidence that a hidden curriculum in schools exists, one that tacitly attempts to teach norms and values to students that were related to working in this unequal society."

#### Jean Anyon

A critical study of commonly-used history textbooks by Anyon (1979) revealed that the most influential publishing companies were few in number; however, they had the ability to support, through their vigorous selection/exclusion processes, various ideologies despite freedom of press and the presumed objectivity of textbooks. Anyon studied seventeen commonly-used history textbooks. She discovered that the working class and the poor did not have their views and activities clearly represented. This omission and distortion, according to Anyon, reflected the powerlessness of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women. Anyon concluded that textbooks not only represent the interest of the dominant society but also help to form support of the dominant social class.

Another study by Anyon (1980) examined fifth-grade classes in working-class, middle-class, upper-income, and capitalist-class communities. She found that the schools were similar in many respects, but differed significantly in content of the teaching-learning processes. In working-class schools, work was defined as following the steps of a procedure. While in middle-class schools, work was defined as getting the right answer. For the upper middle-class students, working was defined as developing one's analytical, intellectual powers. Anyon assigned these definitions of work based on what she observed relative to the requirements placed on students in the various schools. This dissertation focuses on a high school which changed from a middle upper income school system or a "get the right answer" school to a working-class, "follow the rules and procedures" school.

## CRITIQUES OF REPRODUCTION THEORY

As mentioned earlier, the correspondence theory suggested by Bowles and Gintis (1976) has received considerable criticism. Giroux (1981) pointed-out that their main work, Schooling in Capitalist America, paints a perfect picture of the relationship between schooling and the workforce without considering the roles played by teachers, students, parents, and others. Giroux (1981) felt that Bowles and Gintis' correspondence theory "overemphasized domination at the expense of those contradictions and forms of resistance that also characterize social sites such as schools and the work place" (p. 259).

Apple (1979), pointed out that the correspondence theory as posited by Bowles and Gintis assumes a non-pragmatic and passive view of socialization and fails to account for the culture of the school and the resistance which occurs within schools. As evidence, Apple (1979c) pointed-out that:

large numbers of inner-city and working class students creatively adapt their environments so that they can smoke, get out of class, inject humor into their routines, informally control the pacing of classroom life, generally try to make it through the day. (p. 102)

Apple (1980) suggests that Bowles and Gintis' theory regarding the hidden curriculum had some strong elements which merit further research, namely, the fact that the "hidden curriculum" is different in schools representing different social classes and expected

future status in life. Apple points out that lower-class students are taught punctuality, neatness, respect for authority, and other elements of habit formation. The students of middle and upper classes are taught intellectual open-mindedness, problem solving, flexibility, and skills which enable them to function as managers and professionals, not as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers.

MacDonald (1980), in reference to the work of Althusser and Bowles and Gintis, comparatively analyzed their works by noting that, "both see the reproduction of social relations found in the production process as the central function and determining force in the shaping of schools within capitalism" (p. 47). Althusser's work is significant in providing a working "idealistic" paradigm of the relationship between ruling ideology, the division of labor in society, and the relationships between the controlling minority of society over the impotent majority. His work, however, fails to account for the "struggle" which occurs within superstructure agencies, especially schools, among working-class youth who, according to Althusser, are seemingly forced into subjection of the ruling ideology by way of various ideological State apparatuses. As Giroux reported (1983), the imposition of the ruling ideology onto the masses seemed to occur "behind the backs," of teachers and students through hidden messages

or a hidden curriculum according to the ideological model purported by Althusser and others. In essence, according to Bernstein (1975), Althusser conceptualized education as the crucial means of ideological control and reproduction. Bernstein (1975) saw Althusser as completely disregarding the role played by human agency.

In addressing the fragility of Althusser's and other reproduction theorists' models, Finn, Grant, Johnson (1978) characterized their work as rigid and not accounting for the possibilities or probabilities for the capacity of "resistance" on the part of the teachers and students. Such oppositional behavior, as previously cited here, is common in public schools of this nation today, especially among working-class youth and minorities.

Sharp's (1980) thoughts concerning Althusser's model are helpful in providing an understanding of the shortcomings of the ideological model:

It suggests a determinist reproduction of the relations of production by the educational system which tends to contradict Althusser's own thesis of the relative autonomy of the ideological and political levels and leads to a form of reductionism. It also provides no hope that subjects can ever escape from ideology. (p. 163)

Although Althusser (1969, 1971) demonstrated concern, too, for the role of economics in modern industrialized societies as did all neo-Marxists, his primary concern was for the multi-dimensional transmission of ruling-



class ideology from school to the workplace. Althusser (1971) echoed this concern in the following statement: "[O]ne ideological state apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music; it is so silent! It is the School" (p. 155).

## THEORIES OF RESISTANCE

Several other radical theorists have closely scrutinized the works of the social and cultural reproductionists during the 1970s and 1980s. As reported here, many have found that the "tight fit," deterministic concepts of reproduction are not played out in reality at the social site, especially in the schoolhouse. The notion of "human agency" and its role in resisting domination and consequently reproducing a surplus skilled work force is notably void from the model suggested by social and cultural reproductionists. Among the more noted critical thinkers associated with resistance theory are Paul Willis, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Angela McRobbie, and Paul Olson.

### Paul Willis

Willis (1977) documented resistance as a central, active and driving force of the human agents at a typical working-class school in England. In his famous ethnographic research, Learning to Labor, Willis (1977) reported on the actual day-to-day experiences of working-class youth. His findings suggested that the resistance and oppositional behaviors common among a group of English working-class youth, referred to by Willis as the "lads" (the subjects of his research), not only prepared them for working-class jobs but also assured them of working-class status. A crucial factor

of the working-class culture of these youth, as reported by Willis, was the categorical rejection of authority. He affirmed that "the most basic, obvious and explicit dimension of the counter-school culture was entrenched, general and personalised opposition to authority" (p. 11).

The lads not only rejected the authority imposed by adult school officials, but they also rejected other working-class students who acquiesced to school authority, namely, but not exclusively, the "ear'oles" (term used by the lads to refer to those students who comply with the school's rules, their ear holes accepting everything at face value). Because of their impulse to follow the rules of the school, the ear'oles became the target of verbal and physical abuse from the lads.

Willis (1977, 1981, 1987) cited numerous examples of the lads' efforts to gain control over their school lives. Specifically, he demonstrated that the lads chose, in addition to "bullying" the ear'oles and attempting to dominate Asian, African descent and female students, to concentrate their resistance on school rules in three specific areas which Willis referred to as their, "elected grounds for struggle over authority: dress, smoking and drinking alcohol" (p. 11). In his reference to the opposition which he observed among the "lads," Willis (1977) noted that the opposition seemed

wedged between what was the "formal" and "informal" culture of the school. Clearly, but not less important, the counter-school culture was in the "zone" of the informal.

Willis (1977) pointed out that within the counter-school culture, certain elements can exist and become central factors which might appear alien in a more formal culture. For example, the lads used the "laff" or (laugh) as a multi-purpose response to a variety of situations. Willis explained that the laugh and the ability to produce a "laff" was extraordinarily important to the counter-school culture. He wrote that the laff was used to:

defeat boredom and fear, to overcome hardship and problems -- as a way out of almost anything. In many respects the "laff" is the privileged instrument of the informal as the command is of the formal. Certainly the "lads" understand the special importance of the "laff." (p. 29)

The longing to gain informal control at the work place was also noted by Willis (1977) as he explained the work place and conditions of these working-class youth upon "leaving school." He noted the similarities between the work place and the school were many for working-class men. He observed that in their working-class environment, there was a need to control the work situation and some elements of personal freedom persisted.

Finally, Willis (1977) discussed the fact that many working-class youth were preoccupied with opposing

authority. Consequently, the "tight fit", deterministic theories of reproduction offered by Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, and Bourdieu were incomplete and contestable from Willis' perspective. Willis saw the working class in a perpetual "struggle," rejecting all that was formal. African American males (similar to the "lads"), by rejecting the formal aspects of schooling including "qualifications" and "credentials", guarantee their place in the social stratum of the unskilled and poorly skilled. However, Willis (1977) concluded that the lads sensed the futility of study and mental labor and believed that their fate was tied to the working-class and manual labor. Willis wrote, "No conceivable number of certificates amongst the working class will make for a classless society, or convince industrialists and employers -- even if they were able -- that they should create more jobs" (p. 127).

In essence, it appears from Willis' ethnographic work that the working class are more than relegated to certain stations as a result of domination. They often contribute to reproduction through their own oppositional behavior and resistance. This dissertation demonstrates that many African American males reject mental labor and contribute to their working-class plight as well.

Henry Giroux

Focusing on the teachers' role, Giroux (1981) asserted that the deterministic, "tight fit" models of social and cultural reproduction do not apply. He affirmed that teachers interpreted their role in the schooling process and the roles played-out by their students in a variety of ways. In outlining some of the factors which account for the differences in teacher interpretation of their role, Giroux (1981) wrote:

Informal cultural and ideological factors such as ethnicity, race, world-view, and social class background often generate oppositional attitudes among teachers toward school authority, rules, predefined curriculum structures, and institutionally sanctioned forms of teacher accountability.

Giroux (1983a, 1983b) advanced over the understanding of resistance theory by insisting that these theories also tend to stress culture and cultural production with culture referring to the way of life of a people, shared meanings, language, dress, values, etc. For Willis' "lads," preference for manual labor over mental labor was an aspect of their shared meaning or culture.

Giroux (1983a, 1983b) assessed the weaknesses of reproduction theories. Their mechanisms of reproduction are never complete and are always characterized by elements of contestation.

Giroux (1983b) points out two major deficiencies of resistance theories, as well, which are characteris-

tically important for this study. First, not all oppositional behavior constitutes radical importance nor is all in response to domination. In this study of African American youth culture, for example, it was critical to determine whether observed oppositional behavior had a direct purpose, whether it was meant to be emancipatory, or did it simply lack purpose.

According to Giroux (1983b) "students may be totally indifferent to ideology or domination." Regarding their personal emancipation and resistance, Giroux wrote:

I think resistance has to be situated in a perspective or rationality that takes the notion of emancipation as its guiding interest. That is, the nature and meaning of an act of resistance has to be defined next to the degree to which it contains the possibilities to develop what Marcuse termed "a commitment to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity." (Marcuse, 1977)

Second, resistance theories have generally, as reported by Giroux (1983a, 1983b), not been concerned with the roles of girls and women; the female perspective is not properly addressed by resistance theorists. This research project focused on African American males because of the distressed predicaments confronting them in their daily existence.

### Michael Apple

Apple (1979b) offers several explanations regarding the importance of "struggle" with respect to reproduction when he reviewed Willis' (1977) Learning to

Labor. Apple concluded that considerable evidence exists to support the relationship between schools and cultural and economic reproduction, but he pointed out that a mirror-image relationship between education and factory (industry) is simply too mechanistic.

In concurrence with Willis' (1979) observation that resistance and oppositional behavior are common in many urban areas, Apple (1979) wrote:

Large numbers of them [students] in inner-city and working class schools, to say nothing of other areas, creatively adapt their environment so that they can smoke, get out of class, inject humor into the routines, informally control the pacing of classroom life, and generally try to make it through the day. In these same schools, many students go even further. They simply reject the overt and hidden curriculum of the school. The teacher who is teaching about mathematics, science, history, careers, etc., is ignored as much as possible. The covert teaching of punctuality, neatness, compliance and other more economically rooted norms is simply dismissed as far as one can as well. The real task of the students is to last until the bell rings. (p. 23)

### Angela McRobbie

McRobbie (1978), encouraged by the need to depict the "missing dimension, namely girls," generated significant evidence that described the relationship between schooling and the work world for working-class females. She discovered that because these girls were limited in their experiences to the dictated role of females in society, (i.e., they were more or less restricted to the home, school, or the club), their socialization processes were substantially different



from the boys of their social class and other middle-class girls. McRobbie identified the struggle and conflict which naturally exists between working-class and middle-class girls.

McRobbie (1978) reported that working-class girls display one form of contestation against the class-based and oppressive features of school through asserting their sexuality, "to introduce into the classroom their sexuality and their physical maturity in such a way as to force the teacher to take notice" (p. 104). The African American males in this dissertation study often asserted themselves in the classroom through the use of profane language, physical aggression, dress, and other attention-getting tactics to project their counter-school culture.

McRobbie (1978) concluded that "marriage, family life, fashion and beauty all contributed massively to this feminine anti-school culture and, in doing so, nicely illustrated the contradictions inherent in so-called oppositional activities" (p. 104).

### Paul Olson

Olson (1983) investigated the validity of the reproduction theory against a French immersion program in Ontario, Canada. The program was instituted throughout Canada with the goal of increasing the number of bilingual-speaking people living in Canada. Canada

became an officially French/English bilingual country in the early 1960s. Olson found that the program had few guidelines and no in-service training but generated a considerable amount of political attention from middle-class English-speaking parents who wanted their children to become fully bilingual due to a belief that chances of employment would be significantly enhanced in the future for bilingual persons. There was considerable antagonism from senior teaching staff in these schools who were losing their better students to the program.

Olson (1983) found that the immersion program increased tensions among the ethnic and social groups rather than resolved them. He also concluded that contrary to Bowles and Gintis' reproduction theory, the government could not mechanically control every aspect of schooling and society, the opinion one would glean from Bowles and Gintis' "tight fit" model. Further, Olson found that human agency played a major role in the educational outcomes of students.

### SUMMARY

This chapter provided a review of the relevant literature and theoretical framework which guided this study. Knowledge of the social outcomes of too many African American male students who left Metropolitan High School poorly prepared for the world of work left me to consider the possibility that certain economic factors and/or the school system in some ways, either covertly or overtly, contributed to these doleful realities. The theories of reproduction and resistance provided a lens through which I could analyze my findings.

The reproduction paradigm with its tight-fit explanations of the schooling process, assumes that schools serving working-class students have a certain orientation and agenda: they produce working-class outcomes. Students leaving working-class schools are prepared to assume working-class positions in the division of labor. The shortcoming of the tight-fit model is that it fails to explain how these outcomes are achieved.

Theories of resistance, on the other hand, offer the notion of human agency, the autonomy of teachers, parents, and students who can play a significant role in shaping their own outcomes. Much of the working-class outcomes suggested here are a result of social resistance.

In the research presented in this study, I will describe how the working-class outcomes were achieved at Metropolitan High School. Metropolitan High changed from an elite and privileged school community to a working-class school community. From the work reviewed in this chapter related to resistance theories, I assumed that this change in educational outcomes was not due to tight controls by the state. Rather, I assumed some independence on the part of teachers, parents, and students. Further, I argued that working-class reproduction results from the complex interplay of many independent and interdependent forces.

In addition, the case of Metropolitan High School calls into question the tight-fit assumption specifically about outcomes. Human agency emerged again as an important factor. Not all students at Metropolitan High School were social conformists. Some student conformed while others did not. Consequently, I note variable outcomes among the 115 African American male students studied, but the power of the teachers, pupils and parents to alter or counter the social reproduction was apparent.

The following chapter provides a description of the qualitative methods used in this study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

At its inception, this study was not intended to be a dissertation project, a factor which was central to the evolution of its methodology. I was initially concerned only with investigating the drug subculture at Metropolitan High School. As that case study developed, my interest shifted naturally from a micro-level, sociological interpretation of the behaviors associated with a small group of students who were engaged in drug trafficking within the school and surrounding communities to a critical macro-analysis of the social and pedagogical issues which affected the schooling of 115 African American males. I was also concerned with transformative research, e.g., research that enhances opportunities for changes and emancipatory activities within the schooling processes of these youth.

In essence, I did not enter this research with the fallacy of "tabula rasa," that is to say, without any conceptual anticipations. As McKinney (1957) exhorted, "without anticipatory ideas and conceptual directions, one cannot know what facts to look for and cannot recognize what was relevant to the inquiry...deduction was thus a necessary part or instrument of research" (p. 191). I was keenly aware of the current national plight

of young African American males as victims of America's social class struggle and racial injustice (demonstrated in Chapters I and II) and had experienced such in my personal life as a African American man. Additionally, I was employed as an administrator at Metropolitan High School for the first year of this study and consequently understood that many African American males at the school were not benefiting from their schooling opportunity at that high school.

### Critical Ethnography

A critical ethnography, based on the tenets of the neo-Marxist theories as presented in Chapter II, emerged as the most applicable genre of inquiry through which I could conduct this study. In describing the general charge of critical ethnography, Masemann (1982) states:

"Critical ethnography" refers to studies which use a basically anthropological, qualitative participant observer methodology but which rely for their theoretical formulation on a body of theory deriving from critical sociology and philosophy (p. 1).

Thus, with a focus on the theories of social and cultural reproduction and various forms of student resistance and oppositional behaviors, I embarked upon this dissertation project. I wanted to unmask some of those incidents of social class, gender, and racial struggle at Metropolitan High School for the purpose of initiating local pedagogical discourse and action. Where possible, I supported changes which would improve

the educational possibilities for African American male students at Metropolitan High School.

Engaging in research which could engender change at Metropolitan High School was the overarching goal of this study. Giroux (1983) addresses the role of radical educators and their relationship to reshaping teaching and learning:

A radical pedagogy, then, must recognize that student resistance in all of its forms represents manifestations of struggle and solidarity that, in their incompleteness, both challenge and confirm capitalist hegemony. What is most important is the willingness of radical educators to search for emancipatory interests that underlie such resistance and to make them visible to students and others so that they can become objects of debate and political analysis (p. 292).

Anderson (1990a) echoed the same possibilities for critical ethnography:

Unless researchers in the field of educational administration find ways to study the invisible and unobtrusive forms of control that are exercised in schools and school districts, administrative theories that grow out of empirical research -- whether quantitative or qualitative -- will continue to perpetuate a view of school effectiveness that is unable to address in any significant manner the problems of their under-privileged clients (p. 39).

In defining critical ethnography as compared to other interpretive research, Anderson (1990) suggests that "the overriding goal of critical ethnography is to free individuals from sources of domination and repression" (p. 249). Based on the educational outcomes of the overwhelming percentage of Metropolitan High's

African American males, I deduced that, at a minimum, sources of dominance, and oppressive were negatively impacting African American males at Metropolitan High, even if self-imposed. Therefore, disclosing the reality of their plight as uneducated African American men in American society, they could begin to take emancipatory action that would improve their lot as suggested by Freire (1990):

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform (p. 34).

Other researchers have attempted to eliminate oppressive conditions and self-destructive behaviors among their subjects. Roman (1989), for example, set out to conduct a "traditional" ethnographic study of punk women. As a consequence of her feminist epistemology, she began to form tentative notions regarding the women under study. Roman tried to adjust repressive ways of thinking among the women during the course of her study.

The decision to take a critical approach to the study of the experience of 115 African American males was based on a conscious effort to produce "action" research that could easily be distinguished from traditional ethnographic studies by its focus on the potential of the African American male participants and the school's staff as "human agents." This was accom-



plished by linking this study to the radical theories of social and cultural reproduction and resistance as well as social class empowering theory. Masemann (1982) concluded that, "critical approaches emphasize class conflict, the dissimilar interests of various classes, and their differing relationship to (and benefits from) the workings of the educational system" (p. 1).

This study examined social-class issues along with gender and racial issues at Metropolitan High School.

### The Research Design

This study was conducted over a three-year period with several phases of data collection and analysis. The first phase included on-going observation of the 115 African American males as they interacted with each other and staff members at Metropolitan High and informal interviews for a period of a school year and one semester. The second phase involved one semester of formal in-depth interviewing and document collection and analysis. The final year of study involved follow-up interviews, additional data collection and analysis, and observing and interviewing various members of the population in their workplaces and/or post-school settings. The collection of "slices" of data was an endless process, as predicted by Strauss (1987): "Data collection never entirely ceases because coding and memoing continue to raise fresh questions that can only be

addressed by the gathering of new data or examining of previous data" (p. 27).

One important factor which will be discussed further below, was my employment at Metropolitan High School as one of two assistant principals during the first phase of the data collection. I was not employed at the site during the subsequent phases of the study, but continued to visit and collect data. The later phase was much less subject to role conflicts in that the students did not see me as an authority figure. Interviews with consenting participants were conducted away from Metropolitan, but I continued to visit the site to collect data and observe African American male students.

### Conceptual Framework

My investigation utilized participant observation, field notes, manual and computer-aided coding and analysis of the data, analytical memoranda, informal and tape-recorded in-depth interviews and triangulation across data sources. I also worked closely with key student and staff informants to gain the more accurate insider perspectives.

The conceptual framework for the study began to emerge as early as the fall of 1986 when completing my doctoral coursework at Michigan State University and taking a course with Phillip Cusick entitled Field

Research Methods in Education. Through course readings, personal inquiry, and class discussions, I had an opportunity to examine some of the more revered and critical field studies in education (Cusick, 1973 and 1983; Everhart, 1983; Johnson, 1985; Ogbu, 1974; Weis, 1985; Willis, 1977) which emerged during the 1970s and 1980's during the course. Each graduate student was required to undertake some field study related to education. I elected to engage in a case study of the esoteric activities of a drug subculture at Metropolitan High School (Polite, 1987).

The central findings of my investigation of the drug subculture were linked to its members' obsession with materialism and consumerism and their resistance to the values and culture of the school.

Metropolitan High was a predominantly African American urban high school, and consequently the majority of the students involved in the drug subculture were African American males. There were many other African American males attending Metropolitan as well. The majority of the African American male students were not associated with the drug subculture, and a minority were excelling in their academic endeavors, or at least they were receiving good grades in their courses. Most African American males were attending school but not engaged in their studies and consequently experienced limited academic success. I felt that there was a need

for a longitudinal study which would examine the schooling of a relatively large group of African American males throughout their senior high school experience.

Several factors heightened my interest in the possibilities of this study. I was acutely aware of the widening national fissure between the unskilled, working-class and highly skilled, middle-class African American Americans, especially among African American men (Omi & Winant, 1986; Wilson, 1987). Further, several studies demonstrated that many African American males develop negative attitudes about schooling as a result of their home environments, drugs in their communities, and their personal experience with unemployment (Gibbs, 1984; Glasgow, 1981; Wilson, 1987). I incorporated many of the traditionally suggested aspects of a qualitative investigation in this dissertation research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Erikson, 1973; Erikson, 1985; Florio, 1978; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Ives, 1974; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Strauss, 1987 and Van Maanen, 1988).

It was important for me to learn more than about academic outcomes. I sought an understanding of how these African American males made sense of their schooling experience. What influenced their decisions to either engage in or resist school? I was also interested in the school's role in engendering conformity and resistance to its values and norms as it

carried out its stated mission to provide a quality education for all students.

### Research Population

Metropolitan High School had four grades, 9-12. I selected all of the African American males in the tenth grade during the 1986-1987 school year as participants in this longitudinal study because I wanted to follow a group for a minimum of three years. Additionally, the majority of the African American males originally studied in the drug project (Polite, 1987) were in tenth grade during that academic year.

There were 115 African American male tenth graders, and their average age was sixteen at the outset. They were followed over a three-year period with a spotlight on their individual and collective academic choices, incidents of discipline procedures, attendance patterns, short-term suspensions and permanent expulsions, academic performances, co-curricular activities, changes in school policies which impacted them, and their activities upon leaving school.

Based on their academic and social activities, these 115 African American males were tentatively categorized during the first year of study into four cohort groups: active conformists, passive conformists,

covert resistors, and overt resistors (see descriptions above) Chapter IV.

#### SOURCES OF DATA

##### Participant Observation

I was able to observe the above referenced students in various parts of the school building, record field notes, and interview consenting students for the first two years of this study by special permission from the school's principal and school district's superintendent.

On three days per week, I would station myself in various parts of the building and outside certain classrooms for two-hour sessions. When appropriate, I would record detailed notes or brief statements which would later jar my memory when writing accounts of what was observed in the hallways of the school. I also recorded incidents which I observed during my normal day-to-day work operations as assistant principal. Table 2 provides an example of typical field notes.

As a participant observer during the first year and half of the study, I was consistently reminded of the role conflict in which I found myself, that is to say, that I was a school administrator and researcher. Many of the responses and observations were influenced in some way by this reality. I often attempted to account for the impact of this role conflict. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggested "how much participation is the right

amount and how you should participate has to be calculated with the particulars of your study in mind" (p. 128). Table 3 provides evidence of my interest in addressing the role conflict as researcher and school administrator at the beginning stages of the data collection.

In the initial stages (a school year and a half) of the data collection, objectivity was a significant factor to account for consistently. However, I believe that the constant guarding against subjectivity possibilities compensated for this predicament. As LeCompte (1987) expressed, "...while ethnographers, or interpretive researchers are held to the same standards [validity], they are not held to mathematical explanations of bias. Rather, they are held to the highest form of disciplined honesty (p. 43)."

I was appointed to a principalship at another school within the school district during the second year of this study, but I was also permitted to continue my data collection at Metropolitan High School. This change eased the research process and enhanced the integrity of this study.

## Table 2

Typical Field Notes

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Mr. Jones (teacher) came to talk with me regarding Matthew T. (student). He said that most of the students in his third hour class think that Matthew regularly pulls the fire alarm and in fact, had pulled it that morning because, "...whenever he is kicked-out of class, the alarm gets pulled immediately thereafter....it has to be him." He also mentioned that Matthew had mentioned to the other students in the class that he often pulls the fire alarm. Later during that period, one of the security guards mentioned to me that Matthew is also responsible for knocking out the ceiling tiles in the E. Wing (code 024)

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Note. These notes were recorded on January 13, 1988.



Table 3

Field Notes / Role Conflict

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As I was driving to work today, I recorded these thoughts on my observations:

1. The conflict that I am experiencing seems to stem from the "change" in roles which I am attempting to play-out at Metropolitan High School. The students are already clear as to what my role is and the entire school will probably never accept my "new role" as a researcher. This impacts the level of trust which I can expect and without key informants it will be difficult to get to the heart of many observations.
2. The research function could probably better be played-out if I restrict my research solely to observations and avoid any conversations with students, in public. at this time. For example, when I asked a student why he is not attending class, the student automatically assumed that my purpose for questioning is for disciplinary possibilities, not for research. It would be very difficult to convince him that I simply wanted to research his behaviors, especially when I have been

Table 3 continued.

---

known to suspend students for such behaviors in the past.

3. I have also noticed that even my tone of voice is that of an "assistant principal," meaning that when I talk with the students I tend to be more directive and clearly not a neutral voice of a researcher.
4. The teachers and students seem to appreciate seeing me seated in the hall, but as an administrator, not a researcher.

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Note. Recorded on January 14, 1988, while driving to work, the research site.

### Field Notes

Various types of field notes were collected over the course of the study, both descriptive and reflective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) with on-site written recordings and taped messages (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Notes, taped interviews, and interviews were transcribed, stored on a personal computer, and coded. Personal computer-aided coding was an important aspect of the data analysis. The IBM compatible personal computer and software greatly enhanced the accounting for frequency of codes and the retrieval and isolation of various emerging themes and concepts. Unlike Clark (1987), I found the expense associated with the use of a personal computer minimal and access to the data, greatly facilitated. An example of my personal computer-aided field notes is found in Table 4.

The notes shown in Table 4 were coded "023," or examples of student socialization. Later, the same notes were re-coded to demonstrate examples of "teacher caring" and "school policies." The use of a "search and/or replace" command on the computer made manipulation of data relatively easy. Hard copies of official documents were coded manually. Approximately 120 hours were devoted to field observation.

Table 4

Computer-Aided Field Notes Analysis

---

Date: 88/01/24 Time: 10:05

Actor(s): 4Bk males, 3Bk females

Setting: B Wing

Observation Notes: As I arrived for my observation session at the intersection of B and D Wings (corridors), I observed seven (7) students in the B Wing. There were four black males and three black females. These students were not within hearing range. I could see that they were talking and fooling around in the hallway, laughing and seemingly playing. All the classroom doors were closed and there were no adults in the entire wing. All of these students were exchanging materials (books, clothing, etc.) in their lockers. This wing houses the lockers for the 10th graders and the classes taught in this wing are English and social studies.

Theoretical Notes: Many students take extra filing time to allow time to talk and socialize with their friends.

Personal Notes: Many students have complained that five minutes is not sufficient time for filing in such a large building. Adults have determined that five minutes are sufficient for filing, but this does not allow time for students to socialize.

Afterthoughts: Why are all the doors closed before the students have cleared the hallway? Do teachers care what is going on directly outside their door? Do teachers need to take ownership for what happens outside their classrooms?

Code: 023

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### Interviews

Informal and formal in-depth interviews generated a large portion of the raw data for this study. Informal interviews consisted of concise conversations with key informants, school staff, administrators, or who ever could provide detailed information needed to explain some particular aspect of the emerging research. As an example, when attempting to describe the workings of the drug subculture, it was most difficult to understand all the idiomatic expressions and "buzzwords" common to that subculture. Two key informants were asked to provide me with a list of key terms. As new terms were identified, the informants were asked to continue updating my glossary of drug subculture terms. Four examples of those terms which emerged from this process are listed in Table 5.

In the absence of on-going informal interviews with key informants, my comprehension of the workings and language of those African American males involved in the Metropolitan High School's drug subculture would be incredulous at best, and my ability to use these terms when working with these students, unfeasible. More than 60 informal interviews were conducted during the field observation period. Denzin's (1978) work supported the use of key informants in this manner:

Table 5

Examples of Key Terms / Drug culture

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<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<hr/>	
51:	(n) A cigarette which contains both marijuana and crack.
downest:	(adj) A compliment. A term used to describe a person who wears expensive clothing, drives expensive cars or is heavily involved in the drug world.
flippin':	(v) The act of selling drugs solely for the purpose of making a profit. The profit is used to purchase larger quantities of drugs.
put me down:	A manner of requesting to become a lower-level drug dealer for a particular person.

---

By informants I refer to those persons who, ideally, trust the investigator; freely give information about their problems and fears and frankly attempt to explain their own motivation; demonstrate that they will not jeopardize the study; accept information given them by the investigator....the primary functions of the informant are to act as a "de facto" observer for the investigator; provide a unique inside perspective on events that the investigator is still outside of; and serve as a sounding board for insight (p. 198).

Additionally, 65 in-depth formal interviews were conducted with a cross section of the African American male students, teachers, administrators, counselors, school security guards, and local business and police personnel. Each in-depth interview lasted a minimum of one-half hour and was tape recorded and transcribed.

The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History by Ives (1974) was helpful in fine-tuning the logistics of the recorded interview (i.e., selection of taping device, finding informants, details of formulating questions and transcription of taped interviews.

#### Analytical Memoranda

Glasser and Strauss (1967) point out the value of writing memoranda for the purpose of analysis of field notes: "memo writing on the field notes provides an immediate illustration for an idea" (p. 108). Through-

out the study, memoranda were generated to focus on specific emerging themes. An example of one such memorandum is shown in Table 6.

#### Official Documents

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) pointed-out the fact that schools tend to produce a profusion of written communication and files. In the case of Metropolitan High School, there were numerous documents, computer files and reports to examine. Many of these data provided concrete evidence and clues regarding the school's academic outcomes prior to the arrival of large numbers of African American students, some of the changes in curriculum offerings during the 1970's and 80's, course descriptions, and a description of the curriculum made available to the 115 African American male participants of this study and a sense of how African American male students generally participated in the schooling process.



Table 6

An Analytic Memorandum

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One afternoon, immediately following the close of school, a black male was assigned to serve detention for an hour in the assistant principal's office for disruptive behavior; typical of ninth graders at the school. The student was known to me as a playful young man with the potential to be an outstanding football player. He played football during the fall of this school year as a reserve quarterback.

While serving his detention, I overheard him asking the secretary in the outer office where he might locate a tulip which he could dissect for a science project. Realizing that at that time of the year tulips were in the height of their season, I walked-out and asked the student why was it so difficult to get a tulip when there were thousands available in every yard. He replied, "...but Mr. Polite, I live in "Borough" ...there are no tulips in my section of the Borough (the Borough is a tiny, impoverished, totally black township which is part of the Metropolitan School District). I was stunned! The student's brief comment afforded me a microscopic insight into the dialectical tension which can exist between the culture of the school and the culture of the home. In this example, neither his teacher nor I had ever considered the possibility that the student or many students might reside in locations where tulips are rare, at best, especially since most teachers have probably never visited the Borough. This type of tension can result in a lack of concern or empathy for the students' personal situation. This was a good example of social-class conflict.

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I have characterized the various types of documents analyzed by category: internal and external documents. The internal documents were those documents not made readily available to the general public, but detailed valuable information about the organization of the school and student academic outcomes. For the purpose of conducting this study, internal documents were made accessible to me by special permission granted by the school district's superintendent and building principal. The external documents were created to provide general information for public use. However, some external documents, such as the accreditation reports provided to the North Central Accreditation Association, also provided detailed information regarding the internal operations of the school. Table 7 provides a listing of both the internal and external documents accessible to me and utilized in this research study.

Table 7

Documents Examined


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Internal Documents

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1. Official class rank 1988-1989
2. Official transcripts for the 115 black male participants
3. Attendance reports 1986-1989
4. Drop from School report 1986-1989
5. Student discipline files
  - a. in-school suspensions
  - b. suspensions
6. Expulsion Hearings Transcripts 1970, 1986-1989
7. Race by school analysis, 1969-1989
8. Report of official transcripts forwarded to colleges and universities, 1986-1989
9. Race by grade analysis of students enrolled in special education programs
10. Study of class offerings by enrollment 1970-1975 and 1985-1989
11. Official retention reports 1986-1989
12. Teacher discipline referrals
13. Listing of students by grade, eligible for free or reduced school lunch
14. Listing of students who qualify for Chapter I reading services.
15. Parents academic background report
16. Student athletics eligibility report
17. Grade point average report 1989
18. Course enrollment by grade and gender
19. Collective bargaining agreements between the teachers and the Metropolitan School District 1966, 1980, 1989

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External Documents

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1. Yearbooks 1965-1990
  2. North Central Accreditation Reports 1970-1989
  3. Course descriptions and offerings
  4. Student Code of Conduct
  5. Graduation report
  6. School and public newspaper articles
  7. Journal articles pertaining to the school
-

## APPROACHES TO DATA ANALYSIS

### Managing Extensive Data Sets

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) provided the most helpful suggestion for handling extensive data sets, their "cut and put in folder" approach a method used for sorting slices of data. As I neared the end of the data collection process, it was apparent that the volumes of data from interviews, official documents, field note, and analytical memoranda were too difficult to manage without a specific means of categorizing the data by subject and topic. I opted to make photocopies of everything. I used the photocopies for coding and categorizing the data. The data were coded in the left-hand margin, and pages were cut up, sorted, and filed in manila folders by the numerous categories.

Evidence and statements regarding teachers as "caring individuals" were identified from the interviews with students, staff, administrators, yearbooks, etc. When these various pieces of data regarding caring were aggregated in one folder and re-read, the assertions emerged rather easily. In the event that there was little or weak evidence to support various themes, those themes were eliminated from the final analysis.

### On-going Analysis

I continued, even after the data were categorized, to make on-going analyses, collected additional information, and sought clarification on themes which

emerged. For example, I decided to hold informal, telephone interviews with those African American male graduates who had attended college to determine their thoughts on their readiness for college work and other related college issues.

### Validity Through Triangulation

Cross-checking, with a variety of data sources, the above referenced research techniques yielded multiple perspectives on the various themes which emerged throughout this study. Gordon (1975) reported that through triangulation, valid accounts of the research milieu were enhanced:

[T]he various methods give totally different kinds of information that can supplement each other, because we do not know how to interpret some of the information unless we can couple it with other information, or because we need a cross-check to verify the validity of our observations (p. 40).

### THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL

In keeping with the macro-ethnographic tradition, this section provides a description of the school community and the physical make-up of Metropolitan High School.

The school district, located in the state of Michigan, is part of an urban metropolis. The district was formerly a historically White, middle-income community. The majority of the district's current

teaching staff were former residents of the district, who presently reside in other nearby communities. Many of the teachers' children graduated from Metropolitan High School. Metropolitan was the only high school in the district at the time of the study. Students residing within the district's boundaries attended either Metropolitan High School or a private school outside the district.

Metropolitan High opened in early 1954 and graduated its first class in 1957. The school served students in grades 10 through 12 between 1954 and 1972, but in 1973 the Board of Education approved and implemented a grades 9 - 12 academic program. The student capacity of the high school was 3000 and during the 1960s and 1970s, the school operated at near capacity. Metropolitan High received national recognition during the late 1960s and early 1970s because of its students' outstanding academic achievements.

Metropolitan High School experienced an increasing number of African American and minority student enrollments during the 1970s and 1980s. The 1100 students attending Metropolitan High School during the time of this study were predominantly lower-middle income African Americans. A small percentage were representative of the impoverished, lower socioeconomic and working-class backgrounds as well. An increasing number of behaviors defined in this study as noncon-

formity and resistance to schooling were apparent throughout the 1980s. Examples of these behaviors were habitual class-cutting, aggressive and violent behaviors, and nonengagement in the educational processes of the school.

Students attending Metropolitan High enjoyed many "luxury" facilities, e.g., television and radio stations which broadcast throughout the immediate community. There were also tennis courts, baseball, football, and soccer fields, deep diving and an Olympic-sized swimming pools.

The school building had several halls known as "wings." Wings A, B and C were parallel, running north to south, and were joined at the northern end by D wing and the southern end by E wing. The D and E wings were also parallel, running east and west. The D wing housed the athletic facilities, counseling offices, and the principal's office. The E wing housed the science and foreign language departments, the media services, and the library. Wings A, B, C and upper E housed the classrooms and laboratories. Figures 1 and 2 provide diagrams of the school's ground and upper levels.

Figure 1

Metropolitan High School's ground level layout.

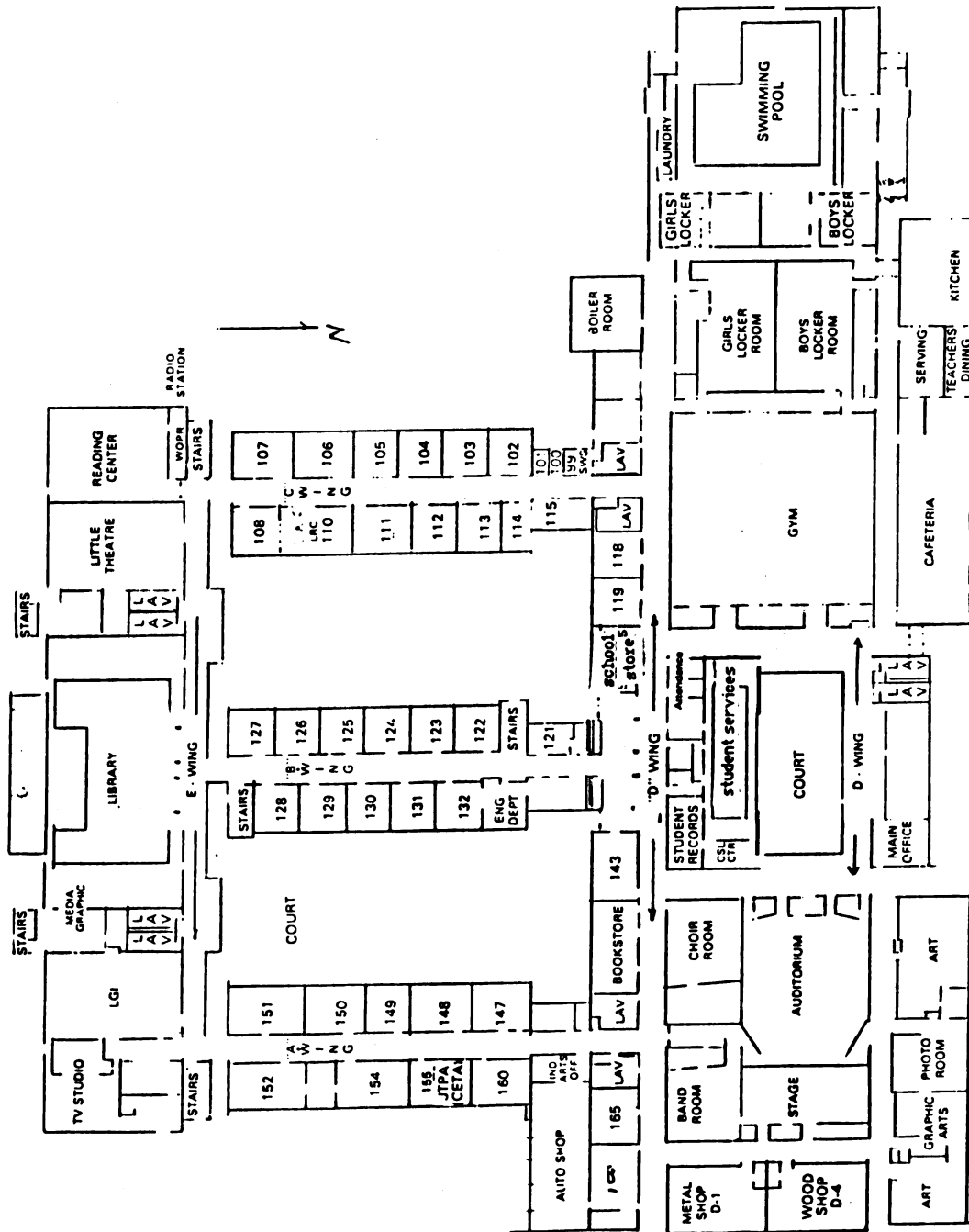
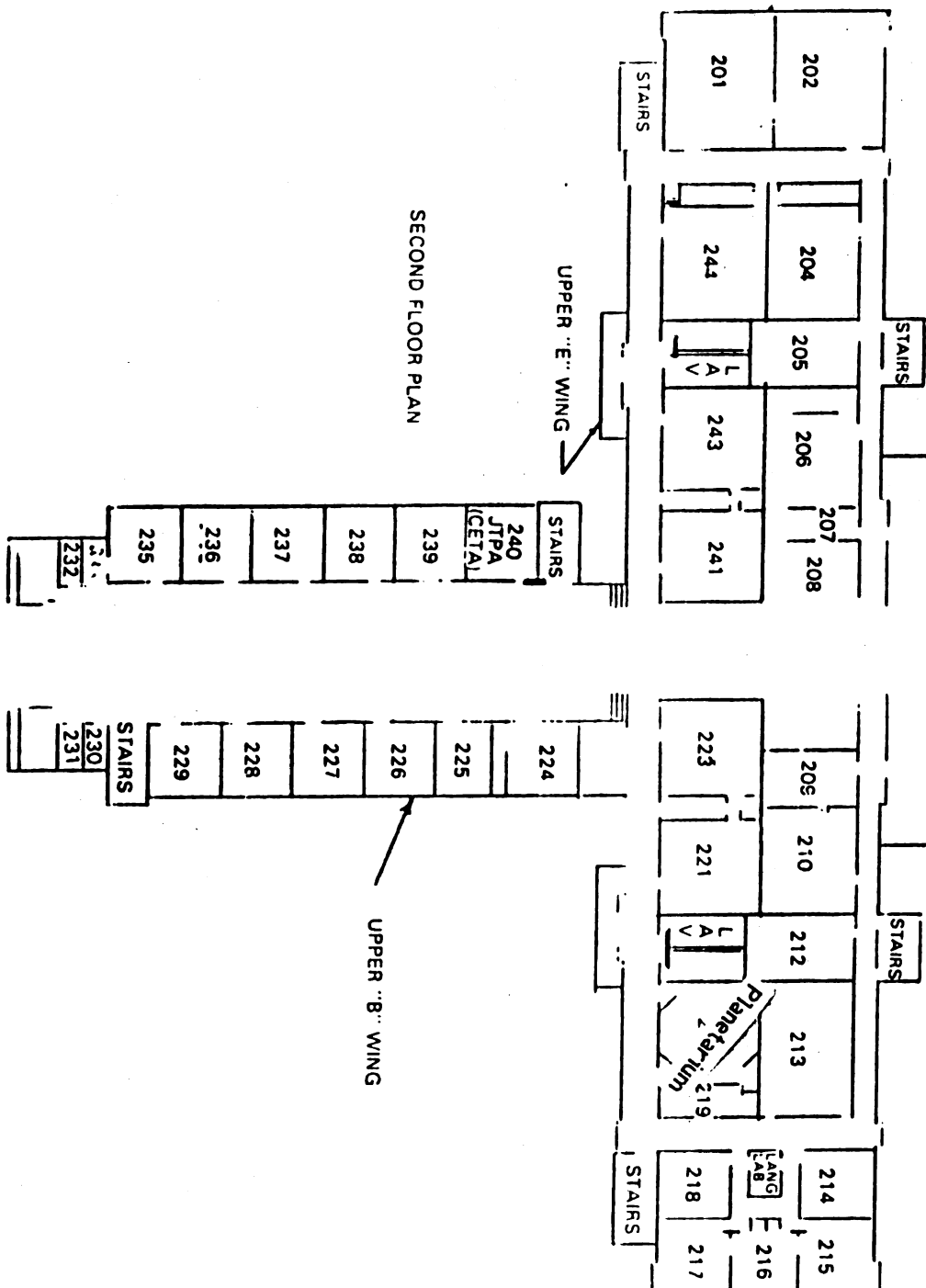




Figure 2

Metropolitan High School's second floor layout.



The school building was in disrepair. There was a need for considerable work to improve the structure (i.e., new roofing material, asbestos abatement, and improved lighting in the wings). The building had not undergone any major renovations since its construction in 1954 and this fact accounted for much of disrepair. The school district proposed a bond election in the fall of 1989 to correct most of the structural problems. The bond proposal was passed by the voters.

A 1985, a local demographic report estimated the population at 31,500 residents who represented 12,000 households in the school district. The per capita income was near \$10,000. City officials also projected a decline in the population which would scale down to 25,000 residents by the year 2000.

The majority of the local residents found employment outside the community due to the small number of employers within the city's boundaries. Among the businesses located within the city, two-thirds or 320 were either retail trade or wholesale trade firms.

Unemployment was escalating in the School District and neared 8% in 1989 with a work force of 10,000. The average housing cost in the district was \$40,000. The tax rate was exorbitant, compared to the nearby major city, at \$76.25 - \$79.46 per \$1,000 per state equalized value.

The majority of the residents were former residents of the inner city. These residents migrated to the school district for self-improvement and to reap the benefits of the one-time exemplary school system. The racial composition and social class make-up of the school district changed from majority white middle-class to majority African American, lowest-middle class between 1970 and 1990. As these racial and ethnic demographic changes occurred, there was a simultaneous decline in the quality of educational outcomes for the new migrants to the district.

### SUMMARY

This chapter explained the framework and procedures used in the collection and analysis of data for this study. The fact that the study was designed to be a critical ethnography impacted my choices of data collected. I was concerned with both the obvious and hidden forms of dominance which adversely affected the education of 115 African American male students and consequently deliberately sought that type of data. I tried to verify my findings through triangulation and the enduring search for disconfirming evidence.

The formal and informal interviews, field observations, official internal and external documents, and analytical memoranda were all helpful in gaining a vivid picture of the quality of education provided for African American males at Metropolitan High School.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the experiences of the 115 African American males in the class of 1989 at Metropolitan High School by reference to two key concepts of reproduction and resistance as discussed in Chapter II. This chapter begins with a discussion of the demographic transition at Metropolitan High School, a transition that led the school to change from one serving a primarily white, middle-class population to a school serving a predominantly african american, working-class and lower-class population. The chapter then explores the consequences of this change relative to the quality of educational outcomes for African American males.

As the social class composition of the student body at Metropolitan High School changed, the quality of schooling at Metropolitan also changed. Relationships between teachers and students, which in the 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by "caring informality", were in the late 1980s characterized by "high formality", much social distance, and a lack of close attention to career counseling and student attendance. Similarly, the close relationships among parents and the school, which typified Metropolitan High throughout much of the 1960s and early 1970s, were lost in the 1980s as working-class African American parents became increas-

ingly detached from the life of the school. As a result, the peer culture of the teenagers in the school assumed ascendancy in the socialization of African American male students, and to a large extent, this culture was in opposition to the central values of the school system. Among the African American male students of the class of 1989, a drug culture emerged in the school, episodes of in-school truancy increased, and expulsions from school became more frequent.

I will argue that these outcomes are consistent with reproduction theory. As the social class composition of the school changed, so did the nature of the school environment and outcomes experienced by the 115 African American male students I studied. The school became more formal and oriented to order and discipline, while the academic outcomes of the students were such that most of the students left unprepared for the demands of college and university work and ill-prepared for the post-industrial work world in Michigan. As a result, education -- a major route out of the working and lower-class situation in which these students found themselves -- was closed off to most of the African American male students at Metropolitan High School.

Yet, this chapter also demonstrates that human agency was important to the story of Metropolitan High School and to the outcomes of the 115 African American male students who were the focus of this study. The

data in this chapter shows that the story of Metropolitan High School is about the variable accommodation of teachers, parents, and students to the social situation in school.

As we see below, many teachers at Metropolitan High chose to distance themselves from the students they served, in part because of teachers' life circumstances. And many parents likewise were led by life circumstances to distance themselves from the school. But other teachers and parents did not follow this pattern. Similarly, the data examined below will show that students developed different patterns of response to the school environment. Some engaged in the kinds of oppositional behaviors noted by resistance theorists, but there were other accommodation to schooling as well. An important part of this chapter is to describe these various patterns.

Finally, this chapter describes three interventions designed to "liberate" students from the cycle of reproduction and counter-productive forms of resistance. The import of these interventions should be obvious. To the extent that a change in the social relations among school staff and students and in the patterns of accommodation student make to these social relations work to improve the academic outcomes of African American male students, there is hope that patterns of reproduction and resistance found in urban schools can be overcome

and that the educational and social outcomes of African American males in the United States can be improved.

#### METROPOLITAN HIGH 1970 - 1990

I began this examination of the quality of education received by the 115 African American males in the class of 1989 by reviewing the changes that occurred at Metropolitan High School between 1970 and 1990 and by discussing how these changes altered the educational environment of the school.

There were slightly more than 100 African American students attending Metropolitan High School in the very early 1970s. This was slightly less than nine percent of the total student body. These 100 African Americans did not actually reside within the city limits, but rather lived in a lower socio-economic borough approximately two miles away.

The district lost an average of 90 white students each year between 1970 and 1990, while it gained approximately the same number of African American students each year during that same time period. Conversations with adults, both black and white, confirmed that the white residents moved out of the district as a result of their improved socio-economic status, concern for the declining quality of education and fear of student racial unrest at school. Therefore, the most obvious change, the racial make-up of the school, was clear to



teachers, parents, and students alike. African Americans began moving directly into Metropolitan City during the mid-1970s. Table 8 provides an analysis of the changes in the racial composition of Metropolitan High School for the twenty-year period.

In 1969, the Principal of Metropolitan High School described the school in an article published in a national journal:

[Metropolitan High School] has an enrollment of about 1550 students in grades 10, 11, and 12. About 100 students are black. The rest are white with only a sprinkling of Orientals. The white students come mostly from middle- and upper-income homes within walking distance, while the black students are bussed from an adjacent, but segregated community and have a lower socio-economic background. Over 80 percent of the graduates...go on to higher education.

Although small in number in 1970, the African American students expressed their anger over conditions of discrimination and alienation at Metropolitan High School. The African American students staged a walk-out and demanded the following social changes:

1. More black participation
  - a. black student officers on Student Council
  - b. black girls on homecoming court
  - c. Better election procedures; fair elections
  - d. black teachers to support an Afro-American Club
2. More black recognition
  - a. black page in the school newspaper, also black staff members
  - b. black culture week
  - c. black speakers on racism, assemblies

Table 8

Race by year analysis of the Metropolitan High School  
student population, 1970-1989

<u>Year</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>
1970	115	7	1534	93	1649
1971	126	8	1434	91	1576
1972*	NA		NA		NA
1973	189	11	1536	89	1726
1974	189	12	1883	88	1572
1975	267	18	1216	82	1488
1976	288	21	1084	79	1372
1977	394	29	966	71	1360
1978	445	33	906	67	1352
1979	522	40	784	60	1306
1980	600	45	733	55	1333
1981	593	50	594	50	1187
1982	646	54	551	46	1197
1983	701	60	467	40	1168
1984	770	65	415	35	1185
1985	822	68	385	32	1207
1986	870	74	306	26	1176
1987	834	78	236	22	1070
1988	802	80	201	20	1003
1989	771	80	193	20	964

Note. Data not available for 1972.

3. Black history course be taught
4. Black qualified teachers
5. Incidents involving racism investigated, perhaps reprimands
6. Temporary bussing for black students investigated further
7. Homage paid to Martin Luther King, Jr.

The students were granted their demands by the school's administration. They were, however, required in return for these concessions to sign an agreement with the principal "to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner and to abide by all the rules, regulations, and policies of the school." The principal, in his remarks to the student body at an assembly planned to discuss the walk-out and the agreements reached, concluded with the following statement:

But I would also say that we have a great school that turns out great scholars and students who achieve and succeed in the colleges and universities and in the vocations of their choices to a greater degree than other schools. This is a tribute to a fine student body and to one of the finest staff of teachers I have ever worked with.

The student walk-out was followed by riots which included racial violence in both 1970 and 1974. The riots resulted in local School Board discipline hearings. These hearings were emotional, volatile, and well publicized. The Michigan State Board of Education sent representatives from Lansing, Michigan to monitor the discipline hearings to assure that the decisions reached were unbiased. Several African American males were

expelled and many others were placed on long-term suspension as a result of these hearings.

It was significant for me to assume, at the outset of this critical ethnography, that the history of African American males at Metropolitan High School was marred by social issues of alienation, political impotence, and resistance. This historical factor was to have some impact on the delivery of educational services. The racial unrest of the 1970s was never forgotten. African American males who I interviewed in 1989 mentioned that they were related to some of the students who participated in the walk-out and race riots in the 1970s. Several others were keenly aware and affected by the history of racial unrest at Metropolitan High. This knowledge evolved and shaped African American males' attitudes about the school, staff, and community.

Since it was clear that there were major concerns relative to race and social-class issues, I decided that my next procedure was to determine specifically from my field observations and personal interviews with students and staff, exactly what were the issues, other than those historical issues previously mentioned, which may have engendered feelings of alienation for some or all African American males at Metropolitan High School in 1986. I examined changes in the teaching and adminis-

trative staff, the building, and the relations between the school and the parents.

### The Teaching and Administrative Staff

An obvious change which occurred during the twenty-year period was in the texture of the relationship between teacher and student. Tonnies (1957) introduced two sociological categories of society, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. The *gemeinschaft* society was characterized, according to Tonnies, by its close friendships and familial relations, a highly personal and informal type of community which stressed consensus and tradition. By contrast, the *gesellschaft* society was characterized by its secondary, formal relations and impersonal interactions. These two types of communities were basically ideal models of society conceived by Tonnies. Most communities, in reality, consist of a combination of both types of interactions, highly personal and impersonal relations. The Metropolitan High School community of early 1970s was very clearly based on highly personal interactions as opposed to the school community of the late 1980s which was most impersonal and highly specialized.

The majority of the teachers who were teaching when I started this project in 1986 had taught at the school since the early 1970s and maintained very strong personal relationships among themselves. In fact, many of

the teachers had known each other since their high school years in the inner city. The students who attended school during the early 1970s were most often their own sons, daughters, and neighbors, since many of the teachers were residents of Metropolitan City at that time.

The school was built with all the amenities of an upper socio-economic community of the late 1950s to serve a "known" population. The administrators who designed the school actually designed a school for their own children, complete with a radio station, planetarium, television station, theater, and deep diving and Olympic-sized swimming pools.

The relationship, according to teachers who taught in the system back in the 1970s, was highly personal and carried over into the community and their religious and political affairs. Most of the teachers and students were Jewish, attended the same Temples, and met regularly at religious and social activities outside of school.

Many of the teachers' sons and daughters graduated from Metropolitan High School and were practicing doctors, lawyers, politicians, and teachers. I often heard teachers discussing their sons and daughters in the teachers' cafeteria during the collection of the data for this project. They often mentioned the year that their son or daughter graduated from Metropolitan High School, always with a sense of pride and the sen-

timent that "those were the days." When I heard these conversations, I felt that whatever happened in the early 1970s was exciting and intellectually stimulating and the teachers were an intricate, causal factor for that excitement vis a` vis the tense, impersonal environment of the late 1980s. As the community's racial composition changed, most of the teachers moved to the more affluent suburbs nearby. They began commuting daily back to Metropolitan High School to complete their work careers.

The relationship between the student and teacher in 1986 was one of professional and client, a highly specialized and impersonal relationship. In my analysis of this change in teacher/student relationship from the highly personal to the impersonal, I considered Tonnies' (1957) conceptual framework of the *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* societies, but I also was reminded of Freire's (1989) concepts of "subjects" and "objects." The students of the early 1970s were, using Freire's terminology, subjects who "knew" their teachers personally and "acted" upon that knowledge. The African American males of the late 1980s, on the other hand, were like objects, "known" by their teachers and "acted upon" by their teachers and others. The latter group had little input into their schooling and consequently could not influence their education, while the former

group had considerable control and influence over their destiny.

A typical expression of this difference in teachers' relationships with their students was expressed by one white teacher. This teacher had worked in the district for more than twenty-five years:

First of all, it was population - and it was mainly a white population. And the kids were more motivated...

And slowly the population changed...and things just sort of evolved from there....

Well, when I hear a lot of people, unfortunately, they compare how it was then and how the kids are now. And it really is too bad because I do see a difference in test scores. And we still have some real terrific kids but we don't have as many...but I see teachers get upset, really get upset. And I think this is what they want... (pause) they want to retire because it isn't like it used to be.

The changes in the texture of the relationship between teacher and student also was reflected in the changes which occurred over the years in the contractual agreements between the school district and the teachers. A review of several contracts pointed out a major change in the relationship, namely, accessibility of the teachers to the parents and students. The original teachers' contract of mid-60s and the 1989 contract were good examples of the changes in expectation of teachers supported by legal contract -- changes which were initiated by and for the teachers' self-interests.



The high expectations of teachers were expressed in the 1966 teachers' contract:

The Board and the Union recognize a teacher's duties as professional duties which cannot be confined to a fixed number of hours per day or per week. The teachers' responsibilities to their students and their profession entails the performances of duties and the expenditure of time beyond regular classroom duty hours and the teachers will continue to attend or participate in PTA meetings on occasion, attend faculty and professional meetings, confer with parents upon reasonable notice, assist in student extracurricular activities, supervise student functions, and perform similar assignments which are a part of their basic professional responsibility.

The 1989 contract provided a different expectation of the relationship between teacher and student:

Teachers shall be free to attend or participate in PTA meetings.... Teachers shall attend one (1) open house or similar function if scheduled and parent teacher conferences and shall assist in the supervision of two (2) sponsored non-paid student functions during the school year. Assignment shall be made on a rotational basis at the early part of each semester whenever possible. The teacher's choice of each sponsorship shall be honored whenever possible. As provided, all teachers who participate in the regularly scheduled parent teacher conferences shall receive the compensatory time.

This change in relationship between teachers and clients impacted the quality and intensity of educational services provided at Metropolitan High.

The academic preparation of teachers was another factor examined. Teacher qualifications and experience were not lacking. The teachers at Metropolitan High were among the most highly educated and well-trained in the county. Table 9 demonstrates the educational

Table 9

Teachers' highest degree earned

<u>Degree</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Bachelor Degree	11	18
Masters Degree	44	73
Doctorate Degree	5	8
	<u>60</u>	<u>100</u>

Note. As of July, 1988

Table 10

Metropolitan High School teachers' years of experience

<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
1-5	9
6-10	5
11-15	6
16-20	11
21-25	12
26-30	13
31-35	5
36-40	1

Note. As of July, 1988

percent of the teachers held at least a master's degree. background of the teaching staff at Metropolitan High School in 1988, while Table 10 indicates the number of years of teaching experience for the same year. Eighty They were graduates of the finest colleges and universities in the nation. Many of them earned their degrees at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University and other major state institutions.

As Table 10 depicts, the average teacher at Metropolitan was very experienced. In fact, most teachers at the time of this study had worked at the school for a minimum of 16 years and saw the school change from one of the most outstanding schools in the state to a school which academically ranked among the lowest in the state.

There were 60 full-time teachers for whom I had demographic information for this project and another 10 teachers who served in various part-time capacities for whom I had limited information. There were no african american male teachers at the school nor in the entire district, even though the racial composition of the school was 80% african american at the time of this study. There were five (7%) african american female teachers and sixty-five (93%) white teachers.

One might conclude that the district made little effort to hire african american teachers, especially african american males. This may or may not be true, but it was essential to understand that, unlike larger

urban school districts which existed for as long as 100 years, Metropolitan School District existed only since the late 1950s. The majority of teachers who were hired when the school originally opened or during the decade thereafter, still remained in their positions until well into the 1980s. Many were nearing their retirement date in 1986. In fact, fourteen new teachers were hired between 1986 and 1988 to replace teachers who retired as a result of a handsome retirement incentive program provided by the district at the close of 1988-1989 school year.

There were not many teacher vacancies during the 1970s and early 1980s. Due to declining enrollment, those vacancies which did occur were filled by the sons and daughters of people in the community or former residents of the community. African American or other minorities who were representative of working-class backgrounds were not hired. African American teachers were very difficult to recruit even at the time of this dissertation study, and the principal spent a considerable amount of time attempting to recruit African Americans for vacant teaching positions. Only one of the fourteen new teachers was African American. African American teachers were more available during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The building had only one principal between 1969 and 1986. The principal of the school at the time when

this study was conducted was newly appointed, a white man, who worked in the building for more than twenty years as a science teacher and assistant principal before being appointed to the principalship in the fall, 1986. The first black administrator of the school was hired in 1983 to serve as assistant principal. In 1986, I was hired as a second assistant principal.

In conclusion, at the time that this research was conducted, teachers were beginning to reach their retirement age. The majority of the teachers working at Metropolitan High School in the late 1980's were there for an average of nearly twenty years. They had seen the student population change from a known group of students to an unknown foreign population. The teachers relocated outside of the district and there was a pervasive feeling of nostalgia among them. This was not to imply that educational services were denied African American males, but definitely to evidence the fact that the quality of service changed over the twenty-year period.

A final factor that I considered was the aging process and the impact that it had on services delivered by these teachers. One could not expect teachers who had advanced in their years to participate in co-curricular and academic efforts at the same level as they had when they were neophytes in the educational

arena. There were, however, no compensations made to students for this aging process.

### Teachers as Caring Individuals

Above all other factors which surfaced throughout this project, none was more pervasive than the issue of teachers as "caring" individuals in the minds of the black males observed and interviewed and my own personal observations of what was happening in the building. I reviewed my data to find that I had collected more than seventy incidents where the issue of teacher caring was the focus. The change in the general make-up of the student body over the past twenty years impacted the quality of instruction, but the African American males were most concerned with the fact that many teachers simply did not demonstrate caring.

Teachers, counselors, and other staff, too many to exhibit here, habitually mentioned the "push-out" or forcing unruly students out of classrooms as a factor which existed in many classes. The expressed feeling of apathy or the attitude towards the students that "either you perform or you don't, I don't care" was frequently mentioned.

Many caring teachers experienced very different types of relationships with their students, especially many of the teachers in the business department who were gearing their students for the work world immediately

following graduation. Several teachers in the business department and other departments commented on the widespread lack of concern for the students by the teachers. One black teacher commented that, "the feeling of disinterest seems to increase with each passing year."

Students, teachers, and administrators agreed that there were many caring teachers at Metropolitan High School, but far too many had given up and awaiting their retirement. Kunjufu (1984), renowned for numerous books and articles regarding the education and discipline of black children, asserted that:

Parents often inform me of how superlative their children's previous teacher was, but during the current year this is not the case. Principals also are quick to mention who are the stalwarts. This scenario is completed by the comments from students about which teachers care. What I received from these encounters is that all four groups--students, parents, teachers, and administrators--recognize quality. Therefore, you are a member of a conspiracy if you allow a student to sit in a classroom one extra day with an unconcerned teacher (pp. 12-13)!

Surprisingly, the African American males had little respect for those teachers who could not control their classes or who failed to demand quality work from their students. Many other African American males felt that their cultural and ethnic needs were not met, that they learned very little about themselves and their history. For example, there were several white teachers who became offended when a black gospel group was invited to Metropolitan High School to join in the celebration of black History month. African American male students at

Metropolitan High School felt that their teachers were not sensitive to the needs for African American identity and were offended by the singing of black gospel and spiritual songs:

Polite: What type of things happened at the high school that probably shouldn't have happened?

Butch: ...last year St. Catherine's High School came over for Black History Month and there was a big confusion about that because there were some teachers that didn't like it.

Polite: Who?

Butch: All the teachers at Metropolitan High didn't like the choir from St. Catherine's.

Polite: Why?

Butch: Mainly because most of the teachers there were Jewish and they felt offended or whatever....I can't remember what happened...but it started a big commotion.

Polite: Did the choir do anything to offend anybody?

Butch: No, nothing!

Polite: Then what was the problem?

Butch: I don't know...(long pause)

Polite: Do you think that they understand the kids here.

Butch: HMMMMM...No not really.

Conversely, teachers felt that too many of their students simply were not interested in school and that their parents were not involved in the process of schooling. My point in this research was to determine the opinions and not to lay blame. All of these factors



were true. Many teachers demonstrated on a daily basis that they did not care; parents were only seen at the parent-teacher conferences, and not many attended those sessions; and many students were not serious about their work.

I have included evidence from my field notes and interviews which support the assertion that many teachers failed to demonstrate caring in their classrooms. For example, a security person commented on the fact that teachers pushed unruly students out of their classrooms.

Polite: I noticed that many of the students who are in halls have permission from their teachers and hall passes.

Security: That creates a large problem for the security staff and we often talk about it amongst ourselves...when the teachers give these kids passes due to the fact that they just don't want the kid in class.

One day while driving, I saw Lateef driving an old car on one of the main streets in the community. He had recently dropped out of school. I asked him if he would pull over and talk with me about his schooling since we were on good terms when he was attending Metropolitan High until he started selling drugs and lost interest in school. We pulled into a bank parking lot and I informally interviewed him. I asked him to reflect on his relationship with his teachers when he attended Metropolitan High School. These were his comments:

Teachers never understood my life...they don't know what's going on out here with us [black males]. There are many broken families, different from in the 1960s...many students are caught in the middle of fights between the parents, mothers and fathers. ...I have a single mom who had to work and take care of us.

Since leaving high school, Lateef had a successful period of dealing drugs. He was very smart, a B-student when he attended Metropolitan High. Since leaving school, he opened his own lawn-care service and placed his younger brother in a job with his company. His goal was to leave the drug world and become an entrepreneur. I took him to lunch and continued my interview. I was especially impressed with his knowledge of government regulations pertaining to purchasing property and small business loans for start-up companies.

Lateef was no longer living at home. He had gotten an apartment and lived with his girlfriend and younger brother. His girlfriend was pregnant. Tragically, at the young age of 16, he was an established drug dealer, parent to a younger brother, spouse to his girlfriend, and an expectant father while living in constant fear of losing his life.

Another perspective on this issue of teacher caring came from those college-bound students who felt that they were not pushed to achieve their maximum potential. Akil had the highest grade-point average and college entrance test score of all of the black participants in this study. His grades and score were comparable to

other outstanding students on the national level. Akil provided some valuable insights into the chemistry class taught by a teacher who did not demonstrate very much caring. Very few African American students passed his class with a grade higher than a C between 1986 and 1989:

Akil: I may have liked chemistry, had I liked the teacher, but I didn't really care for the teacher and I already didn't like chemistry and he just made it two negatives. The first card marking I got an A in chemistry. The second card marking, we were discussing what we do next semester (there are two card markings in each semester), I made the mistake of telling the teacher that I didn't plan on taking chemistry...then that set him off and I got a B the next marking period and I got a B on my report card.

Polite: Can you make a statement about the education you've received at Metropolitan High School?

Akil: Well, if you try to learn, you will learn. There are a lot of teachers that will teach you, but if you have no intention of coming to school to work, if you're coming just to be coming, there are a lot of teachers who won't care. Certain teachers will make you learn. Nothing is really preoccupying their time its just that they [black males] are not motivated to do the work. Its no great emphasis placed on it. Even with me. even though I got good grades and stuff, it wasn't...I was never told that I had to get an A. I got an A because I wanted an A. By the same token, they [black males] do things that barely gets them by, like they might get a C or D and pass the class and they think that everything is okay because they still got credit. A lot of the time I just did what I had to, get by to get an A. If I didn't have to do extra work, I didn't do any. I didn't really reach my maximum potential because I could probably have gotten A's in every class.

Finally, another counselor provided me with her thoughts on why so many students were seen in the halls with their teachers' permission.

Polite: I observed one group of students hanging posters which advertised a dance which was planned for the weekend. I asked them why were they hanging posters. They said that Ms. so and so gave them a pass. Can you comment on why this happens?

Counselor: I think it's typical.

Polite: Will you talk more about it?

Counselor: I think that a lot of teachers don't get into their teaching and they're always looking for ways to get rid of some of these students. It's a terrible thing to say, but I feel that they are always trying to get rid of them.

Polite: Is it that they can't handle them or they don't like them or they have problems with them or themselves or...

Counselor: They...just...don't...care...they ...just...don't...care. It's like those teachers who come in everyday and have a book assignment and as long as they sit and be quiet, they could be doing anything. There is not a lot of interaction between the teachers and students here anymore.

I concluded that far too many teachers demonstrated little or no caring for the African American male participants in this study. For many students, their reaction was to stop caring, to continue disrupting, and to put forth very little effort. Teachers could not be solely blamed for poor academic outcomes. Parents share a major part of the responsibility for their sons' poor

education. They could not expect the school to shoulder the complete responsibility for educating these students.

### Parental Involvement

African American parents were rarely seen in the school or at school-related activities, including those meetings sponsored by the parent-teacher organization. The only times that parents were seen in the building were during the two annual parent conferences, one in the fall and one in the spring, and when students -- generally African American males -- were suspended from classes. Less than one quarter of the parents attended the two annual parent conferences. Most African American parents rarely visited and many never visited the school during their sons' high school careers.

Teachers often commented that the lack of parental input contributed greatly to the lack of interest and motivation on the part of many of the African American students. The teachers viewed the lack of parental involvement as another major difference between the parents of the late 1980s and the parents of the early 1970s. One teacher reflected on the quality of parental involvement of early 1970s:

Parents were very much involved. Any project you wanted to do, parents did for you. Everything you needed, they brought. Whatever you said - let's do this, let's do that, everybody got involved and volunteered. If you had a little play in the classroom, they would come and see it. Whatever

you did, they were right there behind you.

The overwhelming number of African American males in this study were living with single mothers who worked. They had less time to be available for school-sponsored activities, but their understanding of what the school could do without their support, as two teachers put it, was totally unrealistic:

Teacher #1: Many of the parents that I see are very tough to call (understand) and a lot of the times you see some parents think that the school should do it all and follow these kids along, which is totally an impossible task. I think the parents at some point are unreasonable in what they think that we can do...

Teacher #2: Some parents didn't want to come (when called for discipline procedures). Some parents are supportive but they will call up and say, 'Is my kid in school today? How the hell do I know! They have unrealistic expectations of the school and what teachers know and what teachers don't know.

It is important to point out here that a reduction in support staff over the decade of the 1980s greatly hindered parents from receiving the quality of information which was essential for them as parents. For example, there were full-time staff persons assigned in the early 1970s to keep track of student attendance on a daily basis. These persons were available to parents and informed parents by telephone when their children were not attending classes.

Parents received mailed notices periodically throughout the marking period during the late 1980s. Most often, however, the parents of African American male students never received letters from the school because they were intercepted by their sons. The following was a typical example of one student's irresponsible behavior, of which the parents were not aware:

Student: If somebody had a car, we could go up to other schools and meet girls and stuff. Sometimes we would get a room at the local motel, get a buz' (get drunk or high) and have a party for the day.

Polite: What did your parents say about all of that?

Student: Most of the parents didn't know until it was too late, by the end of the second card marking or something.

Polite: Why didn't they know?

Student: They didn't go to parent-teacher conferences and we would beat them home and get the mail from the mailbox or the mailman would just give us the mail.

Polite: What would have happened if they had (parent) known?

Student: They probably would have gotten on our case.

It was essential to learn that the majority of the African American male students whose academic performance was above average and average had some degree of parental support. The degree of parental support most often determined whether they were generally in compliance with the policies of the school. Conversely, those

students who were poor students academically had little or no parental support at home. There were, of course, some discrepant cases, but generally speaking, parental support was a determining factor in the African American male students' level of activity and productivity at school.

My second observation was that there were a few African American parents who worked within, but mainly outside of, the school to assure that certain African American males, generally the better students, took the proper courses, were involved and supported in the school's sports programs, were appropriately dressed, and received ample information needed to make rational decisions about college and summer employment. I questioned one student about his mother's involvement in planning his high school courses. It was clear that his mother and other mothers worked "behind the scenes" to assure that their sons received the best possible education. They did not rely on the school:

Polite: Did your mother know what classes you took?

Naeem: (laugh) Oh she definitely knew!

Polite: Did she check your report card?

Naeem: Yeap!

Polite: All the way through?

Naeem: Definitely!

Polite: Do you think that other black males had that type of support?



Naeem: No...I'm sure that they don't (laugh, but sadly).

Polite: That makes a difference? I know that was true for TJ and Pele. Did you know their parents?

Naeem: hum...hum. They were very nice and helpful. TJ's mother was always asking me about my schedule. She had all the information from when TJ was applying for college last year and taking the entrance tests and stuff, so she gave it to my mom too.

Unfortunately, too few African American parents were ever actively involved in the education of their sons. Sports events, even when the teams were vying for division championships, were poorly attended. Few parents attended honors or sporting programs at the school. Plays and other exhibits were poorly attended by parents. There was a faithful, but small, group of parents who supported everything from the booster clubs to the honors activities.

Hare (1985) addressed the declining involvement of African American parents in the rearing of their children:

Many parents have now come to maturity under post-industrial society's new norms of permissiveness and parental commitment or preoccupation outside the home. They've grown up essentially unparented themselves. In a deeper sense, they no longer know how to parent. Rather than rely on their memory pictures of how their parents dealt with them, they may depend on how-to books, searching for some unknown formulas or techniques. This very search impresses them with the discouraging possibility that some workable parenting techniques exists but continues to elude them. This in turn compounds their feelings of parental inadequacy and guilt and can lead to further ingratiating to the child.

The lack of african american parental support and involvement contributed significantly to the quality of education available to black males at Metropolitan High School. Administrators, teachers, concerned parents and students agreed that most black parents were not involved in the schooling process.

### Career Planning

There was little evidence that African American male students were adequately prepared to make decisions regarding their choices of careers. There were no opportunities for students to meet with a counselor other than to plan class schedules or resolve scheduling conflicts. There were only two career day activities between 1986 and 1988 and they were restricted to a small group of students. Few students expressed knowledge of the job market, except those students who participated in the vocational training programs. I asked one counselor about the extent of career planning available to the students at Metropolitan High School and she responded:

Counselor: I do not feel that the school does enough kids need to have more information which I feel we are really lacking....

Polite: What type of things does the school do?

Counselor: Not a great deal! The voc. school that we affiliate with has career day where we take a select number of students... or [there is] a hit and miss type of thing which is done within the

classrooms. I don't think that there is a great deal done within the counseling department. I know that we need to work with all the students in that area...they need direction and options.

Marvin explained what happened to him in his early years of high school as a result of not having career planning.

When I came here in the 9th grade, I hung with the older students and in my mind, all I wanted to do was just party and I think that if I would have had more people to talk to me about school to say, "Marvin, if you don't study now, you will have a difficult time in your senior year," I would have kind of tried in the 9th grade year, that's when I started experiencing girls, parties, and just going out a lot, that's what really messed me up.

Many African American males were left to rely on their parents for guidance and direction. Few parents were committed to providing this type of support as was suggested in the previous section. One student, Nassor, explained that he received all of his career planning support from his mother:

Polite: Did you receive enough career guidance?

Nassor: No...absolutely not....I really haven't had any except my mother, she is a teacher in the inner-city. She went to Wayne State University and I would go with her for career counseling, but in this school I really haven't had any career counseling. They will ask you if you're going to college or what you're going to do...not really sit down with you to talk about jobs of the future...No, absolutely not.

Students, counselors, and teachers agreed that career counseling and planning were extremely limited for the 115 African American male students. It was

apparent from the lack of career planning, that most African American males without the advantage of skilled parents received in most cases, no information regarding the future job market or the prerequisites needed for entry into specific careers upon leaving high school.

I was a guest lecturer for several sociology classes during the data collection. I always queried the students about their plans after high school. Generally, every student would indicate, by show of raised hand, that he planned to attend college, but only a small number were enrolled in college-preparatory courses and received above-average grades.

In the absence of an organized career development program, the school was not providing much information to African American males regarding career possibilities and the work world. In addition, many African American males remained unaware of the close connection between excellent academic performance and college attendance. As a result, these students often held unrealistic views about their future careers.

### Testing

Student achievement testing was frequent throughout the schooling careers of the students in this study. But the import of this testing was not clear to many of the 115 African American males; it was instead, a big gray area for most. This is not to imply that these

students were totally oblivious to the need and purpose of testing, but many were not conditioned to taking tests in a very serious manner. This was not surprising, considering that most did not really believe that they were prepared for the testing or were actually going to be able to gain admission at the college of their choice.

As a result, testing posed a major burden on African American male students who were generally unprepared academically or emotionally for the tests. This included the state-administered Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP Test) and college entrance examinations.

One student provided me with a typical testing scenario for African American males at Metropolitan High School:

Student: ...well, you know those tests that we take called the MEAP test that are given so early in the year when you just gettin' out of summer, and then they be so long too. We were saying in Mrs. Brooks' class when she was asking us why our test scores are so low...and was telling her that it's so early in the year that we were just getting back to school and you have to start remembering stuff and you can't remember that quick...They should make it in February or sometime like that so that you could be ready. I know when I took the test, we would be there and there would be a time when you really get tired and bored with reading it, you just mark off the answer and some people just marked off the answers and you know that they are not reading it because they are marking too fast. A lot of people didn't care 'cause the test was too long.

Polite: But everyone in the state takes the tests at the same time. Do you think that they should have training for the students to prepare them?

Student: Yes they need more training and understanding about how important the test is....I know Mrs. Bonelli, for the math part of the test, gave us the last year's test and our class really did good on it. When we took it, we did better because we were prepared.

Testing was a source of frustration for all of the college-bound black males. I observed that several of these males took the college-entrance examination as many as five times, hoping to achieve a score high enough to be accepted into a four-year college, or if accepted, a score high enough to be eligible to play college-level sports. Shakir, for example, had a difficult time with his college entrance testing. He explained it in the following excerpt from a in-depth interview:

Polite: What did you get on the ACT?

Shakir: (long pause)...I don't remember.

Polite: Did you do well?

Shakir: I took it three times. The first time I just barely made it and my mother thought that I could do better than that, so I took it again and it [score] dropped...and then the third time I took it, I scored a little higher than the first time.

Polite: Did you take the SAT too?

Shakir: Yes, I took both of them three times.

Polite: (expressed shock) You took six exams in one year?

Shakir: Yes!



Polite: Why do you think that you had to take them six times?

Shakir: 'Cause I knew that I could do better than that.

Shakir was a B - average student at Metropolitan. There were many cases similar to Shakir's with respect to testing, especially college-entrance examinations.

### Comparative Insights and Skepticism

The African American male students I studied were aware of the changes that occurred at Metropolitan High over the years and were skeptical about the quality of education that they received at Metropolitan High. One reason for this was that African American male students' knowledge and experiences with secondary schooling were not limited to those at Metropolitan High School. In fact, students at Metropolitan High participated in two programs that provided them with opportunities to meet, develop friendships, compare insights, and draw conclusions about the quality of education afforded students at other schools. These two programs were a multi-district vocational education program and a tri-district advanced placement program for the academically gifted and talented. Students were bused to these two programs daily. Most students, once enrolled, remained in these programs for two or three years, developing strong rela-



tionships and friendships with students from a variety of schools.

Other students compared their experiences at Metropolitan High with their relatives' experiences from other public and private schools. They heard comments from adults in the community and read articles in the area's newspapers regarding the declining quality of education at Metropolitan High School.

I was convinced from my interview data that this type of comparative knowledge had a negative impact on these students and altered their thinking and enthusiasm about both Metropolitan High School and college, too. They did not attend high school with great hopes of receiving a high-caliber education. They knew that their education was not highly regarded outside the Metropolitan High School community. Many of them also felt that the general public's opinion of their education severely limited their opportunities for higher education. As an example, when I interviewed Ahmed, he simply explained how he had developed this type of comparative knowledge at the Vocational Center:

Ahmed: ...it seemed that their school was so much better than our school in terms of atmosphere and teaching staff.

Polite: Why would you say that?

Ahmed: There was one student in my voc. class who had an English book...the English that I was taking, he had in the 9th grade...their school was more ahead than Metropolitan High.

Polite: What school was he attending?

Ahmed: (he gave the name of the school)

Polite: Were you friendly with this guy?

Ahmed: Yes, he used to sit next to me in class and we were friends.

Fadil also attended the Vocational Center and shared similar experiences, but he was far more critical than Ahmed in his perceptions regarding the differences in the quality of educational opportunities.

Fadil: cause a lot of teachers didn't apply themselves to their job [at Metropolitan High]. A lot of teachers were good for me during the last two years...my first couple of years, I didn't have anybody that really motivated me to learn. They [teachers] said that high school is different and you don't get babied as much as middle school, but I figured if you ask questions,... my father said that they should be able to help you, that's their job. I got friends at voc school, they are students at [other schools] and stuff and they tell you that they have to stay after school and that their teachers are willing to help them.

Polite: So you knew kids who went to other schools?

Fadil: I know a lot of kids that go to other schools all over and when you talk to them in class and they tell you everything that happens in their school and when you tell them about Metropolitan, they be like "wow" and they can't believe what happens at Metropolitan, especially about the attitude of some teachers.

Polite: What type of things do they say?

Fadil: Like the help that you [they] get from your teachers. They all say that their teachers really care and the principal knows you really well. They get to know all their students. 'Cause my counselor didn't even know that I was assigned to her until an incident had came up my senior year and I had to go to her....also I know like the

army recruiters told me that Metropolitan ...our learning isn't as high as some other schools is. I was telling him what I got on the ACT test and he was like asking what my grade-point average was and he said that it would be different if I was going to some other school, I (according to the recruiter) would probably have a D average.

Polite: How did he know that?

Fadil: I guess he had inside information....He said that most people when they look at the news, they see our school at the bottom of the state [Michigan]. He was saying look at what the state is saying and if I was to go to another school I wouldn't do so well. I said it depends on how much you study and he said that is true, but you kids [at Metropolitan] don't really study, you're into selling drugs and stuff.

Polite: Did you know that guy?

Fadil: Yes, he's Sgt. Smith.

There was an abundance of evidence from the in-depth interviews that led me to conclude that most African American males had very negative attitudes about the quality of education available at Metropolitan High School. Whether their information was accurate or not, they believed it. I also suspected that this knowledge affected their motivation and interest in school. They viewed their schooling as not as serious as schooling in other nearby school districts.

Additionally, approximately 30% of the total enrollment at Metropolitan High participated in these off-campus type programs during the 1986-1987 school year. The degree of infiltration of these negative

opinions throughout the school, and especially among African American males, was immeasurable, qualitatively. But I believe it is accurate to observe that most of the African American males in this study were doubtful that the reputation and quality of their schooling was equal to that of other neighboring suburban schools.

This observation corresponds to Willis' (1977) observations. The "lads" in his study also developed pessimistic opinions regarding a plausible egalitarian, educational opportunity for working-class students in England. Like the lads, the African American males studied here indicated in their own words their belief that different schools, representing different socio-economic populations, provide different qualities of education.

## ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

To this point, the data have been used to describe the changes that occurred at Metropolitan High School between 1970 and 1990. These data demonstrate as the social composition of the of the student body at Metropolitan High changed, the quality of education at the school changed as students, parents, and teachers became increasingly disengaged from the academic life of the school.

In this section, I turn to a description of academic and social outcomes of the 115 African American male students I studied. The section demonstrates that the Metropolitan High School of the late 1980s was characterized by (a) low levels of academic achievement among African American males; (b) increased concern on the part of African American males with consumerism and materialistic values; (c) increased participation among African American males in criminal activities related to drug trafficking; and (d) increased participation among African American males in activities called "in-school truancy".

### Academic Outcome for the Graduates

Metropolitan High School used a letter grade system for reporting quarterly academic progress with an 'A' grade representing superior academic performance and a 'E' grade representing academic failure. A point system

also was used, with a 4.0 representing superior academic performance and 1.0 as the lowest passing point for reporting career and annual academic performance.

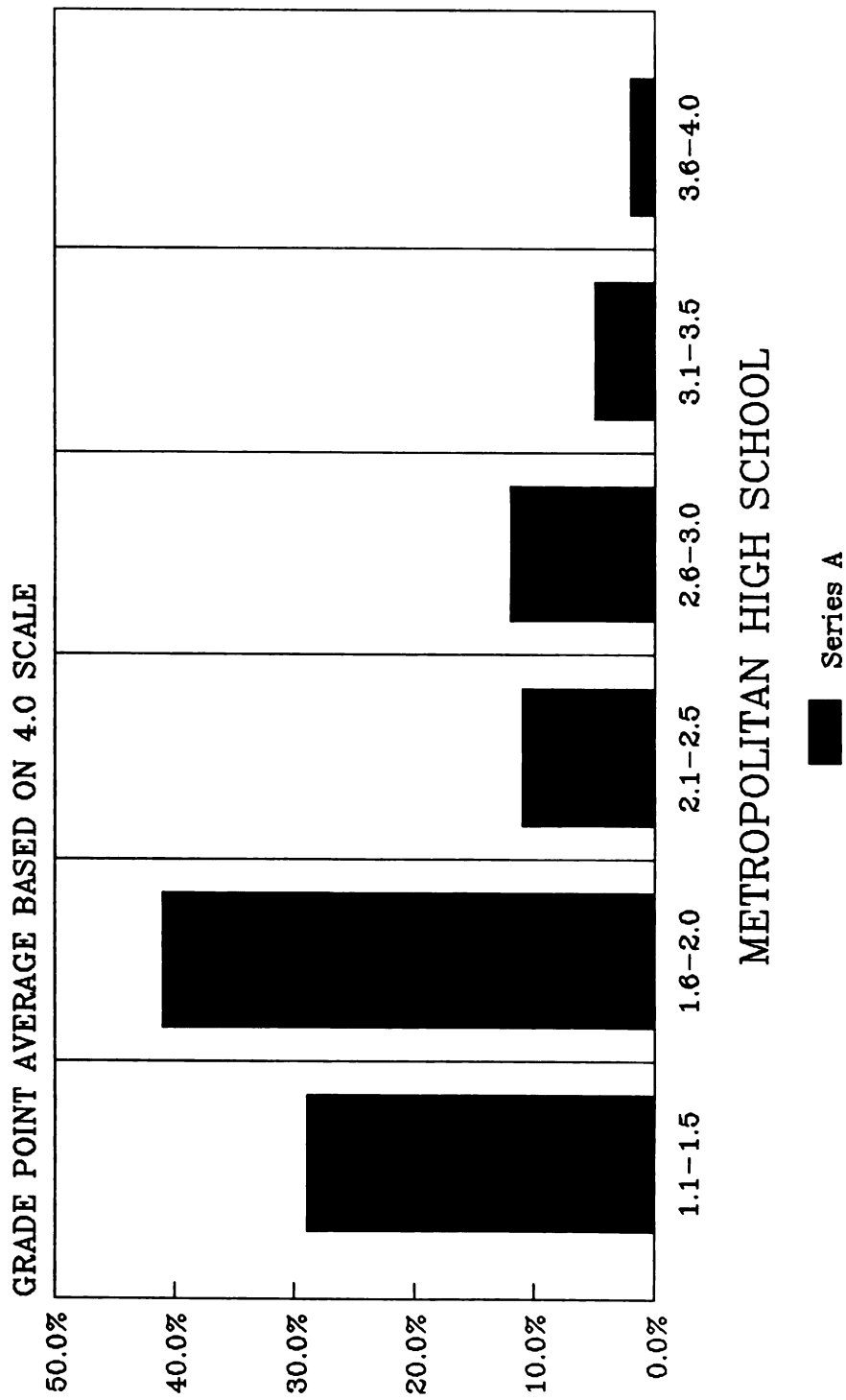
Few of the 115 African American males I studied were academically ready for higher education upon reaching their scheduled graduation date in June of 1989. In fact, only slightly more than half (63 African American males) actually received a diploma as of June, 1990. Two-thirds of those who graduated were academically average or below-average students. Eight out of the 115 earned a grade-point average of C+ or better and only 4 graduated with honors. Figure 3 provides a summary of the grade point averages received by the 63 African American male graduates. Table 11 provides a description of other academic and social outcomes of these 115 African American males.

It was clear that not more than 1 out of 15 African American males was actually prepared for college-level work. Consequently, many of the college-bound students had a difficult time getting admitted into four-year colleges and universities. For example, major colleges and universities commonly required all applicants to take either the ACT or SAT college entrance examination and submit their test scores as a prerequisite for admission. It was highly unlikely that any student could be accepted without taking one of those two examinations. Most college-bound students at

# Figure 3: Grade Point Averages / 1989

## BLACK MALE GRADUATES / 1989

Figure 3. Grade Point Averages / African American Male Graduates



\*BASED ON 63 graduates

Table 11  
Demographic Description of the 115 African American  
Males

<u>N = 115</u>	
<u>Factor</u>	<u>number of incidents</u>
Graduated with class/June, 1989	60
Graduated late	3
Graduated below average (2.00 or C)	39
Graduated above average (2.75 or B-)	8
Graduated with honors (3.0 or better)	4
Took ACT college entrance examination	17
Scored 16 or higher*	4
Dropped for non-attendance	28
Expelled by the Board of Education	8
Moved out of school district	8
GED adult education	4
Killed	1
Unknown	3
<hr/>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>115</u>
<u>Additional Factors</u>	<u>number of known incidents</u>
Shot by gunfire	3
Incarcerated between Sept.	
1986 - June, 1990	23

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\*Note. A score of 15 or higher is considered acceptable for some colleges and sports programs.



Metropolitan High School and throughout the mid-western states traditionally took the ACT examination according to Farrant (1990). Yet, only 17 of the 60 African American males who graduated from Metropolitan High School's class of 1989 took the ACT examination. Moreover, no African American male scored within the highest interval and only three scored within the upper-middle interval. Table 12 presents the ACT composite scores of each of the tested African American male graduates in the class of 1989.

The American College Testing Program, as reported by Farrant (1990), aggregate the ACT composite scores in four intervals:

26 - 36	highest interval
21 - 25	upper-middle interval
16 - 20	lower-middle interval
1 - 15	lowest interval

Several African American males planned to play college-level sports as a means of financing their college education, but due to their poor scores on the college entrance examinations they were not eligible by the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) "Proposition 48," which requires a minimum composite score of 15 on the ACT for eligibility. The large percentage of Metropolitan High School's African American males who failed to qualify was not consistent with NCAA findings with respect to African American athletes

Table 12

Table 12

African American Males' ACT Test Scores by Students  
Tested

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<u>ACT COMPOSITE SCORE</u>	<u>RANK*</u>	<u>NAME</u>
25	upper-middle interval	Akil
24	upper-middle interval	Waleed
22	upper-middle interval	Mapira
16	lower-middle interval	Naeem
15	lowest interval	Tebogo
15	lowest interval	Pili
15	lowest interval	Kunle
13	lowest interval	Weke
13	lowest interval	Onani
13	lowest interval	Moyo
12	lowest interval	Tsoka
09	lowest interval	Juma
08	lowest interval	Thako
08	lowest interval	Coujee
08	lowest interval	Akono
07	lowest interval	Sultan
05	lowest interval	Nassor
03	lowest interval	Chuma

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\*Note. Based on the High School Profile Report: A description of the academic abilities and non-academic characteristics of your ACT tested graduates 1989. The American College Testing Program.

at the national level. Many more African American than white males, proportionately, failed to qualify nationally. At Metropolitan High School only 5% of the cohort qualified to play sports at major institutions their freshman year based on their ACT composite score. The NCAA (1989) reported that 85% of African American candidates to Division I colleges and universities qualified.

Of the total number of black student-athletes who were recruited by and admitted to Division I institutions in the fall of 1988, 85.5 percent were qualifiers and thus eligible to participate in their freshman year. Of the total number of white student-athletes, 97.8 percent were qualifiers.

I interviewed several African American males who entered college to determine what their first year's experiences were like and whether or not they felt academically prepared. Akil, the African American male who had the highest academic performance of the 115, was accepted at several major institutions, including the University of Michigan and Michigan State University. He opted to attend a small, historically black university in the state of Florida known for its distinguished business programs. I questioned him in an interview during the summer of 1990, following his first year of college. I inquired about his readiness for college. It appeared that college was not as a dreadful experience for him as was the case with several others of his African American male classmates. He had achieved a 3.50 grade point average for the first year of college

and was excited about returning to college in the fall, 1990. He had not participated in many co-curricular activities, choosing instead to spend much of his time studying.

Tsoka, another graduate who earned a 2.91 grade point average at Metropolitan High and scored within the lowest interval on the ACT examination (12), was reportedly doing well at a small four-year college in Michigan. His mother indicated that he had taken several remedial courses during the first semester and began his regular courses during the second semester. His overall grade-point average for the first year of college was 3.2 on a 4.0 point scale. When I contacted Tsoka's mother for an interview, she was very concerned that Tsoka was required to take a full semester of remedial classes before entering his regular college program. Tsoka said college was like an extended high school program.

Aside from Akil and Tsoka, two discrepant cases, I was unable to find any other African American male graduates who were faring well, socially and academically, at four-year colleges following their graduation from Metropolitan High School. Many African American males had not received adequate information needed to make rational decisions regarding their college choice. Naeem, for example, was an above-average student at Metropolitan High and attended Utah Valley College in

the state of Utah. He had a very negative experience. His academic performance was slightly above average at Utah Valley, earning a 2.8 on a 4.0-point grading scale. However, he felt compelled to transfer to Central Michigan University for the fall of 1990 because he was unaware that Utah Valley was predominantly Mormon. He complained during a follow-up interview with me that there was tremendous pressure placed on him and other African American students to convert to Mormonism. He felt that if he had received more information from his high school teachers and counselors, he would never have attended Utah Valley. He planned to major in legal assistance and hoped eventually to become a lawyer.

Pili, as well, had a distressing first-year college experience. His grade-point average was 1.70 on a 4.0 scale at a small black college in Virginia. He felt that he was totally unprepared for college. He claimed that his study habits were not properly developed at Metropolitan High School and that the lack of on-going academic challenges in high school severely hindered his development and readiness for college. Pili received the fourth highest grade-point average (3.2) of the 115 African American males at Metropolitan High School.

Pili, Akil, and Tsoka were above-average high school students and were expected to do well in college. Other students like Salim were average academically, but somewhat interested in personal development. Salim

attended an urban university as a part-time student for the first semester following graduation and dropped out of college during the second semester. When I asked him about his experiences in college during a follow-up interview, he reported that he had passed two classes but had received incomplete grades in two other classes. He remarked, "In high school, I figured that I was smart and if I did the work, I would be a show-off....I wanted to fit in with the crowd." Salim did not plan to not return to the university in the fall of 1990, but rather hoped to attend a small Bible college to major in pastoral counseling. His two brothers also attended Metropolitan High School, but dropped out to sell drugs. Salim felt that his mother's support and his determination not to make the same mistakes as his brothers were the only two factors which prevented him from becoming involved in similar circumstances.

Finally, Nassor was an example of the underemployed African American male graduate. Nassor, like most of the African American males in his class, graduated with a below-average academic record. He earned a 1.3 grade point average and scored 05 on the ACT examination. He was not accepted at any four-year college or university and was eligible only for the open admission schools and junior colleges. He opted to work rather than attend a junior college.

I had observed Nassor for more than three months prior to asking for a follow-up interview. I interviewed him at the restaurant where he was employed as a bus boy. He admitted that he felt embarrassed every time I came into the restaurant because he had not gotten himself accepted into college and was working in a "low paying job." He mentioned that he planned to attend a junior college in the fall of 1990, but he had not obtained an application or visited a junior college as of July, 1990. He confirmed that he had "expected more out of life." I asked him what were his complaints, and he replied, "I'm tired of depending on my parents and I only make \$4.35 per hour: I'm dirty at the end of everyday."

Thus, for those black males who graduated, it appeared that widespread underemployment or unemployment was their plight. In fact, most of the 63 African American male graduates did not attend college, and among those who did attend, few had successful first-year experiences.

#### Peer Pressure and Materialism

One explanation for the dismal academic outcomes of the African American males studied here was suggested by Ogbu (1974). He pointed out the severity of negative peer pressure on working-class African American males. Aside from the lack of caring on the part of some

teachers, peer pressure seemed to be the most prominent factor leading to poor academic performance for African American males at Metropolitan High School, especially for the poorer African American male.

Peer pressure accounted for much of the preoccupation with activities which isolated African American males from the benefits of schooling. Many students were consumed by the need to dress in certain fashions, while others refrained from attending certain classes and school in general for fear of name-calling and ridicule because of their style of clothing. In efforts to procure the clothing, valued at as much as \$500 per outfit, many students were drawn into drug trafficking, a lucrative alternative to underemployment and unemployment. A later section in this chapter will discuss the details of the drug subculture at Metropolitan High, while this section will provide some evidence of the impact of peer pressure at Metropolitan High School on African American males.

In my field observations, I often visited nearby businesses and shopping malls and discovered large numbers of Metropolitan African American male students. These students were commonly dropped-off for school by their parents. They entered the front door of the school and walked out the back door with their friends. Often, these students went to the more exorbitant shopping malls to purchase their daily outfits valued at



between \$250 and \$500. Storekeepers provided numerous stories of regular customers who attended Metropolitan High and spent hundreds of dollars shopping each week.

On one occasion, a African American male went to the mall during the school morning and purchased a new pair of designer gym shoes which were priced at \$250. He returned to school and showed them and the bag in which they came to several other African American males during an exchange of classes. He left his shoes in his locker. He returned to his locker at lunch to find it vandalized and his shoes stolen. He became outraged and ran through the building, yelling that he was going to "kill the mother f...who took my shoes, and I will know because I'm the only one with a pair like them in this mother f...school." He left the school at lunch and purchased a second pair of shoes at the same price. When he returned that afternoon with a second pair of shoes, he was the talk and wonderment of his friends. He was later arrested during the school year for attempting to sell \$10,000 worth of cocaine to a drug enforcement agent.

There were numerous incidents where students felt compelled to get into gang fights in support of their neighborhood or friends. If one influential student was suspended from school, other friends would attempt to get themselves suspended or simply did not attend classes so that they could be with their friend. On one

occasion, a student gave me a personal note which read, "Mr. Polite, you know all those kids who are rollin' (selling drugs) always talk about me and the way I dress. So sometimes I don't feel like hearing it and I just cut class." I questioned that student about the note, and he assured me that the reason he did not attend many classes was because his parents were unable to provide him with the high-fashioned clothing worn by so many of the other popular African American males. He later began selling drugs before dropping out of school.

Hare (1985), a famed African American sociologist, explained the negative impact of peer pressure on African American males, especially those from single-parent households headed by the mother, as was the case with the majority of the 115 African American males in this study:

The peer group sets the standards and perimeter of their behavior. It builds disdain and contempt for the values and advice of the parents. In the absence of the father and his relentless model for the boy, with no one of authority and forcefulness to backup the mother's decrees, the boy is all the more easily instigated to oppose his mother's authority. In the best of circumstances, half of the parental force is missing (p. 17).

The effect of peer pressure often resulted in aggressive, violent, and criminal behaviors. Many African American males at Metropolitan High School were shot, paralyzed, or incarcerated, and three were killed during the time that this study was conducted. Most expulsions were based on behavioral incidents related to

negative peer pressure. Knowledge of these events was commonly discussed among the students, teachers, administrators, and parents. I participated in such discussion with a guidance counselor:

Counselor: I have two kids [students] that have been shot and were dealing with drugs at one time or another.

Polite: They were shot?

Counselor: Yes, in the legs, both of them.

Polite: Are they still involved (selling drugs)?

Counselor: One has dropped out of my support group and I haven't seen him. The other said that his friend has died and every time I talk to him he tells me someone else has been shot or killed.

Polite: Well school is a hard act to come behind all those competing forces.

Counselor: Well, he is not doing very well.

I asked one of the African American male security guards who had worked in the school for more than a decade and coached a number of sports, what were some of the reasons so many students were in school, but not attending classes? He responded:

Family problems...stability...one kid that I know, for example, is not in class and he walks the halls...it might seem trivial, but he sees kids with things that he can't have (afford), so he says that he wants them and he walks the halls because he doesn't want to go to class and be ashamed.

As mentioned in the introduction, the school district is composed of Metropolitan City and several small boroughs. One of those boroughs was composed of

mainly lower-income households. The students who lived in that borough were all African American. Throughout the data collection, there were numerous fights between students based on their residence. Much of it was grounded in materialism and peer pressure. One of the students, a Metropolitan City resident who was eventually expelled by the District's School Board for his involvement in a fight, explained the peer pressure felt by African American males this way:

Student: It seems that the students from Metropolitan City were too busy fighting against the students of other communities and sometimes fighting amongst themselves. It was like a show-off at Metropolitan High. You always had to have the highest-priced clothes and roll (sell drugs) to be in the in-group..or you had to do something to keep your name out there like a landmark...you had to be somebody.

...the main reason I got kicked-out of school was that I had a fight with the Borough kids...it was like a gang fight...a guy named Hondo was jealous of this friend [of mine] named Tale.

Polite: Why was Hondo jealous of Tale?

Student: ...'cause of the girls and stuff like that.

Polite: Tale had all those things?

Student: Yes...a lot of girls liked him...what can I say?

Polite: Was there something special about Tale?

Student: Maybe it was his clothes and the way he looked...I don't know!

Polite: So you think that Hondo was jealous of that?

Student: Yeah... 'cause he [Hondo] wanted to be top

man at Metropolitan High...you know that status thing...and he wanted to be somethin'...you know...you know there was a party and this friend of mine and Tale were run-out of the party by these guys from the Borough... Eventually everybody associated with the Metropolitan City group and the kids from the Borough were always bothering us.... I would talk with some of my friends in the Borough to tell them to tell the leaders to chill (stop) from fighting...but it seemed that the people that I talked to were scared to talk to the leaders, those guys who were supposed to be on the top...so it came out to be a fight.

Polite: How does a person get on top to be a leader of these groups?

Student: ...money!

Polite: How did they get the money?

Student: Rollin'!

Polite: Selling drugs?

Student: Right...they sell drugs...mmm and dress nice with the money.

As a final example of impact of peer pressure and materialism, I spoke with Atsu, an average student who provided some general insights about the reputation the school had based on materialism and peer pressure:

Polite: What about peer pressure?

Atsu: It's a lot of that... most people that I know from other schools think that Metropolitan High is just a drug school. When you say what school you graduated from or you say Metropolitan City, they ask... Do you sell drugs?

Polite: Why is that true?

Atsu: I don't know... I look at Metropolitan High and it's not the school, it's the people in the school...they make the

school...they all want to dress nice!  
 They want the girls and they feel if they  
 don't have money then they can't have  
 those things...so they sell drugs.

Polite: What do they do with all their money from  
 selling drugs?

Atsu: Clothes, cars...clothes and cars are the  
 main things, and they keep the money to  
 show it off.

Materialism and consumerism, two prerequisites for  
 a strong capitalist society, very clearly worked their  
 way down to working-class African American males at  
 Metropolitan High and were reflected in the focus of the  
 peer pressure among the students. Hare concluded in his  
 published interview with Pete (1986) that materialism  
 prevents rather than promotes success for many African  
 American males.

In the following sections, I illustrate three kinds  
 of schooling outcomes that appeared related to peer  
 pressure and that were very common the large number of  
 African American males who did not graduate. These were  
 non-attendance, drug trafficking, and expulsions.

### In-School Truancy

Table 11 (p. 137) indicates that 1 out of 5 African  
 American males was dropped from the school's active  
 rolls due to non-attendance. Most of the African  
 American males who were dropped attended certain  
 classes, but missed other classes. They were in or near  
 school, but refrained from attending classes.

I decided to observe what I termed "in-school truancy" to determine what were the common activities of the in-school truant. I stationed myself in various parts of the school, for example, at the intersection of B and E wings, outside the assistant principal's office in the D wing, in and near the school Media Center, in the cafeteria, etc., for a four-week period. I observed and took field notes on the activities involving African American male students who were in-school truants. The behaviors of these students were number coded. For example, 008 was the number code used for the activity of "socializing."

Nine categories of behaviors and/or activities emerged as common among the African American male in-school truants. They were:

1. I.D.-related activities
2. radio station related activities
3. locker activities
4. socializing
5. school work-related activities
6. disruptive behaviors
7. hall passes
8. eating
9. wandering

Several other categories of behaviors, some far more injurious and illegal activities, were associated with the African American male in-school truants. Those behaviors were generally initiated in school and carried on outside of the school facility. Some of those behaviors were drug trafficking, sexual misconduct, theft, destruction of property in the neighborhoods near the school, disruption of nearby commercial businesses, and aggressive and violent behaviors involving other students at Metropolitan High as well as other schools in the district. These outside activities, which often began in the school, were commonly reported to the school's administrators by community persons and police personnel.

#### The I.D. Policy

Many African American males were in-school truants. This occurred as a result of either deliberately not wearing a student identification card in an effort to get rejected from class or because they accidentally forgot their cards. The school issued, free-of-charge, an identification card to all students upon entry. Students were expected to keep this card for the entire four years of high school. The Student Handbook indicated the cost of a replacement of a card at \$2.00.



The handbook also stated that, "Students MUST wear their I.D. card at all times when they are on the school grounds. Students who do not wear their I.D. will be suspended from school."

An informal interview with the secretary who was responsible for issuing new I.D. cards revealed that the school sold more than 3000 cards each year. The student population was only 1050. Some students, however, never needed to purchase cards, while other individual students purchased as many as 75 cards in one school year, according to the secretary.

One out of 10 in-school truants was involved in some activities related to their I. D. card. African American males were observed either purchasing a new card during class time, missing classes because they did not have an I.D. card, or leaving the building to return home to pick-up a forgotten card.

A typical example of how I.D. cards related to in-school truancy was the African American male who, for whatever reason, did not have a card. The student may have attended classes where the teacher did not adhere to the policy and either left the building during those other classes where the card was required, wandered about the school, or left to frequent a local restaurant or friend's home.

I noticed at one observation, a African American male student leaving the building. I asked, "Where are

you going?" He replied, "I have to run home ....I forgot my I.D." He ran off to the east of the school building and missed the entire class period because he was without an I.D.

Many African American males missed valuable class time as a result of a policy which, according to the principal, was instituted to protect the students and staff from outsiders. There were many racial disturbances and conflicts during the 1970s and consequently, the I.D. policy emerged as a means of identifying which students were duly enrolled at Metropolitan High.

Another example of this issue being played out was Jamie's case. A school security officer, at about 2:00 p.m., brought Jamie into the assistant principal's office. The security guard indicated that Jamie had not attended classes for the entire afternoon. When Jamie was asked why he had not attended class, he responded, "I didn't have an I.D." He was asked what he had done for the entire afternoon. He said, "I went to two lunches (two lunch periods in the school) and I went to Hardies (a local restaurant)."

The I.D. policy was a common excuse used by African American males for not attending classes. Many of these students had actually misplaced their cards while others merely used the policy as an excuse for not attending assigned classes.

Socialization:

The student body underwent some major changes during the high school careers of the 115 African American males which had adversely impacted students' social time.

The biggest change involved the school's lunch schedule. Until the 1986 academic year, there was a 60-minute lunch period when all students were free to eat and wander about the building and community. There were hundreds of complaints, including those which detailed accounts of serious fights and violent behaviors involving African American male students. Many students never returned from the lunch hour. Most administrators, including myself, felt that the lunch time was too long and that the students were unable to handle an hour of free time. Consequently, the administration was forced to consider changing the lunch program to a three-session program for the school. The Board of Education approved and implemented the change, effective September, 1987.

The change in the lunch program resulted in students having less time to socialize. The community and school seemed far more orderly without the large masses of students free to wander for an hour each day. Socializing remained the most common activity of African

American male in-school truants. I observed 280 incidents of in-school truancy. One out of 4 incidents were centered around socializing.

Often, whatever happened in the community impacted many African American males' attendance. Many took class time to simply up date each other on the events of the community. For example, following a shooting in the community involving two African American male graduates of 1986, there was much talk in the school hallways concerning the incident. Many students who were neighbors and relatives of the two affected students involved were shocked by the fact that these two students actually attempted murder. The students were preoccupied with the details of the shooting. The excitement of what happened with these African American males easily rivaled what was happening in the classrooms. In this case, what happened external to the learning environment was more exciting and interesting for many African American males than what was going on in the class. Often African American males were heard discussing drugs, cars, and the "fast life" while socializing during class time.

### Class Disruptions

Disrupting ongoing class sessions was a common behavior of many in-school truants. One out of every 10 in-school truants was known to be disrupting the educa-

teachers cannot control them when they do--  
education throughout the school suffers.

Although the subcultural activities observed at Metropolitan High School were carried out throughout the school building and affected many students, the majority of the activities were concentrated in three primary locations:

1. outside the main office;
2. the student parking lot to the west of the school; and
3. the student parking lot to the east of the building.

African American male dealers or "rollers" as they were called at Metropolitan High, were approximately thirty (30) in number. However, a much larger number of African American males associated with these rollers because the rollers provided them with rides in their cars and drugs. This small core of thirty was actually responsible for most of the drug distribution or rollin' carried out within the school.

Recruitment of new members was on-going. The new members were recruited by older members, and there was a constant flow and change in membership. Many of the African American males who dropped out of school operated "dope houses" (a house in the community where drugs are sold twenty-four hours a day), a smaller number stayed in school and somehow managed to graduate.

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I interviewed several rollers to inquire how might teenagers get involved in rollin' or selling drugs. The responses were consistent: by recruitment by older, seasoned members, or by volunteering. Some African American males gave accounts of older students or adults in the community who took young boys "shopping" and purchased material items ranging from clothing to motor bikes, depending on how badly these new recruits were needed to maintain the distribution of the drugs in the community and nearby suburbs. Generally, clothing seemed to be a very high priority and a major attraction which seduced young African American males into the drug culture at Metropolitan High. Once a member or roller, jewelry, cars, and travel became important goals of the roller.

"Put me down" was the term used by young recruits when requesting permission to get involved in the drug dealing business. "Gettin" paid," "on the payroll," "down," and "word up" referred also to those students who sold drugs. One student informed me that,

Once a young "dude" gets tired of not having the amount or type of clothing he wants, he merely has to walk up to an older known roller and say "put me down" or "put me on the payroll" or simply--"word" and the older roller will get the younger dude started by providing him with a small amount of drugs to sell. If the novice proves dependable, he can become a serious roller with his own clientele and "partnerships."

The majority of the rollers were African American and resided in the Borough. However, there were rollers

residing in Metropolitan City as well. According to the students interviewed, many of the "big men" or the "man," (the persons who procured the drugs in large quantities for distribution), lived in Metropolitan City. There were no known white student rollers, but many white students purchased drugs regularly from the rollers, and made up a large portion of the "clientele."

Generally, the rollers operated in small groups of two or three "rollers" referred to as "partnerships." Within the partnership, each member was responsible for contributing an equal amount of "start-up" money. The start-up money was used to purchase a small quantity of drugs, usually marijuana because it was the cheapest drug on the street market. Then the process known as "flippin'" began whereby all or most of the profits from the drug dealings were used to purchase larger quantities of drugs. This process continued within a particular category of drugs until the partners had saved enough money to afford to move into a higher category and so on until they reached the "coke" or cocaine level where the greatest profits were to be made. An example of flippin' was provided by one African American male:

Say you and me want to roll together....OK we form like a partnership and put our money together and purchase a small amount of marijuana to sell until we get enough money to buy the "eight ball" ( a powder form of cocaine which must be processed by adding additives such as quinine or baking soda prior to selling). After we sell a few eight balls, we're into the big time.



Each member of the partnership checked and balanced the others. Should one member be dishonest, some very serious sanctions were generally imposed. These sanctions included isolations from the partnership, beatings, and sometimes, extremely violent attacks and shootings.

Most African American male rollers interviewed responded that the reason they became involved in drug dealing was because they wanted things which their parents could not afford to buy for them. Rollin' was easy money and the profit came quickly with little effort. Based on these characteristics, I concluded that many of the rollers also suffered from low self-esteem. As was mentioned, two communities made up the Metropolitan School District. The average African American parent in Metropolitan City could provide expensive designer clothing, motor bikes, and cars for their children, while such items were generally far beyond the reach of most parents residing in the Borough. One theory which emerged was that poor students who suffered from low self-esteem were more likely to turn to drug dealing than poor students who had a positive self-image. Two of the school's rollers were stopped during the course of this study in the Borough and searched by the police for possible drug

trafficking. Both had more than \$900 on their persons, and neither had ever held a job.

Most of the African American male rollers interviewed seemed to be normal, urban, street-smart students. However the types of activities in which they were involved often-times placed them in extremely dangerous situations. Many rollers reported that they owned and at times carried guns and other weapons due to the need to protect themselves and their goods. One of the rollers appeared in the front of the school building driving a late model Cadillac on one day while I was observing. When a security person asked him to move the car from the front of the building, he refused. The police were called for assistance. A small hand gun was found in a special compartment during a routine search of the car by the police.

Among the major rules of the drug subculture, honesty among the dealers and distributors is a must. Each student interviewed recounted at least one story of a teenager who was shot or killed because he "messed up the man's money". If you were a roller, you had to pay for drugs entrusted in your care. This is the first law of the subculture. "The man wanted either the drugs or the money when he shows (comes) and you'd better give it up or you're dead." One student interviewed was assaulted by several rollers in the boys' locker room

during the course of this project because he did not "pay his debts."

Confidentiality was another important norm of the rollers' subculture. Each informant interviewed reminded me that it was absolutely essential that neither his identity be disclosed nor the identities of other persons involved in the drug dealings of the school for fear of bodily injury or even death. Most of the students interviewed were close associates of one another and apparently none mentioned the fact that they were interviewed by me, or that they had provided me with information concerning the workings of the drug subculture within the school.

Protection of the membership was important, also. When students were asked if they were afraid to be caught or jailed by police or federal drug agents, all replied 'no' because "the man" would bail them out. There were two reasons for this; one, rollers were needed to carry on the drug traffic, and two, the man was "responsible" for the young rollers in his charge. If the word was out on the street that a certain big man failed to take care of his rollers, other rollers in his charge would feel insecure and seek other suppliers. This is very much like prostitution in street corner society. For example, two black graduating seniors in 1989 were out of jail on \$25,000 cash bond because they were caught driving around the community with a large

quantity of cocaine in their car with the intention to sell it. Their suppliers posted the bail for both. Each of these two rollers purchased identical \$30,000 cars and neither had ever held a full-time job. Both of the young men had not yet reached their eighteenth birthday, were flippin' for several years and were 'middle men' with an assemblage of younger rollers working for them.

Sefu was known by all the African American males as a good student and outstanding basketball player. Several students suggested that I interview him regarding his rollin' experiences. I contacted Sefu. He refused to come in for an interview, but did agree to talk with me over the telephone. Sefu told me that he was ashamed to return to school because everyone knew that he was a big man in the drug world. He assured me that he discouraged other African American males from becoming involved with drugs and hoped to get out of the trafficking as soon as he could. Several students told me that Sefu purchased several condominiums with the profits from rollin' and that his parents were living in one of these properties. Sefu was driving a 1989 Mercedes Benz when he was arrested by the police with cocaine valued at \$20,000.

Finally, not taking drugs became a very important norm among the rollers. This was most unlike the drug subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s. These young rollers

in the late 1980s were well aware of the ill affects of drugs on their bodies and generally never consumed their own products. Several rollers referred to those dealers, who also used drugs, as "junkies" and "dope heads." Those rollers who also abused drugs were considered deviant and "weak" among their peers because this deviant group sold not for a profit, but to support their own addiction.

One interesting feature of the drug subculture was its value system. The materialistic "good life," big cars, expensive clothing, jewelry, and travel were the preoccupation of those involved in the drug culture. While involved in the project, I spent a considerable amount of time listening to television and radio advertisements which were commonly aired throughout the day on all stations in the Borough and Metropolitan City. All of these aforementioned material items were constantly being presented by way of the media. Rollin', in the opinion of those involved, was the best way to preclude all the hard work required to procure the things which were important to them in life and society. The alternative of rollin' was especially important for African American males who were average or below-average students and who faced long-term or permanent unemployment. Selling drugs could be viewed as the only solution to impoverished conditions in a materialistic society. As mentioned, there were

approximately thirty true rollers at Metropolitan High. Most had never held a job. Several of those rollers were profiting, tax free, an average of a thousand dollars per week with little overhead and no responsibilities. Much of this money was spent on clothing and other material items and, of course, for purchasing more drugs.

One young roller was very depressed as he discussed his involvement with drugs with me, stating that his mother could barely provide him with the necessities of life. He was only sixteen years old. His question for me was, "Do you want me to fry hamburgers and clean out McDonald's bathrooms for minimum wages, when I can make one 'thou' (a thousand dollars) a week?" He and several of his friends took a weekend trip to Las Vegas to attend a professional boxing match and upon their return were admired by other African American males at school.

Members of the drug subculture spent large amounts of money on very expensive, large gold chains which were worn around the necks of these rollers in the mid-1980s. Such audacious behaviors attracted the attention of the police and other legal authorities and identified the rollers by their appearance. The rollers at Metropolitan High in the late 1980s opted for more expensive and conservative clothing commonly sold in the most exclusive shops and boutiques in the Metropolitan area, tasteful jewelry, and expensive cars, giving them

the appearance of upper middle-class teenagers. Additionally, because so many were identified by their clothing in earlier 1980s, few rollers carried drugs on their person. The accepted procedure, to which their clientele had to adhere, required those interested in purchasing drugs during school time to place an order during the morning which was filled during the lunch period. Crack was sold in the front of the school, directly outside the main office, while "coke" was sold in either of the two student parking lots.

Jojo, a roller, was known personally by me. He had numerous, informal interviews with me regarding the drug activities at Metropolitan High. He provided some helpful information during an in-depth interview. He spoke freely concerning the rollin' in the school. He estimated that 7 out of 10 seniors had smoked a "51" (a marijuana cigarette with traces of crack cocaine added). He told me that his dealings were rarely in the school. He preferred to sell to rich, white clients in the nearby suburbs. Jojo confirmed that he earned approximately \$1,500 per week "when times are good."

When asked about his parents, Jojo responded that he lived with his mother and that she really did not care what he did. He stated that his grandmother was more of a positive influence than his mother. Jojo claimed to have given his mother money on one occasion, but she only "messed it up." He felt that many of the

parents of the rollers did not care, and some actually encouraged the drug dealings because they shared in its profits. Most parents of rollers were unaware that their children were involved in drugs, according to Jojo. Several rollers purchased expensive clothing and left them at a friend's house. Each day, these students met to change clothing at a neutral location in order to preclude the possibility of their parents learning of their involvement with drugs.

Jojo indicated that he attended school because he realized that it was important for his future. He hoped to attend college after graduation. He stated that if he did not attend school, he could work at a "dope house" and earn \$700 per three-day week, packaging and selling drugs. He added that he had seen several friends killed in drug-related wars. Jojo also confirmed the number of rollers in the school and indicated that the majority of sales occurred during the lunch period. However, the largest portion of the money was made after school.

Kofi, another roller, believed that most students had experienced smoking a "51." And more than twenty students were profiting more than a \$1,000 per week from their rollin,' while students at Metropolitan High. He mentioned that two students had purchased \$30,000 cars and three "Arabs" had a large number of African American students rollin' for them. Kofi was concerned that



several middle school students had gotten involved in the drug dealing business in return for a motor bikes and other gifts from the man. Kofi informed me that there were "many" drug houses in Metropolitan City, the Borough, and nearby communities.

Seyaki explained the flippin' process to move up the drug-dealing ladder. He felt the main attraction for rollers was the immediate profit. He admitted having rolled himself, but had to stop because his mother was concerned for his safety.

Finally, language was very important to members of the drug subculture within the school. Listed in Appendix A is a list of terms commonly used by the rollers to set them apart from the dominant culture of the school. Many of the terms were understood by a minority of the dominant culture, but clearly established the uniqueness of the rollers' subculture.

Bilal was a good example of how the drug subculture affected the normal lives of African American male students at Metropolitan High School. Bilal was an average student. He was associated with a number of the rollers but never became involved himself. During the first semester of the 1989-1990 school year, he was shot in the chest just slightly to the right of his heart. From all accounts, he was merely attending a party and several rollers were also in attendance at the same party. During the party, Bilal got into an argument

with one of the rollers over Bilal's girlfriend and clothing. The roller shot Bilal. Bilal was hospitalized for more than a month. When he returned to school he was extremely withdrawn and isolated himself from all of his friends.

I spoke with Bilal about the incident and he convinced me that he was merely attending a party and that he barely knew the boys who shot him. Bilal graduated, but his grades had fallen below the average mark. He had no plans for future schooling or employment.

Nothing posed a greater menace to the normal functioning of Metropolitan High School than the drug subculture of the school. Drugs impacted African American male students' interest in schooling, led to an obsession with materialism, and resulted in many African American males failing to graduate from high school, incarceration and even death.

### Expulsions

Expulsions within the Metropolitan School District were conducted by the Board of Education as the terminal discipline procedure upon recommendation of a school administrator. There were 31 expulsions during the two years that this study was underway. Twenty-nine of the 31 expulsion hearings were for African American male students who were generally involved in violent and

aggressive behaviors at school or on the school grounds.

Once expelled from school, these students had no recourse but to seek to further their education in a private school or another school outside the school district, or attempt to carry on their lives without the benefit of a high school education. Several students were given an opportunity to attend an alternative educational program designed for students who had exhibited antisocial behaviors and were habitually truant from school, the incorrigible student.

The expulsion was the final action taken after numerous indications that a student was obviously rejecting most aspects of schooling. Prior to the expulsion hearings, African American male students were generally suspended from school for multiple offenses against the school's code of conduct, with little or no intervention or counseling provided. Many of the students who were eventually expelled by the Board of Education had a history of aggressive and violent behavior. For example, one student was recommended for expulsion for the following charges:

1. Gross disrespect to a staff member
2. Racial and ethnic slurs directed toward a staff member
3. Disruption of the educational process
4. Threatening a staff member
5. Assault on a staff member

6. Use of inappropriate and abusive language

7. Repeated violation of school rules

This was a typical scenario for a African American male student who was recommended for expulsion, being rude toward staff and resisting school rules. From a theoretical perspective, it seemed that although these students were far more aggressive than the lads in Willis' (1977) ethnography, the direction of their resistance to formal schooling and school-related procedures was the same. These students had generally demonstrated from their elementary and middle school experiences that they were intelligent and capable of learning, but they seemed to reject school in favor of the more lucrative drug world and peer culture. They resisted everything related to school, especially its teachers.

One teacher wrote the following letter to the assistant principal to describe one expelled student's classroom behavior, an incorrigible African American male named Moswen:

Today was my second encounter with Moswen. This whole thing began yesterday. Moswen came to class---late as usual. Moswen asked me if he could go to the Counseling Office because he said his locker was broken into. I said that he could go, but I would not write him a hall pass and would mark him absent. He has given every excuse possible for missing class during the entire ten weeks that school has been in session. I explained to him that he could not be in class and the Counseling Office at the same time. At this time, Moswen became belligerent and argumentative. He did not give me a chance to explain that all he needed was a hall pass from the Counseling Office

back to class (proof that, in fact, he did go to the Counseling Office and that his locker was broken into). Moswen seems to have more stories than Aesop. Moswen then gave me a dirty look and called me a "whore" and stormed out of the door slamming it with his entire body weight. The door and frame are still shaking!]

About ten minutes later, he pounded on the door and was let back into the classroom. Moswen then pointed his finger at me and said, 'I don't care if you tell my mother about all this shit.' Moswen then left the classroom again. I've talked to his mother twice this semester about his attendance and attitude, and she was very supportive. A short time later, there was a loud thud against the door as if somebody threw an object at it or tried to kick it in. I opened the door and looked down the hall. I thought I saw Moswen in a rose-colored "Troop" jacket running toward the Auto Shop.

Moswen came to class today; and, after I took attendance, I asked him to leave because the assistant principal wished to see him. With his typical indignant attitude, he walked toward the door. I opened the door for him to prevent another "slamming door" incident. On his way out, he intentionally walked into me and threw a shoulder into me. He came back ten minutes later and said that the assistant principal wasn't in. I told him that he wasn't going to stay in class, and I told him to leave. He refused and said that he wasn't going. I then sent another student for a staff security person. Approximately ten minutes later, Mrs. Doe (security) came into the classroom. She told him that he had to leave. He complied with her order and started walking out of the room. Mrs. Doe walked out of the room and was in the hallway waiting for Moswen. As Moswen walked past me, he pointed his finger at me and called me a "whore" and walked away.

I was able, after a careful study of the African American males who were expelled over the two-year period, to develop a description of the stereotypical expulsion candidates at Metropolitan High School. The first type had a history of aggressive and disruptive behaviors. They were considered leaders among the African American male students and generally lived in

single-parent households in lower-income neighborhoods. Their anger was clearly directed at life in general and the school specifically.

The second type focused their aggression toward other students. They were often guilty of sexually aggressive behavior against female students.

Expulsions are discussed further under the section focused on the overt resisters. Due to their violent and aggressive behavior directed at teachers and other staff, as well as, other students, 10% of the 115 African American male students were expelled from school by the District's Board of Education.

## REPRODUCTION AND RESISTANCE:

### THE ROLE OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO SCHOOLING

In this final section, I turn to a consideration of students' responses to schooling as a means of explaining student outcomes at Metropolitan High School. Previous work emerging from the critical perspective on schooling tends to emphasize the capacity of students to resist reproduction through overt, oppositional behaviors. This same work also suggests that this oppositional behavior tends to reinforce social reproduction rather than liberate students from it.

My examination of 115 African American males' course selections, academic and discipline records, and the interview data showed that the 115 African American males could be grouped into four categories that typified their responses to their schooling circumstances. These four general categories were not intended to be exhaustive. In fact, I knew that there were numerous other modes of categorizing these students based on their behaviors, for example, the athletic and socially active versus the non-engaged students or students with strong parental and other outside support versus those students who had little or no support.

I categorized the 115 African American males, as represented by the following continuum, based on their responses in the area of academic interests and achievement as well as their social interactions:

active                      passive                      overt  
 --conformist----conformist--nonconformist---resistor----

Using this continuum, the antithesis of the active conformist was the overt resistor.

#### Active Conformism:

The active conformists were fully aware of the goals, rules, and objectives of the high school. These African American males conceptualized their future place in society and acquiesced to the school's rules and procedures with the hope of obtaining their goals in life. At Metropolitan High School these students were generally functioning at or above average and were never in conflict with the school's policies and guidelines. They were determined to make their lives successful by working within the traditional academic and athletic spheres. Several of the active conformists were exceptional athletes as well as above average students. The active conformists were few in number. These students were not necessarily "perfect"; and many deliberately cut classes or engaged in minor deviant behaviors, but always with a clear understanding of their behavior and the potential impact of their behavior on their grades.

The active conformists, with very few exceptions, had strong parental support. Generally, they lived with both parents and at least one of their parents was



college-educated. Their parents oversaw their high school course selection, provided sufficient career counseling, assured that college entrance examinations were taken in a timely manner, and that college applications were submitted to the appropriate institutions.

Several of the active conformists were athletes who received additional incentive and support from the school's coaching staff. Their participation in the school's sports program was contingent upon their compliance with the school rules, policies and their academic success. Grades and academic honors were the driving forces behind the active conformists. One teacher's comments pertaining to these students who occasionally cut classes were helpful in understanding the active conformist:

Polite: We have a lot of students who are regular attenders. They go to class. They don't miss their classes. How do they manage with all the loopholes? Why do some students go to class and do well and others don't?

Teacher: Well, I think that these students are highly motivated.

Polite: What is their motivation? What is their direction?

Teacher: Their grades...They know that they need decent grades in order to get into the college of their choice...and they are very smart as far as knowing the number of days they can miss without it becoming a problem.

Polite: What are the differences between the students?

Teacher: The highly motivated, self-directed

students are very selective in how they do it [cut classes]. They know what they can get away with and what their limits are.

It was apparent from my interview with Akil that he fit the description of an active conformist. He clearly understood the value of his education as compared with other students who were passive or resistant to schooling at Metropolitan High. Again, Akil had the highest grade-point average of all the African American males in this research population:

Polite: Are drugs consuming the school? Is that why so many black males are uninterested in education and resist school?

Akil: A lot are interested in education, but they don't have pride and high goals for what they are going to do....or realistic goals I should say. They think that they can go to Western [Western Michigan University] or Eastern [Eastern Michigan University] and get C's or D's or whatever in their classes and when they get out they will be hired with a degree and all this money...They don't look at getting better grades and you need to attend a better school [college or university] in order to get things that they want out of life.

Polite: How many of the black males who graduated with you last week will be able to get into a decent college?

Akil: Maybe 10 or 15 will go on to a decent school. Some of them will go on to nowhere. Others will join the army or one of the military forces.

Polite: Do you think that this is unusual that out of 115 black males, only 15 will go to college?

Akil: Maybe they'll go to a junior college or something like that. I'm not knocking

Eastern [Michigan] but that's not a school that's on the map as far as the country is concerned. In the 9th and 10th grade a lot of the students played around...it was high school, it was a new experience, you could skip class easily, after they got matured more they realized that there will be some days when you don't want to go to class, but you got to pick those days that you're not going and do what you have to do in the class, but in the 9th and 10th they felt that they didn't have to go. ...If I didn't feel like really going to a class, I just skipped. I was normal! I wasn't one of those students who just sat around and did school work all day...then again, I knew when I had to do work even if I didn't feel like it. I knew that I had information that I had to get or when the teacher was going to give a lecture, I had to take notes.

Generally, the active conformists viewed their conformism as the only realistic choice. They viewed the resistance and drug dealing as a sure means to a short life. Naeem, an active conformist, felt that those students who were involved in the drug world were destined for prison or murder, and he made a choice to work hard at his academics in order to be accepted into the college of his choice:

Naeem: Well, in a way it's my parents, they made sure that I didn't go in the wrong direction, but it was me also....I didn't want to go that way. Too quick, its so out of balance, you can make a lot of money, but you can also die; that's not what I'm here [in school] for.

Polite: Could you have gotten into drugs or violence if you wanted to?

Naeem: Yeah...

Polite: Did you know how?

Naeem: Yeah...

- Polite: How would you have gotten into drugs for example?
- Naeem: I knew a couple of people who were already dealing in drugs and sometimes they asked me if I wanted to start rollin' with them, or whatever.
- Polite: Did anybody ever ask you that specifically?
- Naeem: Yeah...first they wanted me, since I did have access to a car to drive them to drop off drugs and they would pay me. I didn't want to do that and then they asked me if I just wanted to come in and sell with them.
- Polite: What happened?
- Naeem: Nothing, they just said, "You're a loss" and asked somebody else.
- Polite: Do students have an opportunity to decide to follow the rules or get involved in drugs and negative behaviors?
- Naeem: Probably, but they see so many others who are dealing drugs and gettin' clothes and the lifestyle that they lead and they think, "I can do that too!"

I understood, based on this study, that the active conformists comprehended the work ethic of western capitalist societies. They accepted their place in the capitalist system and sincerely believed that with hard work and academic success there would be opportunities for them to enjoy a productive life. They had very specific career goals; that is, they had planned to study accounting, business, pre-medicine, or pre-law. They knew the best college or university for their academic field of interest and the particulars of the college program. They understood the time commitment

needed to complete a college program, but the most important factor about this group was that they were willing to comply with the rules of society in general and the school's policies specifically in an effort to obtain their goals.

The active conformists, like Willis' (1977) ear'oles, were often ridiculed by a few of those students who displayed various degrees of resistance to the school's policies. However, unlike the ear'oles, the active conformists at Metropolitan High School were generally very stable and popular among the majority of students, including the resisters. The active conformists 'knew' what was expected of them as students at Metropolitan High School. They acquiesced to those expectations and consequently received good grades and were understood by teachers and administrators to be the "college-bound group."

#### Passive Conformism:

The passive conformists had little knowledge of the impact of the policies and guidelines but merely acquiesced without questioning. These students had little or no connectiveness to the purposes of schooling but viewed themselves as part of the system, even if their knowledge of the system and its operations were limited.

The passive conformist was a "typical" African

American male student at Metropolitan High School. They had thoughts of college but generally avoided rigorous academic effort and those advanced courses which would have prepared them for college. They commonly lived in single-parent households with their working, divorced or separated mother.

My assertion was that if the passive conformist knew what to do about their high school careers and the social problems which haunted them, their high school experiences would have been significantly different. They were generally consumed by personal problems and peer pressure, always on the edge of compliance and resistance.

Augustine was a typical passive conformist. He was emotionally distressed throughout much of his high school career. The following is an excerpt from my interview with August which demonstrates his passive attitude towards school:

Polite: You were doing well at Metropolitan High?

August: No.

Polite: Why?

August: Because at that point that's when the divorce and everything was going on.

Polite: With your parents?

August: Yes...and we [he and his mother] were living with some people I didn't like so...

Polite: So high school was a difficult time for you?

August: (very sadly) Yeah.

Polite: Do you think a lot of students at the high school have similar home problems?

August: Yes.

Polite: Do you know that, or do you just think?

August: You see certain kids acting up and you figure most likely it comes from their home situation.

Polite: And that can impact the way they learn and their interest in school?

August: Yes.

Polite: Did it impact you?

August: (very sad) Yeah...it kind of closed me off towards school. I daydreamed all the time.

Polite: What were you daydreaming about?

August: Money!

Polite: Money, why money?

August: When they got a divorce, everything went down, money went down, clothes, everything went down.

Polite: Was that a big problem?

August: Yeah, for me it was a big problem.

Polite: But I always remembered you as having everything. You were always well dressed.

August: I got it all on my own eventually.

Polite: What did you do?

August: I got a job.

Polite: What type of job did you get?

August: Worked at Farmer Jack and the A & P [two well-known grocery stores]. I moved around a lot but I always had one [job], which also interfered with my school work though.

Polite: Why was it so important for you to have all this stuff?

August: I felt more secure when I had money.

Polite: Do you see your father now?

August: Yeah...

Polite: What do you think that you will be doing ten years from now?

August: Hmmm...probably in college still.

Polite: Ten years? What are you going to study?

August: Dentistry.

Polite: You're going to dental school? What do you have to do to get into dental school?

August: I will be a dental tec. in the army. I have a lot of schooling to do...make-up for some credits from high school.

Polite: What do you mean?

August: Bring my average up.

Polite: You mentioned teachers that you liked, a number of English teachers, but now you're telling me that you want to do something that's in the hard sciences. Do you think that you will be able to make the switch to math and science? You've never taken advanced math or science.

August: Huh...I think that I can handle it.

Polite: Why do you want to be a dentist?

August: Huh...the money...I enjoy science. I have always done good in that...math is the hardest.

Polite: So you are going to four years of college after the army and then dental school. What does your mother do?

August: She is a waitress. She's going to school to be a nurse at night.

Polite: What does your father do?



August: Huh...he's an insurance manager.

Augustine, like other passive conformists, had some rough short-term and long-term career goals, but lacked sufficient information to make the appropriate, best choices while a student at Metropolitan High School. He was intelligent, again like other passive conformists, but was consumed by his personal problems. Most of the passive conformists were not emotionally free to learn. Metropolitan High's passive conformists were identified by the fact that they seemed to lack direction. They

simply did not have sufficient information to make appropriate decisions about college or the work world.

Nonconformism:

The nonconformists failed to see the worth of the educational process. These students were often regular attenders but rarely engaged in the educational process. The "system" was covertly rejected by this silent group. They saw no need to plan for the future through academic preparation for a position as a wage earner. The nonconformists made up the largest number of African American males at Metropolitan High School. There were innumerable types of evidence to support the fact that the largest portion of the 115 African American males saw little use for the educational process and covertly resisted it.

Many of the nonconformists were habitual in-school truants, and when they did attend classes, they were ill-prepared and rarely contributed to class discussions nor did they produce homework on a regular basis. Many of them were influenced by the drug subculture in the school and were overly concerned with clothing and materialism.

The typical nonconformist held the opinion that what was offered at the school was not meeting their interests. Many of them were extremely talented but often were eventually dropped from the school's active enrollment due to lack of regular attendance. Sekani demonstrated these characteristics:

Polite: Sekani as you can see what this interview is all about...(interrupted)

Sekani: I know what it is. I know exactly what it is.

Polite: What is it about?

Sekani: It's about us black males who messed up. I read about your project over at Bill's house.

Polite: You wrote me a letter one time and you said...I still have the letter...you said that the reason that you didn't go to class was because...(interrupted)

Sekani: I was immature when I said that, I shouldn't have wrote it...about the clothes and stuff? That was back when all those dope dealers were running the school. I can't say their names, right? They were dominating the school. It was hard to be a student then....school is not just learning, it's social too, a big part of it [is social]. All of them were dealing dope. I wanted to be in that group.

- Polite: Did you want to be in the group with the dope dealers?
- Sekani: Yeah, I wanted to be a dope dealer, but I didn't do it.
- Polite: What made you think that you would want to be a dope dealer?
- Sekani: 'Cause I did (laugh)...I just never did anything about...I just thought it was cool.
- Polite: Well, why didn't you get to do it?
- Sekani: I just said forget it...played ball I started thinking that these people who I'm trying to impress, in like five or six years I won't even remember their names, so I said its useless....
- After school, a whole lot of things happen...you'll want to go to this party and do this and hang-out with these people, they won't even look at you if you are not wearing a certain type of clothing. Like this guy with all the gold and diamonds, will look at you as if you ain't nothin....Girls are better at handling it than boys.
- Polite: Why do you think so?
- Sekani: Girls don't get into all that stuff. The girls that I like, the nice girls, don't even like the dope dealers.
- Polite: How many dope dealers were there?
- Sekani: When I was in the ten grade there were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8....They had to be at least a good 30...at least....I mean there were people rollin' that other people didn't even know, they just would wear plain clothes as long as they got a pocket full of money they would come to school and get into the lunch line and pull out a thousand dollars in twenty dollar bills and everybody would go like "wow," ah, and all the girls would try to talk to them...then they would end up going to jail.

Polite: When did you get to play basketball?

Sekani: This year.

Polite: After three years you were finally able to play because of eligibility rulings, right?

Sekani: I played when I was at Sprauve High. That's because I had my coach on me. If I had stayed there, I would have played all four years... 'cause he stayed on everybody about their grades. Another reason I played is because I got this girlfriend and she told me that if I didn't play, I couldn't be with her no more... so I played. She made me get myself together.

Polite: That's what it took?

Sekani: Yeah... when we were first together I was messing up. She finally told me that if I didn't get myself together, it's over... so I got myself together. I'm going to college in about a month, month and a half.

Polite: How did you get a GED? Did you get it already?

Sekani: Yeah... I just got the result the day before yesterday... 'cause I was talking to my coach at practice. He was having all these coaches from colleges and junior colleges come in to talk with me and they said you got the potential, you could go 'pro,' you could do this, you could do that... all you have to do is get out of high school. I talked to my counselor and she said that I had enough credits to be a junior and I would have to go to summer school and all next year to graduate.... I couldn't play ball until next year and my game would deteriorate. I talked to my coach and went back to talk with my counselor to ask if I could get the GED test.... I asked the coach could I go to college with the test and he said, "Yes." So I went to the adult education program.

Polite: When did you go, at night?

Sekani: No... see it was a series of classes, I didn't take them. I went to the bookstore

and there is a book about the GED test... its about as big as the yellow pages... they go over all different studies that you got to know to pass...I was reading every morning for a couple of hours... especially the parts that I didn't know. I just went through the math and the social studies...my writing and readin' ...I had real high scores in that...and I went and took it one day...and I passed it....I knew I passed it because it was real easy...and then I was thinking how stupid I was not to go on and do it in high school instead of rushin' at the last minute.

Polite: All of your teachers thought you were smart. I thought you were smart, but you would never go to class...why?

Sekani: Lazy, shit, that's all it was...lazy.

Sekani attended a small junior college in the southwestern part of the country. He came to visit me after the first year and provided me with an opportunity for a follow-up interview. He indicated that his college life is very structured. He had a strong basketball coach who required all of the players to live with a host family. Sekani's host family was, according to him, white and very wealthy. He enjoyed the relationship which he had developed with this host family. His grades were above average, and he planned to attend a major university in New Jersey for his last two years of college.

Sekani was the typical nonconformist at Metropolitan High School. He, like the other noncon-formists, saw no value to the educational program and he did not subscribe to it. He was sufficiently intelligent as

evidenced by his ability to pass the GED examination, which was commonly understood to be rather difficult for most high school drop-outs. The coaches at Metropolitan High School told me that he demonstrated more natural ball-handling potential than any student who ever attended the school. He clearly had the potential to become a professional basketball player. His problem, like so many other nonconformists, was that he rejected schooling at Metropolitan High.

#### Overt Resistance:

The final group, the overt resistors, openly rejected the educational system, rarely attended classes, disrupted the educational processes of others, and engaged in a number of oppositional behaviors which were geared towards changing their status in the system. Willis (1977) saw similar aggressive behaviors among the "lads" in England as an example of this emancipatory behavior.

There were three essential factors that I used to determine whether oppositional students were actually involved in deliberate resistance. First, the resistors generally attempted to reject their structuralist environment. This rejection was seen in the repeated violation of the school policies and rules and attempting repeatedly to change the policies to better meet the interests of the resisting students. These

efforts to change policy occurred generally by forcing acceptance or tolerance of oppositional behaviors.

Second, the students associated with overt resistance generally felt subject to some form of social injustice. They were most concerned with issues of inequality, discrimination, and prejudice. They expressed feelings of inferiority or social inadequacy.

The third factor associated with the resisting students was their need to use symbolic interaction to build group support. These interactions were identified in their manner of dress, walking gate, vernacular, and need to identify places to "hang out." McRobbie (1978) observed similar behaviors among the working-class girls in England who used sexually explicit dress to resist the dominance and status-quo dress of their society.

The overt resisters were generally expelled or dropped from the active enrollment at Metropolitan High School due to their repeated violation of school rules and policies, violent and aggressive behavior, or non-attendance. I established that nearly 10% of the African American male students met the aforementioned criteria and considered them to be overt resisters.

In conclusion, it is consequential to reiterate the fact that African American male student responses to their conditions of schooling at Metropolitan High School were clearly varied; not all African American male students resisted schooling. Issues of human

agency are closely identified with the various categories and the distinctions between the groups. The conformists seemed committed to a school work ethic which mirrored that of our capitalist society. They believed that hard mental work would be rewarded by the opportunities it would provide for college and university training. Conversely, the resisters maintained an open rejection of mental labor, aligned themselves closely with street and peer cultures, and were often in deliberate violation of school policies and procedures in favor of their own personal interests. Their aggressive, sometimes violent behaviors at school often resulted in long-term suspension and expulsions from school.

The responses displayed by the four groups of African American males to the schooling received at Metropolitan High School were most significant in determining their educational outcomes and probably their future status in the division of labor in our society. The conformists had higher grade-point averages and were more often better prepared academically and emotionally for higher education. The nonconformists had poor academic outcomes and most often failed to graduate with their class, a factor which inevitably will result in rejection from four-year



colleges and high probability of underemployment and unemployed status following high school.

#### EMANCIPATORY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

In the final sections of this paper, I report on my role as both an administrator and a critical ethnographer, attempting to impact change and improve the conditions of schooling which were oppressive for many of the African American male students at Metropolitan High School. Anderson (1989) suggests that one significant factor associated with critical research is the fact that the researcher makes an effort to find ways to expose oppression by placing emphasis on social class conflict and dissimilar interests of the various social classes.

In the case of Metropolitan High School, the 115 African American male students represented working and lower socio-economic classes who were generally leaving school prepared to assume working-class positions in the division of labor in our society. The plight of these students was grounded in the quality of education made available to them, the change in the relationship between the teachers and students, the role played by their parents in the education of these students. Many of these African American males were destined to be permanently unemployed or underemployed.

One point of this critical ethnography was to

suggest strategies which might preclude the possibility of so many of these students being relegated to the lowest socio-economic classes of our society. This section details my effort to impact change in the quality of schooling received by these students through a drop-out prevention program, an elementary school assistantship program, and two curriculum changes.

### Drop-out Prevention and Intervention

It became apparent that many of the in-school truants were in need of immediate attention. Some had missed more than 25 classes in individual courses during the first semester of the 1987-1988 school year and were likely to fail. Complete failure in a course for an in-school truant only served to perpetuate the problem of in-school truancy and eventually led to either dropping out of school or being dropped by the school's administration.

In my capacity as an assistant principal, I regularly informed the principal of my findings pertaining to occurrences of in-school truancy without disclosing the identities of the in-school truants. The principal concurred with my decision to attempt a pilot intervention program, which included 15 African American males with the hope of precluding complete failure and the loss of academic credits for the semester.

Commonly, these in-school truants were dropped from

the active roster of Metropolitan High by the assistant principal. Once dropped, they were free to roam the streets of the community and become a menace to their parents and community.

The school maintained a policy of placing these in-school truants on "attendance probation," which meant informing their parents that the student's poor attendance was resulting in academic failure, monitoring attendance records, and subsequently dropping those students who failed to improve their attendance patterns. Those in-school truants who had reached the age of sixteen subsequently were dropped if their attendance failed to improve.

The attendance probation policy failed to influence many African American male in-school truants to begin attending classes. A review of the records of the students who were placed on attendance probation during the 1986-1987 school year revealed there was no substantial change in their attendance patterns. More than 90% of those in-school truants placed on attendance probation were subsequently dropped from school because they refused to resume attending classes. I questioned the two other administrators at Metropolitan High. Both administrators concurred that attendance probation status generally resulted in the affected African American males being dropped and rarely served to alter the truant's behaviors.

I decided to structure a different type of in-school truancy intervention program. I included more exacting guidelines for both the parents and students involved. The attendance probation had formerly involved mailing a form letter to the parent indicating that the student was not attending classes. This procedure was far from efficient because the parents often did not receive the letters.

I developed the following guidelines for the pilot drop-out intervention program:

1. Each affected parent was required to meet with me and the student's counselor to discuss their son's attendance patterns, hear the details of the intervention program, and sign an intervention agreement statement.
2. The students were required to attend all classes and participate in a group intervention meeting on Wednesdays after school for one hour. The purpose of mandatory after-school meetings was a time for discussion groups and was not meant to be a form of punishment. This point was stressed to the parents and the students. The meetings allowed the students an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding their individual personal problems, classes, and teachers. The counselor was the mediator between the in-school truant and their teachers to arrange make-up work and other activities which would assure that the student could pass his class. If needed, students were referred for additional counseling situations and other professional services.
3. The student was responsible for getting a progress report from the counselor's office on Wednesday mornings and having each of his teachers complete the appropriate sections of the form to verify that the student was actually attending classes and attempting to make progress.
4. Students who failed to follow these guidelines were considered candidates to be dropped from

Metropolitan High School. Final sessions were planned with the counselor, me, and the parent to assure that everything was done to get the student to attend classes.

The program was developed based on the fact that many students in the school, mainly African American males, in the school were under tremendous pressures at school, home, and in the community. It was hoped that the small-group concept would afford these troubled students an opportunity to vent their anger or express their feelings regarding school or other social matters which made regular class attendance difficult or pointless.

Two counselors were asked to volunteer to work with the intervention program. Both agreed and each accepted ten chronic in-school truants for the after-school program. These counselors, aware of the seriousness of the situations involving these students, were anxious to be of assistance. They were not compensated for their additional time rendered. However, both seemed to agree that the project had major merits and should, if possible, be expanded to include more in-school truants in subsequent semesters.

As a result of my dual role in the situation as researcher and administrator, I refrained from meeting with the groups and did not conduct interviews with the African American male students involved in the intervention program after the initial selection and placement processes and meetings with their parents. This

afforded the in-school truants an opportunity to work with their counselors and peers without fear that an administrator, who could possibly discipline them or report their illegal behaviors to the police authorities, would be knowledgeable of their conversations.

My work was restricted to reviewing progress reports submitted weekly by the students, meeting with the counselors weekly to review the groups' outcomes, discussing individual participants' problems and concerns, and assisting the counselors in their efforts to get cooperation from certain teachers. These processes involved an average of six hours per week for five weeks.

### Outcomes

The intervention program had been in place the entire 1988-1989 school year. The success of the program depended on the counselors who volunteered their services. The two counselors mentioned in this section volunteered for the project. However, based on the success of the pilot program, two other counselors were directed to develop a similar program for additional students by the principal. The latter two counselors, who were forced to participate, had very poor results. Their intervention meetings were irregular and poorly attended by their students. Both participating counselors felt that the success experienced in their groups was directly associated with the fact that they had

volunteered to work with the program and the students could sense their sincerity. When asked what their original thinking was regarding the program, both counselors echoed that, "It was worth a try to save these kids."

Although each student in the program had a unique set of circumstances which impacted and influenced that student in his decision to not attend classes, the group of students with which they associated, the lack of self-esteem and self-respect, and poor relationships with their teachers were common problems for all the in-school truants assigned to the intervention program.

One of the two counselors stated:

"I think the teachers identify them as students who are really not motivated or students who don't want to be there. These teachers give them little positive reinforcement in the classroom. Many of the students in my group say over and over again that the teachers are 'picking on them.'" The second counselor concurred, "They [the in-school truants in her group] say the teachers won't listen to them and the teachers simply write, them, off...when they ask questions, they are merely dismissed and they're not reinforced!"

The two counselors and I felt that the in-school truants were caught academically in a vicious circle for example based on their poor attendance of the past, their teachers felt that the questions raised by these students were previously addressed in class and they could not take precious class time to review information for these students who may or may not be in class for several days.

Based on their comments in group, these in-school truants experienced major difficulties relating with adults, especially their parents. The majority of in-school truants experienced difficulties with their parents. One counselor stated, "The kids are missing 'parenting' and day-to-day contact with their parents. Many are angry because their parents were involved in marriages and relationships which have not been successful."

Richard, for example, was reported by his mother as missing from the home. His mother established a relationship with a man residing in the community, left her apartment, and was cohabiting at the man's home. This required Richard to live with them, also. Richard had not slept in the home for more than a month. Each night he would leave the home after midnight through a second-floor window. He returned in the morning around 6:00 a.m. His mother worked all night and he did not want to be in the home with his so-called step-father. Richard began to cry during one of the after-school sessions and explained how much he disliked his step-father. He expressed anger with his mother for placing him in such a difficult situation. When his mother learned from the counselor that Richard was in school, she came to meet with him and his counselor. His mother began yelling at Richard...she left the school and took Richard to the county authorities to report him as a status offender.



She explained that she, "hoped that they would lock him up." Richard's mother reported him as missing, a second time, for more than eight days. He was seen by some Metropolitan students in possession of a gun and bullets.

There are many students who have troubled personal lives. However, in-school truants seemed particularly unable to cope with their personal problems. Davie, one of the African American males selected for the intervention program, was new to Metropolitan High. He formerly resided in the inner city where many of his friends were killed by gunfire as they were involved in drug-related activities. His counselor felt that he feared meeting and making new friends at Metropolitan High, and that he avoided people and classes for the first few weeks of school during the second semester. Davie expressed his fear of making and losing new friends because he had lost other friends in the past.

The personal problems faced by the in-school truants assigned to the intervention program ranged from serious to life threatening. Seemingly, according to the counselors, attending or not attending classes was a minor problem when compared to the personal problems experienced by these students. Among those students whose lives were in turmoil, it is easy to infer that the program's continued interest in the students through the regular weekly sessions provided much needed

attention and positive reinforcement. Additionally, the fact that the in-school truant realized that other students were experiencing similar difficulties was another strong point of the program.

Both counselors felt that scheduling the program after school was a negative factor. It seemed that many students had responsibilities after school, and the fact that they were forced to attend these sessions on Wednesday was considered to be a drawback. However, both counselors also agreed that the students in question missed too much school to attempt to run the sessions during the regular school day. If the intervention program was held during the school day, it would only enhance the problem of being in school but out-of-class.

Martin, for example, was responsible for meeting his younger sister at the elementary school and supervising her until his mother returned from work. Martin missed most of his classes during the first marking period of the second semester of 1987-1988. He was seen in school every day, and his mother attested that she delivered him to school every morning. If the program was held during the day, Martin would surely never make up all the work missed.

The two counselors agreed that students who were under the age of 16 had little success in the intervention program because they realized that they could

not be dropped from school, even if they never attended either classes or the program until they had reached the age of sixteen. Omar, at the start of the program, was fifteen years and three months old. He never attended classes or the afterschool sessions. He told me, "You can't drop me; I'm only 15." Often students were very familiar with the limits of the law and used their knowledge of the law to their disadvantage. Omar's counselor met with him and his mother on several occasions. Omar repeated the fact that he was a "minor" and could not be dropped from school in the presence of his mother.

Based on the students' responsiveness, almost 75% remained in the program after the first five weeks. I concluded that the small-group concept was positively influencing the in-school truant group. Due to their inability to cope with the turmoil in their lives, the small groups were helpful. Both counselors supported my assertion that the small-group concept was effective for many in-school truants.

In-school truancy was commonly associated with parental conflicts and problems, drugs, violence and aggressive behaviors, sexual misconduct, and a multiplicity of other issues. The small group allowed for some degree of positive bonding and mutual support among students who shared similar dysfunctional situations outside of school.

There was a need for a particular, well thought-out approach, such as the "12 Step Recovery Program for Alcoholism." The counselors needed more of a concrete way of addressing all the problems which surfaced in the groups which were related to in-school truancy.

The in-school truancy project was not initially planned as part of this dissertation project. However, the intervention program was a natural outcome of this type of research. It provided a much needed service to some of the many troubled youths at Metropolitan High School, and more than half of the African American males who participated in the project remained in school and graduated.

The principal of Metropolitan High School made a sincere commitment to carry over the project for subsequent years. That commitment was based on the positive impact enjoyed by the pilot program.

The drop-out intervention program is an example of how African American male students might respond to small-group endeavors to change negative and self-destructive behaviors. Groups to address issues of attendance, alcohol and drug abuse, goal setting and career planning, and dysfunctional families might be supportive for African American male students at Metropolitan High in decreasing in-school truancy and other social issues.

An Elementary School Assistantship Program: Machupa's Story

I was appointed to a principalship at one of the elementary schools in the school district during the winter of 1988. I continued collecting data for this study and asked the principal of Metropolitan High School for permission to work with a small number of students who were not having success at the high school. I wanted these students to earn academic credit for coming to work with small groups of elementary school students, with the condition that they had to also attend their regular classes at Metropolitan High.

The principal agreed and set up the course for an academic half-credit to be provided to individual study by contract. I worked with one of the counselors at the high school to recruit three students, one African American female and two African American males. The African American female was an outstanding student who had served on the Student Council and was captain of the girls' basketball team.

Machupa (Mac) was one of the African American males selected, and the other African American male did not complete the program. Mac, a passive conformist, felt that the school did not meet his needs in any way. He was a gifted artist who was only interested in cartooning. He, like other passive conformists, had little knowledge about college, portfolios, art degree pro-

grams, or what was required to become a syndicated cartoonist. Mac dropped out of school, was an active alcoholic, and took a job working for minimum wages at one of the local lawn care nurseries. I found him at work one day moving trees onto a truck. I asked if he would come to the elementary school to talk with me about returning to school.

I knew that Mac was very committed to cartooning. He did weekly cartoon series after dropping out of school, depicting the gang fights between the students from the Borough and Metropolitan City. He sold photocopies of his cartoon strips to various members of the gangs for one dollar per copy. His cartoons were very popular among those students involved in disputes over drugs, neighborhood, etc. I asked him if he would provide me with a sample of his art work. Figure 4 is a pencil drawing of the famed African American film director, Spike Lee.

I also asked Mac if he would return to Metropolitan High and work with five of the elementary school males who had demonstrated potential artistic talents. I explained that he would receive high school credit if he attended the elementary school program and assisted the young artists. He agreed, met with a counselor, and was re-admitted to Metropolitan High School.

Figure 4: Spike Lee by Machupa



Once he started working with the elementary students, he never missed a single day of school. He reported to the elementary school even on days when there was no school at the high school. I had an opportunity to speak and counsel him about the development of his artistic talents. On one occasion, I provided him with a copy of an article which appeared in the Detroit Free Press (August 4, 1989) regarding a African American male, Stephen Bentley who was able to have his cartoon strip, Herb and Jamaal, syndicated nationwide. Figure 5 is a copy of the article which provided Mac with some interesting background information about Stephen Bentley's career as a commercial artist. This information provided Mac with a more realistic picture of what is required to become a syndicated cartoonist.

Figure 6 shows Mac working with several elementary school males. Mac became very interested, yet realistic about his future as a cartoonist. He decided to enlist in the army's college training program to major in architecture, while maintaining his career interests in cartooning. He has also decided to enter a program to address his alcoholic issues.

Mac graduated with his class and planned to enter the armed forces in the September, 1990.



Figure 5: Detroit Free article regarding Stephen Bentley

# Cartoonist puts bits of himself into Herb & Jamaal

BY JOHN SWINTEK  
Free Press Features Editor

Thirty-something Jamaal J. Jamaal is an ex-basketballer who's looking for a post-hoops occupation. Herb Johnson is his eighth-grade classmate who would like to be a writer but plans for bigger and better things.

Together, they're "Herb & Jamaal," a new



comic strip that debuts in the Free Press today on Page 11D. (It replaces Professor Doodles Monday through Saturday; the Professor will continue to be part of the Free Press Sunday color comic strip.)

In the first few weeks, you'll encounter Herb's wife, Sarah Louise; two kids, Ezekiel and Uhuru; and a cantankerous mother-in-law. Herb and Jamaal renew their friendship at their high school reunion and discuss their career and business opportunities with comic guru.

The strip is the handiwork of 34-year-old cartoonist Stephen Bentley. He was born in Burbank, Calif., raised in Los Angeles and a graduate of the University of Missouri, about 10 miles outside Pasadena.

"My personality is in both characters," he said. "The softer side of Jamaal is me, and the more common side of Herb is me."

Instead of drawing comic strips, Bentley converted into an art studio, he draws "H&J" with the

## THE VOTES ARE IN

The Free Press Comic Panel Poll is concluded. Last month, we asked you to vote for the best comic strip in the Free Press and five new prospects. About 3,000 of you took the time to reply. And the verdict is ... well, see next Monday's The Way We Live section for a story on the winning panel, which debates that day.

motivation of addressing the lack of minority representation in comics. "There's not enough positive black imagery," he said. "I'm hoping to break that trend of always having a black as a secondary character."

"H&J" is not for black readers only. "With-

S. HERB, Page 2B

## 'Herb & Jamaal' comic strip debuts today

HERB, Iowa Press 1B

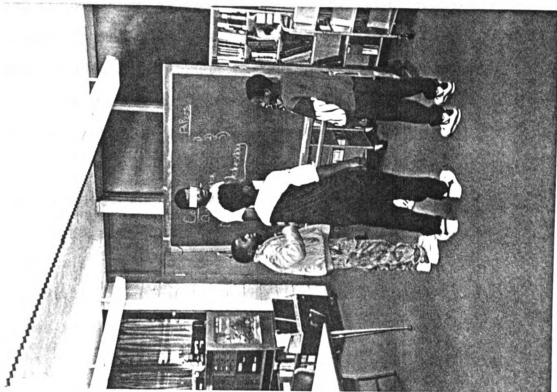
English. Working as a free-lance artist, he was assigned an advertisement for a new line of clothing called "Herb & Jamaal." Designer Jim magazine Dodge, Blue, World Magazine, All that time, he was trying to create a strip a syndicate

Bentley's creation debuts today in the Free Press. He is a graduate of the University of Missouri, the Chicago Tribune. It is being syndicated by Tribune-New York



Stephen Bentley, cartoonist

Figure 6: Mac demonstrating cartooning techniques to several elementary school boys



College Entrance Examination Preparation

As discussed, many college-bound students experienced difficulty scoring high enough on the ACT and SAT college entrance examinations to secure acceptance at the college and universities of their choice. Many were accepted at major colleges and universities, but due to their low test scores, were unable to participate in collegiate sports programs by NCAA eligibility requirements.

The principal of Metropolitan High School and I had several meetings to discuss the problem and some of the options available to us. As a final result, a new course was added to the curriculum to prepare students for the college entrance examinations. The principal and I took special care to select two teachers who were strong in their academic preparation and willing to work with students to ensure that their scores improved.

The course was designed to afford students to focus for 10 weeks on mathematics and science and 10 on English. Several students commented that their scores improved and that their confidence was enhanced as a result of taking this new course. The two teachers who team-taught the course, one taught the English and other taught the math, were somewhat concerned about the outcomes at the outset of the course but later commented that they felt that the course was beneficial to the students who had poor test-taking skills.

Changes in High School Level Mathematics

Many students were not ready for college due to their poor academic performance during their high school years. Following many discussions regarding my findings with this research project, I received a telephone call from the principal of Metropolitan High School. His comments to me were, "Vernon, do you remember all those conversations we had about insisting on student achievement? Well, we have decided to make all students take algebra in the 9th grade, and they will take it until they pass."

The principal was open to trying whatever possible to improve the educational outcomes for African American male students at Metropolitan High School. At the opening of the 1990-1991 school year, the following excerpt from an article about the high school appeared in the school district's newspaper:

Ninth Grade English and Mathematic Initiative

All 9th grade students will learn Algebra this year at Metropolitan High. This strong statement is based on the school district's mission statement: To ensure quality learning for all students.

The Metropolitan High School mathematics department has developed a curriculum that will facilitate this program. The Metropolitan Board of Education is supporting and encouraging the increased expectancies for all students.

SUMMARY

One of the most consequential findings presented in this chapter relates to the changes which occurred in Metropolitan High during the 20-year period between 1970 and 1990. The student racial and socio-economic composition steadily changed from predominantly white, middle and upper income to African American, lower-middle and low income. There were several racial disturbances during this same period which served as evidence that racial unrest has been part of the history of the school.

I also demonstrated in this chapter the change in interpersonal relationships between teachers and students over the years. At one point, the students and their parents were an intricate part of the school and community; they had knowledge and acted upon their knowledge. During the time of this research, the African American male students and their parents maintained a very impersonal relationship with the school's teachers and administration.

The fact that African American male students had comparative knowledge about their schooling, derived from numerous outside sources and experiences as compared with other middle and upper middle-income school districts, was pointed out in this chapter to demonstrate that these African American male students attended school with a negative attitude about their

experiences there. They knew that the schooling was not as productive as other students' experiences in other school districts.

College testing, the key to entry into major colleges and universities, was presented as a major problem for African American male students, along with peer pressure and the feeling that many teachers lacked caring attitudes towards these African American male students. Additionally, the fact that few African American parents were involved in the schooling of African American male students was advanced as one possible factor which impacted the poor academic outcomes of many African American male students. It was clear that most African American parents knew little about the education of their sons at Metropolitan High School.

It was also demonstrated that career planning was almost nil at Metropolitan High School. There was no evidence that detailed career planning was available to African American male students at Metropolitan High School.

As a result of all of these issues, I argued that many African American males were poorly educated, received extremely low grade-point averages, and were generally not prepared for higher education. In fact, few even attempted to gain acceptance in a college or university as compared with the 80% who went on to

college in the early 1970s.

For those students who did not graduate, in-school truancy, the drug subculture, and expulsion following aggressive behaviors were common trends. These students seemed destined for unemployment or underemployment.

After a careful analysis of the responses to schooling on the part of African American male students, I was able to categorize their behaviors as either active or passive conformism, nonconformism, or overt resistance.

In short, the research presented in this chapter supports the existence of social class reproduction in that working-class African American males studied were left school underprepared academically. Education, the traditional means to improved economic and social conditions, eluded most of the students who were the subject of this study.

Equally important, this research detailed how these circumstances were created by focusing on the changes in the school over a 20-year period, and the interactive roles of parents, teachers, and students. Many African American males contributed significantly to their social-class status by resisting mental work and favoring peer culture.

Finally, this chapter demonstrated that when knowledge is presented in more appropriate and supportive manner, changes can occur in the schooling of

African American male students. A pilot drop-out prevention intervention program, an elementary school assistantship program, changes in the curriculum to include courses to prepare students for college testing and in mathematics were examples of more promising possibilities in schooling.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

The primary thrust of this research was to determine to what extent Metropolitan High School fulfilled its mission with respect to African American male students: "To ensure quality learning for all students through effective teaching in a caring environment." I chose to examine this question from the perspectives of radical theories of reproduction and resistance as discussed in Chapter II.

I was able at the outset to establish the significance of the study by carefully detailing the status of African American males in the United States at the close of the 1980s. My findings, as exhibited in Chapter I, revealed that the conditions facing African American males were atrocious in most facets of American life in general and particularly in the state of Michigan where this study was conducted. Some of the critical areas examined were health, life expectancy, employment, wages, housing, imprisonment, and education. The conditions experienced by African American men were so perilous that several renown researchers began in the

late 1980s to refer to African American males as an "endangered species".

With respect to health conditions and life expectancy, I demonstrated that at the close of the 1980s, at both the national and state levels, African American men generally endured far more detrimental health conditions than did their white counterparts in society. In 1985, for example, the average life expectancy for black men was 65.3 as compared with 73.5 for white men in the U.S. I reported that while the average life expectancy for white men has increased annually, the life expectancy for black males has declined annually since the mid-1980s. Additionally, cancer, homicide, hypertension, AIDS, alcohol-related diseases and other substance abuses account for the premature deaths of many African American males.

In the area of employment, I demonstrated research in Chapter I which addressed the employment conditions of African American men since the early 1980s. Following the Civil Rights movement and race riots of the 1960s, there was a significant rise in employment rates for black men and all minorities in this country. In the early 1980s this trend began to lag, especially for black men. At the close of the 1980s, black men worked

fewer hours per week (approximately 7 hours less per week) than their white counterparts. In fact in 1984 when this study's 115 African American male entered secondary school, 40 percent of all black men in the U.S. had an annual income of less than \$10,000 (poverty conditions) compared with only 20 percent of the white male population in this income status. In essence, slightly more than half of the black male population lived in impoverished conditions at the close of the 1980s.

In October 1990, unemployment was 7.2 percent in the state of Michigan. Only West Virginia (8.1 percent) and Alabama (7.3 percent) had higher unemployment rates. The impact of such high rates of unemployment in the state of Michigan continues to disproportionately impact black men (United States Department of Labor, January, 1991).

Nonfarm payroll employment, as measured by the monthly survey of establishments, rose by 2 percent or more between October 1989 and 1990 in 13 states. Nevada continued to report the largest percentage gain (6.6 percent), and Utah was the only state with an increase in excess of 4 percent. All six New England states, the District of Columbia, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York reported over-the-year employment losses.

Nearly all states reported over-the-year job gains in services, and three-fourth of the states had increases in transportation and public utilities, trade, and government. In contrast, over half

of the states reported over-the-year employment losses in construction and manufacturing (United States Department of Labor, January, 1991 p. 2).

Nearly 50 percent of the nation's prison population was composed of African American men in 1987, a 100 percent increase since the very early 1940s. Black on black crime soared in the mid-1980s resulting in the loss of viable black-owned businesses in the predominantly black, urban communities of the U.S. The increase in drug trafficking and drug-related crimes was demonstrated as the causal factor for much of the crime in this communities.

There were linkages exhibited in Chapter I between the impoverished conditions experienced by 50 percent of the African American male population and their educational outcomes. The role of teacher expectation, increased poverty, the lack of parental involvement and in the ascendancy of the peer culture in the lives of young black males were several factors explored to account for the poor academic outcomes for black males in the nation's public schools.

Additionally, although the academic outcomes for many African American males are clearly repugnant, only a few studies (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gibbs, 1984; Gibbs et al., 1988; Hale-Benson, 1982; Hare, 1986; and Weis,

1988) provide descriptions of African American males' responses to public schooling during the 1980s. Therefore, I found it reasonable to conclude that there are very few researchers involved in studies focused on African American males, thus, this critical ethnographic work is especially meaningful. My goal was to provide the African American male students' perspective regarding public schooling at Metropolitan High School by focusing on theories of social reproduction and resistance.

Chapter II provided a discussion of the basic tenets of the theories of reproduction and resistance. The chapter began with Marx and Engels' concern for social class struggle in industrialized Europe. Chapter II demonstrated that some radical theorists have attempted to explain the relationship between schooling and the division of labor in capitalist societies. The reproduction theorists purported that public schools served the will of the minority ruling classes at the expense of the majority classes and use public schools to prepare children for unequal futures.

Other radical theorists, the resistance theorists, focus more on human agency. In the case of the public school in capitalist societies, the student is one of

the key human agents in determining his or her own destiny by conforming to and resisting schooling. Teachers and parents, of course, have agency as well and have a major impact on the quality of educational outcomes.

As the reproduction theory purports, Metropolitan High School was functioning as a working-class school with educational outcomes for African American males which most assuredly relegated them to working-class positions in the division of labor of our society. In fact, based on their educational outcomes at Metropolitan High, few African American male students were prepared academically for college and many were destined to fill the surplus labor strata of society. In essence, Metropolitan High School produced, by and large, working-class African American males, and most of them will find themselves without meaningful employment upon leaving high school.

The traditional reproduction case stories tend to lodge schools in static communities which seemed to undergo simple social-class reproduction of values and culture. Rarely have we examined the dynamic development and shifting of these values and culture over time. Metropolitan High School highlighted the dynamic nature

of working-class reproduction by focusing on the changes which occurred at the school as it went from an elite school with a rigorous academic program and exceptional educational outcomes to a working-class school which served a predominantly African American population and produced poor educational outcomes.

The study demonstrated that teachers withdrew and lost contact with the emerging predominantly African American school population. There was a true sense of loss of community felt by the teachers who lamented over the changes which occurred in the community and school over a period of time. They moved away from the school community and began maintaining a formal relationship with their students as opposed to the informal relationships which typified the school and community during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Parents, too, were overwhelmed by their own personal problems. Most were working-class and single mothers who were not generally actively involved in the schooling of their sons. Rarely did they visit the school and few were ever involved in their sons' academic programs. Teachers sensed that these parents were less concerned than the parents who sent their children to the high school in the earlier years of the

school. Parents, by and large, had very little contact with the school.

Under these conditions, a negative peer culture gained ascendancy throughout the school, especially among African American male students. This peer culture was in direct contradiction to the goals and values of the school. It stressed materialism, consumerism, socialization, and abhorred mental work. Consequently, many African American males were disengaged from the academic aspects of schooling at Metropolitan High School. Many were engaged in activities associated with the school's drug culture to accommodate their inflated concern with dress and money.

The school, through retrenchment, limited many of the services which could have positively impacted the educational outcomes for African American men and other working-class students. No one was assigned the task of actively monitoring and addressing the attendance of these students. Counseling services at Metropolitan High were limited to course selection and emergency matters. Career counseling was non-creative and unrelated to the labor market in our decreasingly industrial and and increasingly service and high technology society.



All of these factors contributed to the second concept of this study, resistance. Resistance theory suggest that students are aware of the academic and social outcomes of their schooling and by their own oppositional behaviors often contribute to social reproduction and inequality. The evidence from the case at Metropolitan High School extends this line of theory. The research detailed accounts of how African American male students developed substantive and warranted opinions about the quality of their educational experience at Metropolitan High School. They were fully aware that students attending neighboring schools were better prepared academically, a fact that had a definite impact on their personal interest and enthusiasm about school at Metropolitan High. But not all students resisted schooling. In fact, I identified four different responses to schooling. Generally speaking, the conformists found their way through the school system with the help of their parents and other outside support. The resisters rejected the values of the school in favor of the values of the peer culture. As similar to other work (Willis (1977) the latter group contributed to the reproduction through their rejection of mental work and forms of resistance.

Finally, there was evidence of the potential to channel some of this resistance into emancipatory interventions. By working closely with small groups of African American male students through a drop-out prevention and intervention program, by allowing another group of African American males to increase their self-esteem by sharing their talents with younger students in a elementary school assistantship program, and by working closely with the administration to create changes in the curriculum which made the school's learning environment more conducive to African American male students, there was evidence that attitudes towards mental work and schooling in general could be improved for African American males at Metropolitan High School. These interventions heightened the awareness of the problems associated with the schooling process at Metropolitan High School for the students, teachers, and administration.

In this study, I was able to draw numerous conclusions about the quality of education received by the 115 African American males at Metropolitan High School. Using qualitative research strategies of participant observation, interviews, document review, etc. (discussed in Chapter III), I concluded that most

African American males examined, like their counterparts in other urban schools in the state and the U.S., left school poorly educated.

The changes in the racial composition of the school over the 20-year period between 1970 and 1990 were in direct alignment with the decline in the quality of educational outcomes for students at Metropolitan High School, especially for African American male students. As the students became "unknown" to the teachers, as teachers began moving out of the immediate community, and as parental involvement and support for the school and their children diminished, there developed a different quality relationship between home and school, teachers and students.

In the early 1970s, Metropolitan High's teachers resided in or near the community and knew their students and parents personally. The change in the relationship between home and school resulted in a negative impact on the quality of education made available to the 115 African American males at Metropolitan High School. Little was accomplished to hire African American and other minority teachers. Over the years, there were few vacancies within the school district, and those vacan-

cies which did exist were generally filled by people known to the community.

Most African American male students were poorly prepared for college testing. During their senior year of high school, few even applied to take the college entrance examinations. Peer pressure consumed many of the 115 African American males at Metropolitan High School. Much of their energy was focused on materialism and consumerism. Their disinterest in schooling was absolutely pervasive.

Additionally, there were examples in every academic department at Metropolitan High School of teachers who simply failed to demonstrate caring attitudes for African American male students. In the students' own voices, the issue of teachers' lack of caring for them was most obvious. Although there were examples of teachers as positive, caring individuals, the feeling on the part of most African American males, the achievers and the nonachievers alike, was that too many teachers did not demonstrate caring.

The African American males, ironically, demonstrated in this study that they respected and positively responded to those teachers who, in their opinions, were caring, fair and firm in their approach

to students and education regardless of their race or ethnic background. This minority of strong, caring teachers represented both African American and white teachers. Interviewed black males readily provided examples of both black and white teachers whom they viewed as 'good teachers.'

The fact that African American parents continued to vote for tax increases to improve the educational facilities but failed to attend parent conferences or involve themselves in the monitoring of their sons' education or to even visit the school on a regular basis was another major factor disclosed in this study which apparently impacted the quality of education received by African American males. Few African American parents were found to be actively involved in the schooling of their sons.

The fact that Metropolitan High School provided little career planning assistance for African American male students was another factor which emerged as critical to the underdevelopment of these African American male students. African American males had limited knowledge about college and preparation for the work world.



As a result of these factors, slightly more than half of the 115 African American males actually graduated. Few even applied for college and only 3 out of the original 115 scored within the upper-middle interval on the ACT examination. Among those who went to college, their first year's experiences were generally not positive.

Among the non-graduates, in-school truancy, drug trafficking, and expulsions were common factors which contributed to their academic failure. Many African American males simply did not attend school on a regular basis. When they did attend school, they were most often disruptive, engaged in illegal drug trafficking, or assaulting teachers and other students. One out of every four black males at Metropolitan High School was arrested at least once prior to June, 1989 for various crimes.

The conditions of schooling and responses exhibited by the Metropolitan High School's 115 African American males in this study were not very different than the conditions of schooling and responses of other African American males in urban areas of the United States. There are numerous similarities between the social and academic outcomes for African American males at

Metropolitan High and African American males who are the subject of critical concern for school administrators in this country.

Like other black males across the country, Metropolitan' black males were ill prepared for higher education and most had few skills to offer the increasingly high technology and service-oriented work force in which they would soon have to compete for positions. In essence, as a result of poor career planning and counseling, few of these students were ready for the deindustrializing conditions of work destined to dominate the labor force in the 1990s in the state of Michigan.



THE EDUCATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES -- 1990s

As a final consideration, education and educational policies at Metropolitan High have undergone numerous changes even as this research project evolved. The school has entered into an accreditation process with the North Central Association based on educational outcomes for its students, the administrators and special teams consisting of parents and teachers are developing a school improvement plan in accordance with the state mandates which require a school improvement plan, a description of the core curriculum, and a description of student retention and achievement outcomes.

Some of the more critical changes which have occurred during the course of this research were changes in the school's lunch program, termination of the school's unpopular I.D. policy, the addition of a course to provide students with test wiseness strategies in preparation for college testing, the clustering of ninth grade students to insure mastery of skills especially in the areas of reading and mathematics, and changes in the mathematics requirement for all students. As plans continue to emerge in the early 1990s and educational policies are established, there are many factors which

this research disclosed regarding the education of African American males at Metropolitan High from my observations and the students' perspective and the education of African American men in the U.S. in general which might be helpful to consider. This section will discuss some of those factors which the school's staff might consider when questioning the status quo of conditions impacting the educational outcomes for African American males at Metropolitan High School in the 1990s.

It is extremely important to reiterate here that the depressing educational and social outcomes for the African American males at Metropolitan High School are similar to the outcomes for African American males in urban schools across this country. As was evidenced in the study, black males are disproportionately represented among prison populations, more often unemployed as teenagers and young adults, they are the poorest of the poor, disproportionately represented in special education programs, most often suspended and expelled from school at the local, state, and national levels. The recommendations which follow might appear somewhat insipid and even impotent in their ability to significantly alter these outcomes. I believe that the

problems of African American men, the so-called human endangered specie, in public school is indistinguishable from the plight of these men in society in general. If there are to be changes in the schooling outcomes for these males, there must first be changes in society's attitudes and social policies toward black males. Black men, too, must begin to see the worth of schooling and its relationship to an improved lifestyle.

#### Specific Focus on the Needs of African American Males

Metropolitan High School remains a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic school district. Its students are African American and African Caribbean; Middle Easterners representing several countries, religious and ethnic heritages; Jews from various countries, and Asians representing a myriad of countries and culture. However, the African American population overwhelmingly outnumbers any of the other groups. At nearly 80 percent in 1990, there is certainly sufficient numbers and reason to develop programs, hire staff, and even focus curricula so as to better serve the African American population.

Twenty years ago when African Americans made up only 10 percent of the student population, there were

student riots and demonstrations in support of basic needs for the African American student population. Included among these students demands in 1970 were demands for increased African American participation in social activities, a focus on African American culture and history including African American courses and increased qualified African American teachers and staff. Although these demand were met in the early 1970s, little occurs presently to continue to focus on the development of African American culture at Metropolitan High School in the early 1990s.

Aside from the need to address the culture and history of African Americans from the viewpoint of programming and curriculum, there is also a need to focus specifically on the education of African American males. The study presented more than sufficient evidence which described the despairing state of black men in society and specifically at Metropolitan High School. A viable African American male mentorship program, starting at the elementary school level and realistic career planning beginning at the middle school level are two the main factors which could help in the development of positive self-imagery and enhanced self-esteem for African American males.

Focus on Teaching Staff

Another factor which emerged from this dissertation was the culture gap between the students and teachers. Evidence was represented in this research from numerous sources which supported the notion that caring teachers are absolutely essential to the academic outcomes of African American students, particularly African American males. In the teachers' and students' own comments were evidence that as the school changed from predominantly white, middle-class, and somewhat elitist to predominantly black and working-class, there was also a change in the texture of the relationship between students and teachers. This problem could gradually be relieved through attrition, as many of the present teaching staff will leave the system through retirement within five years. However, there is a need to replace retiring teachers with qualified persons, who are sensitive to the needs of African American and working-class students. Those persons with limited knowledge of African American culture and history and lack a sensitivity to the needs of the working-class will probably experience little success in the classroom at Metropolitan High School.

From my research at Metropolitan High School, it is clear that caring, productive and sensitive teachers are not exclusively teacher of African American descent. However, they are teachers who view their jobs as more than a 'nine to five' positions. They are generally willing to expend a tremendous amount of personal time and energy to assure that the needs of their students are met.

Caring teachers were viewed as those persons who questioned students who are chronically truant and/or absent. They demand academic growth for all of their students and are not afraid to consult with parents regularly either at meetings at school or by telephone. They demonstrate that they are concerned about the students in their charge.

As I pointed-out in the section on higher education in Chapter I, there is dearth of African Americans entering the colleges and universities of this country, especially in the field of education. When administrators complain that recruiting African American teachers is almost impossible, there is validity to their claims. However, there are non-African American teachers who represent or are at least sensitive to the minorities and working-class epistemologies. Such

persons could better serve the students of Metropolitan High School.

### Career Planning

Michigan is well into its post-industrial period. Thousands of jobs in the automobile-related field have been terminated since the early 1980s, positions which are not likely to return to the state's economy. The positions which were lost were generally characterized by high-wage, labor-intensive jobs in factories. Similar deindustrialization processes have occurred throughout the Midwest, resulting in thousands of unemployed men and women.

In Michigan, many thousands of new jobs have been added to the labor force of the state's economy, but they are characterized by low-wage, service and high tech positions. In my interviews with the 115 African American males, none reported knowledge of any recent high school graduates who secured employment in the factories in the state. Many of these students' fathers earned a very good living in the auto factories through the 1970s but were laid-off in the mid-1980s. However, automobile-related, high wage positions will not be an option for young African American men of the 1990s.

This information concerning the emerging economy must be shared with African Americans and all students. There is a need to inform students of the careers of the future. Local universities which engage in research on the state's economy and labor force should work collaboratively with Metropolitan High School to ensure that accurate career information is made available to all students.

I further suggest that all students, especially African American males, be required to identify their career goals as early as sixth grade and their course selections should be in support of their goals. An annual, honest assessment with the student and his/her parents of the students' accomplishments towards the realization of these goals through the completion of the suggested courses and career choices adjusted to reflect the students accomplishments and realistic career goals.

#### African American Parental and Teacher Involvement

African American parents are often the products of segregated and/or inferior educational opportunities, especially black females. Commonly, black, female heads of house were also victims of poor educational environments interrupted education, and teenage pregnancies.



However, school officials must continue to work with black parents, secure their input regarding the education of their children the expenditure of their tax dollars with respect to education.

African American parents must begin to realize that the public school can not shoulder the full burden of educating their children. Attendance at parent conferences and school activities, assist when possible with course selection and curriculum decisions are essential to the educational outcomes of African American students, especially black males. The research presented here clearly showed a strong relationship between the educational and social outcomes of African American males who had competent parental support as opposed to those African males who had little or no parental support. Parents must understand that they can not merely deposit their sons at public schools and expect that they will emerge four years later, educated, motivated, and prepared for the work world or higher education without parental support.

Across the country, there are strong, parent-led movements developing in urban areas where educators and working-class parents are making tough decisions about the education of urban youth. In the city of Milwaukee,

for example, one such group has developed an urban educational journal entitled, Rethinking Schools.

A description of critical questions raised by Milwaukee's parents and educators were found in Rethinking Schools' (January/February, 1991) entitled "Who We Are":

- 1) How parents, teachers, and students gain more powerful roles in determining school policies
- 2) What must be done to overcome the significant racial, gender, and class inequities which prevent many children from receiving an equal and effective education?
- 3) What specific approaches can teachers use to empower students within the classroom and community? How can we make meaningful community-based work experience an integral part of each child's education?
- 4) What can we do to insure that multicultural and anti-racist education takes place?
- 5) What creative and peaceful methods can we use to resolve conflicts among students, and conflicts between students and teachers?
- 6) What specific teaching techniques and materials have proven successful in our efforts to motivate students (p. 2)?

Metropolitan High School's parents must begin to work with the school teachers and administrators to address some of the critical issues of equity and gender, effective schooling, and the parents' role in the education of their children.

#### Comparative School District Awareness

African American males demonstrated that they believed that white students who attended neighboring

schools were receiving superior educational outcomes from a variety of sources. Most district within the County served upper-middle and middle-class students. Efforts should be made to assure that the students at Metropolitan High School are ensured a quality educational experience similar to that provided other students in the County. The educational parity with other districts in the County should include academic courses and programs, career education, athletic competition, and job training and placement.

This section provided recommendations which the school administrators might consider when examining the educational outcomes of African American male students.

## TWO CRITICAL ISSUES OF THE 1990s

There are two critical factors which serve to predict the grim social and economy conditions of African American men during the 1990s. First, the Plant closings as a result of the continued deindustrialization of urban areas of the Midwest will undoubtedly result in higher unemployment and increased crime for black men. The impact of the New Right and conservatism which became popular during the Reagan and Bush administrations will also negatively impact social services and programs for African American men in the U.S.

### Deindustrialization and Michigan's Job Market

Metropolitan High's African American men will especially feel the impact of the changing conditions of work in the Midwest and particularly in Michigan. The working-class who reside in the Midwest section of the country were able for three decades to enjoy high wages which were generated mainly from the automobile industries and other forms of manufacturing. This was especially true in Michigan where the automobile-related industries accounted for 30 percent of the labor force in the state in the mid-1970s (Schmidt, 1988). There

was, however, a sharp shift in the state from factory-oriented to service-oriented and high-tech form of employment during the past decade. Michigan, for example, shifted to lower-paying service jobs.

There was a 20 percent drop in manufacturing jobs from 1.18 million in 1978 to 934,000 in 1988. However, during that same period, service jobs increased by more than 35 percent from 614,000 to 836,000 (Boyle, 1988). More than 23,200 General Motors Corporation's (GM) hourly workers and another 10,000 salaried workers lost their positions as a result of 14 plant closings. Jackson (1988) reported that, "between 1979 and 1986, Michigan lost a net 136,400 manufacturing jobs in higher-wage industries--\$34,300 a year and above and gained a net 122,300 non-manufacturing jobs in lower wage industries paying less than \$17,000."

Young African American men who left school at the close of 1980s will compete for jobs with thousands of dislocated workers as a result of the plant closings in the state. Both groups of unemployed, unskilled, surplus workers will seek employment in an economy where total employment is declining annually (Price, 1987). Additionally, there seems to a widening gap between the skills of young African American men and the



demands of the emerging job market.

Many of the dislocated workers will take advantage of offers for job retraining programs which are funded by the state and coordinated through the local plant. According to Baldwin (1987) workers who lost their jobs between 1979 and 1984 and were hired in new positions experienced an average loss in gross weekly earnings of 25 percent. Most of the lucky ones (65%) were placed in non-union positions. Only 63 percent of those in new jobs received any form of health insurance. Dislocated workers have a fairly good chance of finding employment in lower paying service-oriented positions, some form of employment is still better than total and permanent unemployment.

On the other hand, the working-class man, especially young African American men, will generally leave school ill-prepared for the emerging new economy with its focus on service and high-tech employment. In Oakland County where Metropolitan High School's young African American men are most likely to seek employment upon leaving school, there were 13,000 automotive-related jobs lost in 1987 as a result of General Motors plant and foundry closings, but the County remains the so-called 'jewel' of the state's economy according to a

University of Michigan researcher (Ourlian, 1988) due to increasing numbers of high-tech firms which are emerging in the County. Metropolitan High School's African American males are residing in the County where the largest growth in employment is expected for the next several years into the 1990s. One study by Cognetics Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts reported that the city of Troy in Oakland County will be among the top five job growth spots through 1993 (Jackson, 1989). Few African American men will be prepared to take advantage of these job possibilities because of their lack of training in computers and high-technology.

There was a drastic shift in employment for workers in Michigan between the years 1978 and 1988. This information should signal school officials in the state, especially in the Oakland County, to begin working with organizations which study these trends so that the appropriate adjustments can be made in the urban schools' curriculum to assure that black male graduates from surrounding schools are prepared in seeking further education designed to prepare them for the available jobs and to insure that graduates can compete for entry-level positions upon leaving school. Since 1978 Michigan's economy has become far more diversified with



significant increases in non-manufacturing positions in both retail and service industries and critical decreases in available positions in the area of manufacturing during the past decade according to the Detroit Free Press (April 4, 1988). Employment in the retail and service sectors has grown 24 percent since 1978 (Schmidt, 1988).

The deindustrialization of the urban areas and economies in the United States is a key factor in the evolution of multinational corporations in this and other First World countries. The 'offshore sourcing' practice results in a shift of low-skilled, labor-intensive type jobs from First World countries to the newly industrializing Third World countries (Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1983). Multinational corporations in countries like the United States, Japan, Germany, the so-called First World, maintains control over management and technology in the first world. Little regard is afforded to the loss of livelihood for thousands of unskilled workers in the First World countries.

The main driving force is increased profits for the multinational corporation. For example, according to Fuentes & Ehrenreich (1983):

A female assembly line worker in the U.S., is likely to earn between \$3.10 and \$5.00 an hour. In many Third World countries a woman doing the same work will earn \$3 to \$5 a day. Corporate executives with their eyes glued on the bottom line, wonder why they should pay someone in Massachusetts on hourly basis what someone in the Philippines will earn in a day" p. 5.

In the case of a multinational auto industries, GM for example in 1987 opened two new plants in South Korea where workers rights were severely limited by martial law. And in 1987, GM opened twelve new plants in Mexico in 1987 making a total of twenty-nine plants in that country where the average wage rate is less than a dollar an hour. The high-wage positions are quickly disappearing from the urban labor market and accessibility to African American men. African American men traditionally left school in the 1960s through the mid-1970s and secured high-wage jobs in the manufacturing industries of the Midwest. In the Detroit metropolitan area, the main manufacturing outlet was, of course, the various automobile factories. African American men who left school in the mid-1980s through the early 1990s will have little opportunities to make the type of income that their fathers and other African American men made in earlier decades. Much of this shift in economy is due the multinational nature of the major corporations of America. McCloskey (1985) wrote,

regarding the impact plant closings and other multinational activities had on dislocated workers in the labor force that "a piece of economic analysis is not complete until everyone is earning only normal profits, or at least until the analyst has identified a reason why not" p. 299. African American men attending public schools in urban areas, especially in the Midwest and specifically the state of Michigan will need to clearly understand that high-wage positions in labor-intensive manufacturing industries will most likely not exist for them. They are likely to be unemployed unless they can demonstrate the ability to fit into the computer, high-tech, and service-oriented positions which are categorically the employment trend of the 1990s.

#### The New Right and Conservatism / 1980s and 1990s

A powerful conservative movement, often referred to as the New Right, emerged during the 1970s and gained prominence and political power in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan's Presidential administration. According to Brodinsky (1982), "the public schools are under attack from the New Right, an attack that threatens their [public school] very existence." The movement is led by

strong politicians and television evangelists who attack those aspects of American life, especially public education, which are objectionable to the right wing zealots of our society. Their goal is to reshape schools and and restore the importance of the nuclear family, all in support their conservative ideals. Some of the typical foci of the New Right are the strengthening of the role of the family and eliminating government supported social services such as child care centers, forcing women to remain at home to raise their children; termination of the teaching of human secularism in schools, favoring the censorship of books; legalization of prayer in schools and teaching of creationism, opposition to any arms-control agreement with the Soviet Union, against gun control, labor unions, and civil rights for accused law breakers (Pierard & Clouse, 1983).

The New Right has become an extremely powerful force in American society and most of their goals seem to be opposition to the well-being of women, African Americans and other minorities, the working-class and the poor. As reported by Pierard & Clouse (1983), "by their successful efforts in blocking the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, rightists have ensured that

the virtual male monopoly over the centers of power in government, business, and the profession will challenged (p. 195)"

The trend towards extreme conservatism has carried over from the Reagan to the Bush Administration. Reagan successfully placed conservative judges on the Supreme Court. These judges immediately began to reverse some of the historical civil rights laws which prohibited discrimination in the workplace. In 1990 under the Bush administration another bill was denied by the President, the Civil Rights Act of 1990. According to the Congressional Digest (August - September, 1990) with respect to the lost of protection against discrimination:

In general, the proponents of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 view the Supreme Court decisions as a major and abrupt departure from the previous anti-discrimination rulings and a step backward in the in the enforcement of civil rights legislation.

They argue that discrimination, though often subtle is still widespread in the United States, that minorities and women have been losing ground in job opportunities in recent years, and that the government's historical protection of the rights of these groups must be reaffirmed.....

Opponents of the legislation fear that its enactment would result in the use of quotas, since employers would be put in the position of having to produce an employee pool that is a reflection of the racial makeup of the community (p. 196).

The failure of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 to become law was considered a major impediment for improved social and economic conditions for black Americans, other minorities and women in this country. As was mentioned, many blacks made major economic gains as a result of the Civil rights movement of the 1960s. African Americans, especially men, can only expect further discrimination in employment hiring practices in the 1990s.

At the state level, Michigan's conservative new governor, John Engler, in his attempts to tackle the economic problems of the state has proposed 536 million dollar cut in the state's budget. His cuts, which will negatively affect African Americans and the poor are a 17 percent cut to household receiving welfare; closing of prisons and mental hospitals, increases in health care costs including medicaid and health insurance to the working poor.

In essence, the trend of the country in the direction of services to African Americans, minorities and the poor has been ultra conservative since the early 1980s. It would appear that as the 1990s proceed, this retrenchment in civil rights and services will continue to have a detrimental impact on African American men,

those who are most needful of employment and social services.

This study of 115 African American males at one urban high school began with a look at the status of African American men in the United States at the close of the 1980s. As the research emerged, there were very clear similarities between the national plight of black youth in the urban schools of this country and the social and academic outcomes for black males at Metropolitan High School. The facts are clear. Black men are poorly educated, receive little support from their parents, are often exposed to teachers who fail to motivate them, are heavily influenced by their peer culture, often involved in crime, and have few job options upon leaving school. Too many African American men are all dressed with no place to go!

The important outcome of this study was its reliance on qualitative research to explain how these deleterious outcomes were achieved in one educational setting, Metropolitan High School.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Student Interview: Interview with Adiso

Polite: Where do you go from here [following graduation]?

Adiso: Now I'm working at a hospital and I got a job at an optical company and I'm going to technical school at OCC. I got my two-year certificate in computers and a certificate in optical mechanics from the voc. program. After that I'm going to Ferris State College to go into optical.

Polite: You are going to make eye glasses?

Adiso: hum hum

Polite: Your responses to my questionnaire were really interesting, that's why I called you in...you said that teachers rarely cared.

Adiso: Some of them cared, but sometimes a couple of them like Mr. B and teachers like that, they didn't care what you do. You sit in class and do your work...you passed. He really don't put no effort towards it. He will say come back later on and he won't be there. And you tell him that about four or five times and ask him for help, and he won't be there at the end of the day.

Polite: Are there a lot of those kind of teachers?

Adiso: Yeah, it's a lot.

Polite: And they don't care?... what do you mean [when you say] they don't care?

Adiso: If you asked for help and they say come in after class, and you come after class and they say they got something else to do or they got to leave and they put you off and you feel that you are wasting your time because you go and they are never there [after school].

Polite: What impact did that have on your education?

Adiso: The class, they [certain teachers] really don't have time to teach you because they got so many other students.

Polite: What was your g.p.a. [grade point average]?

Adiso: 2.4 or 2.3

Polite: What was your class rank?

Adiso: I don't even know.

Polite: What do you think happened to so many of your classmates?

Adiso: Most of them, they wanted to get into the money, making money in the drugs...then most of them tried and they found out that it wasn't what they thought it would be and not as easy as everybody said it was.

Polite: Did anybody ask you about that kind of thing?

Adiso: It's a lot of kids that ask you if you can get in touch with somebody or do you know of somebody.

Polite: What do they mean, get in touch?

Adiso: Like if you want to start to rollin', if they wanted to start rollin', if you know anybody that they could go to or if you anybody know that they can get stuff from...some them carry it around with them?

Polite: Have you ever been asked to do that?

Adiso: hum hum

Polite: And you just backed off?

Adiso: Yeah....I have cousins that got killed over that stuff. And my family, they say whatever I want, to ask and they'll get it for me and don't go that way.

Polite: Did your cousin go to Metropolitan High?

Adiso: Yeah, one of them did, Leon.

Polite: How long ago did he graduate.

Adiso: He didn't graduate, he dropped out.

Polite: And he got killed?

Adiso: No, that was another cousin, he didn't get killed. He's still in school now.

Polite: What about (he appears sad) and that's kind of

embarrassing, right?

Adiso: Yeah, it is...cause he's smart, he's very smart. He was in geometry and passed that, but he didn't have any drive for school. He wanted to make money. And wanted to make it quick and fast without working for it. I was telling him that he was going to end-up dying.

Polite: So what's he doing now?

Adiso: The same thing he was doing then.

Polite: How well is he doing?

Adiso: He's got a Benz [Mercedez], and a penthouse apartment in a hotel downtown.

Polite: Where is the penthouse?

Adiso: Downtown, I don't know the name and all that. He got a house and all that. He has a house in Saginaw too.

Polite: How old is he?

Adiso: 19

Polite: Wow...how long do you think that he will last?

Adiso: I don't know. He's got a couple of contracts on his head, so I don't know.

Polite: How do you feel about him?

Adiso: He's still my cousin and everything, but I told him that he's killing his own people. And he said, "I'm not the one doing it. They know what they are getting into before they get on the stuff."

Polite: That's really strength situating because like my cousin, he can't cross the state line. But I grew up with him and so you still feel close to these people because you've known them since you were a little kid, but you still feel kind of ashamed to know that somebody in your family is involved with that. Do you think that a lot of kids at the high school have that kind of experience?

Adiso: Yeah...it's a lot.. its lot of kids that you wouldn't even expect to be in it that are in it and they keep themselves to where you wouldn't

know about them. For example, like the new beeper law, that really didn't help because you can turn your beeper off and you even have it where it just vibrates. I know a lot of people that have those. I have one cause of father is handicapped and he just told me to have it in my pocket, but I don't have it on me now, but if he got into any trouble at home, He could hit the button and it will go off. Then I have a note so that when I go down to the office I could leave, but a lot of people have beepers and stuff like that.

Polite: What about expectations for students?

Adiso: Yeah, many did, Mrs. Balwin expected you to do everything that she gave you in her plan and Mrs. Brooks. Mrs. Brooks has high expectations for Blacks, especially, I know when I was in her class, I got an A in the first card marking. During the second marking I started foolin' around and not doing my work because I got the A the first marking. She was like "no don't do that, get another A." She was hard on you. She was very hard on you. She would call home and tell my dad when I was slacking off.

Polite: How did you feel about her calling your dad?

Adiso: It made me feel better that she cared. Mrs. Balwin does too.

Polite: Did you get mad with her when she called your father?

Adiso: No...I thanked her...well kind of mad because my father punished me, but when you think about it, she was doing what was right for you.

Polite: But you really felt that she cared about you?

Adiso: It's interesting that out of all the interviews with these black males, everybody said that Mrs. Brooks really cared...talk about being hard and caring at the same time.

Adiso: Well...a couple time I had some bad things going on at home and she would talk to me about it and she knew that something was going on. And when me and this girl had broken up, she knew about it and she told me don't take it so hard because she [his girlfriend] was going with somebody else, she said don't even think about it.

Polite: What kind of things went wrong at home that she knew about?

Adiso: My parents had separated for a while and she knew about it. My father told her. She was still hard on me about my work and said don't use that as a reason for not doing my work. "Still do your work because they still both care about you and everything," and after a while they got back together and she said, "See, I told you that I was right."

Polite: How does she know all that, do other teachers know all that about their students?

Adiso: No, she's close to your parents, like if my parents go to a conference, she'll sit there and talk about your grades and she'll go over more than just your school work, what she noticed in school or out of class and stuff. Whether or not you were a good student...she keeps up with her students, she know most of the class...like everybody that graduated she knew them when they were coming up the stairs and she gave them all a hug and told them so long and said thanks for being in her class. 'Cause when I was up there, she hugged me for about three minutes and told me to take care and keep on going for the optical field, 'cause she always asked what field that we wanted to go into. She really cared.

Polite: And that makes a big difference. Did Mrs. Balwin care as much...were there white teachers that cared as much?

Adiso: Mrs. Balwin, Mr. Goldwin, Mrs. Bonelli really helped me 'cause I didn't like math, especially when I first came in the 9th grade I had Mr. Brown for the whole 9th grade year and wasn't really learning anything in his classes. When I got in her [Mrs. Bonelli's] class she taught me and I came after class and she noticed that I had a little talent but I was backing off 'cause I really didn't want to do no math. So she asked me to come after class and she called home and asked if my parent could get me a tutor and Mrs. Smith is my mom's best friend and she tutored me. Mrs. Bonelli really cared.

Polite: What classes did you have her for?

Adiso: Pre-algebra and algebra.



Polite: Mrs. Bonelli actually called your parents and asked them?

Adiso: hum, hum.

Polite: So it's not just black teachers, it's white teachers too. It depends on the individual whether they really care.

Adiso: It's not like they are racist against you, I haven't met a teacher who was like. Mr. Rhinestein was like that too.

Polite: He cared or he didn't care?

Adiso: Yes, he cared, he would fool around with you and stuff. And if you seen him in the store, he would talk with you for a long amount of time. I've seen him at basketball games and we sat right near each other. Yes, he cared.

Polite: That's wonderful. What about student activities? Where you involved in any kind of student activities?

Adiso: Yes, I played football and basketball and baseball. I wanted to go out for track, but I didn't have time.

Polite: How many years did you play sports?

Adiso: 3.

Polite: Do you think that helped you?

Adiso: Yes, a little bit. It gave you discipline and it kind of made you disappointed like when Mr. Garrison stole our money when he was our coach.

Polite: You said that teachers seldom check when students cut classes. Why?

Adiso: I know my friend Kevin, He didn't graduate because the last semester, he skipped the whole semester and they [teachers] didn't call home or send any letters.

He failed in class and we were telling him to go to class, all he needed were the two classes. He had more [credits] than what you were supposed to have from going to voc. He got lazy, I guess 'seniorighties' got to him and he

just didn't want to go and all he needed was them last two classes.

Polite: He was missing too much school?

Adiso: Right.

Polite: What was he doing?

Adiso: He would be across the street playing basketball.

Polite: And nobody checked on him?

Adiso: Nope!  
He wouldn't come and he had Mrs. Lomax and she cared but she would tell him he just didn't care, but she didn't send home any letter to his parents. I guess it wouldn't have made any sense anyway.

Polite: Did his parent know that he was missing all that school?

Adiso: Nope. They didn't even know 'cause they were like really up-set when they found out. So now he's got to go to summer school.

Polite: What about caring? You said there is not a strong sense of caring. Why?

Adiso: Nobody really cared about the school. All they really cared about was themselves and even when Homecoming came, nobody was really there. They say who cares about Metropolitan, they only care about themselves and making money and do whatever they want to do.

Polite: What could they do to change things?

Adiso: I'm not really sure what they can do. 'Cause my friend Ahmed, he said that he has to come tomorrow, he was in the school and everything and then this one incident came up and he had to go to the alternative program. He had a machete in his locker, some of them get into stuff.

Polite: Why would Ahmed bring a machete to school?

Adiso: I don't know. I think that he was going to sell it to Carlos, but I'm not sure 'cause he had sold Carlos a couple knives before and Carlos liked the machete and Ahmed "brung" them to school and the security saw it and he got sent

to the alternative program....We said why did you bring a knife to school, you could have sold it out of school.

Polite: But they said Ahmed was involved in some fight or hassle or something like that.

Adiso: No, he was not because he would have told me and Kevin 'cause we all grew up tight. If he was going to get into something, he would have told us first.

Polite: And he brought it [machete] to school to sell.

Adiso: Yes, but he didn't explain it that way.

Polite: He told me that he's going to Central State. Didn't you think that you needed to go away to college?

Adiso: No, I want to go to Ferris. I want to go somewhere for my field...and my voc. teachers told me that the best place to go is to Ferris in Michigan. I didn't really want to go to far because of my dad's condition. I could be here and study at the same time. 'Cause me and my girlfriend and my mother got into a car accident Friday and the car got messed up and was going to the bank at the time to get the money to get my car. And when we got in the accident that stopped me from getting my car and now we've got to get new car 'cause the engine went into the hood of the car.

Polite: Are you going to a junior college first?

Adiso: No, I'm going to Ferris.

Polite: But that's still a long way; Ferris is 3 hours. Have you been accepted?

Adiso: Yes.

Polite: Did you take the ACT test?

Adiso: Yes, I got an 18.

Polite: What did you get on the SAT?

Adiso: I didn't take that one. I took the class [college entrance testing class] but I didn't take the test.

Polite: How did you prepare for the ACT?

Adiso: I took the class and plus me and Mike had a whole bunch of textbooks from when David took the exam. Mrs. Smith sent them over to my mom and we sat around and studied them.

Polite: I don't think that Mike got an 18. Was your score higher than his?

Adiso: I'm not sure.

Polite: Why do you think so many kids did not do well [on the test]?

Adiso: A lot of them did OK, but it was so long until they just started guessing.

Polite: Do you think that they were prepared for it?

Adiso: No, not that many, they just took it because it is required.

Polite: Why do some get good grades and poor scores on the tests? Does that mean that you were not taught the right stuff or not deep enough into the subject matter or you didn't take the right classes...what happens?

Adiso: I know like the army recruiters told me that Metropolitan High, our learning isn't as high as some other schools is. I was telling him what I got on the test, and he was like asking what my gpa was and said that it would be different if you were going to Groves, you would probably have a D average.

Polite: How did he know that?

Adiso: I guess he had inside information. He said that most people when they look at the news they see that our school at the bottom of the school in the state. He was saying look at what the state is saying and if you were to go to another school you wouldn't do so well. I said it depends on how much you study and he said that true but you kids don't study, you're into selling drugs and stuff.

Polite: Did you know that guy?

Adiso: Yes, he's Sgt. Jamison.

Polite: Do you think that a lot of kids have family

problems?

Adiso: Some have parents yelling at them and dogging them out, but that's part of being in a family.

Polite: You said that the boys are treated different than the girls.

Adiso: For an example the hat situation, you can't wear a hat to school... girls walk around school right by security, and security won't say anything and girls get away with more 'cause I know some girls if they did take their hat, they'll give it right back to them but the boys, they'll take his hat and keep it all year. A lot girls roll at Metropolitan High, and they have beepers too.

Polite: There are a lot of girls rolling now? Do they have other people working for them too?

Adiso: My cousin was telling me who's in and who's out because he rolls and knows who in it and he comes around here because most of the people are familiar to him.

Polite: This is the same one with the Benz?

Adiso: hum, hum.

Polite: You said that the rules got out of hand and that security sucks. What does that mean?

Adiso: All the rules that they started to bring out like the minute bell and the breakfast club, I mean that it really didn't make a difference 'cause like Kevin and a couple of other people were still coming in late anyway and the teachers didn't apply to the rule anyway.

## APPENDIX B

### Sample Teacher Interview: Interview with OD

- Polite: Would you be able to talk about the school's policy for late students?
- OD: A student who is fifteen or twenty minutes late is considered absent for the period. They can go up to the room, but if the teacher won't allow them in they are out the remainder of the hour...many times teachers will lock the door or not allow the students to enter the room, so therefore they are walking the halls or simply leave.
- Polite: Does that happen often?
- OD: I would say, yes.
- Polite: Are there times when that would be more common than at other times?
- OD: It might first period for student arriving late for school; it could also be after the lunch hour...
- Polite: You mentioned that teachers might lock the door and not allow students in.
- OD: That is correct.
- Polite: What would these students do if there were a large number of teachers that would do that?
- OD: I think it's significant enough.
- Polite: What would be a reasonable estimate of the number of students who forget their I.D. everyday?
- OD: A large percentage of them either forget or pocket their I.D....I think this is a game some of the kids play if they don't want to be in a certain classroom, they tell the teacher they don't have their I.D. and the teacher kicks them out of the room and they play games as far as the I.D. is concerned. One kid I remember had about thirty I.D.'s all on a little rope; it was like a status thing.
- Polite: I have observed a lot for the past few weeks. I was aware that the I.D. policy contributes to

the number of kids in the hall, but I found in my own observations that it is a much bigger problem than I had anticipated. Would you think that it's a big problem?

OD: I think it's a big problem.

Polite: What is the problem with the I.D.?

OD: ...because the teacher is put between the rock and the hard place when the kid says that I don't have an I.D. The school rule that the student must have an I.D. Now the teacher can say remain in the classroom or go down and get another I.D. When I was in the classroom I would always keep them without an I.D. but I knew that I was breaking the school rule.

Polite: Some teachers are not willing and they want to get rid of the kid?

OD: Right!

Polite: So the I.D. policy is not closely followed?

OD: No it is not...but I don't know what the choice is...I think something should be done about the I.D.

Polite: What could be done?

OD: They could be charged [like a credit card]. That might remove the excuse that I don't have the money. Something needs to be done...even if the kid doesn't have an I.D., the teacher knows who the kid is.

Polite: How does the school handle kids that are in school and out of class?

OD: One year, which I thought was good, hall sweeps...I don't recall any hall sweeps this year...the kids seem to respect the sweep...and it round-up the kids that are in the halls...and also puts them on notice that this can't go on. And that someone is actually concerned about them.

Polite: You mentioned that some teachers exclude kids that they don't want. Are there other reasons why kids would be in school and not in class?

OD: Well, if the kid is here for socialization or other kinds of things that might not be part of

the educational process.

Polite: How effective can four or five security officers be?

OD: Not very good because it is a large building... it's a large area to cover. Some of the security...their age is a factor in terms of how well they can do their jobs.

Polite: What about their age?

OD: I just don't think they have the ability to move around...they're really not able to handle this type of job.

Polite: As a former classroom teacher, what would be the guidelines for giving students a pass to leave the classroom?

OD: I think weak teachers set-up their own rules and regulations whether they give a pass or not...I think it depends on the teacher...some won't give a pass for any reason whatsoever... there is no consistent policy within the school.

Polite: I've noticed that when the bell rings, the doors are closed and teachers are not in the hallways. Does this have an impact on the number of students who actually get to class?

OD: Yeah....I think teachers do that to show their displeasure that the student is not in the classroom on time. I think it's also very disruptive to the classroom. I don't think teachers take the onus to supervise the hallways...they look at their job as in the classroom!

Polite: What impact does that have on the school?

OD: Oh, great impact.

Polite: Is that only here or can that be generalized to other schools as well?

OD: I don't think that I have been in enough other schools to see what is going on during that time to really talk regarding what happens in other schools....I think our school, I don't feel there's a good deal of school spirit. I think everything is centered around depts...centered around their classroom...I





don't think there's a lot of interaction between departments.

Polite: Does that have an impact on attendance?

OD: I think many...particularly a number of teachers, and I'm not saying every teacher, but I think there are a number of teachers that are here to put in their years to finish up their years I think that really I think that students sense that they know what teachers are committed and know what teachers are not. I think there are enough teachers that are not committed where it does have an impact. The kids know that they really don't care.

Polite: What percent of the teachers are within 5 or 7 years of retirement?

OD: I would say a good portion. I'm not going to give you a percentage but a good portion because we are just starting to change... where we are getting younger teachers in.. I think we do have a large number of teachers whose interest is not here.

Polite: I observed one group of students hanging posters for an activity that was planned for the weekend...and I asked them why were they hanging the posters...they said Ms. so and so gave us a pass and the pass that they waved at me was like cart blanc...I have the right to do that....Is that the typical thing that happens?

OD: I think that is typical.

Polite: Can you talk some more about this?

OD: I think that a lot of teachers don't get into their teaching and their always looking for ways to get rid of some of these students... it's a terrible thing to say but I feel that they are always trying to get rid...it doesn't matter.

Polite: Is it because they can't handle them or they don't like them or they have problems with them or...?

OD: They just don't care!  
They just don't care. It's like those teachers

that come in everyday and have a book assignment and as long as they sit and be quiet, they could be doing anything....There is not a lot of interaction between the teacher and the students.

Polite: Talk about the administrators and the class cutting problem...how can they help?

OD: I think that the administration and I see there is a trend changing in this school...we have a big turn over in our administration.. I see there is improvement...I think that the administration has to take the job of supervising the faculty and letting them know what they expect, and if they do not measure up, they have to let the faculty know that there is a problem; whether it is through the administration or through the dept. heads. And I think a lot of the dept. heads are in the same category as the teachers; the older dept. heads are counting days waiting to get out; they really don't care what's going on in their dept. either. Some of teachers are working to what the school use to be. I don't think that they think the school has the prestige that it use to have and therefore, there is a lack of motivation.

Polite: Are a lot of the students who fall into the in-school truant category, are they coming to school with baggage do you think...in terms of home life problems?

OD: Oh definitely....There are a lot of those kinds of problems that need to be addressed that are not addressed within the school...

Polite: Can you think of one or two problems other than the obvious failure rate, that have existed because kids are not in class when they were suppose to be?

OD: Getting involved in alcohol and drugs...that type of thing...smokin' out in the community causing disruption....there are break-ins...

Polite: Have all those things happened here?

OD: Yes.

Polite: What about career goal...

- OD: I do not feel that the school does enough...kids need to have more information which I feel we are really lacking....
- Polite: What type of thing does the school do?...
- OD: Not a great deal!...The voc. school that we are affiliated with has a career day where we take a select number of students...a hit and miss type of things which are done within the classroom, I don't think that there is a great deal done within the counseling dept...I think that we need to work with all students within that area...they need direction and options.
- Polite: I think that there is a definite link between having a kid make a statement...commitment saying that I want to be a lawyer or doctor or brick layer or whatever and how they behave in school...whether or not they attend classes.. from your observations of kids that have not done well, would you think that many of these kids have clearly defined career goals?
- OD: Many...of the kids that are doing very poorly in the classroom don't see the relationship between good grades in the classroom and being able to obtain their objectives in life?
- Polite: How do we get younger students to understand what it takes at the high school level to become a doctor?
- OD: I think that is one of the things that the counselors point out to the students, but I think there needs to be more integration within the subject matter. You need to have teachers explain to the students why they need to know this kind of material because it relates to such and such...I think that if you repeat things over and over again, students will start changing and seeing that there is a relationship between what they do in the classroom and what their potential is for the future once they graduate from school.
- Polite: We have a lot of regular attendance students that go to class and don't miss class. How do they manage with all the loopholes? Why do they go?



- OD: Well, I think that these students are highly motivated.
- Polite: What is their motivation? What is their direction?
- OD: Their grade; they know that they need decent grades in order to get into college of their choice, and they are very smart as far as knowing the number of days they can miss without becoming a problem.
- Polite: Would you say that all students, even the better students have cut class on occasion?
- OD: Oh sure, but they are very selective in how they do it and they know what they can get away with and what the limits are.
- Polite: One of the assertions that I made is that all students will occasionally cut a class.
- OD: I think that it is unrealistic to think that they won't.
- Polite: I wonder if that is true in all school though?
- OD: I believe it is.
- Polite: Is that a change in today's thinking about schooling or is it that they have more toys, cars, etc.
- OD: I think that all of a sudden they feel that they need to take a blow-out day.
- Polite: How would you rate in-school truancy on a scale of 1 to 10?
- OD: 6.
- Polite: What would be a bigger problem?
- OD: A lot of problems that students have that need to be addressed, even your better students have these problems and I think your average students have a lot of problems, that they are afraid to discuss.