THE RELATIONSHIP OF RESILIENCE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to discover the manner in which African-American adolescent males perceive, experience, interpret and make sense of their lives. An additional purpose was to determine what it means for an African-American adolescent male to have an internal or external locus of control.

This qualitative study utilized a purposive sampling technique to identify thirteen African-American adolescent males. Approximately half the sample completed high school, and had not been arrested, and half had not completed high school, and had been arrested. An interview guide was developed and used to conduct ethnographic interviews with the study sample. In addition, the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control was administered to the sample.

Analysis of the data suggested that an external locus of control orientation functioned as a protective factor among sample participants. Also indicated was the positive effect of parental influence upon high school completion and non-participation in crime. Sadness and depression were also identified in the study sample.

Dedication

Dedicated to my late mother and father whose love, spirit and wisdom continue to sustain me.

And to the richness and strength of my parents' and grandparents' legacy of love, compassion, pride, and kindness.

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It is because of the support and guidance of family, friends and colleagues, that it has been possible for me to undertake this work. I especially wish to acknowledge my committee chairperson, Dr. Rena Harold, whose calming influence, encouragement, guidance, and availability made it possible for me to reach my goal. I additionally wish to acknowledge the support and direction of committee members, Dr. Dorothy Harper-Jones, Dr. Janet Bokemeier and Dr. Lillian Phenice. Each has provided me with assistance throughout this endeavor.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

At the dawn of the 21st century, America offers to most of its youth, access to a world that includes options and opportunities that have been unequalled in past generations. Advances in science, technology, medicine and communications alone can literally open, and place the world at the fingertips of youth throughout the nation. The numerous possibilities and advances that have enhanced the quality of life for many youth, have not replaced the risk factors. Youth in America face daily challenges to their survival, adjustment, adaptation and psycho-social development (Felner, Brand, DuBois, Adan, Mulhall & Evans, 1995). The rapid change and uncertainty that defines the world in which contemporary youth live, coincides with a stage of their physical and emotional development that is also characterized by change, turbulence and uncertainly (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Mincy, 1994; Kazdin, 1993). Adolescence is a difficult stage of development for all youth. Successful progression and mastery through each stage of development, builds the foundation for mastery of developmental tasks at subsequent stages (Mincy, 1994). The risk-taking behaviors, and harmful choices that often accompany adolescence, result in many of the problem behaviors associated with contemporary adolescents.

The behavior(s), actions, responses, and social adjustment/development of American youth are topics of great concern in contemporary society (Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1995; Furstenberg, 1995; Benard, 1990). Youth violence, crime, depressed school achievement, substance abuse, adolescent reproductive rates, and a host of additionally disturbing factors frame perceptions and reality about contemporary adolescents. Abhorrent behaviors and events tend to occupy the focus of media, politics, social science, and research (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez, 1989; Taylor-Gibbs, 1988).

The barometer by which opinions, perceptions, belief systems, and behaviors of many American youth are gauged often reflect popularized stereotypes. Paired with unacceptable levels and occurrences of violence, death, crime and loss of human potential, African-American youth are represented as victims and offenders at alarming rates (Taylor, 1990). A disproportionate number of African-American male youth between the ages of 15 and 21 occupy prison and youth detention centers (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Taylor, 1987; 1990). Their presence is prominent among a long list of social concerns, including, but not limited to, school failure, under achievement and/or dropouts, youth-on-youth violence and drug abuse (Taylor, 1990; Taylor-Gibbs, 1988; Wehlage, et al., 1989). Visual, printed, and entertainment media often portray African-American males as irresponsible predators for whom violence and a myriad of other self-destructive, anti-social behaviors is

the norm (Majors & Gordon, 1994). The facts that refute popularized stereotypes and perceptions are less publicized, portrayed, and/or emphasized by media and other social institutions. African-American males who do not share mainstream society's negative characterizations, despite their increasing numbers, are considered anomalies by the dominant society (Majors & Gordon, 1994). Most of the African-American male adolescents who grow up in America's inner cities, do not drop out of school and/or engage in other harmful behaviors (Mincy, 1994).

The social concerns associated with African-American male youth are undisputed. Many critical issues frame the lives of these young people. Fear and lack of understanding often overshadow genuine concern *for* contemporary African-American male youth (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Wehlage, et al., 1989). One of the outcomes appears to be that limited attention is commanded to address the scope and magnitude of social, structural and economic issues that nourish the caustic environments that become catalysts for social and psychological strangulation for many African-American male youth. Lost in a galaxy of fears and social issues is the need for greater focus upon factors that are integral components of the lives of African-American male youth, such as: the impact of adolescence upon African-American male youth; society's response(s) to African-American male youth; the effects of race, racism, and gender; the treatment of this population by social work, social policy, and

social researchers; what African-American male youth think; and how they make sense of their lives and their world.

Individuals undergo the process of exiting childhood and entering adulthood during adolescence. During the period of adolescence, actions and behaviors exhibited by young people can have a crucial impact upon the direction, focus and outcome of some of their short and long-term life chances, adjustment(s), adaptation(s) and experiences. Therefore, it is imperative that we, as social workers and social researchers, understand what factors may assist in a successful transition to adulthood.

Ego psychologists believe that personality is dynamic and evolutionary rather than being fixed in early life. "The individual comes into this world with rational, as well as irrational instincts and the personality develops and becomes differentiated in relation to the environmental interactions, concerns, goals and unconscious needs rather than being almost entirely an elaboration of inner instinctual drives" (Compton & Galloway, 1994, p. 135). Erickson (1963, 1968), an early ego psychologist, believed that the crisis of each stage of adolescent development resulted from an interaction between the individual and his/her social environment. Blos' (1941) contention was that adolescents' development must be considered in the context of a particular culture and the adolescents' families' version of the culture. According to Erickson (1963, 1968) and Blos (1941), culture and social environment would be considered important components of adolescent development. The manner in which

adolescents, specifically African-American adolescents, perceive, interpret, "experience and make sense out of their lives" (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 34) is the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Social workers, social scientists and other human service practitioners are socialized by the same social system, and values that historically has excluded and disempowered African-American males. Ivey (1991), Oliver & Brown (1985), and Summers (1991) challenge social scientists and human service practitioners to carefully consider whether theoretical assumptions contribute to and/or lead to inaccurate or misleading conclusions. By virtue of our birth and existence, our cultural script directs many of our actions. In Western culture, the frame of reference is highly individualistic. Problems are placed with the individual. The Western individualistic perspective found in many counseling and therapy theories, does not incorporate "other-centeredness" stressed by some non-Western cultural orientations (Hopps, Pinderhughes & Shankar, 1995; Ivey, 1991). It follows then, that the experiences and realities that mold the thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors of contemporary African-American youth may be experientially different and/or unfamiliar to the experiences of many practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Although ethnic and racial diversity in the United States has increased significantly in the past few decades (Lum, 1996), most social

workers and social scientists continue to be monocultural, monolingual and monoracial (Green, 1995). In order to minimize bias and/or misunderstanding, it is important that the difference in the development of individuals be considered. The structure of decision making and the manner in which life events are emphasized varies among cultures (Compton & Galloway, 1994). In the United States, adolescence is difficult for all young people, but particularly so for lower income adolescents who belong to minority groups (Pillari, 1988). "Social work practitioners need to understand the critical issues affecting the self-development in people in this age group . . . " (Pillari, 1988, p. 216). The need to address many of the social, structural and personal issues facing African-American male adolescents makes the need for expanded knowledge of this population even greater.

Context of the Study

The consequences of poverty, violence, racism, and a plethora of other structural and/or personal barriers in the lives of African-American male adolescents are found in the literature (Major & Gordon, 1994; Taylor-Gibbs, 1988). However, little is evident about barriers that the youth themselves identify and if they also possess strengths, develop goals for the future, and have strategies for solving problems (Majors & Gordon, 1994). This research adds to the current knowledge base regarding African-American adolescents through the addition of sample participants' voices to existing data. This

exploratory qualitative study identifies some of the factors that African-American male adolescents considered to be important in determining the course and direction of their social and educational decision making and behavior. Salient factors that impacted the participants' completion/non-completion of high school and participation/non-participation in crime were revealed.

Rationale

This research builds upon a previous study conducted by this researcher (Schott, 1996) exploring the relationship of race, community size and parental status to adolescent males' locus of control. Rotter (1966) formulated the construct of locus of control to describe individuals based upon the degree to which they attribute responsibility for events in their lives to themselves or to sources outside of their control. More current research supports this construct (Yates, Hecth-Lewis & Goodrich-Wells, 1993). "A concept of locus of control orders people on a continuum according to how much they attribute the events in their lives to their own actions, motivations or competency (internal control) vs. how much they assume the cause of these events to be determined by other forces such as luck, chance, or powerful others (external control)" (Yates, et al., 1993, p. 290).

In the preliminary study using the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control (CNSIE), locus of control scores of 13.0 or above

were designated as suggestive of an external locus of control orientation. The mean CNSIE locus of control score established for twelfth grade males was 11.38 (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973). The mean locus of control score for this researcher's total sample population (n=85) of twelfth grade Michigan males was 17.4. For African-American respondents (n=20) the mean locus of control score was 19.0.

Even if one allows for the possibility that the CNSIE mean locus of control score for twelfth grade males may not be reflective of contemporary American society, the possibility remains that the external locus of control scores among the sample population seem remarkable. In a study of locus of control differences among children using the CNSIE in the middle of the 1970s, the locus of control means for normal, delinquent and emotionally disturbed youth were 14.63, 15.60 and 17.54 respectively (Yates et al., 1993). A more recent use of the CNSIE with at-risk students in grades 10 to 12 found the mean locus of control for average students to be 15.16 and the mean for the control group to be 10.37 (Nunn & Parrish, 1992). According to existing operational explanations of locus of control orientations, the external orientation of the sample respondents appears to suggest a population of adolescent males for whom vulnerability for at-risk and/or self-destructive behaviors, worthlessness, poor school achievement, a sense of fatalism, and a diminished sense of personal empowerment may be constant.

High locus of control externalization existed in this researcher's entire preliminary study sample (Schott, 1996). This research reinforced the legitimacy of questions regarding researchers', practitioners', and educators' comprehension of the meaning and manner in which life events and experiences are interpreted and processed by contemporary African-American male adolescents. In addition, continued research regarding the interpretation of results of locus of control measurements with this population was indicated.

Research Questions

This study examines several questions using a closed response format (CNSIE) and ethnographic interviews. The questions examined are:

1. What is the relationship between locus of control and high school completion/ dropout?
2. What is the relationship between locus of control and participation/non-participation in crime?
3. To what do sample participants attribute their:
   - Completion of high school
   - Non-participation in crime
   - Non-completion of high school
   - Participation in crime.
4. How do African-American male adolescent sample participants describe their world view?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, the following key terms were defined as indicated:

- **Internal locus of control** refers to people who tend to perceive the events of one's life to be the consequences of one's behavior. Individuals described as "internal" believe that they exercise more control over events and outcomes that affect them (Boss & Taylor, 1989). "Internal" adolescents may more readily take responsibility for individual, academic and/or social achievements and failures (Boss & Taylor, 1989). They may also be more likely to assume responsibility for events in their lives. Although the literature seems to indicate that "internal" control is more desirable, this orientation may not be necessarily helpful, as internals assume they can control things over which *they may not have direct control.*
- **External locus of control** suggests that an individual perceives the cause(s) of events in their lives to be determined by forces (such as luck, fate, chance or powerful others) that are not within their control. More external locus of control corresponds to hopelessness, suicidal potential and institutionalization of children (Yates et al., 1994). Externally oriented individuals believe that all hope for control over the

events in their lives has been lost. There is an acceptance that whatever is attempted will have no significant impact upon their lives (Sorensen, 1989).

- **High school completion** is defined as completion of high school indicated by receipt of a diploma, or GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma).
- **Non-completion of high school** is defined as voluntary and/or involuntary termination or removal from high school prior to earning a high school diploma, or GED.
- **Participation in crime** is defined as involvement in lawbreaking activities that resulted in arrest and/or incarceration. (Uniform Crime Report, 1994, Michigan State Police.)
- **Non-participation in crime** means an absence of involvement in lawbreaking activities that resulted in arrest and/or incarceration. (Uniform Crime Report, 1994, Michigan State Police.)
- **Ethnographic inquiry** is defined as "concern with capturing, interpreting and explaining the way in which people in a group, organization, community or society live, experience and make sense out of their lives, their world and their society" (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 34).

- **Resilience** is defined as "the ability to thrive, mature and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances" (Gordon, 1995, p. 239).
- **Risk factors** are defined as "biological, psychological, and environmental factors (such as stressful life events and 'toxic' conditions) that increase an individual's vulnerability" (Kaplan, Turner, Norman & Stillson, 1996, p. 159).
- **Protective factors** are defined as "personal, social, familial, and institutional safety nets that help an individual counter and resist the effects of personal vulnerabilities and environmental hazards" (Kaplan et al., 1996).
- **Competence** is the ability to integrate social, behavioral and cognitive elements necessary to negotiate and manage a dynamic and changing environment (Bandura, 1982).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Contemporary statistics and descriptions of African-American male youth frequently address the alarming rates of crime, death, substance use and abuse, school dropout, lower (compared to other groups) standardized test scores and school achievement. A disproportionate number of African-American male youth occupy morgues, cemeteries, prison and youth detention centers, and the ranks of the uneducated and/or undereducated (George, 1993; Majors & Gordon, 1994; Taylor, 1990; Taylor-Gibbs, 1988). These disturbing statistics are reinforced by social and media perceptions and images of African-American male youth. Although the plight of many African-American male youth is a critical and continuing concern, the young African-American male population (15 to 21 years) is not a homogeneous collection of individuals. Adaptations, experiences and behavior(s) can (and do) vary substantially. Many African-American male youth do not represent mainstream society's negative characterizations, but generally are treated as if they do. African-American male youth who do not fit stereotypical perceptions, are often considered anomalies by the dominant society (Majors & Gordon, 1994).

Social/Cultural Influences

Social workers, social scientists, researchers, and other human service practitioners are subject to influence by some of the same social, institutional, environmental and cultural influences that define and shape the perceptions and realities of young African-American males. Disentanglement from this socialization process is not easily accomplished. Assumptions that the dominant culture's frames of reference are the standard for everyone, can be damaging and counter-productive. Luthar (1995) questions the practice of using socially/economically advantaged adolescents in social competence studies and generalizing the findings to disadvantaged minorities. Ivey (1991), Oliver and Brown (1985), and Summers (1991) challenge social scientists and human service practitioners to carefully consider whether theoretical assumptions contribute to and/or lead to inaccurate or misleading conclusions.

Hall (1992) suggests that lingering stereotypes about African-American males present a crucial challenge to social workers and social work institutions who are impacted by them. According to Hall (1992), social workers must act to confront existing racist stereotyping regardless of the difficulty involved. Duneier (1992) suggests that the social science community has not adequately addressed the African-American population. According to Duneier (1992), ethnographers studying African-American males have made generalizations that would be regarded as unacceptable if they were made about white ethnic groups with as little evidence.

The experiences and realities that mold the thoughts, perceptions and behaviors of contemporary African-American youth may be experientially different and/or unfamiliar to those of many practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Tickamyer, Bokemeier, Feldman, Harris, Jones & Wenk (1993) call for theory construction in which individuals and social structures are mutually defined. Such a position acknowledges a duality in which individuals are considered to be "conscious agents who operate within a matrix of social relations, but who also have a reservoir of power for transforming these relations through their own action" (Tickamyer et al., 1993, p. 208). Additionally, they maintain that "gender, race and ethnicity are socially constructed processes that should be integrated . . . into theory, rather than tacked on" (Tickamyer et al., 1993, p. 208). The structure of decision making and the manner in which life events are emphasized varies among cultures (Compton & Galloway, 1994). It is important that the difference in the development of individuals be considered. The intersections of race, culture, class, and gender, matter in America. The impact of these factors, shape and influence behaviors in ways that are not always apparent. Thus, it is crucial that we increase our knowledge concerning the way in which these constructs are operationalized. Social workers, researchers and other human service practitioners have a great deal of influence regarding the aforementioned "socially constructed process" (Tickamyer et al., 1993). The importance of the

manner in which these constructs are operationalized in social policy, social institutions, and varying facets of society, cannot be minimized.

Adolescence and African-American Males

It is during adolescence that youngsters undergo the process of exiting childhood and entering adulthood. The "child/adult exit-entry" is often viewed as a period of transition, and not as a period of interest in its own right (Kazdin, 1993). Life defining/altering decisions are frequently made at a time when, as a person, "the adolescent is often filled with raging self-doubt, alternating with unrealistic omnipotence. Tolerance for fools and enemies is almost nil, and ideation of heros, almost boundless . . . The ability to differentiate between thought, wish, impulse and action is compromised" (Major & Gordon, 1994, p. 218). In psychoanalytic theory, adolescence could be described as a second edition of childhood, because both have in common the fact that a relatively strong id confronts a relatively weak ego (Freud, A., 1936). "Individual differences, as well as systematic variation (e.g., as a function of . . . urban . . . living)" (Kazdin, 1993, p. 128) in race, gender and perceptions of empowerment and self-determination are salient factors that impact adolescents.

Adolescence can complicate, if not exacerbate developmental issues in the lives of African-American male youth. As a stage of development, adolescence is difficult for all young people, but especially so for African-

American males (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Lee, 1992; Pillari, 1988). For most African-American males, the usual turbulence of emotions, uncertainty, risk taking, robust id/tenuous ego (Freud, A., 1936), that accompany adolescence tend to take place under less than ideal circumstances. The development of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity during childhood and adolescence are often truncated and/or interrupted (Lee, 1992). Successful completion of these early developmental stages and tasks have often been difficult because of social and historical factors that include (but are not limited to) racial/gender bias and discrimination, institutional racism and thwarted (or lack of) access to economic and/or social/psychological opportunities (Lee, 1992).

Locus of Control

Social scientists and researchers have developed a number of theories designed to address/assess the reasons and/or motivations for individual behavior(s). Rotter, Chance and Phares (1972) and others, have developed theories and conducted research that centers upon "people's sense of personal efficacy to produce and regulate events in their lives (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Bandura (1982) suggests that efficacy in functioning in one's environment is not a static or fixed prescription. It involves as well a generative capacity to organize and integrate into action social, behavioral and cognitive factors as needed to manage ever changing circumstances. The degree to which

individuals attribute the responsibility for events in their lives to themselves or to sources outside of their control is formulated in a construct developed by Rotter (1966). The locus of control concept "orders people on a continuum according to how much they attribute the events in their lives to their own actions, motivations or competency (internal control) vs. how much they assume the cause of these events to be determined by other forces such as luck, chance or powerful others (external control)" (Yates et al., (1994), p. 290). As a personality variable and predictor of behavior, perceived locus of control can be critical (Barling, 1980). The locus of control orientation can be a strong indicator of the way in which individuals are likely to interpret, address and respond to life events and experiences. For instance, the internally oriented person is more likely to assume responsibility for academic or social successes and failures, because they connect these successes and/or failures directly to their own behavior(s) (Yates et al., 1994). If they happen to be subjected to abuse or neglect, they are also more likely to believe that the abuse and/or neglect is connected to their behavior(s). On one hand, internally oriented individuals are more amenable to treatment intervention strategies. On the other hand, they are more vulnerable to emotional distress (Benson and Deeter, 1992; Benassi et al., 1988). According to Nowicki (1973), luck, helplessness and achievement characterize the locus of control belief in children. The degree of importance of internal and external locus of control is heightened by the extent to which an individual's concept and/or perception of

personal empowerment may be influenced by internal or external locus of control. In Werner & Smith's (1982) study of locus of control among resilient adolescents, they found resilient adolescents to have more faith that the environment would respond to reasonable efforts on their part than did those adolescents who were experiencing difficulty coping. The manner in which African-American youth perceive the control and causes of events of their lives, and the manner in which they perceive their ability to "execute courses of action required to deal with perspective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122) may impact their adjustment and development.

Luthar and Zigler (1992) found that school-based performance among intelligent inner city youth varied considerably depending upon levels of ego development and locus of control. Due to the existence of social barriers such as race, poverty, lack of economic opportunity and gender that often thwart chances to secure productive spots in society, Myers (1990) suggests that talented, disadvantaged youth who possess organizational skills, may turn to illegal activities. According to Luthar & Zigler (1992), if such youth believe that events in their lives are determined largely by their efforts (internal locus of control), their potential in school may be maximized.

In a study of adolescent leadership behavior, McCullough, Ashbridge & Pegg (1994) found that the leadership group tended to be higher in internal locus of control and to have more prestigious career goals. Benson & Deeter (1992) found that "*internal*" adolescents benefit most from social support

"defined as information leading the subject to believe that s/he was cared for and loved, esteemed and a member of a network of mutual obligations" (p. 192). In the absence of support, internal adolescents may take more responsibility for failures and experience greater degrees of emotional distress (Benson & Deeter, 1994). A study of emotionally disturbed adolescents' locus of control relationships found locus of control orientations to be significantly more internal for those diagnosed as depressed and those diagnosed as having conduct disorder (Yates et al., 1994).

External locus of control suggests that an individual attributes the cause(s) of events in their lives to outside forces (such as luck, fate, chance or powerful others) that are not within their control. Groups who lack power, whether by virtue of social class or race, tend to score more in the direction of external locus of control (Werner & Smith, 1982). More external locus of control corresponds to hopelessness, suicidal potential, anxiety, improper social conduct and institutionalization (McCullough et al., 1994; Yates et al., 1994). Externally oriented individuals believe that all hope for control over the events in their lives has been lost. There is also an acceptance that whatever is attempted will have no significant impact upon their lives (Sorensen, 1989). According to Luthar & Zigler (1992), external locus of control orientations negatively impact school performance of high risk urban inner city adolescents. Due in part to inequities in external social structures, many African-American

children have learned early in life that success in school often does not lead to success in life, and view academic performance as an exercise in futility.

Externally oriented individuals' tendency to ascribe events in their lives to forces outside or beyond their control may be a positive adaptation in some circumstances. Through the use of proverbs that are metaphorical and sometimes illusive (McAdoo, 1989), many African-American parents pass externally orienting values onto their offspring. Sayings such as "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," and "I have never met *fair*, if you do, *please introduce us*," function as protective barriers against the internalization of social and structural biases and inequities. Crocker and Major (1989) noted that members of stigmatized groups often predicted to have low self-esteem, frequently do not. Hillman, Wood and Sawilowsky (1992) postulate that this occurs because it is frequently difficult for individuals stigmatized by race, gender, physical disability or other factors to discern whether negative feedback is based upon prejudice against their group, or a legitimate personal shortcoming. The prejudicial perspective may promote the over use of a self-protective externalizing mechanism that may lead to "a locus of control personality style of externalization as a method by which self-esteem is protected" (Hillman et al., 1992, p. 261).

As a construct, locus of control offers a possible way to understand the manner in which some people are likely to address and/or react to circumstances, situations and life events that they may encounter. However,

the results, and their messages have been mixed. Researchers have linked *both* positive and negative academic, social and psychological functioning to internal and external locus of control (Benson & Deeter, 1992; Crocker & Major, 1989; Hillman et al., 1992; Yates et al., 1994). Among resilient children, the presence of an internal locus of control has repeatedly been found to be involved in protective processes against life stress. What is less apparent is whether emotional/mental health accompanies the adaptive behavior (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). In a study of invulnerability among neglected and abused children, good coping strategies and competent behavior existed, but the children were not emotionally healthy (Anthony & Cohler, 1987). Not every young person becomes daunted and/or unable to survive in difficult circumstances. However, some of the resulting emotional costs suggest that they "cannot walk between the raindrops" (Rolf, Master, Cicchetti, Neuchterlein, & Weintraub, 1990, p. 101).

Recent research by this writer (Schott, 1996) raises questions about the suitability of applying commonly used locus of control explanations to young African-American males at the dusk of the 20th century. In the preliminary study of male, rural and urban high school seniors (Schott, 1996), using the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control (CNSIE), locus of control orientation among the sample population deviated markedly from that of the 11.8 (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) mean locus of control established for twelfth grade males. High externalization was noted among all participants.

Although not statistically significant in the aforementioned study, the mean locus of control for African-American males was 19.00, while for other sample participants it was 17.4. It is conceivable that the CNSIE mean for twelfth grade males, normed with a homogenous suburban sample population over twenty years ago, is no longer applicable for contemporary adolescents. The interpretations of locus of control scores, may be even less applicable for contemporary youth from diverse environments and populations.

If we accept Bandura's (1982) position that locus of control as a construct falls under the rubric of self-efficacy, and if we accept Bandura's position that "perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgements of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with perspective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122), it is conceivable that what it means for an African-American male youth to have an internal or external locus of control orientation may differ from existing explanations of a concept. Yates et al. (1994) suggest the locus of control "expectancy that reinforcing or punishing consequences will result from one's own efforts is in part a function of the immediate environment. Different environments could then, generate different locus of control orientations" (Yates et al., 1994, pp. 290-91). What eludes social work practitioners, researchers, etc. is the manner in which different locus of control orientations may be operationalized and/or manifested by people from different environments. The subtle suggestions in the literature are that "internal" orientations are the most desirable. Less suggested is the fact that "external"

orientations are not inherently "undesirable," and may be more adaptive for some people, in some environments.

Resiliency Theory

Resiliency theory was the theoretical foundation used for this study. Boyce and Germin (1990), Braverman and Paris (1993), Garmezy and Neuchterlein (1992), Gordon (1995) and others have noted the existence of those individuals who make positive adaptations and demonstrate social, mental, and/or academic/professional competence in the presence of a proliferation of stressors and risk factors that make them ripe for vulnerability to a number of personal, social and emotional problems. In spite of adverse conditions associated with social and economic disadvantage, some youths flourish against the odds. "Resilience is the ability to thrive, mature and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances" (Gordon, 1995, p. 239). As a concept, resilience is used to articulate and "to help explain why some children do well under disadvantaged circumstances (Baldwin, Baldwin, Kasser, Zax, Sameroff & Seifer, 1993, p. 742). It is a multifaceted phenomenon inclusive of individual and environmental factors associated with high competence despite high stressors (Gordon, 1995), as well as with questions of emotional/mental health (Cohler, 1987).

This study acknowledges that although there are casualties as African-American male youth make the journey to adulthood, such is not the case for

all. William Julius Wilson (1987) refers to social and economic conditions that have become breeding grounds for what he called an underclass. For many African-American male adolescents, Wilson's (1987) marginal underclass economic/social environments are hosts for the cultivation of their perceptions, beliefs, experiences and development during their formative years. It has been demonstrated that children and adolescents may be adversely affected if they live in an environment that includes persistent violence, poverty, social/emotional instability, and other negative factors. (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Garbarino et al., 1992). Nevertheless, there are individuals who do not appear to be consumed by potentially destructive factors that may exist within the environments that surround them. The Harvard Medical School's longitudinal study of adult development indicated considerable resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged males. The pattern of resilience was present among men from what has been labelled the underclass (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990).

Studies of resiliency and invulnerability search for factors that explain why some individuals do not succumb to adversity. Understanding the dynamics that are at work with resilient people can have implications for mental health, education, criminal justice and social policy, and other disciplines. As a construct, Garmezy makes a clear distinction between resiliency and invulnerability. It is Garmezy's position that there is a distinct difference in a definition that suggests an incapacity to be hurt or damaged

(invulnerability), and one that suggests the power or ability to recover (resiliency) (Masten et al., 1990).

As an entity, resilience and positive outcomes in mental health have been in existence as a specific area of focus for over two decades. It was spearheaded by Garmezy & Neuchterlein (1972). In spite of the fact that the study of positive outcomes would appear ripe for exploration and research, review of the literature on resiliency, invulnerability and related concepts revealed a dearth of research in this area (Rhodes & Brown, 1991). The bulk of the work that has been done in the area of resiliency (prior to the middle to late 1990s) is in relationship to juvenile justice and juvenile delinquents (Rhodes & Brown, 1991). Other resiliency studies in existence focus more upon young children than adolescents; those regarding African-American adolescents are even more scarce (Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Werner, 1990). In recent years, there has been an increase in literature regarding resiliency in connection to child abuse and neglect.

The resilience model as a theoretical foundation in this study incorporates the complex network of individual, structural and environmental factors that tend to be associated with high competence despite high stressors (Gordon, 1995). According to Rutter (1987), identification of elements associated with positive outcomes is insufficient without an understanding of the complex interaction of numerous environmental and/or social/ psychological factors that are involved within the context of resilience.

There is general agreement among experts that there are two essential components in the development of resilience: "Biological, psychological and environmental risk factors such as stressful life events and "toxic" conditions that increase an individual's vulnerability, [and] protective factors (personal, social, familial and institutional safety nets that help an individual" (Kaplan et al., 1996, p. 159) counteract vulnerability to stressors. "Resilient children usually have four attributes: Social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and future" (Bernard, 1993, p. 44). Reframing personal pain through expression as in art work and/or humor can dilute the harshness of adverse circumstances. They can also be harbingers for rejuvenation and strength building (Barbarin, 1993; Bernard, 1993).

Basic concepts of the resilience model used in this study include factors such as:

- **Family protectors factors** - positive, supportive family environment; positive relationship with a caring adult; extended support networks, including family and friends; identification with achievement.
- **Individual attributes** - sense of direction; capacity to think/act separately from troubled caretakers and/or peers; self efficacy -- confidence that one's internal and external world is hopeful and controllable; realistic appraisal of the environment; social problem-solving skills competence.

- **School protective factors** - caring, supportive school atmosphere; high but realistic student performance expectations; availability/opportunity for involvement in school activities.
- **Social support** - participation and involvement in groups, social, cultural, sports and/or religious activities, organizations etc. that reinforce self-esteem, acceptance and a sense of personal worth. (Kaplan et al., 1996; Majors & Gordon, 1995).

The historic involvement of African-American families in religion was addressed in this study. Throughout American history, the Black church has played a powerful role as a mechanism of survival and advancement of African-American people (Oliver & Brown, 1985). Historically, for many African-Americans it has not been uncommon to seek refuge from life's hardships through faith in a higher power. Membership in a church community and/or spiritual commitment are important aspects of family life among many inner-city minority families with competent children (Masten et al., 1990). Although the role of church membership and religious faith have not been researched to the same extent and with the same vigor as other protective factors (Masten et al., 1990), the value of their significance in the lives of African-Americans should not be minimized.

Through the utilization of semi-structured, ethnographic interviews, the purpose of this study is to identify those factors that, according to participants, have an impact upon their decision making, lives, experiences and

perceptions. In addition, the study addresses the construct of internal and external locus of control among sample subjects. Of concern is the manner in which internal and external locus of control orientations function and/or "operate" among the sample population. An additional concern is the extent to which subjects have either an internal or external locus of control, and whether the locus of control orientation serves as a protective factor.

Locus of control orientations suggest whether individuals attribute events in their lives to be the result of their own actions and behaviors (internal), or to outside forces such as luck, chance and/or powerful others (external) (Yates et al., 1994). In the literature, internal locus of control orientations tend to be more associated with academic success, leadership, and greater social and personal responsibility among adolescents (Gordon, 1995; Luthar, 1995; Howerton et al., 1993; Luthar & Zigler, 1992). External locus of control orientations tend to be characterized with more problematic outcomes, such as hopelessness, fatalism, suicidal potential and emotional precariousness (Yates et al., 1994).

Resiliency theory suggests that resilient people "make it" in spite of risk factors that contribute to, or are associated with external locus of control orientations (Kaplan et al., 1996; Gordon, 1995). In addition, externalization can be a factor that can strengthen resilience (Werner & Smith, 1989). Resiliency involves increasing competence in adverse circumstances (Gordon, 1995). It is noteworthy that resilience is based upon the presence of

"biological, psychological and environmental risk factors such as stressful life events ... that increase an individual's vulnerability" (Kaplan et al., 1996, p. 159). It could be argued that resiliency "requires" externalized adaptations. A traditional look at locus of control suggests that resilient youth have developed internal locus of control orientations (Blocker & Copeland, 1994; Howerton et al., 1993). However, when internal and external locus of control orientations are operationalized among the study sample, the question is whether an internal locus of control orientation or an external locus of control orientation is more adaptive.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Brown (1994) suggests that individuals' sense of agency and empowerment is diminished by reliance upon professionals to name and define their experiences. "Alternative paradigms for research that begin with people's personal theories and address the subjective nature of research include feminist models, case studies, qualitative research and critical ethnography" (Brown, 1994, p. 294). A purpose of qualitative research is to capture deeper meanings of human experiences and generate theoretically richer observations not easily articulated by numbers (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Glaser and Strauss (1967) support the use of qualitative inquiry that is grounded in empirical observations of the world. It is their opinion that research guided only by preconceived theory interferes with the development of new perspectives. Reliance upon conventional quantitative approaches have been argued to be unsuited for the fluid complexities of social phenomena (Reid & Smith, 1989). In qualitative research, questions and hypotheses emerge from "the researcher's accumulated knowledge of the phenomena studied with documentation in the form of examples and quotes from subjects" (Reid & Smith, 1989, p. 89).

In this qualitative exploratory study, semi-structured ethnographic interviews are employed to identify some of the factors that African-American male adolescents consider to be important in determining the course and direction of their social and educational decision making and behavior. Internal and external locus of control are also explored. Of concern is whether existing explanations of locus of control adequately describe the sample population. In addition to the use of exploratory ethnographic interviews with a purposive sample of thirteen adolescents, the study utilized a closed response format with the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control measure (CNSIE) to answer four questions:

1. What is the relationship between locus of control and high school completion/dropout?
2. What is the relationship between locus of control and participation/non-participation in crime?
3. To what do sample participants attribute their:
    - completion of high school
    - non-participation in crime
    - termination from high school
    - participation in crime
4. How do African-American male adolescent participants describe their world view?

Open-ended questions, probes and follow-up questions were used in concert with an interview guide (see Appendix C). An ethnographic interview format was used in this exploratory study to discover the manner in which participants experienced and "made sense out of their lives, their world and their society." (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 34).

Methodology

The emphasis of a substantial portion of the research concerning African-American male youth has frequently been connected to delinquency, crime and/or other dysfunctional behavior (Majors & Gordon, 1994; Rhoades and Brown, 1991). This study examined resiliency and competence factors that exist (or do not exist) among the sample population. The inductive process (development of generalizations from specific observations) of discovering theory from data is called grounded theory (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Thus, qualitative inquiry that generates theory and hypotheses based upon observations of the empirical world is a type of grounded theory approach (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The primary method of inquiry utilized in this research was ethnographic semi-structured interviews with each respondent. The interview (Appendix B) focused upon relationships between participants' educational status (high school completion or non-completion), participation/non-participation in crime (arrests or no arrests), world view, and demonstrated resilience and competence. To add to the richness of the

qualitative data, the study employed the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control (Appendix A) and some descriptive statistics.

Sample

Thirteen eighteen-year-old African-American males composed the sample used in this study. The sample consisted of a diverse mixture of participants; six participants (46%) have dropped out of high school as defined in this study. It is interesting to note that all respondents who dropped out of traditional high schools have returned to attend an alternative high school program that is small in size, and has a low teacher/pupil ratio in comparison to regular high school programs. Access to academic support services such as school social work, psychological or counseling services are limited to non-existent at the alternative high school. Seven participants (54%) reside with their mothers. Five of the seven who reside with their mothers completed high school and attend college. Among the total sample, seven (54%) attend college. Six are freshmen, and one is a sophomore. Six of the seven college students attend public universities.

Three participants report that they have fathered a child. All three fathers report that they provide financial support for their children, and that they are actively involved in the lives of their children. All of the sample report that they have been stopped by the police, oftentimes for reasons that are unclear and/or seem unwarranted. Some participants report that religion plays

an important role in their lives. Most participants (61%) report that their mothers practice religion on a frequent basis. Most participants (92%) report that they are, or have been, involved in volunteer service activities.

An abbreviated eco-map format is used to provide brief descriptions of sample participants. The abbreviated eco-maps are not meant to be a replacement for the breadth of information contained in eco maps in their pure form. Rather, the likeness is used to provide clarity to the individual participants' vignettes that are included in the study. Included is information that addresses with whom the participant resides, his family of origin, and whether he has off spring.

In an eco map, a small circle represents a female, and a small square represents a male. Information contained inside the large circle refers to those who reside in the household. Family members who no longer reside in the household are located outside the large circle. The letter "X" inside the small circle or square means the person is deceased. Two diagonal lines between mother and father means that the two are divorced (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, graduation from high school and non-participation in crime were indicators of resilience. It was not anticipated that sample participants who dropped out of school would have returned. Returning to school is also an indication of resilience. Subjects who participated in the study were paid a modest fee. Interestingly, all of the

participants who met the definition for non-completion of high school did not wish to accept the fee that was offered. It was only after moderate coaxing that the money was accepted. One participant stated, "I just wanted to meet the person who wanted to talk to *us*!"

Interview Schedule

The study examined the way participants "experienced and made sense out of their lives, their world and their society" (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 34). The interview (Appendix B) drew upon questions from Family Survey Study (University of Michigan, 1996), Childhood and Beyond Study (University of Michigan, 1994) and the Sibling Study developed by Harold, Colarossi and Mercier (1996).

Each interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the participant. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and identified by participant number. The interviews were conducted in person by this researcher and lasted approximately sixty-five minutes.

Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control

In the previous study (Schott, 1996), the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control (Appendix A) measure (CNSIE) was used in a study to determine locus of control orientation among rural and urban midwestern, male high school seniors. The same measurement was used with the participants in this study. The CNSIE instrument calls for "yes-no" responses on forty items of a questionnaire. The normative for the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control scores for males in grade twelve is 11.38 (Nowicki-Strickland, 1973). In this study, those locus of control scores that are 13.0 or above suggest an external locus of control orientation.

Validity

The Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control is an instrument used to measure internal-external locus of control. It is appropriate for young people up to 18 years of age. The instrument is readable at the fifth grade level. An expected progression toward internality with increasing age, academic achievement, personal competence and social status demonstrated with other locus of control measures is observed in samples tested with the CNSIE (Belter & Brinkman, 1981). In a review of locus of control measures, Lefcourt found the CNSIE to be one of the better

measures of locus of control as a generalized expectancy presently available for children (Howerton et al., 1993).

Sampling Procedure

The study was conducted in a large Midwestern city with a population (including the surrounding suburban areas) that exceeds 700,000 people. Approximately 15 percent of the city residents are African-Americans. A purposive sampling method was employed in this study. Key individuals from community agencies, secondary and post secondary education institutions, and African-American churches were contacted to generate the samples used in this study. Researchers sometimes elect to use purposive sampling in exploratory studies (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). This method of sampling is utilized when the researcher "wishes to study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified, but the enumeration of all of them" (Rubin & Babbie, p. 255) would not be easily accomplished. This researcher wished to assemble no less than ten sample participants, consisting roughly of half high school drop-outs and half high school graduates. The city from which the sample population came had a broad and diverse network of community services and resources. Social workers, religious leaders, educators, probation officers, etc. had readily available knowledge and/or access to a potential sample population. Because of these extensive contacts and networking capabilities, the decision to use

purposive sampling was based upon this researcher's belief that a comprehensive understanding of the subject studied could be gained by tapping community leaders' and professionals' expertise to identify participants who represent the target population (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Purposive sampling is consistent with the use of grounded theory.

Data Analysis

The first step in this study was the administration of the CNSIE to sample participants. Sample participants' responses on the CNSIE were collected and tabulated. Transcriptions of audio taped interviews were the primary source of data for the study. Inductive content analysis was used to construct a set of categories that provided an exploratory framework for summarizing the data. Content analysis is a way to classify or code information according to a conceptual framework (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). In this study, content analysis involved the process of distilling information generated from participant interviews. This was accomplished through a series of activities. The initial steps included examination of the information collected from participants during ethnographic interviews. The focus was upon the qualitative questions in the study: Participation/non-participation in crime, completion/non-completion of high school, and the manner in which participants described their world view. Responses were first grouped according to their relationship to the previously mentioned areas. Next, they

were grouped according to the categories, risk factors, protective factors and resilience/competence. This process was followed by efforts to identify and/or construct consistent themes that emerged from participants' responses (see Appendix B). The information obtained from the aforementioned process was placed on an eco-map (see Figure 1), which functioned as a graphic tool for comprehension and summarization of the content of responses shared by participants. An eco-map is a pen and paper assessment tool, primarily developed by Ann Hartman (1978), that utilizes a set of symbols to represent certain factors and/or events. In an eco map, a small circle represents a female, and a small square represents a male. Information contained inside the large circle refers to those who reside in the household. Family members who no longer reside in the household are located outside the large circle. The letter "X" inside the small circle or square means the person is deceased. Two diagonal lines between mother and father means that the two are divorced (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1994).

The graphic format of an eco-map is used to organize the results of participant interviews. The total sample population is "the client" in the center of the map. In the traditional form of an eco-map, those factors that impact upon the sample are noted. By utilizing the format of an eco-map in this manner, the way in which themes relate and interconnect can be observed.

The eco-map makes it possible for those who use it to achieve a holistic or ecological view of the relationships, groups, individuals, events, and social

environments of the client or family (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1994). In this research, the eco-map was used to obtain a holistic, ecological view of the subjects studied. It provided a collective summary and representation of the subjects in the study.

A qualitative approach to content analysis was utilized in this study. The tabulation and analysis of the results of the quantitative CNSIE supported the qualitative construct. The qualitative approach utilized in this study, resulted in the discovery of vital information regarding sample participants' locus of control that would not have been determined by use of quantitative data alone.

Limitations

The sample size is a limitation of this study. With a sample size of thirteen, there were no expectations for statistical generalizations beyond the study sample. A sample of thirteen is not large enough to infer that the finding may not have occurred by chance. Nevertheless, insights and information gained from this often neglected population are worthy of attention and may provide strategies for additional research and study. In addition, qualitative data is reliable in its use of the voices of participants to tell their own stories. This method of research can be more reliable than a researcher making assumptions from quantitative results, as is demonstrated in this study.

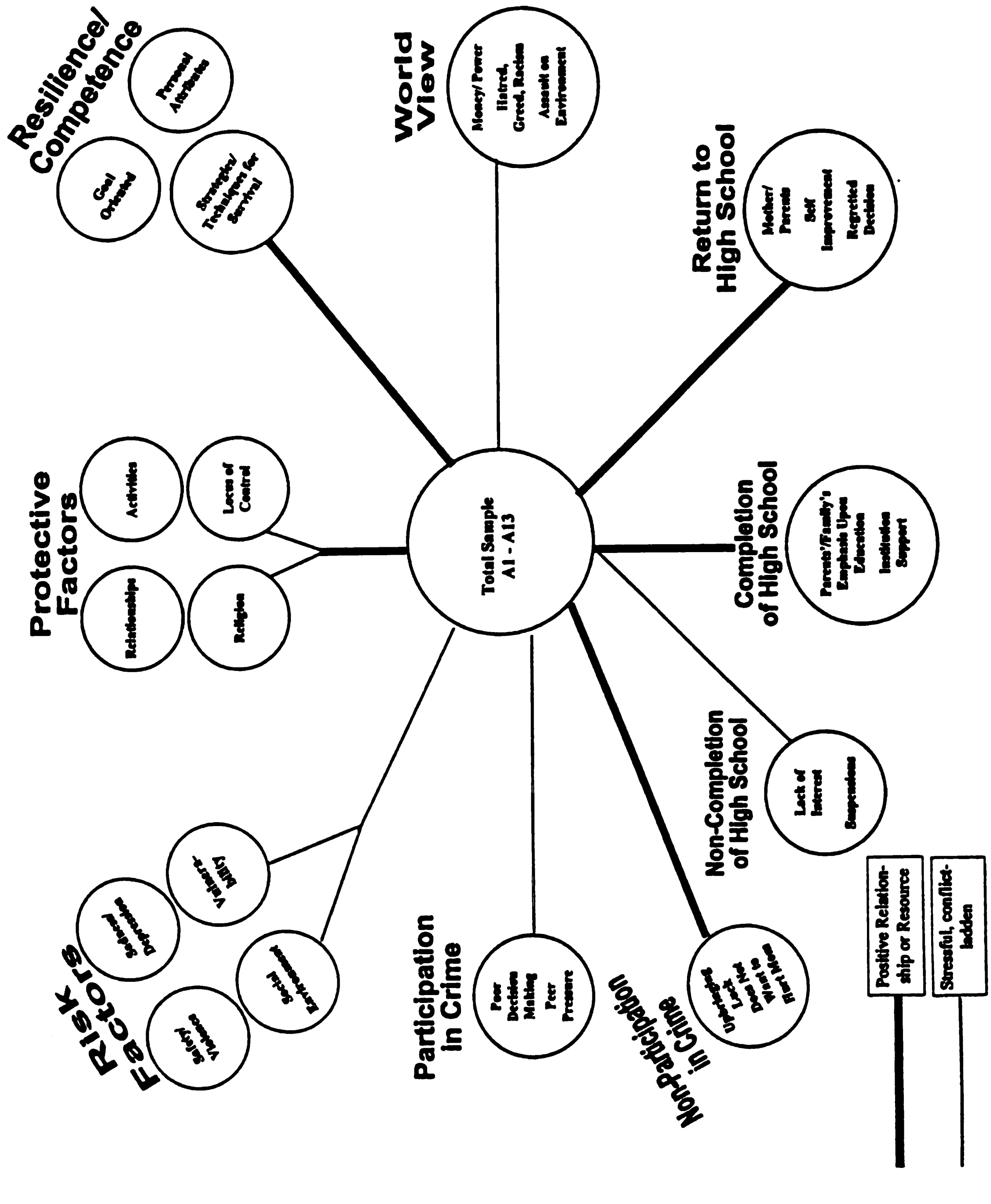

Total Sample
A1 - A13
Protective Factors
Relationships
Activities
Religion
Locus of Control
Resilience/ Competence
Goal Oriented
Personal Attributes
Strategies/ Techniques for Survival
World View
Money/ Power
Hatred, Greed, Racism
Assault on Environment
Return to High School
Mother/ Parents
Self Improvement
Regretted Decision
Completion of High School
Parents'/Family's Emphasis Upon Education
Institution Support
Non-Completion of High School
Lack of Interest
Suspensions
Non-Participation in Crime
Participation in Crime
Peer
Decision Making
Peer Pressure
Risk Factors
Positive Relationship or Resource
Stressful, conflict-ladden

Figure 1

Because the total sample population in this study came from one urban community, it may not be readily generalized to other populations. In spite of this, the data has use/application for the represented community. It also has the potential of germinating questions and information useful for future research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample population in this study was composed of thirteen African-American males. All respondents were 18 years of age when the interviews were conducted between the months of October and December, 1996. General information regarding respondents' nuclear family structure was obtained. It was a deliberate decision by the researcher to make no formal attempt (via direct questioning) to collect information regarding parents'/families' economic status (SES), education, or occupations. The value of SES notwithstanding, the researcher hoped to minimize communication barriers that could resulted from questioning in this area. Although it can be surmised that single female headed families are likely to experience greater economic distress and poverty than two parent families (Gordon, 1994; Garmezy, 1993), the researcher wished to discover *sample respondents'* perceptions of the impact of factors such as SES in their daily lives. In addition, it has been the researcher's experience that for many African-Americans, questions about family finances, education, social status, and the like, by a stranger may be unwelcomed and may compromise the establishment of rapport. During the interviewing process, information regarding parents' education, occupation and financial status was shared by

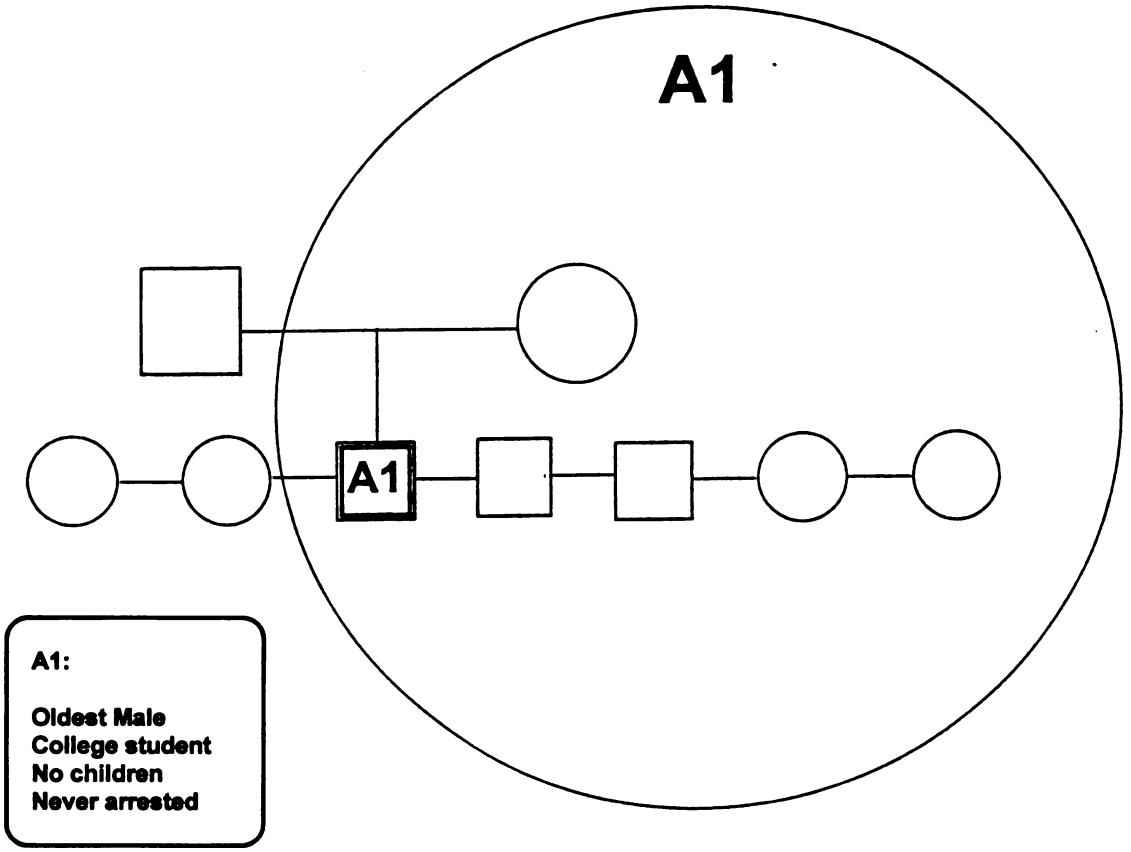
participants based upon the participants' opinions of the significance of the information to them. For example, one respondent expressed great respect and admiration for his parents' perseverance and accomplishments in spite of their limited education.

All participants were interviewed one time on the premises of their college or high school. Interviews lasted approximately 65 minutes. During the data gathering period, no problems arose that necessitated the referral of respondents to a mental health practitioner or facility due to problems that resulted from participation in the interviews. However, based upon the content of some responses, three respondents were encouraged to initiate contact with a mental health practitioner. All participants were provided with a copy of the 1996 Edition of The Family Survival Guide, a brochure that lists area human service agency names, descriptions of functions, locations and telephone numbers. In addition, the researcher offered to assist respondents with referrals if needed.

SAMPLE PARTICIPANTS

Some of us are lost. Our minds don't know what to think or who to trust. We are told by our own to stop the violence and love each other. At times it seems we don't love ourselves. We have to follow rules that were not made by us. Then we are told not to break them and not to put up a fuss. We are just told to make it in this world, and I guess be born with the right stuff. Very few understand the Black man and how hard it is for us to succeed. When we know how to stop the violence, but don't; when we have not been taught to love ourselves; when we have had no say in the rules we must follow; we are not a dying breed that lost, . . . we are lost, so we are dying.

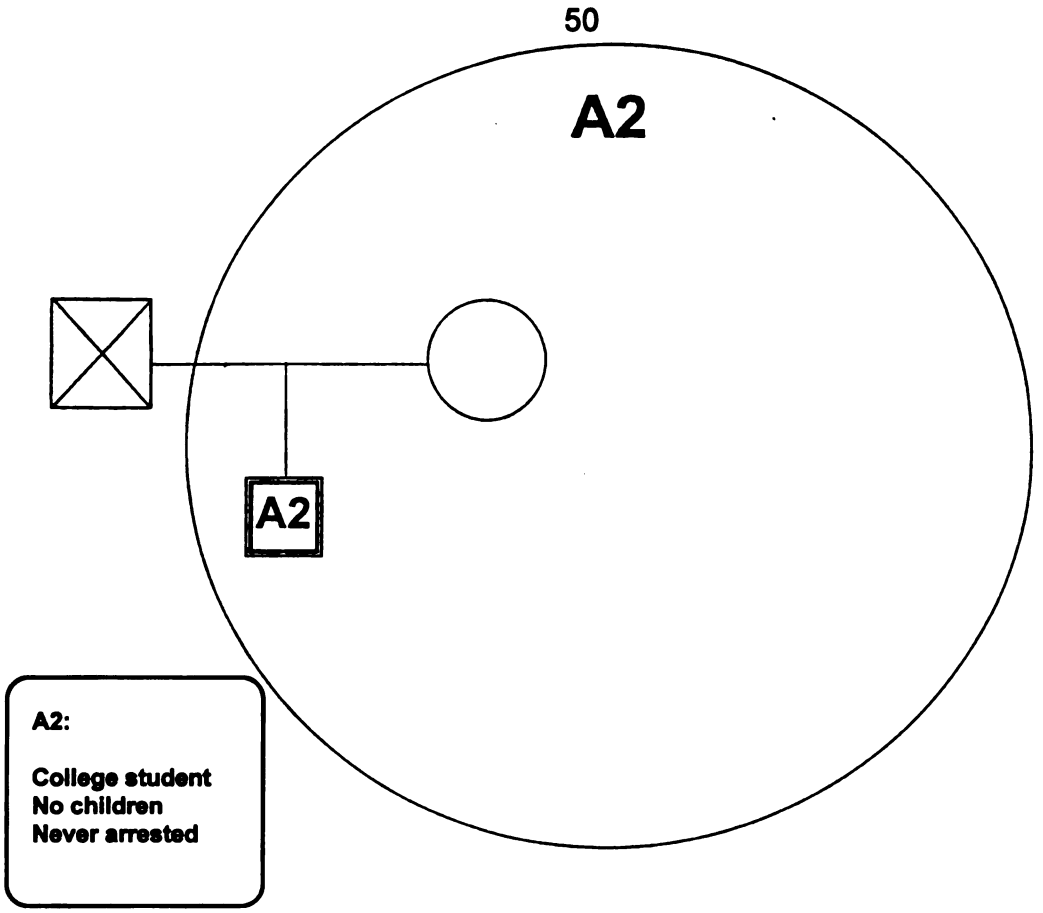
Community College Freshman



A-1 entertained thoughts of dropping out of high school. His participation in sports and the Upward Bound program kept him focused. It is only when participating in sports that A-1 feels that he is in control. College has not been easy for him. He acknowledges sadness and frequent feelings of hopelessness. He recognizes the need for his mother's attention to be focused primarily upon his younger siblings. Nevertheless, he misses her support. His worries about the future safety of his siblings are heightened by the recent deaths and woundings of relatives and friends.

The fact that A-1 has not been arrested is attributed to "me not getting into the back of the car!" i.e., removing himself from situations that may

become problematic. A-1 does not want it to be said that he is a bad person, or to be defined by stereotypes that suggest his material possessions were acquired through illegal activities. The existence of "too much hate" between individuals and races of people, contribute to A-1's less than optimistic view of the world. He acknowledged suicidal thoughts in the past, and within three months prior to the interview. He is familiar with his college's counseling services, but indicated that he would be more prone to contact a mentor from high school. A-1 hopes to own a business in the future. Education is seen as a way to realize personal goals and to combat stereotypes.

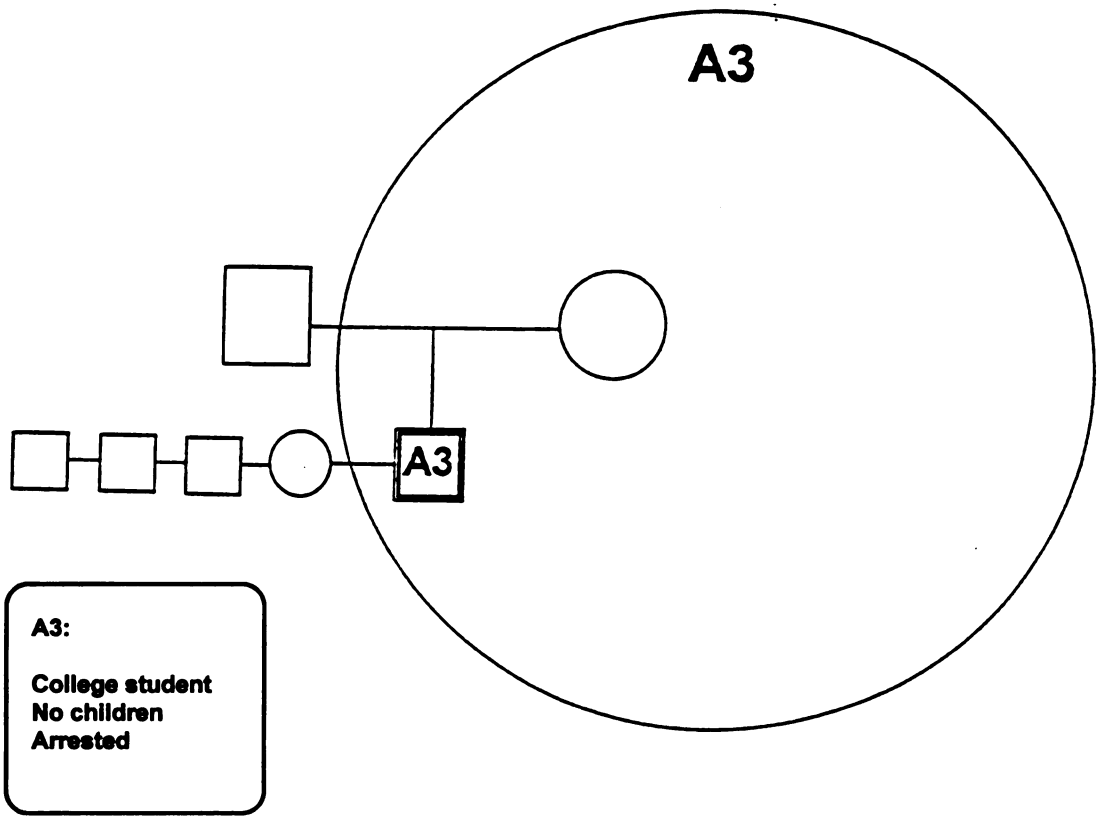


A-2 spoke with conviction about his upbringing and religious faith. He credits his decision to graduate high school and not to participate in crime to a strong religious faith, family emphasis upon education, and participation in student government, sports, and church activities. He indicated that he never considered dropping out of high school, but has thought of interrupting college to pursue a career in gymnastics.

A-2's mother, grandmother, extended family, and fictive kin have been strong sources of support and guidance. He acknowledged that he frequently feels sad and is concerned about the health and well-being of his mother and grandmother. It bothers A-2 that he is frequently characterized by stereotypes

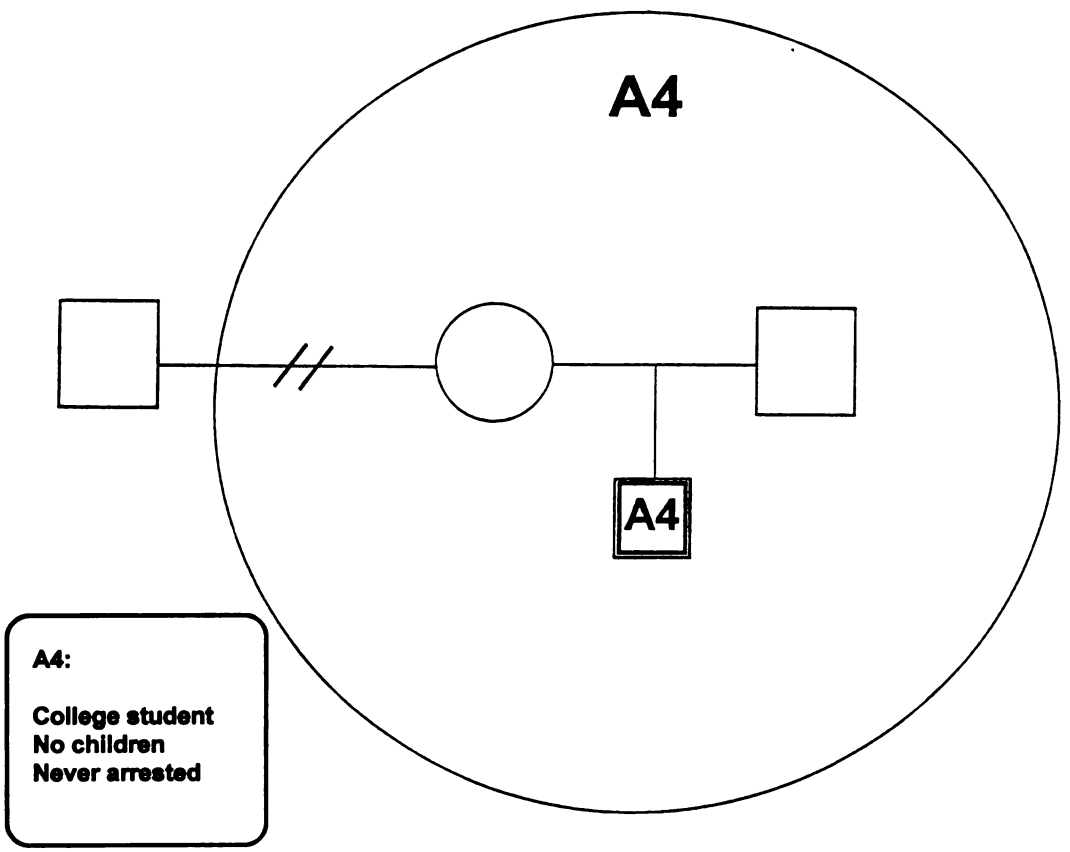
rather than his personal behavior and accomplishments. He participates in many extra curricular activities in college. He believes life for him is more difficult because he is African-American and male. It is not uncommon for him to be hassled by white college peers. "The hate of different races is so rooted in people's minds and their family structure, that they don't even realize what's going on. They don't realize that they might actually be racist."

At the age of 25, A-2 plans to be half done with work on a graduate degree in math or computer science. His plans include continued involvement in some facet of gymnastics, and he hopes to be "working on a wife . . . a beautiful woman." It is his view that there is insufficient cooperation among people, and that there is inadequate attention given to the world's social problems.



A-3 emphasized the respect and admiration that he has for his parents' strength and hard work. He stressed that his father is an integral part of his life, even though his parents are separated. "My parents are from Jamaica . . . and they have come a long way without much formal schooling . . . They came here and they succeeded. We are not homeless or starving and we have a pretty good house." Education and religion are emphasized by A-3's family. Dropping out of high school was not a consideration. He did not recall being encouraged to remain in school by school officials. There were social workers in his high school. He would have utilized their services if he needed them.

A-3's arrest was an experience that he believes ultimately helped him refocus his life in a more positive direction. He wishes not to be affiliated with self-destruction, through either crime or addiction. A-3 reported with pride the accomplishments of African-Americans, but disappointment in the violence and crime. By the age of 25, A-3's goal is to retire on stock market investments. As a secondary plan, he expects to be employed in computer engineering. Humanity's lack of concern for the environment is one of A-3's primary concerns about the future.



An infectious smile, coupled with a warm, shy, and polite manner formulate initial impressions of A-4. He described himself as pleasant and easy to get along with. A-4 readily acknowledged his admiration and love for his mother. She is one of the most important influences in his life. A-4's decisions regarding staying in school and not participating in crime are in part, anchored in his desire to do nothing that would cause his mother pain. His father frequently encourages him to be better than he (father) is. "That's what I am aspiring to be."

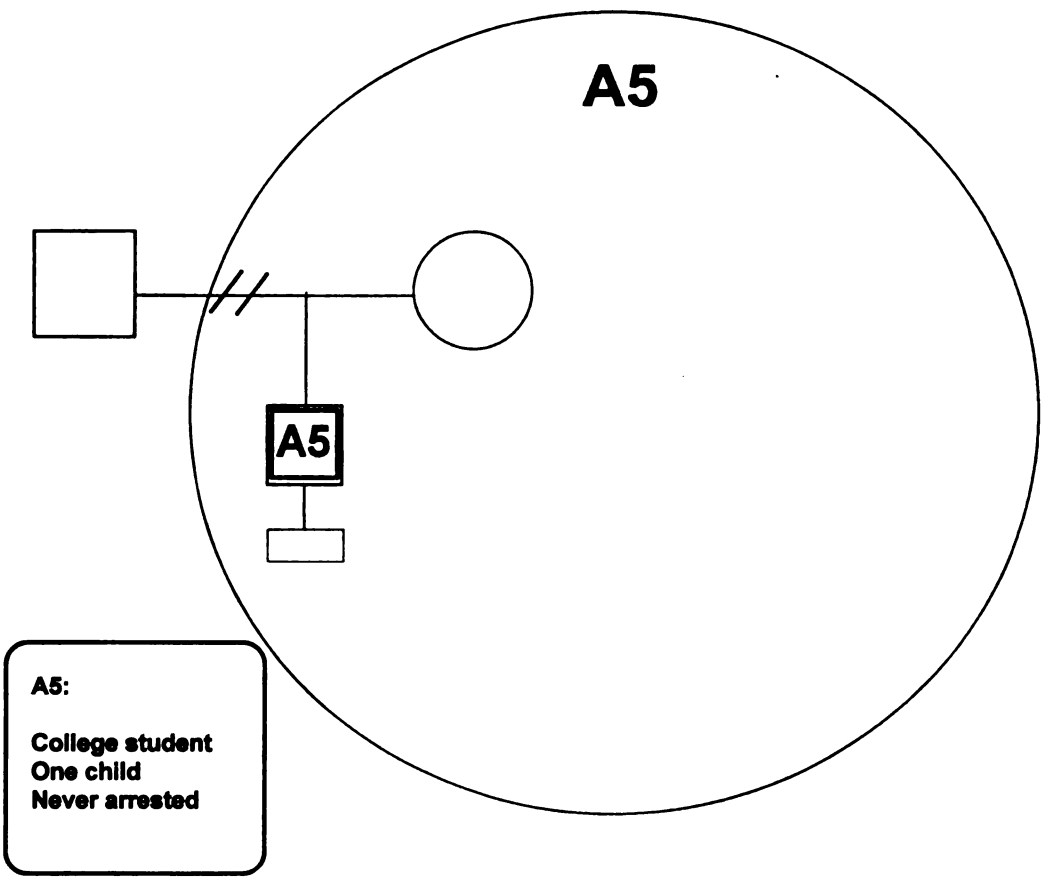
A-4 reports no thoughts of dropping out of high school, but admits that college is a struggle. The social support that resulted from A-4's sports

participation in high school, does not exist in college. A-4 is saddened that some question whether he can/will avoid following the footsteps of a friend who dropped out of college. He recalls little encouragement from high school teachers or counselors for students to stay in school. There were school social workers at A-4's high school. He thinks he *might* have talked with a school social worker if he had a problem. He does not want to be a statistic, but related that he barely escaped death when shots were fired at one of his peers.

It is A-4's opinion that one's future is just as dependent upon luck as it is personal behavior. "Sometimes it does not matter whether you do anything wrong -- you can still be a statistic and you can still be arrested." A-4 is very concerned for the present and future welfare of others. He does not think that people care enough about each other, and worries that his mother and others he cares about will become victims of a tragedy.

Religion is an important component of A-4's life. He has relied upon religion to help him cope when he has been stopped by police for what he considered were unfounded reasons. "It made me feel angry, like I wanted to break something. Nothing I could do about it . . . just prayed about it and kept going on with my life. You can't live in the past."

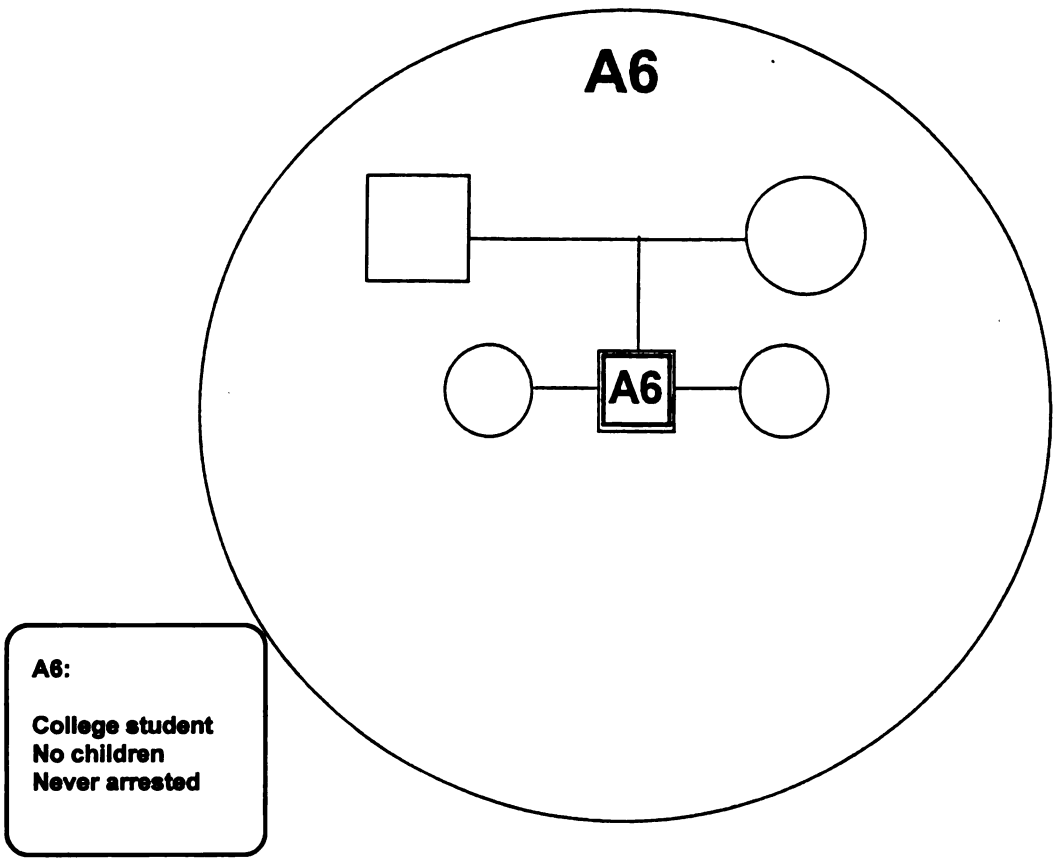
A-4 dreams of becoming an actor. He plans to get a college degree in case his dream does not become a reality.



A-5 considers himself to be confident, easy going, a good listener, and in control of his life. He does not want to be ignorant, selfish, unmotivated, or unemployed. He never considered dropping out of high school, but has considered dropping out of college. A-5's mother was instrumental in his decision to stay in college. Other than once or twice upon entry into high school, A-5 does not recall school officials encouraging students to stay in school. A-5 does not recall whether there were school social workers at his high school, but said he would not have talked with one about personal matters.

A-5 attributes the fact that he has not been arrested to not committing crimes. Nevertheless, he has been stopped by police numerous times. It bothers him, but he is resigned that it will happen. It is A-5's opinion that fear of black males, abuse of authority, and lack of understanding are possible reasons why he has been stopped by police with such frequency.

A-5 does not think about the future a great deal, but worries about being able to get a job and being able to provide for a family. He believes that life is a struggle for Blacks in the United States, and that everything revolves around money and power. He also believes the rules of the game differ for Blacks and Whites. According to A-5, it's hard for Blacks to play the game when they lack the money, power and influence that historically have been held by Whites. He believes ethics and morality are not considered in most circumstances, and that he is helpless to change things.



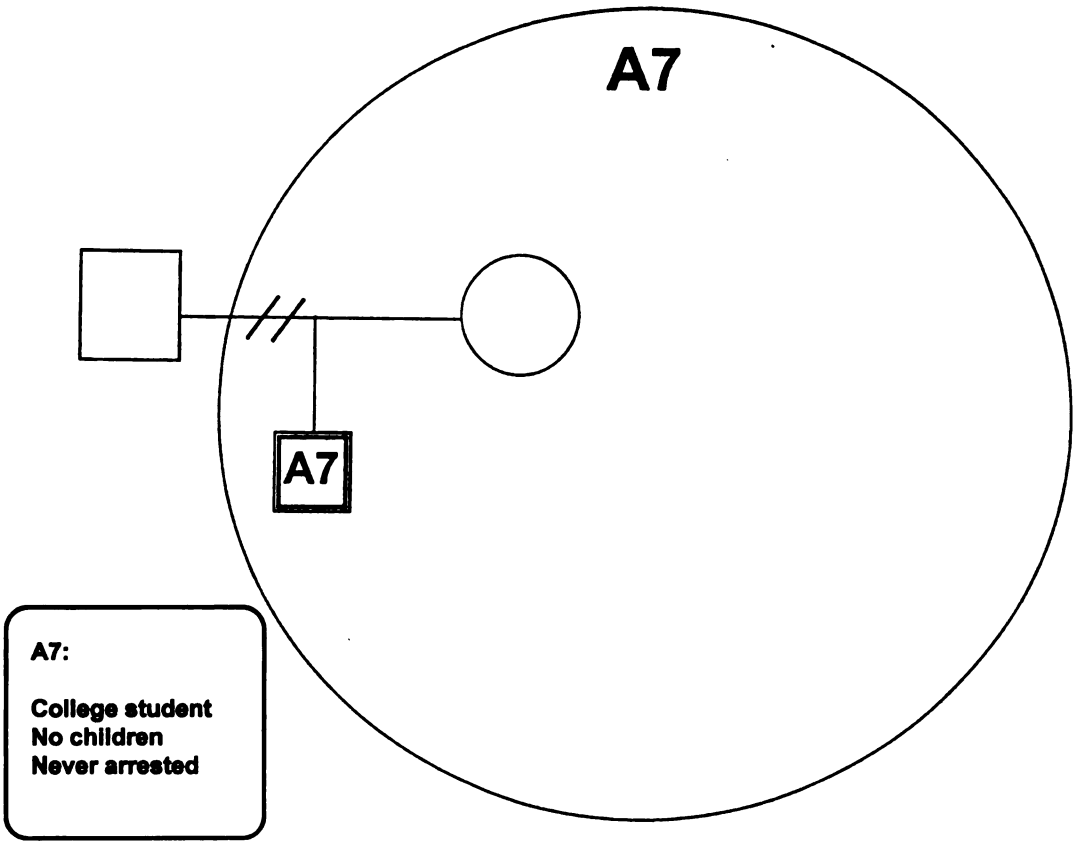
A-6 is a high school graduate and college student. He was Captain of his basketball team for four years, and President of Junior Achievement for one year. In addition, he holds leadership positions in his church. Religion and education are prominent family values that have influenced A-6. He has high achievement goals for the present and future, and tries to be a responsible person. "I try to keep my priorities in order --- school work first, maintain an even temper, keep smiling and stay positive."

A-6 has a close knit nuclear and extended family, and an extensive network of support from peers and family friends. He acknowledged that he has had thoughts of suicide (albeit not pervasive) within a few months prior to

the interview. A-6 believes that as a people, African-Americans are strong. He also believes that African-American males are very strong, but *they* do not always realize it, and others do not always notice it.

A-6 has never been arrested, but has been stopped by police more than once "for vague reasons when they could be looking for criminals." A-6 has friends and acquaintances who have been victims of violence.

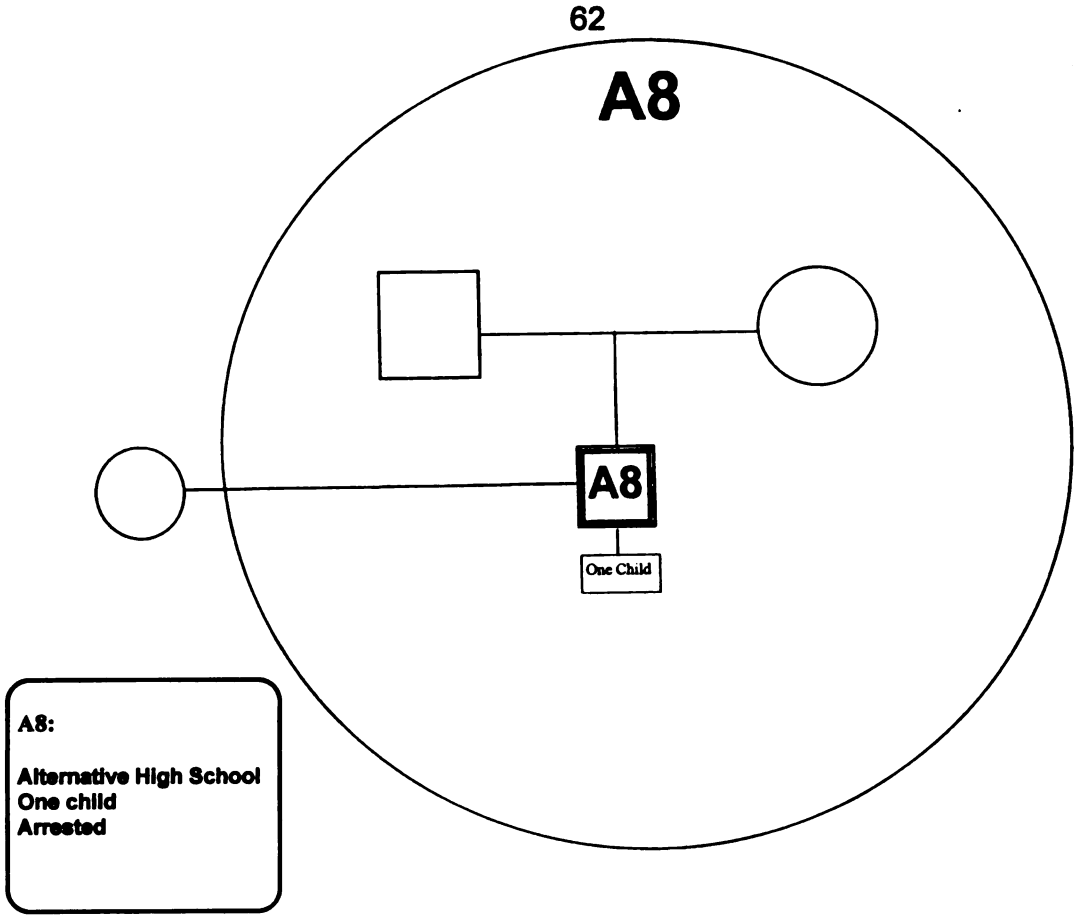
It is A-6's opinion that the world is getting worse and that people tend not to think of others --- only themselves. He described his outlook as pessimistic, and suggested feeling like "a needle in a haystack." His fears for the future include the extent to which individuals rely upon computers rather than themselves to do their thinking and their work.



A-7 lists intelligence, independence, and his opinion that he is probably one of the friendliest people you will meet among his best attributes. He is a high school graduate and college student who misses the support of high school peers, and finds the pressures of college life difficult. He considers education a vehicle for future achievement, but is concerned that employment opportunities might not be available to him in spite of a college education. A-7 did not know if there were social workers at his high school, but would not have been opposed to seeing a social worker. He recalls few occasions when students were encouraged to stay in school.

A-7 does not want to be a statistic, or someone who is not intelligent. It disturbs him that "people look at me and think I am a criminal. I have to constantly work to disprove stereotypes --- some of which I know, some of which I don't." Although A-7 has not been arrested, nor done anything that would cause arrest, he feels that he must try to make up for what many African-Americans males who are incarcerated are unable to do.

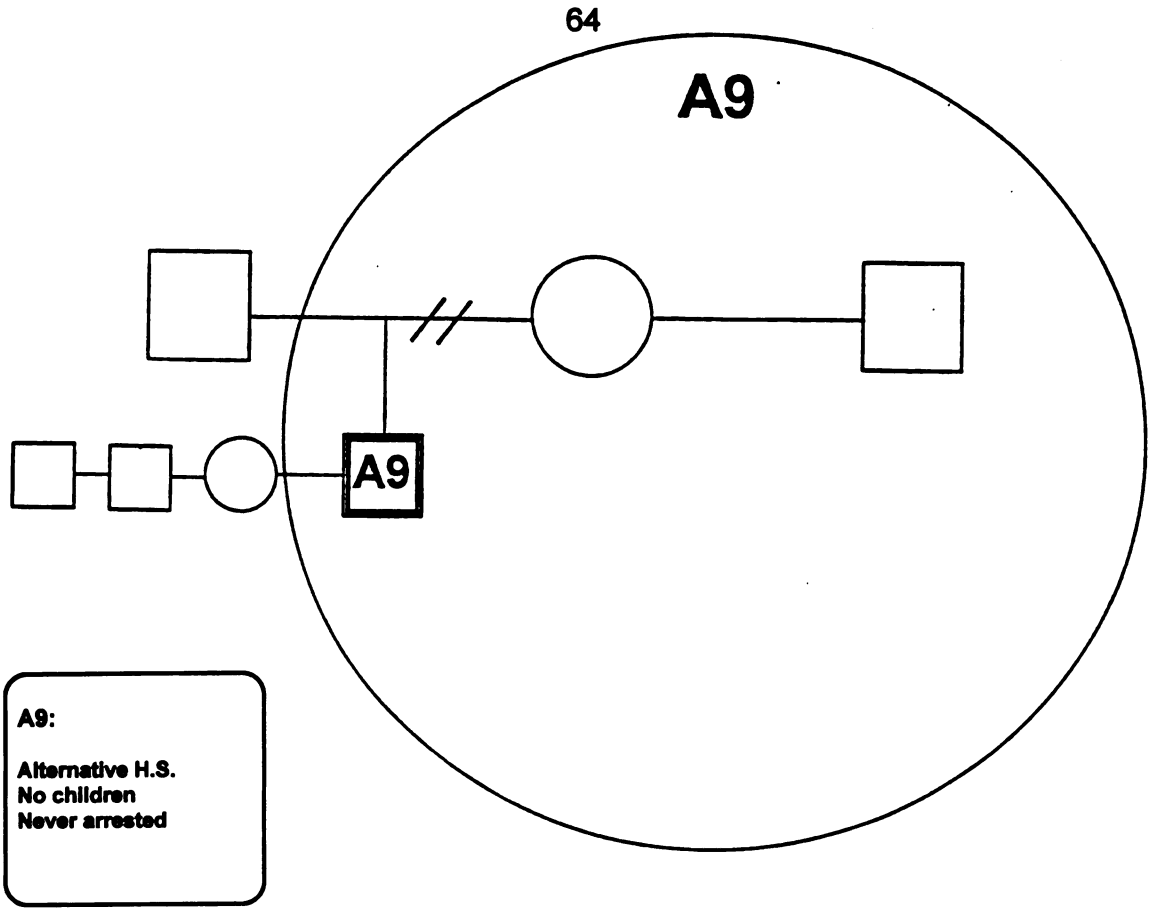
Participation in sports provides an outlet for stress for A-7. He hopes to become a journalist, and noted that writing provides one of the few opportunities for him to be in control. In A-7's opinion, the world in which we live is a very scary place.



Soft spoken and polite, A-8 readily spoke of the network of support provided by peers, fellow workers, and a close knit family and extended family. Religion is an important component of his family life. A-8's decision to attend an alternative high school was influenced by upbringing and his family's emphasis upon education and staying in school. He plans to graduate high school and attend college, but recognizes that his responsibilities as a teenage father make the task enormous. A-8 would like to be an astronaut, but doubts that it will ever happen. Most of his time is spent in school, working, or spending time with his son and his son's mother.

A-8 describes himself as dependable, hardworking, non-judgmental, and easy to get along with. Although he believes that he was acting in self-defense during the altercation that resulted in his arrest and incarceration, A-8 has worked hard to stay in school and out of trouble. "I just stay off the streets . . . I hang with some of my friends . . . but if they're going to do something like smoke weed, things like that, I let them go. I just mind my own business."

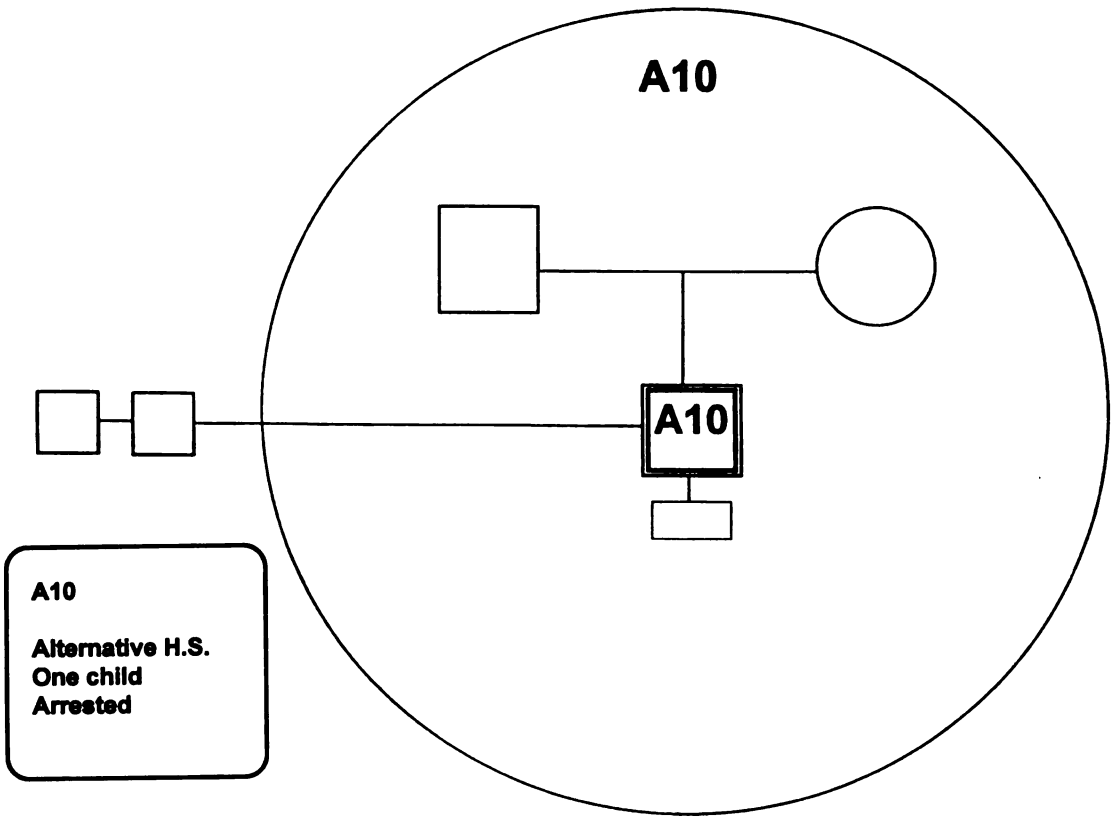
A-8 does not want to be a bum or criminal. His most admired adults are his father, because he is a hard worker and a good man, and his brother-in-law, because he is hardworking, in college, and a Christian. It is A-8's belief that "no matter what, you can't give up . . . you *got* to keep getting up."



Themes of self-improvement and perseverance dominated the content of A-9's interview. He advocated vigorously for improving the social and economic health of the Black community. A-9 has a strong commitment to helping others and building harmony in the Black community. When A-9 considers what he would like for himself in the future, he states he does not want to be a quitter. He wants to be a caring person, "because that's the key. The more you help, the better off you will be. I'd rather be a friend than an enemy to you."

A strong relationship with his mother, and a supportive teacher played a role in A-9's return to high school. In addition to family problems, A-9 left

home to care for an ailing relative. "I felt like I had all of the burden on me. I met Mr. Smith (teacher) at a time that was really hard for me. I didn't really want to go to school. Mr. Smith encouraged me. He was not like some adults who just said '*Well, if you don't want to learn . . .* ' Mr. Smith kept bothering me, and showed me that he cared. That made me want to care. My mother was always there. She always pushed me. That's the bright spot."



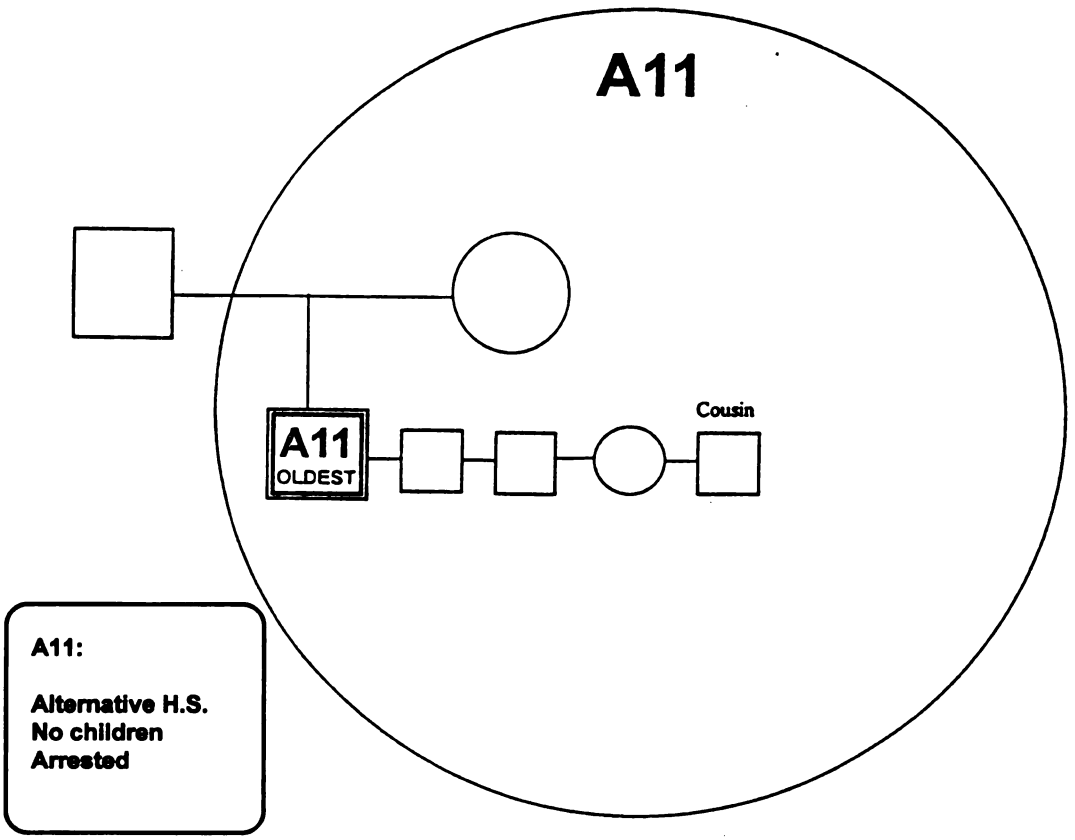
Barely audible and with little verbal or facial expression, A-10 completed the interview. He reported few friends and tenuous connections with immediate and/or extended family members. He was able to think of only one positive attribute about himself --- that he gets along with people. A-10 has one child and reported having been arrested several times for driving without a license, and/or minor offenses. He dislikes it that he is automatically assumed to be a dope dealer.

A-10 is currently unemployed, but maintains that he provides financial support for his child. He made the decision to return to school because he wants to plan for the future --- just in case he lives to the age of 35.

Otherwise, A-10 stated he had no thoughts about the future, and that he did not wish to discuss the future. He did not deny thoughts of suicide, however, he considered them to be infrequent.

A-10 reported that prior to a sports head injury, he had been a Team Captain and Class President. According to A-10, he has recovered from his injury, but he has had no interest and/or involvement in sports or other school/community activities since his accident several years ago.

During a brief retreat from what appeared to be almost expressionless responses, A-10 strongly declared his regrets for dropping out of high school. "I think I messed up my life when I dropped out of school. I'd be in college right now, still playing sports. I wish I had never dropped out of school. But I did, so now I'm back in school trying to make up for what I did. But now, I cannot play my sports. That was a big part of my life." A-10 did not approach school personnel prior to quitting school. He recalls sports team members encouraging him to stay in school, but not teachers, counselors or social workers.



Articulate and commanding in his presence, A-11 began the interview stating that he wanted to meet the person who was interested in talking with young African-American males. He talked without hesitance about his experiences. It is A-11's opinion that faith and belief in God are the only things that are certain. He is in awe of his grandmother's strength and spirituality. A-11 has been suspended from high school more than once. He stated that teachers find him to be intimidating. Although he admits to having assaulted others, the intimidation description does not coincide with A-11's perception of himself. He met with a school social worker, but he did not like her. "She didn't understand me."

A-11's family's emphasis upon education has contributed to his decision to remain in school. According to A-11, many of his extended family members are college graduates and/or are actively involved in school, community, and church activities. "Everyone in the family supported them when they were in college. I think that's really important, . . . and important in my decision to change the way I want to live my life." A-11 wants to graduate high school and attend college, but noted that *he* might present some of his greatest barriers. "I don't want to be underneath my mother my whole life. I want to be my own man, but it seems like it's hard for me right now to do what I'm supposed to do to maintain. I don't have my license. I can't find my birth certificate or social security card, which means I can't get a job. It just seems depressing and I keep procrastinating. I just think I'm not as motivated as I used to be."

It is A-11's perception that humanity and the earth are dying. "Everywhere you look, somebody's blowing up an airplane, shooting up an abortion clinic, or killing somebody over their color. How long can we keep contaminating the air and water, and taking from the earth and putting nothing back . . . ?"

Moments after the conclusion of his interview, A-11 returned with a poem he had written. The researcher asked, and received permission to include it with this study.

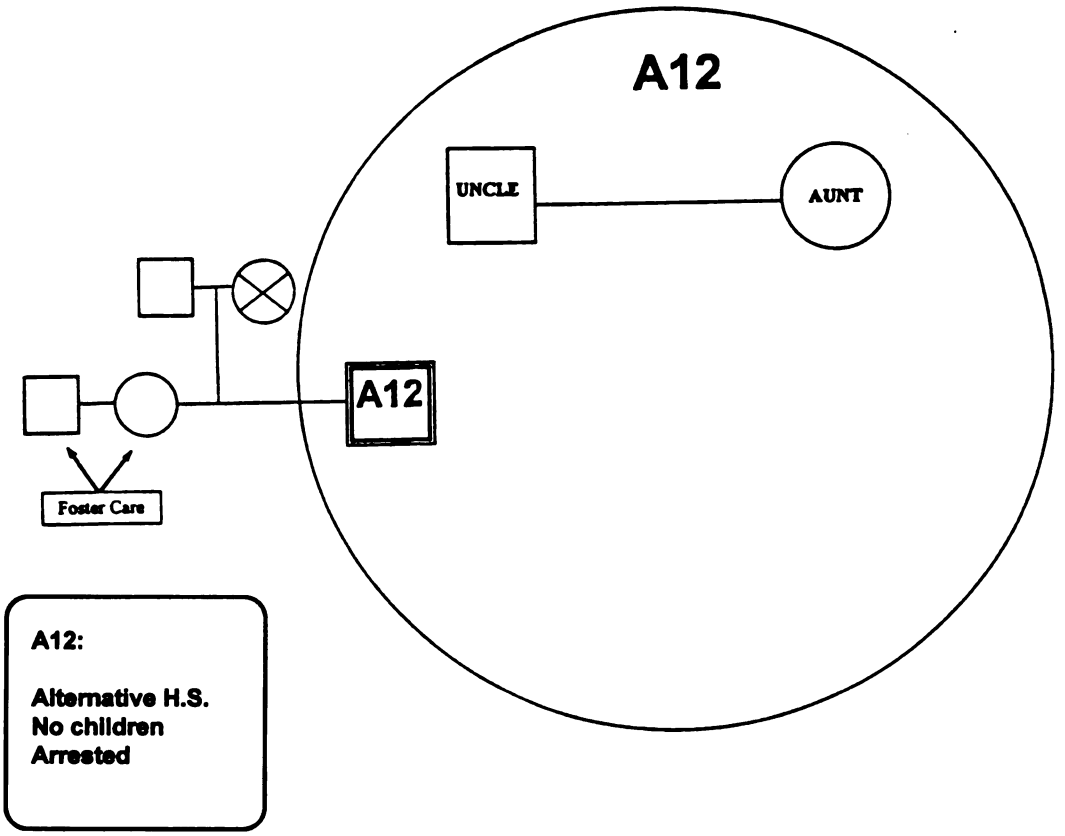
DESTINY

by

Lost, can you find me?

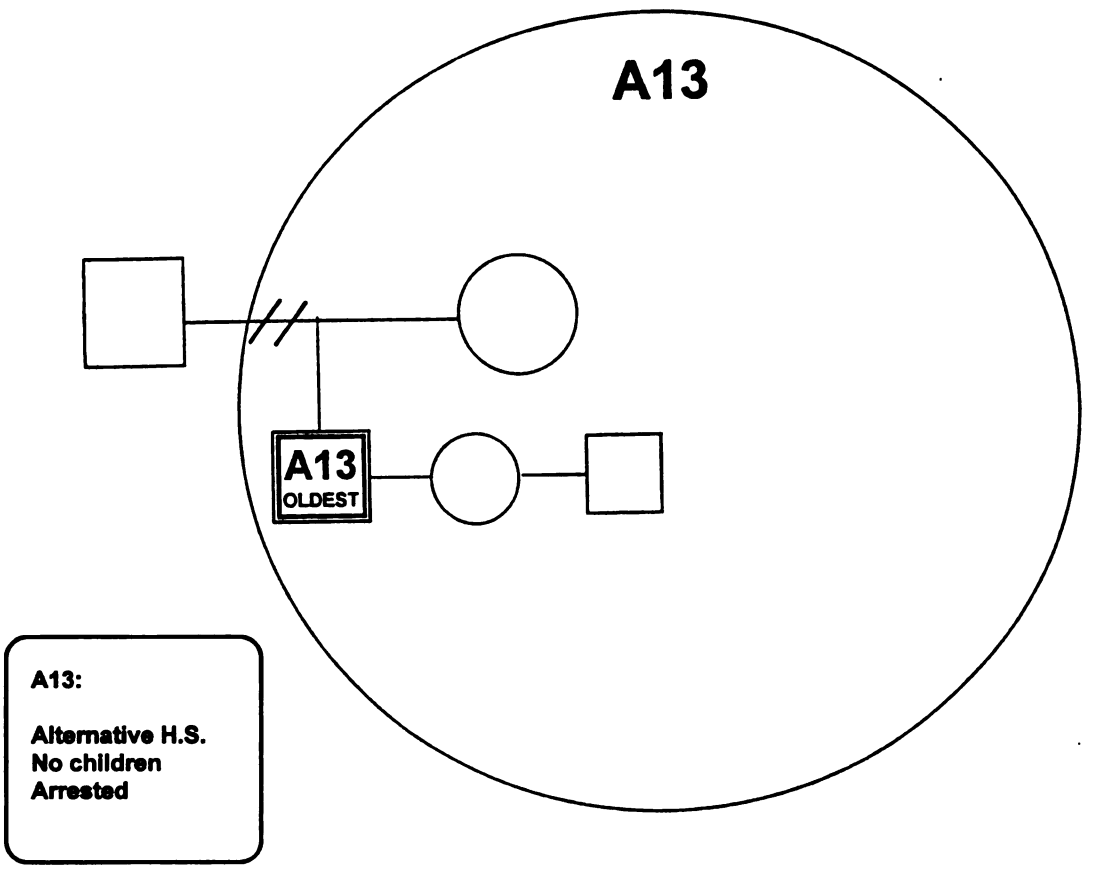
The sadness and fear bringz fire inside
afraid to die but filled with too much pride
and envy and hate and anger and sad
and alternating stages of happy and glad.
why I don't know progress is so slow
we labor through life some say just to die
and you rate me third person because I get high
or sell drugz or rob or steal or maybe even kill
but these thingz come natural in the way I feel.
Can't find peace when therez none left to find
I'm not always violent just when offset in my mind
I want to do something and make my mom proud,
but all that follows me is bad luck and dark clouds
destiny awaits but it I can't see
all I know is that I want to be
someone to love and one who can love
or destroyed by myself with my evil black glove.

A-11



Energetic and talkative, A-12 has many hopes and plans for the future. His greatest desire is to make a home for his brother and sister who are currently in foster homes. A-12 resides in an area of high crime and violence. Some family members encouraged his past involvement in crime. Although A-12 has been arrested and placed in juvenile detention several times, it was during a stay in the county jail that he began to take a closer look at himself. Upon release from jail, "I said to myself, no more of that man. This is no way to be an example to my younger brother and sister, or to other members of my family. I had to face reality, and make a choice for myself."

According to A-12, the influence and love of his aunts and uncle, faith in God, and a youth pastor at a church he attends have been great sources of support for him. He is dedicated to trying to help others who might be struggling. Many of his peers from elementary school are incarcerated for selling drugs. "Some are doing what they know to do to survive . . . You can't get mad at people when they only know a certain amount of things to do . . . It's hard for them. I don't put them down for what they do. I try to help them out, I talk to them . . . help point them in a positive direction." A-12 is quite concerned about others' perceptions of him. He shares his family's wish that he will become a nice young man. "I don't want people to say that they wouldn't want to be around me -- that I am bad news. I don't want people to say bad things about me, or that I am a bad person, because I am not." A-12 would like to graduate high school and attend college. He would like to some day own a business. A-12 will abandon his plans for college in order to take care of his brother and sister, and to make it possible for them to have a better life. His view of the world is that it is corrupt. "There is too much racism, violence, hate and too many unhappy, intolerant people."



A-13 describes himself as understanding, compassionate, and an unofficial planner and organizer among his peers. Like all other participants in this study, he has been stopped by the police many times. He often questions the actions of the police, and is sometimes arrested because of this. "It makes me feel inferior because of the fact that they can come up to you and just put you in the back of the car. From that point on, you probably already have a crowd, and you look like a criminal and you haven't even done anything." A-13 is saddened by the violent deaths of some of his peers. Even though he does not want to die a violent death, he thinks it may happen. According to A-

13, danger comes with the territory, "and if the situation calls for it --- when it's a matter of protection, I say do it."

When A-13 dropped out of high school, he became bored staying home. He realized that he had made a foolish error. In addition, his mother would not permit him to stay home doing nothing. A-13 wants to attend college, and wants to own a business some day. He believes he can reach his goals if he is determined to do so. A-13 worked with a school social worker when he was in elementary school. His experience was positive.

A-13 worries about what the future holds for his younger siblings. It also bothers him that his mother worries about his safety whenever he leaves home. A-13 thinks there are many problems in the world today, but he is optimistic about the future. Although he believes that it is a struggle to be African-American and male, he considers it a blessing. "Black people have so many gifts and talents, and have greatness in so many different ways."

Discussion of the Data Analysis Process

Following the completion of the ethnographic interviews with the thirteen sample participants in this study, each interview was transcribed. Collectively, these transcriptions averaged 20 pages each. In addition, each participant completed the Children's Nowicki Strickland Internal External Locus of Control measure. The results of this quantitative measure were reviewed after the analysis of the qualitative data.

The researcher listened to each taped interview and read the transcriptions of each taped interview many times. Copies of the transcribed interviews were made using different colors of paper. Participants' responses were grouped according to their relationship to the qualitative research questions in the study: To what do sample participants attribute their completion of high school, or termination from high school, and participation or non-participation in crime? How do African-American male adolescent participants describe their world view?

A poster board was set up for each participant. Following the tabulation of locus of control scores, the process for analysis is as follows:

1. Each subject's interview transcript was reproduced in several colors.
2. Each subject was assigned a poster board.

3. Selected statements from each subject's transcript were grouped according to their relationship to the research questions (high school completion/non-completion, participation/non-participation in crime and world view). NOTE: Pink = Crime; Blue = World View; Yellow = School.
4. Each participant's statements regarding world view, school and crime were attached to their poster boards.
5. Each subject's set of pink, blue and yellow responses were evaluated for content regarding (a) risk factors, (b) protective factors, and (c) resilience/competence.

The poster boards provided a visual representation of the content of the interviews and revealed a coherent thematic pattern generated by participants' responses. These themes include relationships, religion, and sadness, and are reflected in narrative statements and illustrative tables.

For example, the impact of the *spur* of prevailing negative stereotypes about African-American males was referenced by all participants. This factor influenced participants' decisions and behavior in different ways. Some expressed frustration, and some indicated sadness. An additional finding was that for a majority of participants, mothers were mentioned as role models or important sources of direction and/or support.

The color coded poster boards provided a vehicle from which the researcher could visually identify categories and potential themes within

categories. Once themes were identified, they were transferred to a graphic patterned after an eco-map. It is from this graphic summarization and the aforementioned process of content analysis that findings of the study are communicated.

Some of the participants' actual responses are included in this study. The researcher attempted to select those participant words and responses that would capture, interpret, and explain the way the sample participants' experience and make sense of their lives (Rudestam & Newton, 1992).

The coding technique utilized in this study represents one method by which these data can be organized and understood. Other methods of analyzing other levels of the data, and constructing meanings could be employed in the future.

Qualitative Interview Findings

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with participants to learn about the manner in which the sample population made sense of their lives and experiences. An interview guide with open-ended questions, probes and follow-up questions was used to gather data that pertained to the qualitative research questions. The data from which the findings are derived are self-reported by participants. Participants were encouraged to express themselves in terms that best expressed their feelings and perceptions. When asked how participants thought people unlike themselves refer to them, and people like them, some participants were noticeably hesitant to state certain derogatory references. Over half responded with comments such as,

"I can't say the term in your presence," or

"It would not be respectful to say to you."

More than once, participants asked:

"Are you *sure* it is okay to say what I think?"

Following the researcher's acknowledgement of participants' respect for her chronological maturity, and an open invitation for participants to "speak their minds," interviews commenced --- derogatory references and all.

Factors That Contributed to Completion of High School

Parents, and the value parents place on education are among the factors influencing high school completion among the sample population. Six

out of seven participants indicated parental influence contributed to their decision-making regarding high school completion. Parents' expectations that high school *"would be completed,"* appeared to be of greater importance than the school experience itself for some participants. A-5 and A-7 did not consider certain aspects of their secondary school experience to have been particularly supportive or positive, but they *never* thought of dropping out of high school. Among the total sample, 46% reported they never considered dropping otu of high school. A-5 considered taking a break from college and finishing later. He deferred withdrawing from college after talking to his mother:

> She said if I *really* thought I needed a break, it wouldn't hurt to take one. But then she said, it's a good chance you won't finish once you stop. I really thought about that.

The support and camaraderie that result from participation in sports and other community and team-building activities, are additional factors that influenced participants' decisions to complete high school. The Upward Bound Program, and participation in track and football, were pivotal for A-1. There were people who cared. In auditory tones, and a facial expression that suggested pleasant reminiscence, A-1 related:

> It (was) just like family.

For most respondents (six of seven), participation in sports offered a rare venue in which they experienced a sense of mastery and control. A-4 experienced the pressures that occurred when teammates relied upon him. When he came through for them:

> It was a good feeling, because they looked up to you and relied on *you*.

Because of his athletic capabilities and what he could do, A-13 felt in control when he played sports. As Captain of his high school basketball team, A-6 noted:

> It makes me feel that people can depend on me, that they feel that I am responsible.

Factors That Contributed to Non-Completion of High School

In this study, non-completion of high school was defined as voluntary and/or involuntary termination or removal from high school prior to earning a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). Family problems (33%), poor decision-making (33%), and lack of interest (16%) are among the stated reasons for non-completion of high school. Suspension from high school for reasons that ranged from lack of attendance to disruptive behavior is the primary contributing factor for non-completion of high school among the sample population. With two exceptions, interviews with participants revealed that many do not consider themselves to have dropped out of high school.

(Interestingly, most had entertained thoughts of dropping out of high school more than a few times). This perception remained even among those participants who did not attend school for many weeks in succession. A-9 stated that he never dropped out of school, however, he:

> stopped going to school for about three months . . .

A-9 left the state to be with an ill grandparent.

One participant attributes his non-completion of high school to his loss of interest following a sports injury (A-10). Another stated that listening to the wrong people, and being weak minded, played a role in his four week absence from school (A-13).

Factors That Contributed to Returning to High School

An unanticipated finding in this study was participants' (46%) return to high school. It is noteworthy that some of the factors that contributed to participants returning to school coincided with factors that contributed to high school completion among the sample. A-8 was suspended from school. A-8's parents always stressed the importance of education and staying in school. According to A-8, he:

> was messing up pretty bad . . . not going to school,
>
> etc., but I never considered dropping out of school.

Among most (83%) of the participants who *did* consider dropping out of school, the parents' and/or mothers' expectation of school attendance factored into

their decision to continue their education. Half of the participants wanted their mothers to be proud of them, and half indicated that the support of a teacher and/or pastor influenced their decision to return to high school. Additional reasons for returning to high school include self improvement, planning for the future, and to attend college.

Factors That Contributed to Non-Participation in Crime

For purposes of this study, non-participation in crime is defined as absence of involvement in law breaking activities that resulted in arrest and/or incarceration. The majority of the sample population were non-participants in crime. For some participants, religious faith, upbringing (family's values), and avoidance of behavior(s) that might bring pain to their mothers, served to deter their involvement in crime. Over half of the sample in this category take measures to avoid situations and circumstances that might lead to crime. However, just as many suggested that the aforementioned actions may be insufficient and/or provide no guarantees. All sample participants have been stopped by police numerous times. Based upon their direct experiences (and the experiences of others with whom they may be acquainted), it is not surprising that participants consider that luck and chance have played a role in them not getting arrested. A-3's experiences are not atypical:

> I live in a predominantly white community. White police officers stop me just to ask me for license,

registration, and proof of insurance, but give no probable reason to stop me for obstructing the law or breaking the law.

A-6 related a similar story of being stopped by police:

... because I had a chip on the right side of my tail light. The cover was chipped, and they stopped me and said I needed to buy red tape to cover it. I felt that was no reason to stop me, because it really wasn't noticeable. You had to really, really look at it to see.

A-12's story is more compelling:

I understand the police have a job to do, but they harass you. Like this weekend, I didn't do anything wrong. They handcuffed me and put me in the back of the car. The handcuffs were on backwards, and I told the policeman I couldn't feel my fingertips. He said, "Yeah, well me neither, nigger." Then they just kept laughing.

Factors That Contributed to Participation in Crime

The definition for participation in crime in this study is, involvement in lawbreaking activities that resulted in arrest and/or incarceration. The reasons

for arrests/incarcerations among sample participants are as numerous as the number of sample participants who fit the defined criteria. Other than the fact that all six sample participants had histories of arrest and/or incarceration, there was no repetition of the reasons for participation in crime (see Figure 9). Although one participant felt he was acting in self-defense when he was arrested, he nor the other participants denied that they had engaged in activities that could lead to arrest. The participants did not suggest that others were responsible for their behavior and actions. In one instance, it could be argued that familial encouragement to engage in crime exerted extraordinary pressure upon the participant. Nevertheless, A-12 attributed his participation in crime to the fact that he:

> ... wasn't in (his) own state of mind. I was more or less in my own world, but it was all for me and what I wanted. At times I would see that I was just hurting myself.

A-10 knew that he could get arrested for driving without a license, but he related that he:

> ...just had to get around. I had to go. It wasn't worth going to jail, but I did it, and I got caught, so I had to pay for it.

World View

An individual's view of the world based upon the totality of their knowledge and experience(s) was the definition given to participants to consider in their discussions of world view. The interviews provided a glimpse of participants' views of the world, and the way they perceive themselves in connection and conjunction to that world. There was repetition of certain perceptions and themes in participants' responses. Especially strong were perceptions that greed, hatred, and violence (69%) are destroying people, the earth, and the environment. In addition, perceptions were that *too little* concern for others (54%), *too much* racism (46%), and *too much* emphasis upon money and power (61%) exist in the world. Corruption (31%) and the struggle(s) associated with being Black in the United States of America (62%) were also popular themes.

A-2's comments on world view capsulized the thoughts of some of his fellow participants:

> Through my eyes, I see the world as ignorant and corrupt. The way we do things, and the way things happen in the world is biased. The judicial system is biased. The educational system is biased. The world has its faults, and pretends like it doesn't. I don't see anyone working on social problems in the world. Everyone seems to be more concerned about

> political stuff, like who's running what corporation and who has the most votes and influence. They are not concerned about attacking the social problems. It shouldn't be like that. There should be more attention to communication between people and relationships within the communities. Start with communities first, and then move out into the rest of the world.

Many participants' world views suggest frustration and pessimism. In addition to these perceptions, are themes of optimism, hope, and involvement. Four participants voted for the first time in the 1996 election. Another is registered to vote:

> I wanted *my* voice to be heard (A-8).

Most participants thought the Million Man March was a positive event, and springboard for Blacks in America. A-7 thought:

> It was a day for African-American men to get a picture of what they need to do to make this world a better place.

A-6 thought the Million Man March provided an opportunity to unify the:

> ... Black community as a whole, not just with the men. Since it's mostly Black men killing off other

> Black men, they have to start with the Black male first.

A-2's experience was more direct:

> I wished that I was there! During that time, I noticed that it brought more Blacks together here on campus.

Even though A-2's world view reflected criticism, he noted:

> I fit in (the world I described) as one of the people trying to relate to others, and trying to make it a better place.

A-7 thinks the world:

> ...is a very dangerous place. It's also a beautiful place. I love where I live, and I love where I'm from. But, I think it needs to calm down a little bit before it can be a place where I want to raise my children.

A-13 reflected a similar view:

> When I look throughout, I feel the world is not the best place to be right now, but I know that it will be better.

Risk Factors

Multiple risk factors are found among the entire sample population. All have lost friends and/or peers to acts of violence. Some have lost family members as well:

> My friend wasn't killed, but he was shot seven times. My cousin was just recently shot in the mouth. He died. At the time it happens, you hurt inside. You miss seeing them, but there's not too much you can do (A-1).

A-13 noted:

> The impact is hard. I mean it hurts. But I always come to a final conclusion that we weren't put to stay here in the first place. But that's bad. That's not the way to go --- by a gunshot. I never want to go that way.

All participants have been stopped by police for questionable, possibly unwarranted reasons. In addition, all are affected by negative stereotyping and fear of becoming a statistic. Most participants (69%) experienced sadness or depression, and most reported a non-supportive educational environment or experience (54%). Twenty-three percent reported thoughts of suicide, feelings of isolation and feeling burdened by peers' problems. Ninety-two percent have

lost friends to violence, and 15% have lost family members. Thirty-eight percent of sample members worry about the safety and future of their younger siblings and mothers.

Almost half the participants have participated in crime as defined in this study.

Negative stereotypes concerned and affected all participants:

> You know that Black men are often portrayed as thugs and rapists, and stuff. The Million Man March showed that Black men can come together and do right instead of wrong --- that we can actually do something that's productive, that's got nothing to do will all the rest of the stereotypes (A-8).

> I have to constantly work to disprove stereotypes --- some of which I know, some of which I don't (A-7).

Protective Factors

Protective factors buffer, or weaken the intensity of situations, events, and circumstances that increased the vulnerability of sample participants. Family and extended family relationships were important protective factors for the sample participants. Sixty-nine percent reported a network of extended

family members and supportive adults, and 77% reported positive relationships with their parents and family members.

A-13 is keenly aware of the importance of his family members:

> I can always talk to my mom or my grandfather about anything. My family is very supportive of me. If I do certain things, whether it's good or bad, it's still the same love.

> My aunt and uncles raised me, and they pushed me to go through school and get a job instead of run the streets. They take time to listen to me, and I listen to what they tell me. Without them, I would probably be in some kind of trouble (A-12).

> My mom's a strong person. She's just there for me every time I need her. She does so much for me, it just makes me thank God. She shows me how I want to be toward my children (A-4).

> My family is very supportive of me. Basically, if I decide to do anything, as long as it's not anything outrageous or crazy, they're usually behind me

> 100%. They help me out with problems I have. I go to my parents or my family and tell them anything that I am having trouble with, and there won't be any hassles. I can always depend on them (A-5).

A personal and/or family connection with religion was evident among most (77%) sample participants. Many participants (62%) practiced a religion themselves. Most of those who did not, indicated that one (or both - 77%) of their parents did.

> I try to go by Christian ways. Even though everybody in my family is saved, I'm not saved yet, but I read the Bible (A-8).

> When I am home, I attend church every Sunday. I sing in the choir (A-4).

> I go to church occasionally. My father's side of the family attends church weekly. Religion is still in my mother's life, but she doesn't go to church now (A-5).

Some sample participants' reluctance to be paid for participation in this study may be connected to religious and social values that do not support accepting money for contributions to service. To take part in a study that might help others, is an opportunity to "do good," and "good works" do not require payment. (It is also a possibility that participants so desired to have their voices heard, they did not wish to be compensated.)

Involvement and participation in sports was a key factor for many of the sample participants. Among other factors, sports provided relaxation, stress reduction, an outlet for aggression, and peer *and* adult support:

> I played basketball in high school. If I was having trouble at school or anything like that, the basketball coaches or teammates would help if I needed it (A-6).

> I played football. I love the contact. I play a defensive position, which means I like to go and I like to hit people (A-7).

> Sports are very supportive. It's another outlet for me. If things are going bad, I can just forget about everything for awhile. I think sports are good because sometimes you get upset, and before

> thinking do something that you regret. If you have another outlet, maybe you can think about what you're doing. It (sports) calms you down, and you can be a bit more civilized (A-9).

> My brother plays basketball, and he is Captain of his team. It's not really *my* extra curricular activity, but just watching him is all that I need. I play basketball, but really my brother is all the basketball I need (A-11).

Resiliency / Competence

Not unlike studies conducted by Garmezy & Neuchterlein (1992), Gordon (1995), and others, sample participants in this study have demonstrated social and academic competence in the presence of risk factors that mitigate against positive outcomes and adaptations. Indicators of resiliency/competence identified in the literature were well represented among participants. All participants indicated future goals and strategies to accomplish them:

I'm going to school and I'm trying to do the best that I can. I hope to be able to graduate five years from now, and go on to be a successful journalist (A-7).

A year from now, I hope to be more like my father. He works hard to get everything he has. My father introduced me to the stock market. Just in case I happen not to be able to retire from investment profits at 25, I'm going to school to get a degree, so that I can fall back on a more traditional job (A-3).

I want to finish high school, and maybe go to college. I also want to make a home for my younger brother and sister. If my plans don't work out, I might consider the military. When I reach 25, I hope to have a family (A-12).

I want to be an elementary school teacher, and I don't want to be unemployed. I am staying in school, and trying to remain motivated (A-5).

Participants consider education to be a pivotal factor in achieving their goals. Although all are pursuing an education, there is not complete certainty that education will provide the keys to their future:

> A year from now, I want to be out of high school, of course, and probably going to Community College. I hope to find a better job. There might be a job opening where my brother-in-law works. If I can get in there, third shift and on weekends, I'll be all set through college. I'll be able to go to college and graduate, and still have a job (A-8).

Personal Attributes

Friendliness, a sense of humor, and the ability to get along with people, were considered important components of sample participants' lives. Most expressed pride in their possession of these attributes. A-1 tries:

> . . . to talk with everybody, no matter what the color. I still talk to people, even though there is not much you can do when somebody sees you as a stereotype, regardless of what you say or do.

> I am very sociable. I'd rather be a friend than an enemy to you. I'd rather take the good things than the bad things. I'm just easy to get along with (A-9).

> My personality is the best thing about me. I can get along with you easily (A-10).

> My sense of humor, personality, and understanding are the best things about me (A-6).

> I am probably one of the friendliest people you'll meet (A-7).

Leadership in school, religious and community activities were commonly found in the sample. Many participants reported holding offices in Student Government, and/or in church or community activities:

> I was President of Junior Achievement at our high school (A-6).

> In every group I am involved with, I end up being the leader. It is not always voluntary. Someone always

> picks me. I guess people see me as responsible, so I always end up leading something (A-11).

Intelligence

Most participants considered intelligence and determination to be important components of who they are, and what they are. According to A-1:

> I am intelligent, and willing to learn.

A-7 expressed the sentiments of others:

> The best things about me, aside from my mother and my family love, is that I am intelligent, determined, and well read.

Pride

Pride in racial ancestry and identity were frequently expressed by sample participants. Parents and family members were influential in this aspect of participants' development:

> My father tells me that I come from a very strong race. He makes sure that I am reading about our

> history, and educated about the struggles African-Americans have had to endure (A-7).
>
> My uncle likes to talk about Black people who are our founders and ancestors. He talks about Black people in the past and in the present. It's fun to listen to him (A-4).
>
> My father's a Black Puerto Rican, and my mother is Black. They have always told me to never let anyone degrade you. Regardless of what others say, you know where you come from and who you are (A-9).
>
> They (my family) tell me it's hard, because you have to make way for yourself. Nobody's going to *give* you anything. I'm proud to be Black, and I feel like *I am blessed.*

Participants' perceptions of the implications of being male, and African-American in the United States in 1996 were also evident:

Because I am African-American, a lot of people look at me as a criminal. I have to prove that I am not. Maybe by the way I dress, or the music I listen to, people will think of me as some ghetto, project-raised teenager. That is not the truth, but it means that I have to prove to these people that I'm not what they think I am (A-7).

I have to strive to break the barriers. Break the chains --- break that view that African-American males are inferior, and can't run businesses. I'm going to prove them wrong (A-1).

You've gotta stay strong, maintain, and do better for yourself and your people. You should want to make it, and bring as many as you can with you. If you help a person, and that person helps someone else, we can rebuild (A-9).

If I go to a job interview with the same qualifications as a white man, and it's a white corporation, most

> likely, the odds are that they will probably pick the white man. I've got to beat the odds (A-4).

Participants consider discrimination and racism to be a factor that has affected their lives to a degree. The impact was stated most often in reference to negative stereotypes, harassment by police, and in future opportunities for employment. Interestingly, sample participants tended *not* to think that discrimination because of race or gender would hinder them from getting the amount of education that they wanted. However, participants *do* believe that race and gender will be prominent factors in their access to employment when they enter the labor market.

Strategies for Survival

"Words to live by," and/or personal mottos surfaced during interviews with some participants. Expressions such as "making it," "keep getting up," and "maintain(ing)" were associated with participants' strategies to survive and/or negotiate within their social environment:

> The way I see it, we've got to 'maintain.' A lot of times things don't go right because people are scared to talk. If I have an opinion, or something to

say, I am going to say it. But, if I know it may hurt somebody, I might phrase it a little differently (A-9).

Crime is everywhere. You can't escape it, but you have to 'make it,' no matter what. A few of my friends might say, 'come on man, let's smoke some weed or something.' 'No, man, you go ahead. Knock yourself out. I'll still be here when you get back.' That's how I play, I laugh all the time when I'm talking to them, but I wouldn't want to be around them. They respect me for that (A-12).

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Internal locus of control refers to people who tend to perceive the events in their lives to result from consequences of their own behavior (Yates et al., 1994). External locus of control suggests a person perceives events in their lives to be determined by forces such as luck, chance, or powerful others (Yates, et al., 1994). The implications and significance of internal and external locus of control are addressed in greater depth in Chapters I and II of this study.

The sample population's locus of control scores were examined relative to their relationship to high school completion/non-completion, and participation/non-participation in crime (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this study, locus of control scores of 13.0 or above, were indicative of an external locus of control orientation. The sample mean locus of control score was 16.4. Individual locus of control scores ranged between 13.0 and 25.0. Six of the nine participants whose locus of control scores were between 13.0 and 16.0 were among those sample participants who had not completed high school. Of the four participants whose locus of control scores ranged between 17.0 and 25.0, all had completed high school.

The locus of control scores for participants who did not participate in crime ranged between 13.0 and 25.0. The locus of control scores for those participants who did participate in crime were clustered between 13.0 and 16.0.

LOCUS OF CONTROL SCORES
(Total Sample Mean = 16.4)

Locus of Control Scores	High School Completion	Non-completion of High School	Participation in Crime	Non-participation in Crime
A-1 = 17	X			X
A-2 = 18	X			X
A-3 = 15	X		X	
A-4 = 25	X			X
A-5 = 13	X			X
A-6 = 15	X			X
A-7 = 20	X			X
A-8 = 15		X	X	
A-9 = 16		X		X
A-10 = 13		X	X	
A-11 = 15		X	X	
A-12 = 16		X	X	
A-13 = 16		X	X	

FIGURE 2

All sample participants scored within the external locus of control range. The locus of control scores of those participants who did *not* complete high school (but have returned to alternative high school), and *did* participate in crime, are concentrated between 13.0 and 16.0. The locus of control scores for sample participants who did complete high school, and *did not* participate in crime, are scattered between 13.0 and 25.0.

The greatest concentration of locus of control scores for the total sample population falls between 15.0 and 17.0. In response to two of the research questions, there is a relationship between locus of control scores and completion/non-completion of high school, and participation/non-participation in crime. That a difference exists among the sample population's locus of control scores is evident. The statistical significance of the differences cannot be determined because the sample size does not permit statistical inferences. However, among the participants in this study, non-completion of high school, and participation in crime, resulted in locus of control scores that fall within the range of 13.0 and 16.0. Conversely, completion of high school, and non-participation in crime, resulted in a wider range of external locus of control scores. Although statistical significance of these results cannot be analyzed at this point, there is strong evidence that within the "external nature" of participants' locus of control orientations, some scores are closer to the "internal" continuum than others. According to the definitions in this study, it appears the "more internal" participants were not as resilient as those with

greater externalization. Future research with a larger sample would provide more quantitative information regarding these findings. The qualitative approach employed in this study, provided the richness of understanding and insight that is not forthcoming with quantitative measures alone. Without the qualitative data, conclusions based upon quantitative locus of control results would have, at best, been misleading.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Less than four decades ago, this researcher recalls from first hand experience that life within the United States for African-Americans was prefaced, and defined by overt racism, segregation, and racial discrimination. Justice, equity, open access to education, housing, economic opportunities, and the American dream were neither an expectation, nor an option for many African-Americans. Although the most visible acts of racial discrimination were concentrated in the southern United States, no African-American escaped their reach.

Within the structure of families and African-American social communities, psycho-social, psycho-emotional spheres of support were developed to provide protection from penetration by hostile environmental forces. Families were the center sphere, followed by African-American social and religious communities, and next the larger social, global environment (Billingsly, 1968). All African-Americans were vulnerable to the effects of a racist society, but African-American males were (and are) very vulnerable to wanton, unpredictable, and sometimes deadly physical, structural and/or emotional violence (Hill, 1997; Frazier, 1957).

Between the 1960's and 1980's, the need for some of the protective armor provided by African-American families and social/religious communities, began to slowly dissipate as laws that supported social segregation and discrimination were overturned. Few African-American youth born within the past two and a half decades have as a part of their personal history, direct experience with overt, systematic racism, segregation, and discrimination. The networks of support, and the cloak of protection provided by African-American families and social communities, also have not been a part of their life experience.

A disenfranchising system of laws, social policies and discriminatory behavior by the dominant culture, were a tangible, external force against which African-Americans and others openly struggled and fought. A more elusive, diversified, and less tangible external environment punctures the spheres of family/community support and protection that were present in years past (Hill, 1997). The covert, sometimes unconscious, unintentional nature of institutional racism clouds its presence, and makes it less open to identification and condemnation (Hill, 1997). The fruits of the struggle for civil rights have made it possible for the African-American middle class to be more mobile, and more able to reside and work in the sphere of the larger social environment (Wilson, 1987). Successful efforts to dismantle practices of discrimination and segregation have made it possible for many African-Americans to have a better chance at achieving the American dream. In an ironic twist of fate, the

spheres of protection and support have become porous. Their energy and focus are siphoned into many directions, not the least of which are economic instability, teen violence, AIDS, homelessness, and others (Hill, 1997). Access to the American dream for some, depletes the resources that fuel access for others. Exposure to competence, positive role models, and resilient coping strategies are lessened for many African-American youth, with each "successful" entry into the larger social environment by a member of their community (Wilson, 1987).

Many African-American adolescent males (and females) exist in a metaphorical psycho-social DMZ (demilitarized zone) with limited protection or insulation from penetration and intrusion of the external environment. In light of these factors, this exploratory, ethnographic study was undertaken to discover how African-American adolescent males make sense of their lives, environment, and world (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Do they survive? How do they survive? Are there networks of support, protective factors, strengths, resiliency, and others that can, or will enhance their development, growth, and adjustment in the present and in the future?

The potential implications for the data generated from this exploratory study, far exceed the scope and focus of this study's research questions. The stories, thoughts, and experiences shared by sample participants were tantamount to the pleas of a young child, who, when feeling ignored, cups the face of an adult in his hand and says, "I am talking to you. Are you listening to

me?" The participants in this sample are eager to talk to researchers, social workers, teachers, parents, and policy makers. The challenge is whether we as researchers, social workers, policy makers, teachers, and practitioners are ready, and/or willing to listen.

Locus of Control

An external locus of control orientation can be a positive adaptation for members of stigmatized groups (Hillman et al., 1992). The external direction of locus of control orientations found in the sample population are not unlike findings by Smith & Werner (1982), in their review of locus of control scores among racial and ethnic minorities. Externalization can be a bulwark against the internalization of social biases and inequities.

The CNSIE was administered to all participants in this study. Based upon locus of control definitions in this study, an external locus of control orientation existed among all of the sample members in this study. The range of locus of control scores is broad. Nevertheless, external locus of control orientations have been associated with vulnerability for self-destructive behaviors, suicidal potential, feelings of worthlessness, poor school achievement, and fatalism (Yates, et al., 1994). Externally oriented individuals believe that, for the most part, their efforts are futile, and will have little significance upon their lives.

Most sample participants' behaviors and responses reflected this inclusion of the fatalism, emotional vulnerability, and hopelessness associated with external locus of control orientations. Reflected as well however, were possible prophylactic effects against some of the risk factors to which all sample members are exposed. It is noteworthy that many sample participants who completed high school, and did not participate in crime, had higher external locus of control scores. More elevated external locus of control scores suggest a protective effect that enhances participants' capacities to "handle, and bounce back" in spite of the pitfalls of their experiences. Other factors may have contributed to this outcome, however, further research is indicated to identify these possibilities.

Although the sample size was not designed to yield statistical significance, the range of external locus of control scores, coupled with the content of participant responses, support the need to exercise extreme caution when interpreting the meanings of locus of control orientations among the sample population. If, for example, we focus on participants with locus of control scores from 15.0 to 17.0, we find notable *similarities* in responses, and experiences. Administered to a larger sample, it would be anticipated that there might be more distinct differences in the mean locus of control score based upon high school completion/non-completion, and participation/non-participation in crime.

Characteristics such as leadership, academic success, accepting responsibility for individual academic and social achievements and failures and other values, usually associated with *internal locus of control* orientations, were also found throughout the sample population. In the midst of a population of externally oriented sample subjects, were found individuals who readily take responsibility for the consequences of their behavior (A-10, A-12), who achieve academically (A-6, A-3, A-12), and who have engaged in, and demonstrated, leadership ability (A-11, A-2, A-6). The externally oriented African-American male subjects in this study possessed characteristics of both internal *and* external locus of control orientations. An external locus of control orientation could be explained as a protective factor, as described above, and an indication of resilience among participants in this study. As previously noted, externalization among the sample population accompanied greater capacities to spring back, and to be more resilient in the presence of adversity. In isolation, subjects' locus of control scores do not capture their strengths, competencies, vulnerabilities, and resilience.

The balance necessary for competent internal and external functions is impacted by social, structural, psychological, and/or environmental factors that may facilitate or hinder individual adjustment and adaptation (Antonovsky, 1979). As stated, an internal locus of control orientation is associated with achievement, mastery, hopefulness, a sense of empowerment, and the like (Benson & Deeter, 1992). In addition to other factors, external locus of control

orientations are associated with ascribing life events to chance, luck, outside forces, and/or powerful others (Yates et al., 1994). Internal orientations or resources, facilitate goal directedness, achievement, a sense of responsibility, and so on (McCullough et al., 1994; Benson & Deeter, 1992; Antonovsky, 1979). External locus of control orientations facilitate successful negotiation within, and among that numerous risk factors, and daily challenges that may be faced by individuals (Howerton, et al., 1993). Ego psychologists suggest that personality development incorporates environmental interactions, goals, and concerns (Compton & Galloway, 1994). Social environment and culture have long been concluded to be important facets of adolescent development (Erickson, 1968; Blos, 1941).

Bandura (1982), suggests that locus of control as a construct falls under the rubric of self-efficacy. If we accept Bandura's position that self-efficacy involves how well one can judge and "execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, P. 122), it can be hypothesized that the manner in which sample members successfully utilize, apply, and balance strategies and components of both internal and external locus of control orientations, is an indicator of resilience. Such an hypothesis considers the structural, psycho-social, and environmental realities of life for the sample population. It would be consistent with Tickamyer et al., (1993) who suggest theory development acknowledging the matrix of social relations in which individuals operate, along with their power to transform them.

Successful responses to certain risk factors may call for externalization. In other instances, internal responses, or a combination of internal and external responses would be the most productive course of action to address a prospective situation (Bandura, 1982). For example, stress and violence are a part of A-1, A-4, A-8, and other sample members' social environments. Powerful others, (police, authority figures), chance, and a sense of powerlessness are "external" components of their daily lives. Sample members' strategies to survive and navigate in the context of their life experiences, and psycho-social environments, sometime call for "internally orientated" judgement and decision making. A-1's decision to stay in school, and avoid problematic situations with peers was an "internal" response to execute his efforts to find ways to accomplish his goals for the future. For a time, A-12 engaged in some of the negative behaviors that are associated with an external locus of control orientation, such as delinquency, incarceration, and school dropout (Luthar & Zigler, 1992). One could argue that the circumstances surrounding A-12's participation in crime were extenuating in that some of his immediate family members were involved in numerous lawbreaking activities. They solicited and encouraged A-12's participation in crime. A-12's explanation for his behavior was the "internal" response that he was responsible for his actions.

Among sample members there were indications that the significance of locus of control orientation was connected to the manner in which

internal/external locus of control orientations were integrated and balanced by individuals. The presence, or absence of the capacity to select internal or external approaches in appropriate response to given situations (Antonovsky, 1979) appeared to be an important factor in sample members' functioning and decision making. In her study, Abatso (1985) found that Black male community college students excelled not because of greater aptitude than other students, but among other coping behaviors, they had more internality in their locus of control. They were more flexible and more varied in the strategies that they used to cope.

In this study, completion of high school and non-participation in crime are indicators of resilience. All sample members with locus of control scores of 17 or above completed high school. Of those with locus of controls scores between 13 and 16, 66% had not completed high school, as defined in this study. The fact that some sample members returned to an alternative high school to complete school, is also an indication of resilience. However, it can be argued that the absence of judgement to execute and balance "internal" and "external" resources, may have caused the disruptions in these sample members' educations.

A-10 provides credence for the aforementioned argument. Although his sports injury was an unfortunate mishap over which he had no control, A-10's physical and emotional vulnerability at the time may have made him less able

to draw upon the internal resources that were manifested in his "internal" choice to return to school.

Based upon findings in this study, the pilot study (Schott, 1996) and other research (Werner & Smith, 1989), it can be hypothesized that African-American adolescent males tend to have an external locus of control orientation. Among the study sample, the more elevated the locus of control score, the more likely sample members' are to have completed high-school, not participated in crime, and not to have fathered a child. Is it necessary to abandon the use of locus of control measurements with African-American adolescent males? Is it necessary to develop a new locus of control measurement, and/or revise the existing CNSIE? The CNSIE was normed over two decades ago using a homogeneous, middle income population that included few non-Anglo subjects. The psycho-social environments for adolescents in the United States of America were significantly different then they are today. Thus, it is conceivable that if the CNSIE were normed in 1997 with a diverse population of adolescents, the results would not be the same. In this researcher's pilot study (Schott, 1996) with a diverse group of male high-school seniors (N=85), from rural and urban Michigan school districts, the mean locus of control score was 17.4. Evidence exists that suggests the legitimacy for additional research to update existing measurements and to develop new ones.

The data gained in this study underscore the need to exercise extreme caution when applying traditional locus of control explanations to African-American adolescent males. This same caution is suggested for all populations. Although some problems exist, this researcher finds it is premature to suggest abandoning the use of locus of control measurements with the study sample, or with African-American adolescent males. However, more research is needed to determine how to use and interpret the findings in contemporary society. Much of the existing research addresses the implications of an internal locus of control *"or"* an external locus of control. The current study suggests that there may need to be an *"and"* as a part of the discussion as well. What does it mean to have an internal "and" external locus of control? What is most beneficial, internality, externality, or a combination of the two? What about practice and policy implications? Most practice theories are individualistic in their approach, and focus upon "individual" responsibility (Hopps et al., 1995). State and national social welfare policies also emphasize a more "internal" focus. Is it appropriate to do so? McMahon and Allen-Meares, (1992) suggest that the emphasis upon an individualistic approach in social work practice ignores the ecological perspective and person in environment configuration.

Locus of control as a theoretical construct has usefulness in application to the study sample. There is utility in its potential to provide more clues about personality development, particularly regarding the manner in which structurally

induced environmental factors and events are personally handled by individuals (Compton & Galloway, 1994; Erickson, 1968). Additionally, qualitative and quantitative research is needed to address the significance of locus of control in the contexts of the twenty-first century. More research is needed to ascertain the manner in which the traditional locus of control explanations need to be revised, and/or expanded to reflect the realities of contemporary experiences and environments. Both qualitative and quantitative research are suggested to reach conclusions that incorporate a "person-in-environment configuration" (McMahon & Allen-Meaers, 1992) and to minimize the development of assumptions based upon information that could be misleading.

Eco-Map

A holistic representation of the social, personal, and environmental factors that shape and frame the lives and perceptions of sample participants, was constructed and depicted in a graphic presentation (see Figure 1). **Risk factors** identified in the literature, (Majors & Gordon, 1994); (Taylor-Gibbs, 1990) figure prominently in the lives of sample subjects. Four principle themes concerning risk factors were identified by the participants: Safety and violence, social environment, vulnerability as an African-American male, and depression and sadness.

Safety and violence were issues that participants identified as concerns they consider to be critical. According to participants, their parents/families also would find issues of safety and violence to be very important. Some participants have been direct victims of assault, and/or have lost family members and friends to acts of violence.

Mincy (1994) suggests that male youth who have had some of the personal contacts with violence experienced by some sample participants, are likely to be traumatized. They become desensitized to violence, anticipate impending death, and find long term plans for school and/or employment trivial. The resilience of sample subjects is evidenced in their lack of trivializing the importance of education and future planning. All sample subjects are in school. Some have returned after they have dropped out of school. Subjects have plans for the future and to continue their education even though some anticipate a premature death. Sample subjects' stories provide numerous demonstrations of positive adaptations and "the ability to thrive, mature and increase competence in the face" (Gordon, p. 41, 1995) of adversity.

In addition to the danger that exists due to violent acts, African-American males may also be vulnerable to physical and/or psychological assault by law enforcement officials. All sample participants have experienced repeated questioning and/or harassment by police. Understandably, high on parents'/families' wish lists for their male offspring, is that they be safe.

For some sample participants, the **social environments** in which they live are areas of high crime and violence. Participants have had to develop strategies to co-exist in their environments, without losing themselves in the process. Social environments in which crime and/or violence are not predominant, were not havens of tranquility for sample subjects. Participants in these environments reported being frequently stopped by police in, and around their neighborhoods for tenuous, if not unfounded reasons.

Vulnerabilities as African-American males included limited family, school, or other sources of social support, bombardment by negative stereotypes, and teenage parenthood. Three sample subjects have children. This number, although not insignificant in fact or reality, does not reflect popular perceptions of rampant reproduction rates among young Black males.

For some respondents, family, school and/or community supports were limited. Reasons identified included, but are not limited to, maternal concentration upon younger children, and a participant's loss of interest in school and social interactions following an injury. An unanticipated finding was the reported sporadic nature of efforts by school personnel to encourage students to remain in school. The limited involvement of school social workers and/or other mentors, also was not expected.

The smaller student population, and the personal interests of teachers, were key factors for participants who attend the alternative high school. Both alternative school officials, and sample participants, asked the researcher to

return, and/or help them obtain someone who would be available to just "talk with students, and listen to what they have to say."

Sadness and depression were referenced directly and indirectly in the content of participants' responses. The direct references to "depression, or being depressed" were not as frequent as references to feelings of sadness and isolation. The more common response was to deny depression, but acknowledge frequent sadness within three months prior to the interview.

A somewhat similar response pattern occurred regarding suicide. Although some participants acknowledged suicidal thoughts, others *failed* to deny them. Asked directly if they had thoughts of suicide, participants' answers would be, "no." When asked if they had thoughts of ending their lives within the past few months, responses such as, "doesn't everybody?" or, "that doesn't solve anything," were revealing in their ambivalence.

Enmeshed within discussions of sadness and depression, are the suppression of anger, and the impact of stereotyping upon sample participants. As a matter of survival, African-American males have had to quickly learn that an "improper expression of anger" can be fatal. The "wrong" tone or response to a police officer, or someone else, could have dire consequences.

Sample participants are persistently exposed to demeaning stereotypes about African-American males. Although participants were quite disturbed by them, it is difficult for some of the stereotypes not to become internalized. Once internalized, sample subjects' inadvertently assume responsibility for

them. If, in attempts to deconstruct stereotypes, participants are not mindful of the extent of control they do (and do not) have, they run the risk of becoming not unlike victims of abuse who, despite their efforts and actions to avoid being wounded, have little impact upon their perpetrators' irrational and changing demands. An external locus of control orientation is a more protective and more "resilient" adaptation in such instances.

The internal orientation within the external sample subjects, makes them likely candidates for self-blaming. The possibilities for sadness, depression, fatalism, and others, become more likely *if* participants mistakenly think that (their) deconstruction of stereotypes is going to (*will*) change the way others may think of them. (Tiger Woods is a living example of "Shattering Stereotypes, 101." Nevertheless, that has not prevented negative references, stereotypes, and characterizations from being launched in his direction.)

The security of family relationships, the support derived from social relationships and activities, and belief in a higher power, were **protective factors** that muffled the intensity of sample participants' risk factors. The role of religion has been identified as a vital component in the lives of most competent African-American families (Majors & Gordon, 1994). Maternal love and support, and the quality of maternal relationships were prominent, and consistent factors in most aspects of participants' decision making.

Sample participants' family and maternal relationships were factors that helped keep the scales tipped toward resilience, rather than risk. According to

Hill (1997), the strong work ethic and emphasis upon higher educational and occupational attainment in families headed by single African-American women, contributes to resilience. A-11, A-2, A-5 and others stressed their mothers' emphasis upon education and work. A-13 made note of the fact that it was clear to him that his mother would not tolerate him not attending school.

The literature documents the importance of family relationships as protective factors for resilient youth (Felner, 1995; Resnick et al., 1993; Masten et al., 1991). Majors and Gordon (1994) observed that among African-American male youth, the mothers' influence with their sons is stronger, even when fathers are present. In this sample, seven of the thirteen participants (54%) were from single woman-headed families. Five of the seven (71%) completed high school, and attend college, and four of the seven (57%) were non-participants in crime. In a National Urban League study conducted in 1979-80, families headed by single African-American women were almost as likely to have children in college as two parent African-American families (Hill, 1997). Although the subjects in this sample are making positive adaptations, families headed by women face tremendous risks that can place their children in jeopardy (Felner et al., 1995; Gordon, 1994) for a myriad of risk factors. Sample subjects acknowledged the positive influence of their mothers in their comments, and their accomplishments. Providing mothers with the resources and supports needed to continue to raise healthy, productive members of society is a sound and sensible investment. The social, economic and

emotional costs of *not* empowering mothers, so that they in turn can empower their sons, are far too great to ignore.

Fathers were listed among the individuals most admired by some sample members (A-3, A-6). A-3 emphasized that his father continues to be an important part of his life even though his parents do not live together. He aspires to be like his father, and voiced great respect for his strength and wisdom. According to Majors & Gordon (1994), upwardly mobil, achieving African-American males attempt to be like their fathers, and are encouraged by their mothers to identify with their fathers. A-4 has a comfortable and close relationship with his mother. He freely discusses his thoughts and concerns with her. He noted that his mother "will listen to me, but sometimes tells me it is something a father and son should discuss."

Cultural heritage and history are important influences upon the manner in which African-American families function. Historically, the building blocks of African family organization was based upon consanguinity (blood ties). (European family organization was based upon conjugality--marriage ties). Consanguineous networks may have included conjugal households among a compound of extended family dwellings (Hill, 1997). In contemporary African-American families, extended family members continue to play important roles, and to be protective factors in the development and growth of African-American children in *both* one and two parent families (Hill, 1997). Positive extended family female and male role models who reside in other households

assist and participate in the socialization of children (Majors and Gordon, 1994). A-13's favorite Uncle is admired for his strong mindedness and self-sufficiency. A-4's Uncle is a purveyor of cultural and family history, and racial pride. A-12 gives much credit to the Aunts and Uncles who have been a positive influence upon him.

Sample subjects' **resilience and competence** were repeatedly demonstrated in this study. By definition of terms in this study, sample subjects who did not participate in crime, and completed high school, were considered to be resilient. Among sample subjects, 54% completed high school, and 54% had not participated in crime. High school completion, non-participation in crime, and not being a teenage parent (77%) were related with each other. All subjects (46%) who, by the study's definition, did not complete high school, returned to high school. According to their stories, most have triumphed over many obstacles to get where they are.

Personal attributes such as a sense of humor, friendliness, and the ability to get along with other people, contributed to sample participants' resilience and competence. The aforementioned attributes augment the sample's efforts to survive and make sense of their world and environments (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Sample subjects do not rely solely upon personal attributes. Perseverance, goal directness, determination, and intelligence are also factors.

The extent of concern for the welfare of others by the sample population was greater than anticipated. Almost 70% of the sample participants do not think people are adequately concerned about others, and/or the earth and environment. Ninety-two percent of the sample reported involvement in volunteer activities such as neighborhood clean and fix-ups, helping the elderly and homeless, and working on an AIDS awareness campaign. Benard (1993, 1990) suggests that resilient children and youth often extend themselves to others in need. Doing so elevates self-worth, and may also anesthetize the pain of their own lives. It could be argued that the sample populations' value and belief in a higher power (77%) is congruent with their concern for others.

Implications for Practice

The primary tasks of adolescence according to Erickson (1963), are to establish identity and avoid confusion about one's role. Important questions include: As an infant, was there an establishment of a basic trust? In subsequent tasks, was there the development of initiative rather than guilt; autonomy rather than doubt and shame; competence rather than inadequacy and inferiority? If these developmental tasks are satisfactorily accomplished in childhood, in the progression through adolescence, youth are better equipped to handle the struggles that accompany that stage of development (Erickson, 1963). Racism is a barrier that complicates the aforementioned process for African-Americans. It is difficult to develop trust in the benevolent reliability of

the world when from early childhood, individuals frequently experience events that erode the process (Majors & Gordon, 1994). Parents must teach African-American children survival strategies such as having their purchased candy or bubble gum placed in a bag to minimize the chances of being accused of theft. This researcher recently observed several members of a Boy Scout troop who were approximately eleven to thirteen years of age. The Scouts were in a hobby shop that specialized in model airplanes. The African-American boys were followed by store employees. Questions about parts and models were not answered with information, but with comments such as, "That costs X dollars," or "Do you have X amount?" The Anglo Boy Scouts were not followed, and they were provided with direct responses to their questions.

The accumulation of events such as those described, eventually take their toll. "African-American adolescent males' stage-appropriate narcissistic doubts about worth, competence, and identity are combined with his indoctrination with the criteria for respect pushed by an alienating dominant culture and that culture's simultaneous barriers to those perquisites" (Majors & Gordon, 1994, p.219). The accomplishment of developmental tasks described by Erickson (1963), are frustrated and/or frequently interrupted by social, structural and other barriers (Majors & Gordon, 1994). The process of establishing trust, initiative, competence, and others, applies to African-American male youth just as it does to other youth. However, when these developmental milestones are discussed, it is important to consider African-

American adolescent males in the context of their culture and environment (Blos, 1941). Their cultural and environmental experiences are likely to be different from those of their dominant culture counterparts. For example, establishing one's identity is an accepted part of adolescent development in the United States (Erickson, 1963). It is general knowledge that in the process of "finding themselves," adolescents may succumb to poor judgement and decision-making, and may engage in nuisance, yet lawbreaking behaviors. Unlike their dominant culture peers, "teenage pranks" committed by African-American adolescent males are more likely to result in an arrest and/or criminal record (Majors & Gordon, 1994). There is real pressure to accomplish the task of "growing up" without making major, or glaring errors. This pressure exists at a time in development when an individual can be most vulnerable to making mistakes (Majors & Gordon, 1994). In the upbringing of this researcher and others (Hill, 1997), the message has been that "finding oneself" (which may include poor decision-making, lack of decision-making and others), is a luxury African Americans cannot afford.

In American society, the traditional male role is that of provider-protector. A man's worth is measured by his ability to provide economic support and protection to a family. The more economic resources he has access to, the greater his ability to provide and protect (Majors & Gordon, 1994). Just as in the past, it continues to be difficult for African-American males to reach the dominant culture's prescribed male social roles and

expectations. Sample members in this study are taking steps to make it more likely for them to be providers and protectors by continuing their education. However, most have lingering doubts about their ability to overcome the barriers they expect to face. A-4, A-7, A-5, and others are quite concerned that it will be difficult for them to find employment upon graduation from college. Some of the despair expressed by sample members like A-6 who appear to have everything going (intelligence, supportive family, leadership ability) may result from the belief that despite their own initiative, or adapting their behavior to that of the dominant group, they might never have access to respect and economic resources and security as defined by the dominant culture (Ogbu, 1986).

Members of the study sample individually and collectively, have many of the characteristics associated with resilience, such as competence, intelligence, determination, a sense of humor, friendliness and so on. One of the challenges for researchers, practitioners, educators, and policy makers will be to re-focus the lens of their values and experiences when viewing adolescent African-American males. Many of the life experiences of adolescent African-American males do not parallel those of the viewer. They face legitimate concerns about life, death, and mental health, many years prior to the time the same issues become a concern for most practitioners and researchers.

Do social workers, educators, policy makers and researchers consider African-American adolescent males to be resilient? What, if any, barriers do they think these adolescents face? How does one recognize resilience among adolescent African-American males? What do practitioners, educators, and researchers see when they encounter African-American adolescent males with shaved heads, and pants hanging close to their knee caps? What if these youth are not attending school, and appear to be unmotivated and lethargic? Do they see a "budding delinquent," or do they see beyond the exterior, and consider that an accumulation of risk factors might have taxed the balance of any of these individuals' internal/external resources, thus placing them in jeopardy for poor decision making? Are behaviors and responses that initially appear to be destructive or dysfunctional, possible indications of attempts to be resilient, to cope, to bounce back? Exposure to chronic community violence for example, has been connected to difficulty in concentrating, memory impairment because of avoidance of intrusive thoughts, apparent indifference to hurt or loss, constriction in exploration and thinking for fear of re-living traumatic events (Garbarino, 1992), and so on. When these behaviors are observed, is it considered that they may be a possible method by which the person is attempting to "maintain" or "keep getting up?" Garbarino et al., (1992) examined a series of risk factors and found that average intelligence scores for children remained good until the third or fourth risk factors were added. It was at this point that intelligence scores dropped into problematic

ranges. Could it be that an accumulation of environmental stressors rather than lack of motivation, or other personal/social deficiencies contribute to such things as poor school attendance, apparent indifference, and the like? According to A-9, the answer would be yes. The burden of a series of family problems took their toll. A-9 lost interest in school, and confidence in himself.

Among the merits of resiliency theory are the facts that credence and recognition are given to strengths and the ability to triumph in the face of adversity. It offers the possibility for developing "prescriptions" for bolstering resiliency, and/or resilient coping strategies. For example, based upon the findings of this study, a stronger presence of school social workers in secondary and alternative school settings, more youth/group workers, and more self-development opportunities for mothers raising children alone, could provide more possibilities for African-American adolescent males to become more resilient. The relevance and importance of social support systems, and environmental factors are acknowledged in resiliency theory. Nevertheless, carefulness must be exercised in the manner in which resiliency theory, and resilient characteristics are determined and/or interpreted. There is the temptation to emphasize and focus upon extraordinary individual capacities to survive, rather than challenge the structures that mitigate against survival.

Garbarino et al. (1992), Garmezy and Neuchterlein (1992), Rhodes and Brown (1991), Werner and Smith (1989) and others note characteristics of resilient youth that include, but are not limited to, intelligence, positive self-

esteem, goal orientation, gregariousness and an ability to generate warmth from caregivers. The concern with these descriptions becomes the cultural and/or value orientation social workers, researchers, policy makers, and others apply to characteristics such as goal orientation, gregariousness, and so on. Is goal orientation always a resilient quality, or is it so only in reference to certain criteria, such as career goals, or sports and/or education achievements? How is it defined, and which value system provides the definition?

As cited earlier, ego psychology theories inform us of developmental tasks that must be successfully mastered during childhood and adolescence to maximize adjustment and adaptation as an adult. Locus of control theories provide clues to the manner in which individuals are likely to personally interpret, assimilate and respond to given environmental stimuli. Resiliency theory acknowledges the existence of, and resistance to the impact of structural, social and environmental barriers that interfere with successful accomplishment of developmental tasks, and influence the balance of internal and external resources. The tasks of practitioners, policy makers, and researchers are to become more knowledgeable of the manner in which these constructs are manifested in the adaptations and adjustments of adolescent African-American males, and others. Efforts to remediate structural and environmental barriers that hinder the accomplishment of developmental milestones, contribute to an imbalance in internal/external resources, and

make the need for resilience necessary, require the focus, energy, and attention of micro and macro practice arenas. Utilization of resiliency theory is a beginning step in the process of re-focusing the way in which adolescent African-American males are viewed. However, acknowledging, recognizing, identifying, and applauding resiliency in the absence of vigorously attacking the circumstances that made resilience necessary, sanctions and perpetuates the barriers African-American adolescent males are expected to overcome.

Social workers, researchers, educators, and others often interact, react (or *do not* interact or react), to African-American adolescent males in accordance with popular stereotypes, media images, personal biases/prejudices, and inaccurate and/or misleading research findings. The troubling statistics that plague African-American male adolescents are not to be minimized or overlooked by human service practitioners, researchers, and educators. Commanding *equal* attention however, are the millions of African-American male adolescents who struggle against tremendous odds simply to reach the age of 21. For many, the life stresses and experiences of these youth, are not comprehensible to some of the adults with whom they are in contact in schools and communities. Findings in this study indicate that these young men are thoughtful, resilient, compassionate, sensitive, kind, friendly, creative, fun, socially conscious, responsible, determined, approachable, tolerant, industrious, spiritual, goal oriented, dreamers, planners, isolated, sad, depressed and sometimes suicidal.

Those who work with and/or have influence upon the lives of African-American adolescent males, must remain cognizant of the impact and cumulative effect upon mental health, of a constant stream of stressful life events. Over-taxation of an individual's reservoir of adaptive capacities can cause a pathological response (Rubenstein, Heeren, Housman, Ruben & Stechler, 1989). Research has verified that the amount of life stress is greater among suicidal adolescents, than it is among their non-suicidal counterparts (Rubenstein et al., 1989).

Sample participants' decisions to resist stereotyping, inequities, and other barriers they encounter, are admirable and must be encouraged. It must also be recognized by social workers, educators, researchers and others, that these are not issues that rest only upon the shoulders of African-American adolescent males. *We* must also take active measures to turn off the constant barrage of demeaning perceptions and images, that ignore the strengths and resiliency of this population. The manner in which social workers, researchers and African-American adolescent males recognize and use (or do not use) their power to transform stereotyping becomes critical. It will define their actions and reactions to social structures. It will have an influence upon whether individual decisions will be to challenge, deconstruct, or perpetuate/maintain the status quo.

The intensity and depth of stressors sample subjects face, are addressed in this study. The tremendous amounts of resilience strength, and

"luck," required for African-American adolescents to "maintain" and "keep getting up," are extraordinary. The integrity of the protective armor upon which African-American male youth must depend, is weakened when school/educational and community environments are insensitive to their needs, inaccessible and/or not supportive. The armor is strengthened by mothers, fathers, families and mentors who can provide support, nurturance and guidance (Rolf et al., 1989). For sample subjects, participation in sports provided peer support, and access to potential resources for adult support. In addition, it provided individual avenues and options for relaxation, stress reduction, feelings of control, and physical fitness.

It is noteworthy that sample participants' reports of their experiences, and treatment were not distinguishable based upon participation or non-participation in crime, or completion or non-completion of high school. The remarks of an individual suspended from high school numerous times, are as profound as those of a person who has never been in trouble, and at the age of 18 is a sophomore in college. The authors of the poem and the statement that precedes the vignettes, are considered to be marginal students. Yet, their powerful, passionate, and articulate writings reflect great intellect and talent.

The implications for practice and research are as numerous as the issues that face African-American adolescent males. The issues are complex, and there are no quick-fixes. In the absence of data generated by ethnographic interviews with the sample population, the prognosis for

leadership and academic achievement among sample subjects based upon locus of control scores, would have been bleak. More research and theory development that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches are indicated if we are to become more literate and effective in our efforts to interface with this population.

Bold and creative measures that include building upon the social structures and personal relationships that are important to African-American adolescent males, are called for *if* we decide to "listen" to them. The relationships African-American adolescent males have with their mothers, and their connections with spirituality and religion are resources that can be put to better use. If single mothers are better equipped to meet the needs of their children, they are in a better position to capitalize upon the strength of the mother-son relationship. A colleague (Swanson, March 18, 1997) is involved in the evaluation of a study that provides recreational, educational, counseling and mentoring support for inner-city elementary students in a mid-sized Michigan city. Preliminary results indicate an unanticipated finding of single mothers voluntarily returning to school, and upgrading job/employment skills. The women's taste of self-efficacy appears to have a positive influence upon their children (Barbarin, 1993). Community, family, church and neighborhood social supports reduce emotional strain upon parents. Their optimism about their ability to cope successfully with problems is positively associated with children's social and academic functioning (Barbarin, 1993).

Resilient youth tend to seek out an empathic ear to listen to them (Garmezy, 1993; Nettles & Pleck, 1993). The "ear" can be a positive or negative influence. More opportunities to be the "positive" influence are necessary. A brigade of youth pastors might be more appropriate than a church's emphasis upon overseas missionaries. A greater presence of school social workers in secondary schools is necessary. The practice of having school social work services only available to special education students is short-sighted and ethically irresponsible, and sacrifices the talent, potential, and lives of many youth for short term, monetary savings.

The smaller size and more personalized attention available in the alternative high school setting, suggests that for some students, large secondary institutions are not the most helpful. Smaller units of students within the secondary setting, warrants consideration. These units could be arranged to foster more opportunities for relationship building and mentoring.

Post-secondary education facilities might place a greater emphasis upon methods to minimize the isolation that is often experienced by African-American adolescent males. Programs that provide opportunities for student-faculty mentors are found at many colleges and universities. They could be expanded to include volunteer families from surrounding communities. Family volunteers can reinforce the family and church centered connections that are important to many African-Americans. Interestingly, prior to desegregation in the Southern United States, decisions related to one's choice of a college or

university included whether or not one had "people" (extended family or fictive kin) in the vicinity. The sample subjects in this study supported Barbarin's (1993) findings that family connectedness continues to be important.

Increased efforts by Schools of Social Work to recruit more African-American social work students would provide more trained social workers for employment in schools and public and private agencies. The aforementioned suggestions could benefit all adolescents, not just African-American males.

The utility of Western perspectives of individualism needs to be revisited. Based upon our knowledge of the pitfalls that accompany adolescence as a stage of development, perhaps we need to rethink the efficacy leaving it up to adolescents to make potentially harmful life decisions without attempting to intervene. Had A-10's teacher followed the lead of others who said to him, "Well, if you don't want to learn ....," A-10 might not have returned to high school.

The challenges for research and practice in the 21st century are numerous. The work to be done is time consuming and may not be a part of the traditional job description. Thus, practitioners and researchers may have to take the lead from the sample's impressive record of volunteer activities. A bright, young, compassionate and receptive population awaits. If there is to be a commitment to improving the lives and life chances of African-American adolescent males, the social work, practice, and research communities will need to be prepared to deconstruct and/or challenge existing theories and

practices, if necessary. They also must be open to grappling with the social structures that influence their perceptions. When we consider African-American adolescent males, and the plethora of factors that they encompass, if we envision revision of the manner in which they are treated, responded to and perceived, we must be aware of the critical roles of practice and research in the revisioning process.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Locus of Control (CNSIE)

1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?
2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?
3. Are some people just born lucky?
4. Most of the time do you feel that getting good grades meant a great deal to you?
5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?
6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough he or she can pass any subject?
7. Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard enough because things never turn out right anyway?
8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning that it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?
9. Do you feel that most of the time parents listen to what their children have to say?
10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?
11. When you get punished does it usually seem its for no good reason at all?
12. Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?
13. Do you think that cheering more than luck helps a team to win?
14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible to change your parent's mind about anything?
15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decision.

16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's very little you can do to make it right?

17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?

18. Are most of the other people your age stronger than you are?

19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?

20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding whom your friends are?

21. If you find a four leaf clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?

22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with what kind of grades you got?

23. Do you feel that when a person your age is angry at you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?

24. Have you ever had a good luck charm?

25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?

26. Did your parents usually help you if you asked them to?

27. Have you felt that when people were angry with you it was usually for no reason at all?

28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?

29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen they just are going to happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?

30. Do you think that people can get their own way if they just keep trying?

31. Most of the time do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?

32. Do you feel that when good things happen they happen because of hard work?

33. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy there's little you can do to change matters?

34. Do you feel that it's easy to get a friend to do what you want them to do?

35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?

36. Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's little you can do about it?

37. Did you usually feel that it was almost useless to try in school because most other people were just plain smarter than you are?

38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?

39. Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what you family decides to do?

40. Do you think it's better to be smart than to be lucky?

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviews of participants will include but are not limited to questions contained in this guide.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ _____ _____
Month *Day* *Year*

Sex: _____

High School Graduate: _____ Yes _____ No

Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

1. In what ways are your family members supportive for you?

_____

_____

_____

2. When you have a personal problem, who do you know will help you out?

_____

_____

_____

3. Can you depend upon the people you named to help you out (some of the time; all of the time; most of the time?) _____

_____

_____

4. RE: school - church - sports participation in other social organization(s):

   A. What are the ways in which this group is supportive for you?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Were you a member of any other groups in the community such as scouts, service or hobby clubs?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Now think about the adults in your life. Of all the adults you know **personally**, think of the one you would most like to be like.*

6. Is this person male or female?

   ☐ Male ☐ Female

7. Who is it? _____

   _____

   _____

8. Can you tell me what things you admire the most about this person? ___

   _____

   _____

9. Do you have an extended family member with whom you feel close?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Do you know people who "are like family" to you; someone you trust and feel close to?

    ☐ Yes ☐ No

    If yes, tell me about them. Tell me why you feel the way you do about them.

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. How many different adults are emotionally supportive for you?
    _____ (give a number)
12. How long have you known this person (or these individuals)?
    _____
13. How do you know them (relative, neighbor, teacher)? _____
14. How is this person helpful? _____
    _____
    _____
15. What are three of your parents'/family's wishes for you? _____
    _____
    _____

COMPETENCE

16. People often know the kind of person they do not want to be or become. What are four things you don't want to be true about you?
    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
    4. _____
17. What are you doing now to avoid having these things happen?
    _____
    _____
    _____
18. What are some of the things/reasons that have contributed to you not being arrested? _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

19. Can you give an example of a situation in which you feel you have control?

_____

_____

_____

20. Can you give an example of a situation that you think you can't control?

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. Can you give an example of a situation where you do not have control?

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. Under what conditions do you feel you have control? _____

_____

_____

_____

23. How likely is it that you will have the type of job you want when you grow up?

Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

24. Have you ever thought of dropping out of school? (If no, skip to question 28)

☐ Yes ☐ No

25. How seriously have you considered dropping out? **(READ CATEGORIES)**

Not Very Seriously	Somewhat Seriously	Very Seriously	Already Happened
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

26. Could you tell me why you are or were thinking of dropping out of school? _____

_____

_____

_____

27. What do you think the chances are that you will go back and finish high school or get a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED)?

Not Very Good	Pretty Good	Very Good
1	2	3

28. If you could do exactly what you wanted, how far would you like to go in school?

(1) 11th grade or less
(2) graduate from high school
(3) post high school vocational or technical training
(4) some college
(5) graduate from a business college or a two year college with associates degree
(6) graduate from a 4 year college
(7) get a masters degree or a teaching credential
(8) get a law degree, a Ph.D., or a medical doctor's degree

29. We can't always do what we most want to do. How far do you think you actually will go in school?

(1) 11th grade or less
(2) graduate from high school
(3) post high school vocational or technical training
(4) some college
(5) graduate from a business college or a two year college with associates degree
(6) graduate from a 4 year college
(7) get a masters degree or a teaching credential
(8) get a law degree, a Ph.D., or a medical doctor's degree

30. *How many of your friends encourage you to:*

	All	*Half*	*None*
• Disobey your parents?			
• Do dangerous things?			
• Get in trouble with the police?			
• Get in trouble at school?			
• Attend religious services?			
• Would tease you if you spent a lot of time on homework?			
• Make you feel good about yourself?			
• Make you feel tense and nervous?			
• Make you feel challenged intellectually whenyou are hanging out with them?			

31. What do you think are the four best things about you?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES

32. During the past year were you a leader, organizer, or captain of any of the organizations or groups you belonged to?

☐ Yes ☐ No

33. **(IF YES:)** What groups? _____

_____

_____

34. What is your favorite activity to do outside of school? _____

_____

_____

*What do **you** think the chances are that you will...*

35. ...enter the military?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ In the Middle ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ Already Happened

36. ...have psychological problems like depression?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ In the Middle ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ Already Happened

37. ...have thoughts of suicide?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ In the Middle ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ Already Happened

38. ...get involved with kids your parent(s) won't approve of?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ In the Middle ☐ High ☐ Very High ☐ Already Happened

39. What in your opinion was the purpose of the Million Man March?

_____

_____

_____

40. Have you done anything differently as a result of the Million Man March? (IF YES: What have you done?) _____

_____

_____

_____

41. During the last few months, how often have you felt:

	Almost/ Never	Sometimes	Almost Always
• *Hopeless*			
• *So angry you wanted to smash or break something*			
• *Felt very sad*			
• *Felt you couldn't control your temper*			
• *Felt depressed*			
• *Felt so upset you wanted to hit or hurt someone*			
• *Had thoughts of ending your life*			

SOCIAL SUPPORT

42. RE: church - sports - participation in other social organization(s):

A. What are the ways in which this group is supportive for you?

_____

_____

_____

43. When you have a personal problem, who can you depend upon to help you out?

_____

_____

_____

44. Can you depend on: - parents
- siblings
- friends

to help you out?

45. Were/are you a member of any groups in the community such as scouts, service or hobby clubs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

46. Were/are you involved in any volunteer service activities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

47. What are some of the activities you do after school, or on weekends?

_____

_____

_____

48. *During the past month, how often did your friends:*

	Never	*Once/ Twice*	*3-4 Times*	*Almost Every Day*
• *Criticize your ideas*				
• *Argue with you*				
• *Listen carefully to your point of view*				
• *Help you do something important*				
• *Talk with you about your problems and worries*				
• *Make you feel loved and cared for*				

49. How often do you provide emotional support to others? _____

50. How often do you feel burdened or stressed by other people's problems?

_____

_____

(If 3-4 times or more) Tell me about it please. _____

_____

_____

RISK FACTORS

51. Have you ever been arrested?

☐ Yes ☐ No

52. How many times have you been arrested in the past year?

_____

53. What does it mean to you (for you) to have been arrested?

_____

_____

_____

54. What led you to the decision to break the law or do something that might cause you to be arrested? _____

_____

_____

55. What are some of the things/reasons that contributed to you being arrested? __

_____

_____

_____

56. Have you ever been stopped by police but not arrested?

☐ Yes ☐ No

57. How many times? _____

58. What does it mean for you to have been stopped by the police? _____

_____

_____

_____

59. Is your family stressful for you? (If yes, tell me how they are stressful for you.) _____

_____

_____

_____

60. In what ways is school, church, participation in sports, etc. stressful for you?

_____

_____

_____

DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL

61. Have you dropped out of school?

☐ Yes ☐ No (If No, go to question 68)

62. Could you tell me why you dropped out of school? _____

_____

_____

_____

63. Did anyone at school like teachers or counselors try to discourage you from dropping out?

☐ Yes ☐ No

64. What did they say to you? _____

_____

_____

_____

65. Did you share this with teachers, counselors or anyone else before you dropped out?

☐ Yes ☐ No

66. (If yes) what did they say to you? _____

_____

_____

_____

67. What do you think the chances are that you will go back and finish high school or get a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED)?

Not Very Good	Pretty Good	Very Good
1	2	3

68. What things might keep you from getting as much education as you want? ___

_____

_____

_____

69. Do you think discrimination because of your race might keep you from getting the amount of education you want?

Not At All	A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Lot
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

70. Do you think discrimination because of your sex might keep you from getting the amount of education you want?

Not At All	A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Lot
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

71. Do you anticipate that you will father a child within the next year?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Already happened

72. Do you have friend(s) who have been killed by an act of violence (death caused by individual(s) that was not due to an accident)?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

73. Do you have friends who have been wounded by an act of violence (injury caused by individual(s) that was not due to an accident)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

74. Do you have acquaintances who have been killed by an act of violence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

75. Do you have acquaintances who have been wounded by an act of violence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

76. Have you been a victim of assault?

☐ Yes ☐ No

77. Have you been threatened with death or serious harm?

☐ Yes ☐ No

78. How have these experiences impacted you? _____

_____

_____

_____

79. Do you have friends or acquaintances who have contracted the AIDS virus? __

_____

_____

CULTURE / BI-CULTURE

The next series of questions I am going to ask you have to do with what is known as ethnicity. Ethnicity is a word that describes a person's family culture, background or race. I want to know what you think about ethnicity--how you'd describe yourself, and what that description means to you.

80. First of all, tell me what is your ethnicity. Use as many words as you need.

_____

_____

_____

(IF RESPONSE INDICATES ETHNICITY IS NOT UNDERSTOOD:)

You might use your family background or the country your family comes from, or your cultural group or the color of your skin, or any combination of these.

_____

_____

_____

81. Now, what do you think most other people call your racial or ethnic group? It's okay if it's not the same as what you call yourself.

(01) Black

(02) African-American

(03) Black American

(04) Mixed **(IF MIXED:)** What races?

1) _____

2) _____

(_ _) Something Else (SPECIFY:) _____

82. Are there things your parents, or the people who raise you, do or tell you to help you know what it is to be (African-American?)

☐ Yes ☐ No (If no, go to question 84)

83. What do they do or tell you? _____

_____

_____

_____

84. What are the most important things they do or tell you? _____

_____

_____

_____

85. What does it mean to you to be an (African-American) male?

_____

_____

_____

86. How important is your ethnic background to the daily life of your family?

Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

87. How important is it for you to know about your ethnic background?

Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

88. Are you proud of your ethnic background?

Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

89. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.

Not At All True	A Little True	Sort of True	Very True
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

FUTURE

Now here are some questions about the future.

90. Many people know what they would like to be like in the future. They have a picture in their minds of a person they would like to be. Please tell me four things about the kind of person **you most hope** to be at this time next year.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

91. What are you doing now to make these things happen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

92. Often people also know what kind of person they don't want to become. They know what they don't want to be true about themselves in the future. What are four things **you do not want to be true of you** next year, or that you most want to avoid by this time next year?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

93. Now imagine yourself at age 25. If you could be anything you wanted to be, what would you be? _____

_____

_____

94. If you could have any job you wanted, what kind of job would you most **like to have** when you are age 25? _____

_____

_____

95. If you could do exactly what you wanted, how far would you like to go in school?

(1) 11th grade or less
(2) graduate from high school
(3) post high school vocational or technical training
(4) some college
(5) graduate from a business college or a two year college with associates degree
(6) graduate from a 4 year college
(7) get a masters degree or a teaching credential
(8) get a law degree, a Ph.D., or a medical doctor's degree

96. What are some of your worries and fears about the future? _____

_____

_____

97. What are two things you are doing now, or plan to do, to try to keep your fears or worries from happening? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

RELIGION

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about religion.

98. Do you practice a religion? **(IF NECESSARY)**: (Do you attend a church, mosque or other place of worship?)

☐ Yes ☐ No

99. How often during a year do you attend church or religious services?

(SPECIFY:) ___ ___ (CIRCLE ONE) (NUMBER OF TIMES)

Weekly Monthly

Bi-Monthly 1-4 Times Per Year

100. How important is religion in the day to day life of your family?

Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Very
1	2	3	4

101. Do you celebrate special religious holidays connected with your religion?

☐ Yes ☐ No

102. Do you participate in community activities with people of your religion? (If yes, how often?)

Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Almost Frequently	Always
1	2	3	4	5

WORLD VIEW

103. Think about your experiences and all that you know -- your knowledge. After years of life, what are your thoughts about the world in which we live? _____

104. Tell me about you in the world you describe. _____

SCHOOL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

105. How is/was school supportive for/to you? _____

106. Can you depend on a teacher or other adults at school to help you with a problem? _____

107. Is there a school social worker at your school? _____

_____

_____

_____

108. Has the school social worker helped you or a friend with a problem? _____

_____

_____

_____

109. Would you talk with the school social worker or school counselor if you needed help with a problem? _____

_____

_____

_____

110. Did you/do you take part in any school activities such as clubs or student government? (This includes any formal extra-curricular school activity other than athletic teams.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

111. Has anyone at school like teachers, social workers or counselors discouraged you from dropping out of school?

☐ Yes ☐ No

112. What did they say to you? _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(Self)

I, _____ state that I am 18 years of age and agree to participate in the research study conducted by Doctoral Candidate, Elaine Ragsdale Schott. I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from this agreement at any time. I understand that I will be paid the sum of $25.00 upon completion of the entire Children's Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Survey (CNSIE) and the tape recorded interview with Ms. Schott.

I understand that this research is for the purpose of completing Ms. Schott's doctoral degree requirements, and that I will not be identified by name in this project or any subsequent written work. I understand that the contents of the Children's Nowicki-Strickland/Internal External Locus of Control Survey and the interview with Ms. Schott are confidential, and that reports of research findings will not associate me with specific responses and/or findings. I also understand that Ms. Schott has a duty to inform the appropriate person(s) if, during the process of the interview, I indicate an intent to harm myself or others.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Initial Code

High School Completion	High School Non-Completion	Participation in Crime	Non-Participation in Crime	Protective Factors	Risk Factors	Resilience/ Competence	World View
Grades / Good Student	Poor Teachers	Peer Pressure	Personal Values	School Support	Violence	Hard Worker	Hatred / Racism
Personal Motivation	Boredom	Poor Home Life	Family Support	Family Support	Substance Use / Abuse	Determination	Violence
Parents	Suspension	Gangs	Good Decision-making	Religion	Crime	Social Support	Difficult for African-Americans
College Plans				Mentor(s) / Role Models	Single Parent	Mentor	

Final Code

Family's / Mother's Emphasis on Education	Suspension	Peer Pressure	Luck	Relationships with Family, Parents and Mother	Safety / Violence	Goal Oriented	Difficult for African-Americans
Support of Special Program	Lost Interest	Poor Decision-making	Doesn't Want to Hurt Mother	Religion	Sadness / Depression	Personal Attributes	Money / Power
Special Teacher / Adult			Personal Values	Participation in Sports and Other Activities	Vulnerability as African-American Male	Relationships with Mother, Family, Caring Adult	Assault on Environment, Hatred, Greed, Racism
			Family Support		Social Environment (School, Police)	Perseverance	Not Enough Concern About Others

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