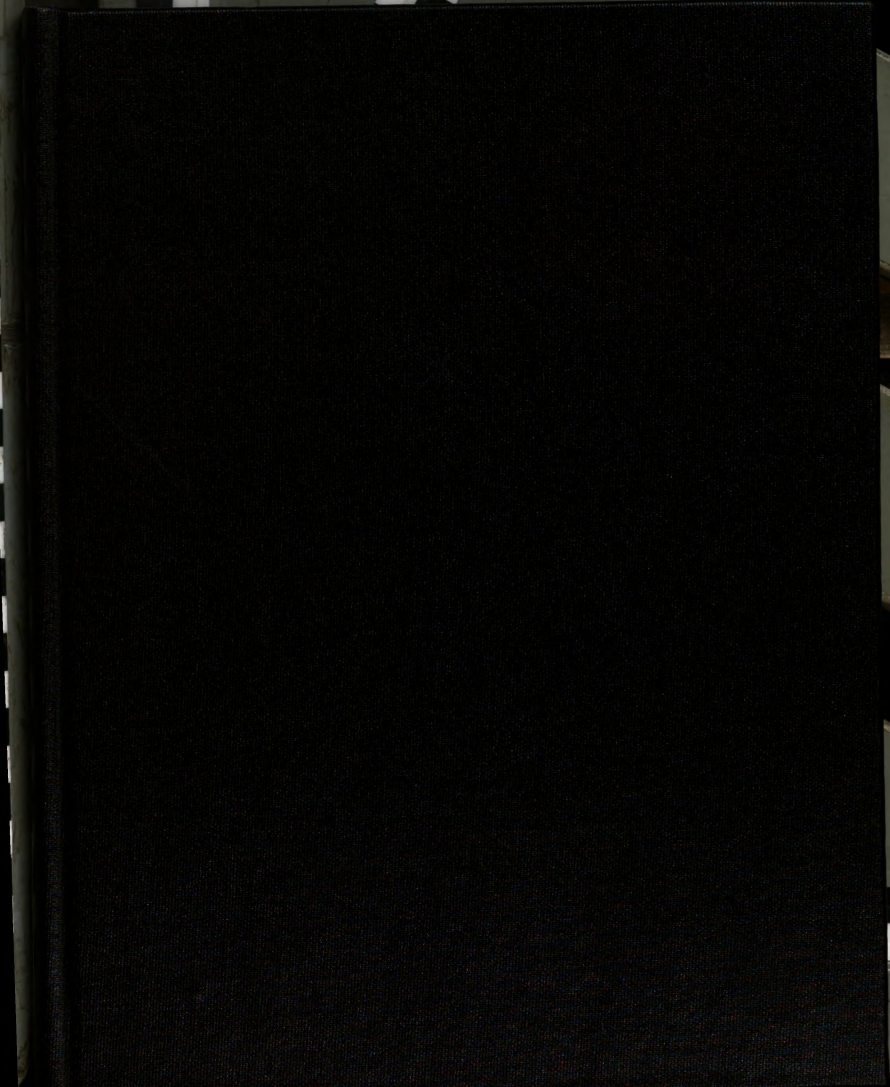




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On Decision Making

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**IDENTIFYING CORRELATES OF URBAN "AT-RISK" COLLEGE FRESHMEN'S
LIFE STYLE DECISIONS: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY,
VOCATIONAL IDENTITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT, AND
COPING STYLES ON DECISION MAKING**

By

Martin Fitzgerald Hill

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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**Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology
and Special Education**

2004

ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING CORRELATES OF URBAN "AT-RISK" COLLEGE FRESHMEN'S LIFE STYLE DECISIONS: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF RACIAL IDENTITY, VOCATIONAL IDENTITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT, AND COPING STYLES ON DECISION MAKING

By

Martin Fitzgerald Hill

Decision making may be understood in terms of a cost-versus-benefit approach, where behavior is chosen that maximizes gains and minimizes losses (Galotti & Kozberg, 1996; Woerll & Danner, 1989). Some factors influencing decision making are racial identity development, vocational identity development, psychological adjustment, and coping styles of the individual. The question under investigation focused on the development of the decision-making process: To what degree do urban African American college freshmen's Black racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping style predict early adult life style behavior?

Participants were 144 African American college freshmen who came from low-SES backgrounds. They ranged in age from 18 to 19 years. Multiple linear regression analyses were performed to analyze the association between life decision making (dependent variable) and racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping (independent variables). The results, supported by a p value of .05 for significance, showed a positive correlation between psychological adjustment and decision making and a negative correlation between racial identity and decision making. Research implications and applications show a need to provide training for African

American college freshmen in the *ability* to make productive decisions- *Mentoring*
programs may be useful in helping *wi*th the transition to college life.

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I would like to start off by saying that I feel truly blessed to be allowed the opportunity to learn so much and use this God-given talent to help others. There are so many people to thank that I hope I do not forget anyone. I feel honored to have worked with so many wonderful people, who have allowed me to grow and reach my potential. I owe many for this achievement and will only continue to use this gift to its fullest.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Decision Making

Decision making is a complex process that is learned throughout one's lifetime. The process requires skills in analyzing a situation, understanding the situational factors, and understanding how one's actions will affect the situation. At the most basic level, there are two kinds of decision situations: those in which decision makers are presented with options and those in which decision makers create options for themselves (Byrnes & McClenny, 1994). Decision making relies on the ability to use higher levels of cognitive functioning to develop a plan to influence a specific situation. Cognitive factors (functions) are taken to mean those that are relevant to the mental process of knowing, including perceptions and reasoning (C. P. Gordon, 1996; Piaget, 1958).

Decision making is not easy; rather, it is a complex cognitive process that involves a number of component operations (Byrnes, 1998; Byrnes, Miller, & Reynolds, 1999; Solvic, Lichtenstein, & Fischhoff, 1988). Decision making requires individuals to rely on previous experiences to provide guidance when facing new situations. Mastering this ability takes time and numerous experiences. As a child matures, the brain becomes able to retain larger amounts of information at once, making it possible to compare pieces of information and also to build up bodies of information (Falvell, 1985; C. P. Gordon, 1996).

Normal development in childhood is characterized by rapid, orderly changes in multiple dimensions of functioning, including broad dimensions such as cognitive, social, or emotional development, and narrow dimensions such as expressions of anger or

impulse control (Eyberg, Schuhmann, & Rey, 1998). In Western cultures, *adolescence* is considered to be a transitional period from childhood to adulthood (Matter, 1984; Renk & Creasey, 2003). The transition from early to late adolescence includes a dramatic change in the degree to which adolescents view themselves as being capable of making important decisions (Galotti & Kozberg, 1996).

Although many researchers have examined decision making in adults (Abelson & Lewi, 1985), very few have examined the development of decision making from childhood to adulthood (Byrnes & McClenny, 1994; Beyth-Marom, Fischhoff, Quadrel, & Furby, 1991). The literature on decision making contains more than 20 theoretical models of adult competence, but essentially no accounts of children's competence or a developmental mechanism (Byrnes, 1998; Byrnes et al., 1999). Steinberg and Cauffman (1996) quoted Kohlberg's theory, stating that individuals develop through qualitatively different stages of moral reasoning over the course of childhood and adolescence. Reasoning progresses from "preconventional" thinking (reasoning in which moral problems are understood purely in terms of the immediate consequences of acting one way or another), through "conventional" thinking (reasoning in which moral problems are understood in terms of how various courses of action are viewed by others, especially in relation to social rules and conventions), to "postconventional" thinking (reasoning in which moral problems are viewed in terms of abstract moral principles and matters of personal conscience).

In many ways, it is appropriate for adolescence to be the time in which major life decisions are first confronted (Galotti & Kozberg, 1996). Some of the decisions that adolescents make have far-reaching consequences for the future (Taal & Sampaio de Carvalho, 1997). Both adolescence and youth are critical developmental periods during

which individuation must be balanced by social integration within a community (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Newmann, 1981). Like the school-age child, the adolescent shuttles back and forth between two cultures, that of adults and that of peers (Stone & Church, 1979). For ego psychologists, the period of adolescence is critical in terms of identity formation and continued ego development (Erickson, 1973; Lavery, Siegel, Cousins, & Rubovits 1993; Sullivan, 1953). Haynie, Alexander, & Walters (1997) stated from a cognitive-developmental perspective that adolescents are thought to be more competent decision makers than younger children but less adept than adults. Cognitive development is most often completed in adolescence, enabling logical, abstract, and hypothetical thinking, as well as the ability to plan ahead and to reflect on past behavior (Piaget, 1970). Abilities to think hypothetically and futuristically, and to integrate multiple aspects of a task or problem, reflect formal operational thinking and are essential to reasoned decisions (Haynie et al., 1997).

The centrality of the future orientation of adolescents means that the adolescent differs from the child above all in that he or she thinks beyond the present (C. P. Gordon, 1996). Klaczynski (2001) stated that, with increasing age, children rely more on the "representativeness heuristic" (i.e., the extent to which individual cases conform to existing schemata) and less on statistical evidence. Adolescents' reasoning begins to reflect the influence of self-reflective empathy processes and internalized values (Batchelder & Root, 1994, Eisenberg et al., 1987). Haynie et al. (1997) stated that a successful decision-making model includes five steps to organize a well-considered decision. These five-steps are: (a) identify possible options; (b) identify the consequences of each option; (c) evaluate each consequence; (d) assess the probability of

each consequence; and (e) use some decision rule, combined with the *preceding steps*, to make a decision.

Janis and Mann (1977) extracted seven basic steps that they ascribed to a high-quality decision-making process. The individual (a) thoroughly canvasses a wide range of alternative courses of action; (b) surveys the full range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the choice; (c) carefully weighs whatever he or she knows about the costs and risks of negative consequences, as well as the positive consequences, that could flow from each alternative; (d) intensively searches for new information relevant to further evaluation of the alternatives; (e) correctly assimilates and takes account of any new information or expert judgment to which he or she is exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action the person initially prefers; (f) reexamines the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice; and (g) makes detailed provisions for implementing or executing the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various known risks were to materialize. The first step involves setting a goal (e.g., do well on an exam). The second step involves compiling options for producing goals (e.g., studying, hiring a tutor). The third step involves rank-ordering one's options (e.g., studying is better than hiring a tutor). The last step is selecting the highest-ranking alternative. The most important consequence of approaching decisions in such ways is that an individual would be very likely to attain his or her goals (Byrnes et al., 1999).

Farrell (1990) stated that many adolescents are seeking the answer to the all-important question of their lives, "Where do I fit in?" Adolescents are learning how to make decisions, which interact with their environment, and are trying to obtain a level of

well-being. Nevill (1997) stated a natural hypothesis: The more a person's needs are met through a full range of activities, the more successful and satisfied that person will be. Adolescents are trying to decide on ways to have their needs met through the opportunities provided by their environment. The focus is on feeling confident in making the right decision to have as many needs/wants met as possible.

Negative Environmental Influences

The environment provides experiences that help adolescent make sense of any given situation and provides guidance on how to handle the situation. The literature on stage models of decision-making procedures has suggested two identifiable phases: investigation—gathering information, defining values and goals, and generating and evaluating alternatives; and choice and implementation—the process of selecting a preferred course of action and the process of implementing this option of choice (Friedman, 1996).

A decision maker's values and beliefs about options determine two things: which options are entertained in a particular instance, and the rankings assigned to options (Bymes et al., 1999). Janis and Mann's (1977) decisional balance theory posited that, under normal conditions, individuals make rational decisions to engage or not engage in risky behavior on the basis of some internal ratio or balance of costs to benefits (Siegel et al., 1994).

Decision making may be understood in terms of a cost-versus-benefit approach, in which behavior is chosen that maximizes gains and minimizes losses. Klaczynski's (2001) cognitive research on decision making focused on the development of abilities that are frequently associated with intellectual maturity and on the correlations between these abilities and aspects of decision making (e.g., awareness of costs and benefits). The

relative value of risk and benefit is determined from perceptions that drive behavior (Siegel et al., 1994).

Theorists working from a purely cognitive framework (e.g., Furby & Beyth-Maron, 1992) attempted to explain such risky behavior as the outcome of a decision-making process that factors into the equation such variables as the estimated likelihood of risk, the estimated seriousness of the potential risk, and the cost and benefit of alternative behaviors (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). *Risk taking* is a term developed by adults (parents, psychologists, health educators) to denote adolescent behavior that may result in physical or emotional harm to themselves or others (Siegel et al., 1994). C. P. Gordon (1996) stated that the nature and number of the costs and benefits considered will be a function of the adolescent's cognitive stage of development. Research on the evaluation of consequences usually has focused on the ability to estimate probability. Adolescents do not do this well (Ganzel, 1999).

As stated earlier, decision-making abilities are affected by the adolescent's environment. Chu and Powers (1995) stated that optimal development occurs when an individual interacts with a social environment that is responsive and adaptive to his or her changing needs. The child's constitution, which is influenced by genetics, is also influenced by the environment (Eyberg, Schuhmann, & Rey, 1997; Sameroff, 1975). Some adolescents' environment may be risky in nature and provide reinforcement that leads to "at-risk" behavior. The concern is that adolescents do not realize that their behavior is risky in nature.

It is widely known that adolescents decide to participate in various risky behaviors that may have life-altering consequences (Caffray & Schneider, 2000). Following Rutter (1987) and Werner and Smith (1982), risk has been defined as those

psychosocial factors that have been demonstrated to increase the risk of children and adolescents for the development of psychopathology (Grossman et al., 1992). This type of behavior can lead to negative outcomes that can harm adolescents for the rest of their life. (For example, males are more than twice as likely as females to report having left high school because of behavior problems, including not being able to get along with teachers and being expelled or suspended [Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986, p. 369]). Adolescents are at risk for accidental injury, violence, and the initiation of lifestyles and habits that present long-term health risks: Automobile accidents account for three fourths of all deaths among the 15-24 age group and alcohol consumption, highly correlated with many fatal car accidents, is on the rise (American Medical Association, 1990). Other areas of concern include tobacco use, sexual activity, school noncompliance, and running away from home, as well as engagement in behaviors that, although not illicit or illegal, are at best imprudent (Lavery et al., 1993). Deficient social problem-solving (SPS) skills have been linked to such problems among minors as aggressiveness (Dodge & Feldman, 1990), conduct disorder (Joffe, Dobson, Fine, Marriage, & Haley, 1990), and substance abuse (Greening, 1997; Platt, Scura, & Hannon, 1973). The likelihood of developing "at-risk" behavior is great if the adolescent has negative examples to follow.

Steinberg and Cauffman (1996) stated that some adolescents may behave responsibly in some situations but act irresponsibly in others; show temperance under certain conditions but act impulsively under others; and demonstrate perspective in some circumstances but short-sightedness in others. Accurate reality testing is a prerequisite for success in anticipating consequences, interpreting information, and action planning (Lavery et al., 1993). Researchers have hypothesized that adolescents' involvement in

risky behaviors is due to such factors as negative family and academic influences, negative emotions, peer influences, sensation-seeking needs, unrealistic optimism or a sense of invulnerability, and attempts to achieve goals related to the transition into adulthood (Caffray & Schneider, 2000).

Baumrind (1987) differentiated between pathological and adaptive risk taking: Adaptive risk taking is characterized by secondary gains such as increased self-esteem, stress tolerance, and initiative (Siegel et al., 1994). Steinberg and Cauffman (1996) believed, therefore, that responsibility, temperance, and perspective are best conceived as dispositions to behave in a given way under particular conditions, rather than as fixed abilities or competencies that are displayed independently of context.

With this in mind, outside influences may contribute to the variation in decision-making abilities. One influential environmental factor is low socioeconomic status (SES). In terms of economic status, a large portion of the African American population is disadvantaged (Garmezy, 1991). This situation has consequences for the health of Black infants (Garmezy, 1991). In particular, a history of welfare dependency discourages success at work, education, and marriage, and these intervening variables have an adverse effect on income (Israel & Seeborg, 1998). Elder, Liker, and Cross (1984) concluded that economic hardship was associated with two types of poor adjustment in children: temper tantrums and difficult behavior. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to limit the degree of stress that some individuals experience, particularly those in economically and socially disadvantaged environments (D. B. Miller, 1999).

This discouraging picture relates to negative experiences that teach the child unproductive means of handling stressful situations. D. B. Miller (1999) stated that it is often difficult to limit the degree of stress that some individuals experience, particularly

those in economically and socially disadvantaged environments. Life in urban cities has been compared to a war zone (DeHaan & MacDermid, 1998). In studies, background characteristics of students were strongly related to dropping out of school. Hispanics and Blacks, lower-SES students, were considered to be most likely to drop out (Bryk & Thum, 1989). Findings have indicated that African American males' school performance was negatively influenced by the concentration of jobless males in the neighborhood (Taylor, 2000). Rutter (1993) suggested that "susceptibility to stress is a graded phenomenon" (p. 626) in that some people are able to handle or recover from stressful events more readily than others.

The two background characteristics that are most strongly related to dropping out are SES and race/ethnicity (Ekstrom et al., 1986). Lee and Ekstrom (1987), who used a database of 12,000 students, found that guidance services (in schools) were not equally distributed among all students. In their sample, students from lower-SES families or minority status had less access to guidance counseling. The negative decision making that students learn can continue through adolescence and on into adulthood. A vicious cycle can develop, which continues throughout an individual's life.

The environment also will influence adolescents' psychological and physical development. African American children in urban settings often have numerous obstacles to overcome, such as poverty, substandard housing, and inferior schools (Miller, 1999; Peters, 1985; Sayer, 1994). Researchers have found that, in some communities, children and adolescents may be exposed to some form of violence on a regular basis (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Gladstein, Rusonis, & Heald, 1992; Spencer, Dupree, Cunningham, Harpalani, & Munoz-Miller, 2003). Garbarino, Kostelny, and Dubrow (1991) stated that increased levels of gang violence, lack of basic health care,

inadequate food, inferior schooling, and social isolation are factors that make the context of urban poverty stressful. The fact that major stressful life events place individuals at greater risk for psychopathology and antisocial behavior is well known (Seidman, Chesir-Teran, Friedman, & Yoshikawa, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Few would disagree with the statement that violence has become endemic in urban communities, exacting its greatest toll among young African Americans. Victimization rates for homicide and other violence crimes are disproportionately high for African American adolescents (Howard, 1996). Haynie et al. (1997) cited a 1994 report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 1994) in which it was stated that firearm-related violence ranked as the second leading cause of death among adolescents. For African American adolescent males, it was the leading cause of death (Haynie et al., 1997). Homicide has been the leading cause of death for Black youths age 15 to 24 (M. A. Hamburg, 1998), and according to some estimates (Cohen & Swift, 1993), homicide rates among Black males in this age range are more than 10 times those of their White counterparts (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 34).

Adolescents who grow up in violent communities will be exposed to negative decision-making examples. The stress these adolescents experience, along with the negative examples, can result in negative decision-making development. From this perspective, young adolescents who show evidence of significant distress are, in fact, in trouble. Their distress is likely to predict future difficulty (Grossman et al., 1992; D. A. Hamburg & Takaniski, 1989). Chronic violence or cumulative stressful experiences may have far-reaching effects on the psychological and cognitive development of adolescents (Gladstein et al., 1992; Spencer et al., 2003) because this seems to "increase their susceptibility to developmental harm and post-traumatic stress" (Gladstein et al., 1992, p.

49; Spencer et al., 2003, p. 37). Results from the 1993 Youth Risk Behavior Survey suggested that violent behavior often occurs on school property (Haynie et al., 1997; CDC, 1994). Violent behavior in general is linked to the experience of violence at home, to victimization, and to witnessing violent acts (APA commission on Violence and Youth, 1993; Haynie et al., 1997; Page, Kitchin-Becker, Solovan, Golcec, & Herbert, 1992). These type of experiences will influence how adolescents shape their decision-making processes.

The potential for a healthy adaptation is considerably heightened due to the sociocultural and developmental press for adolescents to think about the future and what role they might play in the general social structure. Yet in many central city high schools today, fewer than half of the students who enter graduate (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Hess & Lauber, 1985). Adolescents with poor academic performance or competence are likely to have bad feelings about school. This, in turn, weakens their bonds or attachment to school and increases their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (Caffray & Schneider, 2000; Ellickson and Hays, 1992; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Jessor, VanDen Bos, Banderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Further, dropouts have more discipline problems than students who remain in school (Bryk & Thum, 1989). The majority of delinquent adolescents affiliate with deviant peers (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). Consequently, adolescents in urban settings must face the typical developmental challenges in addition to those required to survive the day-to-day experiences that many outsiders and some residents perceive as hopeless (Lerner, Lerner, & Tubman, 1989; Steward et al., 1998).

As the influence from the environment influences an adolescent's view of the world, risky behavior may become appealing. Another risky behavior is sexual

involvement. The need for a better understanding of the sexual practices of women generally, and of minority women in particular, and the dynamics underlying these practices, has increased as the incidence of HIV infection from heterosexual transmission has risen (Quadagno, Sly, Harrison, Eberstein, & Soler, 1998). Ethnicity has been reported to affect the types of sexual acts that are practiced, the frequency of sex, and the numbers and types of sexual partners (Quadagno et al., 1998). Younger individuals tend to have more partners, be more experimental in the types of sexual behaviors they engage in, and have higher frequencies for all sexual behaviors (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Quadagno et al., 1998, Van Oss Marin, Gomez, & Hearst, 1993). Sexual behavior is a serious risk behavior, which has damaging outcomes if a poor decision is made.

Eyberg et al. (1998) stated that the central process of reorganization links the child's needs with the requirements of the culture. Reorganization can be illustrated with the behavioral process of imitation (Eyberg et al., 1998). The concern is the development of negative behaviors that are learned and mastered by imitation. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) stated that one's beliefs will directly affect the behaviors one chooses. Imitating negative behaviors can have a lasting impact on the developing adolescent.

Positive Environmental Influences

Along the lines of environmental influences are environmental protective factors. These factors help the adolescent make sense of his or her environment and thereby assist in making better decisions. Sum and Fogg (1991) stated that more than 65% of adolescents are able to make the transition to young adulthood successfully and improve their economic circumstances. Stevenson (1994, 1995) and Peters (1985) posited that racial socialization (racial identity) can act as a buffer against negative racial messages in

the environment. Researchers have **posited** that protective factors **operate at three levels:** individual, familial, and societal (Garmezy, 1985; K. A. Gordon, 1995; Luther & Zigler, 1991; D. B. Miller, 1999; Rutter, 1987). Grossman et al. (1992) also stated that protective factors and processes identified thus far can be categorized as individual, familial, and social environmental. These elements may interact to protect a person from negative environmental conditions (Brooks, 1994; D. B. Miller, 1999; Rutter, 1987)

A study by Arroyo and Zigler (1995) indicated that racial identity facilitates the development of competencies among African American adolescents. Protective factors, at least in the case of adolescents, have been shown to be highly context dependent (Grossman et al., 1992). Empirical researchers have found that youths whose parents stressed ethnic pride and preparation for racial barriers reported higher levels of personal efficacy and received better grades than youths whose parents did not **do this** (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Phillips-Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). Other findings have indicated that the more negatively mothers perceived their neighborhoods, the more they talked to their children about the need to find a good job in the future, the more they worried about their children and their future employment, and the greater was their desire for their children to earn good grades (Jayaratne, 1993; Taylor, 2000).

Individual factors that have been found to protect adolescents from risk include, among others, self-esteem and internal locus of control (Grossman et al., 1992). Moreover, perceptions of peer acceptance have been empirically linked with positive self-concept and adjustment (Harter, Marold, Whitesell & Cobbs, 1996; Seidman et al., 1999). These elements may interact to protect a person from negative environmental conditions (Brooks, 1994; D. B. Miller, 1999; Rutter, 1987). Protective factors help

adolescents better understand their environment and make better sense of what is happening around them.

Historically, psychological and sociological theories have placed risk for and protection from depression and antisocial behavior during adolescence in the context of the family and/or peer systems (Cohen, 1955; Rutter, 1990; Seidman et al., 1999). In cross-sectional studies, parental social support (e.g., instrumental, emotional) has consistently been found to be negatively related to measures of internalizing symptoms and problem behavior among adolescent samples representing diverse racial and ethnic groups (Barrera & Li, 1996; Seidman et al., 1999). African American families are concerned about the self-perception, identity, and achievement of their children (and adolescents) (Mosley-Howard & Evans, 2000). Several studies, often operationalizing involvement as parental monitoring, have documented its protective role against academic failure, delinquency, problem drinking, and antisocial activities (Harris & Marmer, 1996; Seidman et al., 1999).

Studies have demonstrated the joint protective function of family support or cohesion together with low hassles or conflict for adolescent maladaptation, depression, and substance use (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; Seidman et al., 1999). The resource exchange theory addresses the relationship among the variables of interest (Blake & Darling, 2000). The basic premise of this theory is that humans form interpersonal relationships in light of the rewards, costs, or profits (outcomes) that such associations might be expected to bring. Blake and Darling stated that multigenerational and interdependent kinship that provide emotional and economic support for its members have dominated family life in African American families. The functioning of kin, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and nonbiological relatives has been central to the

development of the child (or adolescent) and has provided mutual aid *in the African American family* (Blake & Darling, 2000).

Involvement in various types of problem behaviors (substance abuse, delinquency, etc.) might be incongruent for youths who have strong "traditional" ethnic affiliations (Phillips-Smith et al., 1999; Westermeyer, 1984). Racial and ethnic identity (REI) among African American adolescents and young adults has been associated, generally in the protective direction, with numerous psychological and behavioral characteristics including self-esteem, attitudes toward substance use, and social functioning (Baldwin, 1984; Belgrave et al., 1994; Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Selassie, & Smith, 1999). These examples show that protective factors exist within the family, but the concern is how influential are the family support factors.

Even with all the environmental influences on adolescents, not all adolescents develop negative decision-making characteristics. With protective factors, some adolescents develop productive decision-making abilities and manage to survive their community influence. African American and White students who have strong ethnic identification report fewer behavior problems than their peers without strong ethnic identities (Jagers & Mock, 1993; Phillips-Smith et al., 1999; Rotheram-Borus, 1990). They also share some of the same stressors, including inflation, divorce, unemployment, natural disasters, and developmental problems of children and adults as they grow older (Blake & Darling, 2000).

Half of the children living under conditions of disadvantage do not repeat that pattern in their own adult lives (Garnezy, 1991). Adolescence is a major transition time with inevitable stresses of life span changes, but normal adolescents do not experience major turmoil and do not manifest serious symptomatology (Grossman et al., 1992).

From the perspective of a stage-environment fit, Eccles et al., (1993) proposed that when the developmental trajectories of early adolescence and the trajectories of environmental change across the school years are in synchrony, there will be positive motivational consequences in adolescents (Chu & Powers, 1995). In the choice phase, decision makers simply choose the option given the highest global goodness rating (Byrnes & McClenny, 1994). It appears that environmental factors can influence decision making of adolescents, but there are still more specific factors that influence decision-making development.

Steinberg and Cauffman (1996) and Scott, Reppucci, & Woolard (1995) stated that there is more to competent decision making than cognitive competence. They urged researchers to examine developmental aspects of "judgment," more broadly conceived. With this in mind, there must be developmental factors that influence the ability to acquire the skills of effective decision making. Some developmental factors that can influence the ability to make decisions are racial identity development, vocational identity development, and psychological adjustment and coping-style development of the individual.

The nature of African Americans' psychological well being or functioning has been a large topic of interest for researchers for many years (Carter, 1991). Psychological functioning among African Americans has been investigated from basically two perspectives: (a) psychiatric epidemiological studies on the relationships among race, social class, and psychological symptoms, and (b) social psychological studies of the relationship among psychological symptoms, race, social class, and mediating variables such as locus of control and stressful life events (Carter, 1991). Taking these viewpoints together, it is not surprising that racial identity, vocational

identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles play an important role in African Americans' development. Development focuses on many skills, one of which is life choices or decision making.

Racial Identity

As Erikson (1973) pointed out, one of the major tasks of adolescence is the development of identity (C. P. Gordon, 1996). Identity is that quality of the ego that emerges largely during the critical period of adolescence; young people have to deal with a physiological revolution inside themselves and "tangible adult tasks" ahead of them (Farrell, 1990). One way that theorists and researchers have attempted to understand within-group psychological differences among African Americans has been through the use of racial identity theory (Carter, 1991; Cross, 1978; Helms, 1990).

The model has been incorporated into a rationally constructed scale, the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B; Helms & Parham, 1985; Plummer, 1995) that measures the four themes of the model: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization. Each stage focuses on the growth of the individual mentally and how this impacts his or her behavior. Each stage/theme is discussed in the following paragraphs.

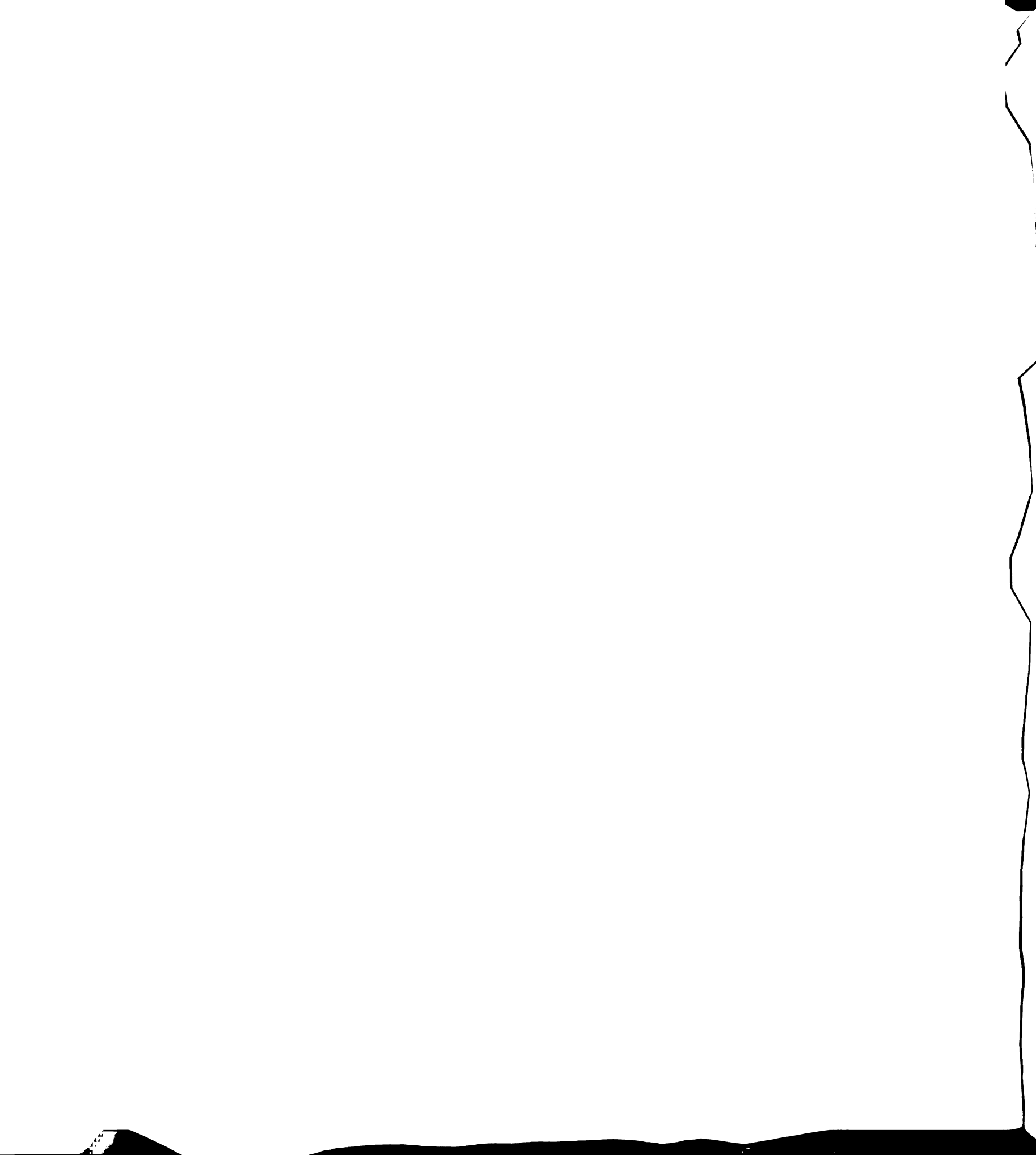
Pre-encounter describes the African American's viewing the world from a White European frame of reference. This individual devalues his or her sense of Blackness. *Encounter* describes the process of becoming aware of one's Blackness. The individual awakens as a result of a critical incident that leads him or her to reconceptualize issues of race in society and to recognize his or her racial feelings. *Immersion* describes the individual who moves to accept his sense of Blackness. The individual makes a voluntary decision to become "Black" and embraces the African culture. *Internalization* describes an attitude in which the individual is very aware of the meaning of being

African American. The individual has a high comfort level with his or her racial being and acknowledges the African American culture as well as appreciates other ethnic/racial cultures and values (Plummer, 1995).

In viewing race as an important factor in decision making, one also needs to understand the influence of beliefs about one's racial identity. African Americans' view of their racial identity will have a significant influence on their psychological adjustment. There are four avenues in developing one's racial identity. Racial *salience* refers to the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of his or her self-concept at a particular time. *Salience* is concerned with a particular event, as the unit of analysis. Racial *ideology* is the individual's set of beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way they think other members of their race should act. This dimension represents the person's philosophy about the ways in which African Americans should live and interact with society. Racial *regard* refers to the person's affective and evaluative judgment of his or her race. Racial *centrality* refers to the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with respect to race. It is a measure of whether race is a core part of an individual's self-concept (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). An African American's racial identity will have a strong influence on the development of the skill of decision making.

Vocational Identity

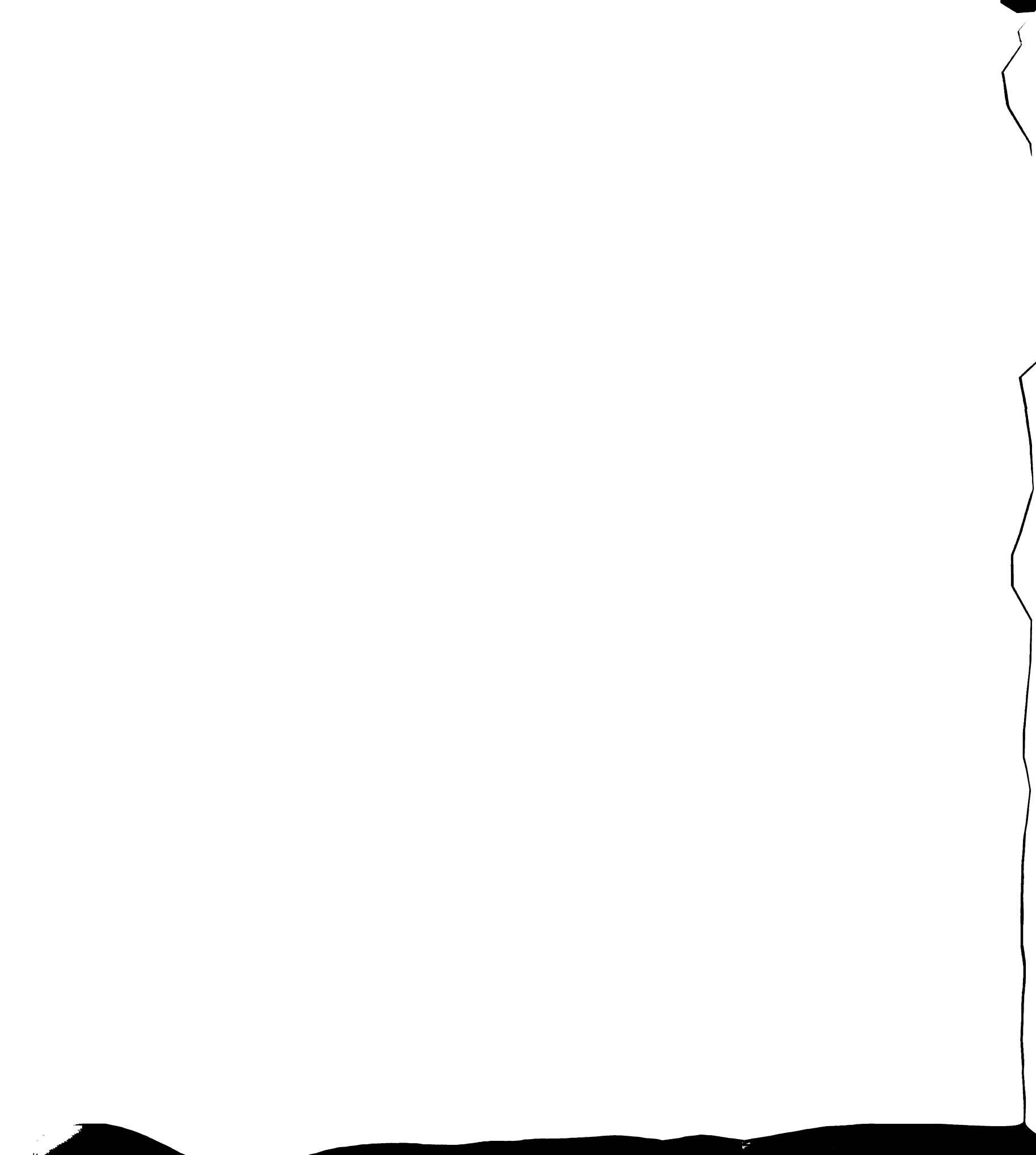
Career decision-making is a complex process, involving multiple alternatives and objectives (Nevill, 1997). A second factor associated with decision-making skill development is vocational-identity development. African Americans' understanding of experiences associated with school and/or work will shape their vocational identity.



There are two components that influence situational understanding. One is worldview, and the second is history of African Americans' career behavior.

African Americans' worldview is very different from that of White Americans. African Americans tend to view the world through a collective focus, whereas White Americans' approach will tend to be more independent in nature. African Americans have a world-view similar to people from Africa. An African worldview (Asante, 1987) purports that African Americans have to some degree retained notions of collectivism (valuing group identity and belonging above individualism), kinship bonds (the development of familylike relationships with others outside the biological family), spiritualism (valuing of a supreme being and being grounded and guided by that principle), role flexibility (shared and changing roles as needed by family), indigenous social support (help-seeking sought from within the indigenous community), and diunital views of the world (integrating elements in life and striving for balance, not dichotomizing, integrating notions of material and spiritual, masculine and feminine forces).

African Americans' worldview is Africentric, whereas White Americans' worldview is Eurocentric. According to Cheatham (1990), *Africentrism* is defined as placing no central emphasis on the individual, but rather being other oriented; families stress affiliation, collectivity, interdependence, respect for elders, and obedience to authority as preferable to individuation and autonomy. In comparison, *Eurocentrism* is defined as a belief in the comparative superiority of the Anglo American culture's emphasis on Western values, ethos, and beliefs in values of competition, individuation, mastery over nature, and rigid adherence to time (Cheatham, 1990).



African Americans who express the collectivist view of the world will take other individuals into consideration in making their decisions. The desire to account for others' needs shows a greater concern for the group as compared to the individual. Examples of others are family (immediate and extended), friends, and community members. Astin (1984) proposed that vocational "maladjustment occurs when the drive to satisfy one need predominates to the extent that the other needs are inadequately satisfied" (p. 125). This concern will influence life choices to a point where personal needs or gains may be secondary, whereas group or family needs are primary.

The second component of vocational-identity development is an understanding of the history of the race's career behavior. Smith (1983) stated that African Americans have the highest youth unemployment. They are twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed. Furthermore, lower- and higher-class African Americans experience discrimination at almost equal levels (Smith, 1983). Many African Americans have difficulty reaching their career aspirations and achieving their career goals.

Many African Americans learn about the world of work during their adolescent years. It may be important for adolescents to have knowledge of African Americans' vocational history when they are making plans for their careers. This information is important to keep in mind because adolescence is a critical period for the formation of vocational interests and identity (Mortimer, Pimentel, Ryu, Nash, & Lee, 1996).

Psychological Adjustment and Coping

A final factor influencing life choices is psychological adjustment and coping. Psychological adjustment, as measured by the Affects Balance Scale, is described as a manifestation of positive affects or emotions, as well as the relative absence of negative emotions (Steward et al., 1998). Coping is defined as the act of controlling adverse

environmental conditions, thereby lowering psycho-physiological disturbance (Phillips, 1993). The ability to adjust to and cope in any given situation will influence the manner in which adolescents select possible options.

Researchers have examined the importance of social support systems and protective process during adolescence. These studies have emphasized the role of family support in promoting psychological well-being and coping-style development. Affective motivators have been targeted in many theories as playing a critical role in adolescents' decisions to participate in a variety of risky behaviors that may have life-altering consequences (Caffray & Schneider, 2000). The church has helped African Americans to cope with difficult situations, to encourage educational endeavors, and to promote self-esteem (Blake & Darling, 2000).

Caffray and Schneider (2000) described affective motivators in three categories: (a) promote risky behaviors by enhancing pleasant affect states (sensation seeking), (b) promote risky behaviors by reducing or avoiding negative affective states (tension reduction), and (c) deter risky behaviors by avoiding anticipated regret (e.g., of harming future). The adolescent needs to develop the ability to cope mentally with situations viewed as stressful. This will allow an adolescent to better adapt to the situation and construct a productive plan to relieve the stress.

Along with stress management, coping-style development will allow the adolescent to make more effective decisions. There are two styles of coping that encompasses all individuals. *Problem-focused* coping is defined as involving attempts to manage or reduce stress by directly altering the situation or the individual's appraisal of the situation. *Emotion-focused* coping is defined as making attempts to regulate emotional responses to stressful situations (Phillips, 1993). Regardless of which coping

strategy is selected, the focus is on **how the adolescent selects appropriate coping techniques to assist in a positive outcome.**

Operational Definitions of Terms

The following terms are **defined** in the context in which they are used in this dissertation:

Africentrism is defined as **placing no central emphasis on the individual; rather, families stress affiliation, collectivity, interdependence, respect for elders, and obedience to authority as preferable to individuation and autonomy** (Cheatham, 1990).

Career maturity **is an individual's readiness to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions and cope with appropriate career development tasks** (Powell & Luzzo, 1998; Savickas, 1984).

Coping is an act intended to **control adverse environmental conditions, thereby lowering psycho-physiological disturbance** (Phillips, 1993).

Encounter is a stage in which an individual has **an experience or a series of experiences that challenges his or her anti-Black and pro-White attitudes; thus the individual's attitude reflects a state of psychological confusion and emotional turmoil** (Carter, 1991).

Eurocentrism is a belief in the **comparative superiority of the Anglo-American culture; there is an emphasis on Western values, ethos, and beliefs in values of competition, individuation, mastery over nature, and rigid adherence to time** (Cheatham, 1990).

Identity is that quality of the ego that emerges largely during the critical period of **adolescence** (Erikson, 1973; Farrell 1990). It is a dynamic fitting together of parts of the

personality with the realities of the social world so that a person has a sense both of internal coherence and meaningful relatedness to the real world (Josselson, 1987).

Immersion is a stage in which an individual becomes deeply involved in discovering his or her Black cultural heritage and has idealized images and intense emotions about his or her new Black identity; psychologically, the individual may feel anxious about his or her new identity and hostile and angry toward Whites (Carter, 1991).

Internalization occurs when a person internalizes a positive Black identity; internalization attitudes have associated with them an awareness and acceptance of a bicultural identity structure (Carter, 1991).

Maturity is the capacity to function adequately on one's own (Greenberger & Sorensen, 1974), to contribute to social cohesion, and to interact adequately with others (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996).

Pre-encounter is a stage in which an individual devalues his or her race or racial group and attempts to deny membership in that group (Carter, 1991).

Protective factors are specific competencies that are necessary for the process of resilience to occur (Dyer & McGuinness, 1996).

Psychological adjustment is defined as a manifestation of positive affects or emotions, as well as the relative absence of negative emotions (Steward et al., 1998).

Racial identity refers to an individual's acquisition of group patterns, one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995; Rotheram & Phinney, 1987).

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity (Dyer & McGuinness, 1996).

Risk-taking behavior involves knowingly risking harm by engaging in a particular activity (C. P. Gordon, 1996).

Self-determination is "the ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself" (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p. 164).

Vocational identity is an identity that is built through differentiation and integration as one confronts work. The newness of the experience demands that a new identity be formed, the goal being the formation of an ego identity for work (Tolbert, 1974).

Research Questions

This investigation focused on the development of the decision-making process. The following research questions were posed: How does development of the decision-making process relate to future decision making? Do urban adolescents' Black racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment and coping style predict early adult life style behavior? If so, to what degree?

The following hypotheses were developed to analyze the data collected in this study:

Hypothesis 1: Positive scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Scale will correlate to positive life decisions and life experiences of the participants.

Hypothesis 2: Negative scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Scale will correlate negatively with participants' decision-making abilities.

Hypothesis 3: Male participants will have lower scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Scale and will have more negative decisions as compared to female participants.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescent decision making is a developmental process. Models of development can be used to better understand the process of adolescent decision making. In the transactional model (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975), age is used to index the developmental levels that occur sequentially within each of the multiple dimensions. Development is understood as a continuous interplay between the child, the experiences provided by the child's environment, and the child's own effect on the environment. A child's developmental outcome results from complex, dynamic transactions between the child's constitutional system (within the child) and the child's environmental system (outside the child) (Eyberg et al., 1997). It can be concluded that the child's constitutional-system (within the child) variables play an important role in the development of the adolescent's decision-making process.

Some variables such as racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles can influence decision-making development. However, there is little empirical evidence taking into account the racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles of the adolescent when studying the development of decision-making processes. The impact of these factors on the development of healthy and productive decision-making abilities is described in this chapter.

The literature review is focused on the effects of racial identity on life decision making, the effects of vocational identity on decision making, and the effects of

psychological adjustment and coping styles on decision making. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how these factors combine to influence adolescents' life choices.

Effects of Racial Identity on Life Decision Making

Ethnic identity refers to "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to group membership" (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987, p. 13). A number of early researchers on ethnic identity and similar constructs (i.e., racial identity) assessed the relationship between ethnic group identity and young people's self-esteem (K. Clark & Clark, 1939; Cross, 1991; Phillips-Smith et al., 1999). Racial identity is perhaps the most explored dimension of African American life and functioning (Scott, 2003; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). DeHaan and MacDermid (1998) stated that, despite the importance of identity, the development of identity in urban adolescents has not been studied extensively.

Interest in this age group, at least in part, is based on the assumption that adolescence is a critical period for the formation of racial and ethnic identity (REI) (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Resnicow et al., 1999). Racial identity theorists have argued that African Americans differ in the extent and degree to which they identify with their ascribed racial/cultural group (Carter, 1991). Each African American moves through four stages of racial identity development. These stages progress from a slim view of one's culture to a broader view, incorporating all aspects of one's culture while understanding other cultures in the larger society. This model has been incorporated into a rationally constructed scale, the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B; Helms & Parham, 1985; Plummer, 1995), that measures the four stages of the model: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization. Each stage focuses on the growth

of the individual mentally and how this affects his or her behavior. Identity development is a major task for all adolescents (D. B. Miller, 1999).

Having entered adolescence with emergent identities that grant variable salience to race and Black culture, African American adolescents go through a process of identity exploration (L. D. Scott, 2003). African American adolescents progress through these stages and gain a better understanding of the influence of their culture on their belief system. The extent to which an African American adolescent ascribes to a racial/ethnic group will influence his or her decision-making ability. For adolescents who are members of racial or ethnic minorities, this task (identity development) is particularly complicated, given their environment (D. B. Miller, 1999; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Racial socialization, in turn, fosters racial identity (D. B. Miller, 1999). It has been suggested that racial identity and racial socialization foster the adjustment of African American adolescents in the face of race-related adversity (L. D. Scott, 2003; D. B. Miller, 1999; Ward, 1999). Racial socialization and racial identity have been presented as protective factors for urban African American adolescents (D. B. Miller, 1999). Arroyo and Zigler (1995) found that racial identity facilitates the development of competencies among African American adolescents. Adolescents continue their racial identity struggle beyond the racial socialization of childhood and come to some resolution of this struggle in the adolescent period (Plummer, 1995).

The assumption that African Americans suffer from an inferiority complex (i.e., low self-esteem) went unchallenged until the early 1970s (Cross, 1991). If this is the case, many African American adolescents will have a low view of themselves, which will lead to making decisions that do not allow them to reach their full potential. Also, this

belief would encourage African American adolescents to make rash and thoughtless decisions because they may feel that nothing good will come from their decisions.

In a review of the literature on African American racial identity and self-concept, Cross (1991) examined the results from 45 studies conducted between 1939 and 1987. The author found that 36% of the studies reported a significant positive association between racial identity and self-esteem. The majority of the 45 studies used children and teens as participants ($N = 34$). It is important to point this out because there is a correlation between racial identity formation and internal belief system. This internal belief system provides a framework when evaluating a situation and making decisions to affect the situation. McCreary, Slavin, and Berry (1996) noted that African American adolescents must develop a strong racial identity in order to overcome the stigma of negative social stereotypes. Furthermore, recent studies have indicated that discrimination is a stressor that has deleterious effects on the mental health of African Americans (Brown et al., 2000; Scott, 2003; Simons et al., 2002). If the adolescent has a low internal value system (influenced by social stereotypes), his or her decision-making ability may be hampered in some way.

Another factor influencing the influence of racial identity on adolescent's decision making is insulation. According to the insulation hypothesis, because of racial segregation in the United States, the majority of African Americans compare themselves not with members of the broader society, but with other African Americans. As a result, African Americans are insulated from the broader society's negative perceptions of their racial group, and thus their personal self-esteem is protected (Rowley et al., 1998). In terms of its protective function, Ward (2000) contended that the development of a sense of Black identity that is "unassailable" is the most significant strategy for resisting racial

oppression and hence is requisite for African American children and adolescents (L. D. Scott, 2003).

If this is the case, African American adolescents make judgments about their actions using their own community as a reference point. The impact on decision-making abilities would depend on how the specific community viewed and evaluated them. When adolescents identify with and positively value their cultural group membership (i.e., when they possess high collective self-esteem), they are likely to behave in ways that are indicative of and consistent with the norms and values of their cultural group (Constantine, Donnelly, & Myers, 2002). The adolescent, depending on whether he or she receives positive or negative reinforcement from the community, will continue to make decisions in that same general fashion.

Adolescents develop a value system that assists them in evaluating individuals who provide positive and negative support. One important aspect of this value system is whom the adolescent evaluates as important in his or her community with regard to providing positive or negative reinforcement for decision making. Most theorists of racial identity have assumed that adolescents have accepted their parents' and the society's labels of racial identity (Plummer, 1995). Families transmit the values, norms, and beliefs that are needed by successive generations to cope in an environment in which race plays a critical role (Demo & Hughes, 1990; D. B. Miller, 1999). The adolescent makes determinations on the worth of individuals in his or her community and the importance of their input. The evaluation of individuals will have a direct influence on how the adolescent makes sense of reinforcement from the community. This evaluation process will have a direct effect on the types of decisions the adolescent makes.

Effects of Vocational Identity on Decision Making

Before viewing the effects of vocational identity on decision making, it is necessary to understand career maturity. Career maturity has been defined as the individual's ability to make appropriate career choices, including awareness of what is required to make a career decision and the degree to which one's choices are both realistic and consistent over time (Crites, 1976; Ohler, Levinson, & Hays, 1996; King, 1989). According to Crites (1971), career maturity includes both affective and cognitive dimensions. Haynie et al. (1997) pointed out that acquisition of formal operations is not a function of age, but of maturation. The cognitive dimension of career maturity is represented by career choice competencies (i.e., career decision-making skills), whereas the affective dimension is represented by attitudes toward the career decision-making process (Powell & Luzzo, 1998). A certain level of career maturity must be reached to allow for effective career exploration. If maturity is not reached, career decision making will be flawed in some way.

Accounts of adolescent immaturity may be classified into two broad categories: those attributed to cognitive differences between adolescents and adults (i.e., differences in the way they think) and those attributed to psychosocial differences (i.e., differences in their social and emotional maturity) (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). This is important to note, because if the African American adolescent has not reached a level of career maturity, then his or her decision-making process will be limited. More important, the desired career path will appear out of reach because the adolescent has not developed the skill to effectively organize a plan to obtain the desired goal.

Levinson, Ohler, Caswell, & Kiewra (1998) stated that, according to Super, career maturity consists of five dimensions: planfulness, exploration, information gathering,

decision-making, and reality orientation. Using Super's developmental stages as a guide for understanding the process of decision making, one sees that the African American adolescent is between the growth and exploratory stages. Each stage has a specific quality that the adolescent must master. In the growth stage, the focus is on developing the capacity, attitudes, and interest in careers. These aspects will allow the adolescent to categorize career paths into likes and dislikes. This task is the beginning stage of decision making for future activities. The second stage, exploration, focuses on narrowing choices, but not completely ruling out particular choices. This continues with the development of decision-making skills because the adolescent now starts to pick from the desired paths to select a few desirable career goals. The second stage allows for further development of decision-making skills.

As is true of racial identity, the adolescent's vocational identity has an effect on his or her level of confidence. Powell and Luzzo (1998) said that people who possess relatively high levels of career maturity are likely to achieve successful and satisfying careers because they display awareness of the career decision-making process, often think about alternatives careers, and relate their present behavior to future goals. Gottfredson (as cited in Levinson et al., 1998) identified 12 factors that affect career choice and place certain populations at risk for experiencing career-choice difficulties. These risk factors include low intelligence, poor education, cultural isolation, low self-esteem, functional limitations, nontraditional interests, social isolation, low/high intelligence compared with family and peers, primary caretaker, and primary economic provider. These factors place women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities at high risk for career-choice problems (Levinson et al., 1998). Research has also consistently indicated that members of certain ethnic minority groups may have lower levels of career maturity

than European Americans (Luzzo, 1998; Powell & Luzzo, 1998). Lower career maturity creates a situation in which full exploration of oneself will not be an option. This will lead to identity formation at earlier stages and a possible stagnation of development.

Ego identity formation is another aspect of adolescent growth, which will have an impact on youths' vocational maturity. Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney (1989) stated that identity achievement involves the individual going through a period of exploration and emerging with a sense of commitment to his or her ego identity. According to Erikson (1973), adolescence is a time of role experimentation and exploration of the self, and it is through these processes that the adolescent establishes a coherent sense of identity—a sense of knowing who one is and where one is headed. The adolescent is learning about himself or herself and developing a sense of confidence in his or her abilities. This belief in oneself relates to how confident the adolescent feels about the decisions he or she makes.

In a series of studies, career indecision was related to serious psychological problems, including situation and characteristic anxiety, self-perceptual difficulties, and externalized attribution (Fugua & Hartman, 1983). If the adolescent has a low level of confidence in his or her career decision making, the youth will select career paths that he or she thinks are achievable and easy to reach. The selection may be below the adolescent's ability level, but achieving at a lower level will allow the adolescent to "save face."

Finally, it appears that there is a correlation between career planning and adolescents' decision-making abilities. Mortimer et al. (1996) stated that, because work values are important determinants of vocational choice and actual occupational destinations, it is important to understand their origins. Because adolescence is an

important time for the formation of vocational interests and identity (Erikson 1973), it is reasonable to suppose that work experience would have a significant formative influence on adolescents' thinking about the potential rewards to be obtained from work (Mortimer et al., 1996.) Researchers have pointed out the importance of the role that employment during high school plays in adolescents' dropping out of school (Ekstrom et al., 1986). The researchers were focusing on the intrinsic value adolescents gain from holding a job during high school. The important point is how much importance the adolescent places on career planning and future decision making. If the adolescent has no interest in career planning, his or her decisions will reflect this lack of interest.

Researchers have discovered that there are some important aspects to adolescent decision making with regard to future plans. Steinberg, Greenberger, Jacobi, and Garduque (1981) posited three possible consequences of adolescent employment for vocational socialization. The first was that part-time jobs may help adolescents acquire attitudes, values, habits, and knowledge that will make them better adult workers. This belief focuses on developing an awareness of the importance to career planning and making plans for future career exploration and growth. In a related study, Lindsay and Knox (1984) found that high monetary remuneration fostered a decline in intrinsic values, whereas autonomous and challenging work strengthened intrinsic values over time. The importance the African American adolescent places on career planning will relate directly to how well he or she makes future career decisions. As the adolescent matures, he or she will be faced with career exploration and planning. The better developed the youth's vocational identity, the better his or her decisions will be and the happier the adolescent will be with those decisions.

The Effects of Psychological Adjustment and Coping Styles on Decision Making

To understand the effects of psychological adjustment and coping styles on decision making, one must first understand how stress affects the individual. Stress can be viewed as the relationship between the individual's interpretation of a situation and the environmental aspects of the situation (Phillips, 1993). More specifically, the stimulus-response interaction (or relational) definition is based on the belief that there is no clear-cut way to predict psychological stress as a reaction without reference to the characteristics of the person (Phillips, 1993). Thus, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that it is more appropriate to view psychological stress as a relationship between the person and the environment (Phillips, 1993). Two important aspects of psychological adjustment and coping are the individual personality with regard to adapting to the stressor and the influence of the environment.

Coping with stress has been an important topic in current research on adolescent development (Chapman & Mullis, 2000; W. Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996; Hastings, Anderson, & Kelly, 1996; Munford, 1994). Most of the current conceptualizations of adolescent coping neglect to consider the influence of adolescents' worldview and identity on the types of coping strategies they may use (Constantine et al., 2002). R. Clark, Novak, and Dupree (2002) stated that adolescent coping is one individual factor that may be proximally related to developmental trajectories (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987; Stern & Zevon, 1990), through influencing the untoward psychosocial and physiological effects associated with perceived stressors (R. Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Hauber, Rice, Howell, & Carmon, 1998). African Americans' coping strategy will play a role in how well they adjust to different situations they encounter in their surroundings. Darwinian thought heavily influences one's approach to coping, in

which the survival function of coping is emphasized. In this approach, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping is often defined as acts that control aversive environmental conditions, thereby lowering psychophysiological disturbance (Phillips, 1993).

In response to a range of life stressors, the type of coping strategy used by adolescents is generally related to divergent mental health outcomes (Moos, 2002; L. D. Scott, 2003). Phillips-Smith et al. (1999) and Blask and Unger (1995) found both ethnic identity and self-esteem to be related to a sense of personal efficacy. Adolescents learn ways to adjust to the stress of their environment while continuing to grow and mature under the adverse conditions. Researchers have suggested that parents play an instrumental role in introducing modes of affect regulation and coping strategies to youths (Chapman & Mullis, 1999; R. Clark et al., 2002; Melnick & Hinshaw, 2000). Constantine et al. (2002) and Daly, Jennings, Beckett, and Leashore (1995) also reported that when African Americans were faced with stressful situations, they used family and community-based resources to cope. The environment teaches adolescents ways to behave that reduce stress levels while shaping the adolescents' cognitive development.

Looking more closely at the cognitive development of adolescents, their ability to appraise any given situation will play an important role in what types of decisions they make to handle the stressors. Lazarus's theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) emphasizes the person's appraisal of what is being experienced and the use of this information for coping and shaping the course of events. The processes of cognitive appraisal and coping are critical mediators of stressful person-environment relations and their immediate and long-range outcomes. Before a coping strategy is selected, a stressor must be appraised

(Renk & Creasey, 2003). The adolescent must be able to assess any *Given situation* and then make a decision on how to best handle the situation.

The developmental level of the appraisal process will have an influence on the adolescent's ability to cope with any given stressor. Symptoms of depression are more prevalent and more frequent during adolescence than in earlier stages of development (Wolraich, Felice, & Drotar, 1997). Early parent-child transactions involving insecure attachment also have been implicated in the development of depression (Cummings & Cicchetti, 1990). These influences do not allow for proper development of the appraisal process, which can lead to maladjustments to stressful situations. Inappropriate psychological adjustment will affect the selection of the coping style. If this occurs, the adolescent will not be able to respond effectively to the stressful situation. Perhaps it is the level of maturity of these cognitive skills that allows the adolescent to engage in the kinds of thinking associated with depression, such as guilt, hopelessness, and self-critical comparisons with others in the peer culture (Eyberg et al., 1997).

As the adolescent makes sense of a situation, he or she will make appraisals focusing on decisions to affect the situation. The two means of appraisal addressed in Lazarus's theory are primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal refers to the cognitive process of evaluating the significance of a situation for one's well being (Phillips, 1993). The adolescent must be able to understand what is going on in any given situation and determine the effects on his or her growth and development. The appraisal refers to evaluating the outcomes from an abstract point of view. Adolescents need to be able to see how their actions will affect them at that time and later.

Secondary appraisal refers to a process of evaluating what, if anything, can be done to manage threatening or challenging situations (Phillips, 1993). This refers to

adolescents making decisions to **handle** a specific situation. The **evaluation process** has occurred, where the adolescent views his or her options and now it is **time to act**. The major issue is whether the youth **will** make a positive or a negative decision. This decision will affect the specific situation and will be used as a reference whenever a similar situation occurs.

Along with the appraisal process, strategies have to be selected to address the situation. Renk and Creasey (2003) stated that strategies may include problem-focused coping, which is employed when the individual determines that a harmful, threatening, or challenging situation is amenable to change, or emotion-focused coping, which occurs when it is judged that nothing can be done to modify a harmful, threatening, or challenging situation. Traditionally, it has been reported that males tend to endorse more active, problem-focused coping strategies than females (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). In contrast to males, females often endorse more emotion- than problem-focused coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) and seek more social support (Houtman, 1990; Renk & Creasey, 2003). Research with other populations of adolescents (e.g., Bird & Harris, 1990) has suggested that females tend to use more peaceful, less violent methods of coping with stress. In contrast, males have been reported to be aggressive and to ventilate their feelings through the use of swearing and taking anger out on others (Bird & Harris, 1990; Chapman & Mullis, 2000). The ability to select the correct or most appropriate coping strategy can influence the outcome of a situation and how the adolescent adjusts to the problem.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Participants

The participants in this study were 179 college freshmen. Due to missing data, only 144 participants were used for this study. The sample was considered “at-risk” on the basis of their residential areas being labeled low social economic status (SES). Low SES is considered as having a family income below or near the national poverty level standards. The sample’s racial/ethnic make-up was African American, as self-identified by the students. All students had completed high school and were first-time college students. College freshmen were selected as participants because adolescent decision-making processes have not been extensively researched, despite an awareness of the importance of problem solving and decision making during this stage of human development (Friedman, 1996; Friedman & Mann, 1993; Mann, Harmoni, & Power, 1989). The definition of adolescence was expanded to include 18- and 19-year-old college students.

The Research Setting

I contacted the Office of Supportive Services at a large, predominantly White midwestern university. This office conducts programs and activities that target “at-risk and underrepresented” high school students and provides support during their college careers. The programs and activities provided are mentoring initiatives (residential fellows and student assistants), academic guidance (time management, orientation seminars, stress management, and study skills), tutorial assistance (math enrichment and general tutor support), research opportunities (McNair/SROP), scholarships, career

planning and exploration, student employment, and a summer university program. Other activities this office conducts are welcome orientations for incoming students, orientations for their parents, open houses, parents' visitation day, a recognition program for student achievement, and an honor society (Chi Alpha Epsilon).

The ethnic/racial classification of the students includes African American, Native American, Latino/a, Asian American, and White. These students come from predominantly urban communities and/or low-SES communities, or are first-generation college students. The activities provided are designed to help students with their adjustment to college, as well as to promote their academic performance. The focus of the office is to increase retention rates, facilitate academic success, and enhance graduation rates among students in its programs.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were selected on the basis of two considerations: simplicity and familiarity. These instruments are easy to complete and effective with participants. Each instrument takes no longer than 20 minutes to complete, and a selection of answers is provided. Minimizing the time to complete instruments was key in gaining student participation. Previous research using these instruments indicated no difficulty in participants' completing the measures. The ability to sample many participants in a short time frame was a major factor in the selection of these instruments. The element of short turn-around time was important, as was ease of scoring the instruments and coding the results.

The second factor affecting the selection of these instruments was my familiarity with the use of these instruments. In a previous study, I had used some of these measures. I felt comfortable using the instruments and have witnessed their effectiveness

and efficiency. The instruments are simple to use and analyze. The selection of these instruments aimed at on keeping data collection simple.

Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale-Form B

The Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale-Form B (BRIAS; Yanico, Swanson, & Tokar, 1994) is a self-report attitude scale with a construct base focused on African Americans' racial/ethnic identity attitudes (see Appendix A). Identity is measured on four subscales: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization.

Carter (1991) defined each subscale. During the pre-encounter stage, individuals devalue racial/ethnic groups and try to deny their membership in a particular racial/ethnic group. During the encounter stage, individuals experience challenges to their anti-Black attitudes. During the immersion/emersion stage, individuals become deeply invested in discovering their Black culture. They idealize Black cultural ideals and develop intense emotions toward their Black identity. During the internalization stage, individuals internalize a positive Black identity. They develop an awareness and acceptance of living in a multinational structure. Responses are made on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale. The ratings range from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Internal reliability consistency coefficients range from .50 to .79.

My Vocational Situation

My Vocational Situation (MVS; Wiggins & Moody, 1981) is a hand-scored "experimental diagnostic form" to help counselors select the most effective treatment for vocational clients (see Appendix A). The measure is used as a screening device for locating high schools, colleges, and adult programs for which students need intensive career counseling. The MVS contains three measures; only one is described as a scale,

the 18-item true-false Vocational Identity Scale (VI). The VI score *consists of the* number of false responses. The *other* two measures are used as *checklist indicators*. The Occupational Information (OI) *measure* lists four types of career information useful for career exploration. The Barriers (**B**) *measure* lists four possible hazards to career exploration. For all measures, *high* scores are interpreted as favorable outcomes.

KR-20 reliability is estimated to be greater than .80 for the VI scale. The reliability of the OI measure is lower for college students (.79) and much lower for high school students (.39). The reliability of the (B) measure is low for college students (.45) and very low for high school students (.23).

Affects Balance Scale

The Affects Balance Scale (ABS; Derogatis, 1975) is a self-report mood scale focused on the idea that healthy psychological adjustment or psychological well-being is represented by the manifestation of positive affects along with the relative absence of negative emotions (see Appendix A). Mood and affect states are represented in the ABS by four positive affect components (joy, contentment, vigor, and affection) and four negative affect components (anxiety, depression, guilt, and hostility). The overall score, the Affect Balance Index (ABI), reflects the balance between positive affects and negative-emotion responses. The larger the ABI score, the more positive the individual's psychological adaptation. The ABS is composed of 40 items and takes from 3 to 5 minutes to complete.

Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences

The Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-Cope; Patterson & McCubbin, 1984) instrument is designed to identify the behaviors adolescents find

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helpful in managing problems or difficult situations (see Appendix A). The normal development of an adolescent centers on the search for an identity, both as part of a peer group and as an individual, with specific emphasis on social, psychological, and physical aspects. The need to develop normally, independent from one's family, and to discover one's uniqueness frequently creates a conflict environment in the family. The 95-item measure is grouped to conceptualize the following patterns of coping: ventilating feelings, seeking diversions, developing self-reliance and optimism, developing social support, solving family problems, being humorous, relaxing, engaging in demanding activities, seeking professional support, investing in close friends, and avoiding problems. Each coping strategy is represented by a subscale score. The instrument is grounded on the belief that adolescents will use different styles of coping when dealing with day-to-day situations. The A-COPE takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Risk Involvement and Perception Scale

The Risk Involvement and Perception Scale measures perceptions of the benefits and risks of a number of behaviors and involvement in such behaviors (Siegel et al., 1994) (see Appendix A). This instrument contains three separate scales: involvement in risk behavior, perception of benefit associated with risk behavior, and perception of negative consequences associated with risk behavior. The measure used in this study is a modified version of the original instrument. The items include behaviors that are illegal for all people, those that are inappropriate for younger age groups, and those that involve some measure of social or physical risk for all people (Lavery et al., 1993). Participants respond to a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 8 (*daily or more*) for all three scales. Test/retest reliability coefficients over a 2-week period ranged from .72 to .97 for the involvement scale. The test/retest reliability for the perception of risk scale over a 2-

week period ranged from .43 to .81, whereas the reliability for the *perception of benefit* scale over a 2-week period ranged from .33 to .82. The test/retest Cronbach's alpha correlations were .72 for the involvement scale, .87 for the perception of risk scale, and .77 for the perception of benefit scale, demonstrating adequate internal consistency (Lavery et al., 1993).

Demographic Information

The full data sheet contains questions addressing the current situation of the participants (see Appendix F). Participants were asked for background information concerning their age, gender, ethnic/racial background, year in school, and current employment. Other questions focused on the number of immediate family members, salary of parents, marital status of parents, and highest educational level of each parent. The information gathered on the data sheet is described in the Results section.

Procedure

I contacted the Office of Supportive Services located at the large, predominantly White midwestern university that was the study site to discuss the proposed research. The project focused on "at-risk" students entering the college. The director of the Office of Supportive Services received a presentation discussing the intentions of the researchers and the projected outcome of the interventions focused on student performance. After the director of the Office of Supportive Services evaluated the project, it was approved.

Staff in the Office of Supportive Services provided mailing labels for all African American freshmen associated with their office. The pool of participants came from the list of students provided by the Office of Supportive Services. The students were sent a packet of information covering the research project, a copy of each measure, a

demographic data sheet, a consent form, and a mailing address to *which they should* return the information. The students were introduced to the study *and asked to complete* the measures. Upon completion *of* the measures, the students mailed the packets to the mailing address included in the *in*formation. The data were passed to the primary researcher for data analysis.

In the selected programs, the targeted at-risk students were provided with information about the project. As students received their packets in the mail, they had the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate. Each packet consisted of the BRIAS, MVS, ABS, A-COPE, Risk Involvement and Perception Scale, the demographic form, Consent Form (see Appendix B), an introduction sheet (see Appendix B), and instructions (see Appendix B). In total, 700 packets were distributed. After reviewing the packets that were returned, I discovered that only 179 were fully completed and the consent forms returned. As a result, 179 potential participants were eligible for this study. However, due to missing data, only 144 participants were involved in the study.

After completing the measures, students returned the packets and I coded them. The participants received a short explanation of the focus of the study and the importance of *their* participation. If any participants reported being distressed from the experience, they *w*ere provided with counseling and/or debriefing to assist in the area where distress occurred. The selected programs received a thank-you for their participation. Likewise, the Office of Supportive Services received a thank-you for their participation and assistance.

Data Analysis

A nonexperimental and correlational design was used in this study. The internal validity of the study was low because the independent variables were not manipulated systematically. The study comprised a representative sample of the larger population. Participants were grouped according to gender, males and females, producing two groups for comparison purposes. There was no control group. The participants came from the pool of students who returned the informed consent forms, signed by their parents and themselves.

Multiple linear regression analyses were performed to analyze the association between life decision making (dependent variable) and racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping. The BRIAS was used to measure racial identity. The MVS scale was used to measure vocational identity. The ABS was used to measure psychological adjustment. The A-COPE was used to measure coping styles for problem experiences. The Risk Involvement and Perception Scale was used to measure the dependent variable, life decision making. The level of significance chosen for this study was $p < .05$. This p value was selected because standard levels of significance are measured at a p value of .05 or lower.

A demographic analysis also was conducted. Parents' educational level, marital status of parents, level of family income, and age of participant were analyzed to see whether they had any effect on participants' decision-making abilities. The level of significance chosen for this analysis was $p < .01$. This p value was selected because an effect was noticed relating to the demographic variables of the participants, but it was not significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The data were collected over a 4-month period. This study was conducted during spring semester 2003. Originally, there were 179 potential participants, but due to missing data, only 144 participants were used in the analysis. Multiple linear regression analysis was used. In this analysis, there were 5 degrees of freedom (*df*) with a *p* value of .0002. The sum of squares was 21.445 and the mean square was 4.289. The R^2 value was .158. Based on the overall analysis of this study, there were significant findings and the multiple linear regression model was useful.

The *p* value used for indicating statistical significance was .05 ($p < .05$) for each dependent variable. This *p* value was used with the original linear multiple regression model: ($dm = bri + mvs + abs + aco$) decision-making = racial identity + vocational identity + psychological adjustment + coping. The independent variables were racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping strategies. The dependent variable was decision making.

The demographic variables used in this study were participants' age, gender, educational level of parents (mother and father), family income, and marital status of parents. A second linear multiple regression model was run. The original model, which included the dependent variable (decision making) and the independent variables (racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles), was used, and the demographic variables were used to make the second model. The analyses of the demographic variables indicated statistical significance at $p < .01$. This value was selected because there was no significant effect at the standard *p* value of .05. Thus, to

show that the demographic variables had some effect on the dependent variable (decision making), the *p* value was reduced to .01.

Participants' personal information is shown in Table 1. The demographic variables were age of participant, gender, mother's educational level, father's educational level, SES level of family, and marital status of the participant's parents. The participants' age was either 18 or 19 years. Gender was either male or female. The values assigned to parent's educational level (mother or father) were 1 for grade school, 2 for high school, 3 for college, and 4 for graduate school (master's degree, doctorate, medical school, or law school). Family income was categorized as follows: (1) \$0-\$10,000, (2) \$10,000-\$20,000, (3) \$20,000-\$30,000, (4) \$30,000-\$40,000, (5) \$40,000-\$50,000, (6) \$50,000-\$75,000, (7) \$75,000-\$100,000, and (8) \$100,000 or more. The values assigned for marital status were (1) for single, (2) for married, (3) for divorced, and (4) for widowed.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants.

The SAS System		85		
The FREQ Procedure				
AGE				
AGE	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Percent
18	53	46.90	53	46.90
19	60	53.10	113	100.00
Frequency Missing = 66				

Table 1: Continued.

Class Level Information		
Class	Levels	Values
gender	1	fema
Ed_MOM	3	2 3 4
Ed_DAD	4	1 2 3 4
marital	4	1 2 3 4
Number of observations		179
The SAS System		244
The FREQ Procedure		

Ed_MOM					
Ed_MOM	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Percent	
1	1	0.62	1	0.62	
2	39	24.07	40	24.69	
3	102	62.96	142	87.65	
4	20	12.35	162	100.00	

Frequency Missing = 17

Ed_MOM is broken into the following categories: (1) grade school, (2) high school, (3) college, (4) graduate school (master's, doctorate, medical school, or law school)

Ed_DAD					
Ed_DAD	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Percent	
1	3	1.90	3	1.90	
2	28	17.72	31	19.62	
3	85	53.80	116	73.42	
4	42	26.58	158	100.00	

Frequency Missing = 21

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Table 1: Continued.

Ed_DAD is broken into the following categories: (1) grade school, (2) high school, (3) college, (4) graduate school (master's, doctorate, medical school, or law school)

SES

SES	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Percent
1	10	6.62	10	6.62
3	16	10.60	26	17.22
4	12	7.95	38	25.17
5	14	9.27	52	34.44
6	27	17.88	79	52.32
7	29	19.21	108	71.52
8	43	28.48	151	100.00

Frequency Missing = 28

SES is broken into the following categories:

(1)	0-10,000	(2)	10,000-20,000
(3)	20,000-30,000	(4)	30,000-40,000
(5)	40,000-50,000	(6)	50,000-75,000
(7)	75,000-100,000	(8)	100,000 or more

Marital Status

Marital	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Percent
1	21	12.96	21	12.96
2	123	75.93	144	88.89
3	13	8.02	157	96.91
4	5	3.09	162	100.00

Frequency Missing = 17

Marital status is broken into the following categories:

(1) single (2) married (3) divorced (4) widowed

Based on the multiple linear regression analysis run using the independent variables of racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping, there was a significant finding related to psychological adjustment ($F < .0001$). The findings indicated that healthy psychological well-being has a positive impact on the ability to make effective decisions. There was also a significant finding related to racial identity ($F = .0407$). The results also indicated that there is a negative relationship between racial identity and decision-making. The results show that a positive racial identity development can have a negative effect on making positive decisions. Looking at the analysis relating to gender, there is no significant relationship. Using a p value of .05 for significance, the value of .1216 shows no significant effect on decision making based on the gender of the participant. Table 2 shows the results for each independent variable.

Table 2: Significant independent variables (linear multiple regression).

The SAS System
The GLM Procedure
Number of observations 179

NOTE: Due to missing values, only 144 observations could be used in this analysis.

Dependent Variable: m_dm m_dm

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	5	21.4448625	4.2889725	5.17	0.0002
Error	138	114.5214539	0.8298656		
Corrected Total	143	135.9663163			

R-Square	Coeff Var	Root MSE	m_dm Mean
0.157722	43.51955	0.910970	2.093242

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
gendern	1	2.01338579	2.01338579	2.43	0.1216
m_bri	1	3.54289200	3.54289200	4.27	0.0407
m_mvs	1	0.29006006	0.29006006	0.35	0.5553
m_abs	1	14.90804185	14.90804185	17.96	<.0001
m_aco	1	0.02809923	0.02809923	0.03	0.8543

Variables:	Gender:	Male or female
	M_bri:	Black Racial Identity
	M_mvs:	Vocational Identity
	M_abs:	Psychological adjustment
	M_aco:	Coping style

Parameter	Estimate	Error	t Value	Pr > t
Intercept	0.806957683	0.90737285	0.89	0.3754
gendern	-0.319370583	0.20503844	-1.56	0.1216
m_bri	-0.359504367	0.17399193	-2.07	0.0407
m_mvs	-0.061876546	0.10466127	-0.59	0.5553
m_abs	1.191071656	0.28101627	4.24	<.0001
m_aco	0.046085041	0.25044745	0.18	0.8543

Along with the linear regression analysis, an analysis of variance was run to determine the effects of each independent variable (racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping) on the dependent variable, decision making. As shown in Table 3, only two independent variables--racial identity (bri) and psychological adjustment (abs)--had an effect on decision making. The table shows racial identity with an opposite effect on decision making (significant at .040) and a positive effect on psychological adjustment ($p < .0001$). The table also shows no effect between male and

female participants. The analysis of variance showed gender at .138, which is not significant. Finally, a stepwise regression model showed that two variables were significant at the .10 level. These variables are psychological adjustment and racial identity. These findings support the results reported earlier from the linear multiple regression analysis.

Table 3: Significant independent variables and gender.

Analysis of Variance					
Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	3	21.09557	7.03186	8.57	<.0001
Error	140	114.87074	0.82051		
Corrected Total	143	135.96632			

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Std. Error	Type II SS	F Value	Pr > F
Intercept	0.78664	0.69224	1.05956	1.29	0.2577
gendern	-0.30180	0.20201	1.83135	2.23	0.1374
m_bri	-0.35853	0.17294	3.52658	4.30	0.0400
m_abs	1.18087	0.24857	18.51714	22.57	<.0001

Bounds on condition number: 1.1218, 9.7482

All variables left in the model are significant at the .10 level.

No other variable met the .10 significance level criterion for entry into the model.

The SAS System
The REG Procedure
Model: MODEL1

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Dependent Variable: m_dm m_dm

Table 3: Continued.

Summary of Stepwise Selection								
Variable	Variable	Number	Partial	Model	Step	Entered	Removed	Label
Vars in	<i>R</i> -Square	<i>R</i> -Square	<i>C</i> (<i>p</i>)	<i>F</i> Value	<i>Pr</i> > <i>F</i>			
m_abs	m_abs	1	0.1244	0.1244	3.4519	20.18	<.0001	
m_bri	m_bri	2	0.0172	0.1417	2.6277	2.83	0.0946	

Stepwise Selection: Step 2					
Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Type II SS	<i>F</i> Value	<i>Pr</i> > <i>F</i>
Intercept	0.43560	0.65398	0.36721	0.44	0.5064
m_bri	-0.27756	0.16494	2.34372	2.83	0.0946
m_abs	1.13458	0.24771	17.36369	20.98	<.0001

After running the first multiple linear regression without the demographic variables included, the effects of the demographic variables on the ability to make effective decisions were investigated. A second regression was run. The second multiple linear regression analysis including the demographic variables of age, level of family income (SES), parents' educational level (mother's and father's separately), and marital status of parents with the independent variables of racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping. There was a significant effect regarding marital status of parents ($F < .0249$) when using the p value of .01 for significance. The p value of .01 was selected because no significant effects were noticed using the .05 value. Looking at these results, it can be seen that psychological adjustment had a significant effect ($p = .05$, $F < .008$), lending further support to the notion that psychological adjustment has an effect on the ability to make effective or positive decisions. Table 4 shows the results related to this multiple regression analysis.

Table 4: Significant demographic and independent variables (combined multiple regression).

Source	df	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
AGE	1	2.53701607	2.53701607	3.11	0.0812
SES	1	0.98391168	0.98391168	1.21	0.2749
Ed_MOM	2	2.21369689	1.10684844	1.36	0.2620
marital	3	8.00426659	2.66808886	3.27	0.0249
m_bri	1	0.01693481	0.01693481	0.02	0.8857
m_mvs	1	5.25903538	5.25903538	6.45	0.0128
m_abs	1	5.92929700	5.92929700	7.27	0.0084
m_aco	1	0.90246412	0.90246412	1.11	0.2956

A *t* test was conducted to evaluate the effect, if any, of the marital status of participants' parents. A difference was found in the effect on decision making of three of the four marital status categories: single, married, and divorced. It appears that such statuses had a strong effect on participants' decision making. Single status had a *t* value of -3.16, married had a *t* value of -1.33, and divorced had a *t* value of -2.06. This indicates that single and divorced parents have a large influence on how their children make decisions.

Table 5 shows the results of a *t* test comparing the various types of marital statuses. The results indicated that participants whose parents have different marital statuses have differing decision making abilities. There is a stronger effect on decision making if the participant's parents are single (category 1); that is, these participants make better decisions than those who are being raised by a widowed parent (category 4). It is interesting that participants raised by single parents (category 1) make better decisions than those with married parents (category 2).

Table 5: The effect of marital status of participants' parents on their decision making.

Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > t
Intercept	1.732320067 B	0.75464133	2.30	0.0234
AGE	-0.016743702	0.00867381	-1.93	0.0559
marital 1	-1.466556143 B	0.46447988	-3.16	0.0020
marital 2	-0.540724778 B	0.40524419	-1.33	0.1846
marital 3	-0.963420596 B	0.46680392	-2.06	0.0412
marital 4	0.000000000B	.	.	.
m_mvs	-0.194243771	0.11034054	-1.76	0.0809
m_abs	0.808570095	0.26832474	3.01	0.0032

	Marital Comparison	Difference Between Means	95% Confidence Limits
4 - 2	0.4514	-0.3646	1.2674
4 - 3	0.8693	-0.0720	1.8106
4 - 1	1.2527	0.3626	2.1428*
2 - 4	-0.4514	-1.2674	0.3646
2 - 3	0.4179	-0.1037	0.9396
2 - 1	0.8013	0.3790	1.2237*
3 - 4	-0.8693	-1.8106	0.0720
3 - 2	-0.4179	-0.9396	0.1037
3 - 1	0.3834	-0.2479	1.0146
1 - 4	-1.2527	-2.1428	-0.3626*
1 - 2	-0.8013	-1.2237	-0.3790*
1 - 3	-0.3834	-1.0146	0.2479

*Significant at the .05 level.

Marital status comparison

Alpha	.05
Error df	158
Error Mean Square	0.820195
Critical Value of t	1.975090

The means, standard deviations, and minimums of each variable used in the original linear multiple regression ($dm = bri + mvs + abs + aco$) are shown in Table 6. Also shown is a matrix comparison of all variables involved in the first linear multiple regression equations.

Table 6: Means, standard deviations, and minimums of variables (matrix comparison of variables).

Means, SD and minimum						
The SAS System						
The MEANS Procedure						
Variable	Label	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
m_dm	m_dm	167	2.0331082	0.9470770	0.4736842	5.3684211
m_bri	m_bri	145	2.5225566	0.4606855	1.2666667	3.5666667
m_mvs	m_mvs	131	2.5962680	0.7393378	1.0555556	4.4444444
m_abs	m_abs	167	2.0802318	0.2985754	1.2250000	2.7000000
m_aco	m_aco	167	2.9886140	0.3328124	1.9814815	4.0377358

Variables:	Gender:	Male or female
	M_bri:	Black racial identity
	M_mvs:	Vocational identity
	M_abs:	Psychological adjustment
	M_aco:	Coping style

Correlation information matrix
The CORR Procedure

5 Variables: m_dm m_bri m_mvs m_abs m_aco

Simple Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Label
m_dm	167	2.03311	0.94708	339.52907	0.47368	5.36842	m_dm
m_bri	145	2.52256	0.46069	365.77071	1.26667	3.56667	m_bri
m_mvs	131	2.59627	0.73934	340.11111	1.05556	4.44444	m_mvs
m_abs	167	2.08023	0.29858	347.39872	1.22500	2.70000	m_abs
m_aco	167	2.98861	0.33281	499.09853	1.98148	4.03774	m_aco

Table 6: Continued.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Prob > r under H0: Rho=0 Number of Observations					
	m_dm	m_bri	m_mvs	m_abs	m_aco
m_dm	1.00000	-0.12466	-0.00525	0.32678	0.16033
m_dm		0.13520	0.95260	<.0001	0.03850
	167	145	131	167	167
m_bri	-0.12466	1.00000	-0.14876	0.03396	-0.01884
m_bri	0.13520		0.11100	0.68510	0.82200
	145	145	116	145	145
m_mvs	-0.00525	-0.14876	1.00000	0.16543	-0.07235
m_mvs	0.95260	0.11100		0.05900	0.41150
	131	116	131	131	131
m_abs	0.32678	0.03396	0.16543	1.00000	0.41606
m_abs	<.0001	0.68510	0.05900		<.0001
	167	145	131	167	167
m_aco	0.16033	-0.01884	-0.07235	0.41606	1.00000
m_aco	0.03850	0.82200	0.41150	<.0001	
	167	145	131	167	167

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Discussion of Findings

This study was undertaken to investigate the decision-making abilities of adolescents. The questions under investigation were whether higher scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale would be correlated with participants' making better decisions; whether participants receiving lower scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Attitude Scales would make worse decisions; and whether male participants would receive lower scores on the Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, My Vocational Situation, and Black Racial Identity Attitude Scales and would make more negative decisions as compared to female participants. The most important consequence of approaching decisions is that an individual would be very likely to attain his or her goal (Byrnes et al., 1999).

Based on the results from this study, two significant conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a positive effect or connection between psychological adjustment and decision making. Second, there is a negative effect or correlation between racial identity and decision making. For an individual to be consistently successful (regarding his or her decisions), the person's beliefs about options and strategies must be accurate (Byrnes et al., 1999). Accurate appraisal is key in productive decision making and affects the outcome of the decision.

Looking more closely at the first effect, psychological adjustment measured by the Affects Balance Scale showed an effect on the participants' decision-making ability. This result demonstrates that having good psychological well-being will influence how situations are evaluated and the selection of options to handle situations. People in positive moods may be more likely to generate positive as opposed to negative consequences (Bower & Cohen, 1982; Ganzel, 1999). Mood may affect the assessment of probabilities (Deldin & Lewin, 1986; Ganzel, 1999). Having a clear understanding of what is going on around them and being able to handle stressful/difficult situations can influence how people decide to resolve particular situations. Individual need to have established a good sense of psychological adjustment and abilities to handle stressful experiences.

The finding of a positive correlation between decision making and psychological adjustment shows that there is a need to help adolescents develop positive psychological well-being and provide assistance in using good adjustment skills in handling life experiences. Secure outcomes such as social acceptance (Vernberg, 1990), psychological well-being (Notaro, Miller, & Zimmerman, 1998), high self-esteem (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), and less problem behavior (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998) are direct results of good psychological well-being. Adolescents reporting secure attachment to friends also have better overall psychological functioning (Miller, Notaro, & Zimmerman, 2002; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Experimentation with a wide range of behaviors is seen as a prevalent activity associated with healthy psychological development (Hurrelmann, 1990; Siegel et al., 1994; Steinberg, 1993). Researchers, parents, teachers/professors, and mentors can use this information to guide

adolescents in gaining confidence in their ability to handle psychological stress and respond in a positive fashion.

The second finding from this study is a negative correlation between racial identity measured by the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale and decision making. This result shows that racial identity had a negative effect on how adolescents made their decisions. The participant may have a high sense of self (personal identity). This unrealistic self-appraisal has caused some researchers to suggest a linkage between adolescent egocentrism and risk taking, based on a faulty "it can't happen to me" point of view (Lavery et al., 1993). Research on the evaluation of consequences most often has focused on the ability to estimate probability; adolescents do not do this well (Ganzel, 1999). It is plausible that, in American society, some young people might receive messages that communicate to them that opportunities for their ethnic group are blocked and, thus, that opportunities for self may also be affected (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Phillips, 1993). The participants are still developing their sense of themselves as well as moving into a new experience (college life). As young people grow and become more aware of the social perceptions derived from their ethnicity, then ethnic identity and self-esteem may begin to converge (Phillips-Smith et al., 1999). This may affect their comfort level regarding their identity development.

Strong identity development may influence adolescent to try things, which they may not have considered before. Phillips (1993) referred to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who suggested that maintaining a strong ethnic identity might present problems in negotiating schooling in the United States. African Americans who incorporate their race as a central aspect of their identities are likely to go through a process of "recycling" whereby their perspectives and insights regarding their blackness are constantly

rewarded, enhanced, and refined by new experiences and encounters (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Scott, 2003). The confidence level is high, so the risk-taking behavior may be increased as a by-product of this level of confidence.

Another consideration related to the second finding is the fact that there is a level of risk-taking behavior related to being a college freshman. Being a college freshman, especially being away from home for the first time, will encourage students to try new things and not be concerned about the outcomes. Based largely on Cross's model of nigrescence, pre-encounter attitudes can be characterized as pro-White and anti-Black. Individuals may ignore particular aspects of a decision problem, or use a noncompensatory decision strategy (Ganzel, 1999; Payne, Betterman & Johnson, 1990).

First, many individuals do not engage in formal rational manipulation of information presented in decision-making situations (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Specifically, they do not engage in controlled processing of the costs, benefits, and risks involved in the problem situation (Edelstein, 2000). The fact that there is more freedom for students and the impact of the decision is less can encourage students to try more risky behavior.

Regardless of whether pros and cons derive from features of objects or features of actions, decision makers need to combine all of this information in order to compute goodness values (Byrnes & McClenny, 1994). Adolescents with more experience participating in a risky behavior hold stronger beliefs that participation in the behavior could both enhance positive and reduce negative affective states (Caffray & Schneider, 2000). Because students are more secure in who they are, their risk-taking behavior may be increased.

The other two variables under investigation, vocational identity and coping, did not have a significant effect on the participants' ability to make decisions. Also, gender did not have a significant effect on decision making. The result of no significant effect of vocational identity measured by My Vocational Situation can be understood in light of the fact that participants at this age may not have their academic/career plans in place. There may still be changes and adjustments being made for the next few years, so their vocational maturity may not have developed. As their college careers continue, the maturity level relating to vocation will increase and can later have an influence on decision making.

Participants' coping abilities measured by the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences showed no significant influence. Coping strategies in this population may relate to how the participants use their coping strategies to influence decision making. Coping can affect a student on more than one level. Constantine et al. (2002) stated that Black college students might separate how they privately feel about their group from how they believe others may evaluate them. This separation between public and private evaluations may represent an important survival strategy for Black Americans because of the prejudice and discrimination they face in the United States (Constantine et al., 2002). If this is the case, participants in this study may have viewed their coping strategies on more than one level, and using coping to influence decision-making may not be the way they use coping strategies. The participants may use coping mechanisms to help with other aspects of college life.

The finding of no significant effect of participants' gender on decision making was a surprise. It appears that the decision-making abilities of the participants were

equal, which led to no significant difference in the decisions being made by males and females.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be listed regarding this research project. First, the use of questionnaires as the sole means of data collection is a limitation. Using survey materials allows for objective responses, but may not elicit more detailed information that could be helpful in understanding the topics under investigation. Self-reporting provides participants an opportunity to respond in a manner to make themselves look better. Self-reporting may have influenced participants to respond in a more socially desirable manner. Use of interviews or measures asking for short written responses could have elicited more descriptive information.

A second limitation is the difficulty with generalizing the findings. Selecting such a specific group did not allow for a random sample. The participants were all African-Americans involved with one specific office on campus. The participants were selected from the pool of students who returned consent forms. This selection process did not allow for other African-American students on campus to have an opportunity to participate. The group who were selected were current freshmen, but other freshmen who were not involved with this office did not have an opportunity to be involved. Thus, because the respondent group was homogeneous, this may limit the ability to generalize the findings.

A third limitation is the use of only one office to gain access to students. The Office of Supportive Services was the only office used to gather mailing labels for the participants. This did not allow for connecting with a greater number of African American freshmen students and hence a potentially more divergent sample. Getting

involved with other support networks or other offices on campus working with African American freshmen would have given me a chance to collect data on students who were not involved with the Office of Supportive Services. Also, using a random sample of African American students from across the campus would have increased the generalizability of the findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

In terms of the directions of future research, more work needs to be done on decision making of adolescents in general. To date, there are no generally accepted practices for assessing decision-making capacity (Edelstein, 2000). The relationship between internal factors and decision making has not received much attention from researchers. Racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping are only a few internal factors influencing decision making. It may be useful to study each factor separately, as well as locating others (i.e., locus of control, learned helplessness, and peer influence) to investigate.

Along these lines, researchers should focus on specific strengths or strategies used to assist in the decision-making process. In this study, psychological adjustment was found to be a significant factor in making positive decisions. If this topic is studied further, specific strengths of participants may be discovered. By understanding these strengths, training, programming, or individual/group activities may be developed to help incoming freshmen gain skills in enhance their psychological development, which will have a direct influence on their ability to make effective decisions. The goal is to locate specific characteristics that produce good psychological adjustment and help freshmen grow in these areas.

As well as understanding the psychological adjustment of freshmen, more research on the types of coping strategies selected would be beneficial. As the development of psychological adjustment improves, a greater confidence develops that leads to an improved ability to select more effective strategies for coping with stressful situations. Improving coping may indirectly affect decision making, but it will directly support psychological adjustment. This line of thinking focuses on ways to increase psychological adjustment, and selection of coping strategies would be an important topic to understand.

It would be helpful to replicate this study with different African American populations. Including African American students of different SES levels would allow a researcher to make within-group comparisons. This could lead to understanding the different needs of African American college freshmen. It would also be good to replicate this study with majority students, using a White racial identity scale to set up comparison research. Within-group comparisons, as well as comparison to African Americans, would facilitate locating similarities and differences between the two groups. Along these lines, selection of other minority populations might be useful. An acculturation measure might be used to assess racial identity development with Hispanic/Latino(a), Asian, Native American, and international student populations. The results could be analyzed separately to understand each group's decision-making ability. Also, studies could be conducted to compare various minority groups' ability to make positive decisions. The focus of these studies would be on identifying similarities and differences between ethnic/racial groups, as well as understanding the differences between specific groups.

Another line of investigation could be to evaluate the decision-making process between upper and underclass students. A comparison study between freshmen and seniors could provide evidence on how decision making changes as students progress through college and maturity levels increase. A study could also be conducted comparing undergraduate and graduate students. The investigation could focus on whether there are differences in how these students make decisions. Could having a degree and knowledge/experience with college influence one's ability to make decisions? Finally, there could be a comparison master's and doctoral students' decision-making capabilities. The focus could be on how maturity level, time in school, or life experiences shape one's ability to make decisions.

Implications

Implications of this research focus on understanding decision making of African American college (adolescents) freshmen, understanding specific factors that influence decision making, and gaining more information on what helps African American college students make more effective decisions. Each of these implications is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Understanding how African-American college (adolescents) freshmen make decisions is critical to colleges, university support services, parents, and students themselves. Colleges are interested in how to help African American freshmen be successful. Colleges have designed support services, such as the Office of Supportive Services and the Office of Minority Student Affairs, to help African American students not only be accepted in college but also graduate. Understanding the ways this population makes decisions would help these offices design programs to promote better decision making among this group. Also, the offices can develop specific workshops and

programs, and have professionals on hand to assist in the development of better decision-making skills. African American students may not have the skills necessary to understand their new environment (a large, predominantly White university) and can benefit from learning how to maneuver in their new surroundings. The focus of specific programming from the support offices would be on increasing these students' chances for success both academically and socially.

Understanding the factors that influence decision making will have a great influence on how researchers, faculty, staff, administrators, and parents work with students. Decision making is not an exact science and is learned through life experiences; this situation reinforces the fact that decision making is not easy to master. Even when a student has been through an experience, this does not mean that he or she will learn from the situation. The focus would be on understanding how students develop their skill in making decisions and then improve their ability to make better decisions. Research in this area will uncover more specific factors influencing decision making, along with evaluating the process by which students select the information to use in making their decisions.

To continue the discussion on decision making, selection of facts and information analysis must be understood. Students select information from the situation and use this information in making a decision. Taking a closer look at how students determine what facts to consider is important, as is determining how they rate what facts are more or less important.

Although having a clear perception of information selection is one great influence on decision making, the role that evaluation of information plays in decision making needs to be better understood. Students analyze facts related to a situation, and this has

an influence on the solutions **selected**. The process of **analyzing in formation** is not a simple one and may need fine **tuning** if students are consistently **making poor decisions**. Students may need assistance **in** making productive decisions, as well as *in understanding* the consequences of these decisions. As further research **focuses on factors influencing** decision making, investigators can evaluate how students **make decisions and can educate** students, faculty, and parents about ways to improve the possibility of making positive decisions. The key is to help students know when and where positive decisions can benefit them and promote the ability to make consistent positive decisions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENTATION

Black Racial Identity Scale

This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes. Please select the appropriate number corresponding with your desired answer.

Rating scale:

1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Uncertain) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)

1. ___ I believe that being Black is a positive experience.
2. ___ I know through experience what being Black in America means.
3. ___ I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences, and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.
4. ___ I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.
5. ___ I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people.
6. ___ I involve myself in causes that will help all oppressed people.
7. ___ I feel comfortable wherever I am.
8. ___ I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.
9. ___ I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.
10. ___ I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities.
11. ___ I often find myself referring to White people as honkies, devils, pigs, etc.
12. ___ I believe that to be Black is not necessarily good.
13. ___ I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.
14. ___ I frequently confront the system and the man.
15. ___ I constantly involve myself in Black political and social activities.
16. ___ I involve myself in social action and political groups even though there are no other Blacks involved.
17. ___ I believe that Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways that are similar to White people.
18. ___ I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective.
19. ___ I have changed my style of life to fit my beliefs about Black people.
20. ___ I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings.
21. ___ I believe that Black people came from a strange, dark, and uncivilized continent.
22. ___ People, regardless of their race, have strengths and weaknesses.
23. ___ I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black.
24. ___ I feel guilty and or anxious about some of the things I believe about Black people.
25. ___ I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon for solving problems is to become a part of the White person's world.
26. ___ I speak my mind regardless of the consequences.
27. ___ I believe that everything Black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to Black activities.
28. ___ I am determined to find my Black Identity.
29. ___ I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks.
30. ___ I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths.

My Vocational Situation

In thinking about your present job or in planning for an occupation or career:

Please answer using one of the following:

1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (Uncertain) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)

1. ___ I need reassurance that I have made the right choice of occupation.
2. ___ I am concerned that my present interests may change over the years.
3. ___ I am uncertain about the occupation I could perform well.
4. ___ I don't know what my major strengths and weaknesses are.
5. ___ The jobs I *can do* may not pay enough to live the kind of life I want.
6. ___ If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I am afraid I would make a bad choice.
7. ___ I need to find out what kind of career I should follow.
8. ___ Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.
9. ___ I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.
10. ___ I am not sure that my present occupational choice or job is right for me.
11. ___ I don't know enough about what workers do in various occupations.
12. ___ No single occupation appeals strongly to me.
13. ___ I am uncertain about which occupation I would enjoy.
14. ___ I would like to increase the number of occupations I could consider.
15. ___ My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year.
16. ___ I am not sure of myself in many areas of life.
17. ___ I have known what occupation I want to follow for less than one year.
18. ___ I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do.

Affects Balance Scale

Below is a list of words that describes the way people sometimes feel. I would like you to tell me whether you have been having any of these feelings during the past semester. Please indicate the degree to which you have felt each emotion by putting a number that best describes your experience. Provide a number for each word and do not skip any items.

Rating system:

0 Never 1 Rarely 2 Sometimes 3 Frequently 4 Always

<u> </u> Nervous	<u> </u> Cheerful	<u> </u> Sad	<u> </u> Satisfied
<u> </u> Regretful	<u> </u> Active	<u> </u> Irritable	<u> </u> Friendly
<u> </u> Happy	<u> </u> Anxious	<u> </u> Pleased	<u> </u> Miserable
<u> </u> Excited	<u> </u> Guilty	<u> </u> Passionate	<u> </u> Enraged
<u> </u> Timid	<u> </u> Delighted	<u> </u> Hopeless	<u> </u> Relaxed
<u> </u> Blameworthy	<u> </u> Vigorous	<u> </u> Resentful	<u> </u> Affectionate
<u> </u> Glad	<u> </u> Afraid	<u> </u> Energetic	<u> </u> Remorseful
<u> </u> Loving	<u> </u> Bitter	<u> </u> Tense	<u> </u> Joyous
<u> </u> Worthless	<u> </u> Contented	<u> </u> Ashamed	<u> </u> Lively
<u> </u> Angry	<u> </u> Warm		

A-COPE

Adolescent-Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences

Read each of the statements below, which describes a behavior for coping with problem. Describe how often you do each of the described behaviors when you face difficulties or feel tense. ONLY indicate how often you do each behavior as a way to cope with problems.

Select from one of the following responses for each statement:

1 (never) 2 (hardly ever) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (most of the time)

1. ☐ Go along with parents' requests and rules.
2. ☐ Read
3. ☐ Try to be funny and make light of it all.
4. ☐ Apologize to people
5. ☐ Listen to music—stereo, radio, etc.
6. ☐ Talk to a teacher or school counselor about what bothers you.
7. ☐ Eat food.
8. ☐ Try to stay away from home as much as possible.
9. ☐ Use drugs prescribed by a doctor.
10. ☐ Get more involved in Activities at school.
11. ☐ Go shopping; buy things you like
12. ☐ Try to reason with parents and talk things out; compromise.
13. ☐ Try to improve yourself (get body in shape, better grades, etc.)
14. ☐ Cry
15. ☐ Try to think of the good things in your life.
16. ☐ Be with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
17. ☐ Ride around in the car.
18. ☐ Say nice things to others.
19. ☐ Get angry and yell at people.
20. ☐ Joke and keep a sense of humor.
21. ☐ Talk to a minister/rabbi/priest.
22. ☐ Let off steam by complaining to family members.
23. ☐ Go to church.
24. ☐ Use drugs (not prescribed by a doctor).
25. ☐ Swear
26. ☐ Organize your life and what you have to do.
27. ☐ Work hard on schoolwork or other school projects.
28. ☐ Blame others for what's going wrong.
29. ☐ Be close with someone you care about.
30. ☐ Try to help other people solve their problems.
31. ☐ Talk to your mother about what bothers you.
32. ☐ Try, on your own, to figure out how to deal with your problems.
33. ☐ Work on a hobby you have.
34. ☐ Get professional counseling.
35. ☐ Try to keep up friendships or make new friends.

36. ___ Go to a movie.
37. ___ Day dream about **how** you would like things to be.
38. ___ Tell yourself the **problem** is not important.
39. ___ Talk to a brother or **sister** about how you feel.
40. ___ Get a job or work **harder** at one.
41. ___ Do things with **your** family.
42. ___ Smoke.
43. ___ Watch T.V.
44. ___ Pray.
45. ___ Try to see the good **things** in a difficult situation.
46. ___ Drink beer, liquor, wine.
47. ___ Try to make your own decisions.
48. ___ Sleep.
49. ___ Say mean things to people; be sarcastic.
50. ___ Talk to your father about what bothers **you**.
51. ___ Let off steam by **complaining** to your **friends**.
52. ___ Talk to a friend about how you feel.
53. ___ Play video games
54. ___ Do a strenuous **physical** activity.

Risk Involvement and Perception Scale

For each of the following, select a number that corresponds to your involvement in that behavior.

Rating Scale:

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Daily or More
0	1 2	3	4	5 6 7 8

1. _____ Having sex
2. _____ Riding with a drunk driver
3. _____ Drinking alcohol
4. _____ Walking alone at night
5. _____ Getting drunk
6. _____ Binge eating
7. _____ Riding a motorcycle
8. _____ Smoking marijuana
9. _____ Driving a car
10. _____ Taking speed
11. _____ Having sex without a condom
12. _____ Shoplifting
13. _____ Driving after drinking
14. _____ Taking prescription drugs
15. _____ Riding with a seatbelt
16. _____ Contact sports
17. _____ Taking cocaine/crack
18. _____ Smoking cigarettes
19. _____ Sunbathing

Demographic Sheet

Background Information (please print)

Name: _____

Current Address: _____

☐ Hispanic	☐ Freshman	☐ Male
☐ White(non-Hispanic)	☐ Sophomore	☐ Female
☐ Black(non-Hispanic)	☐ Junior	
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander	☐ Senior	☐ Age _____
☐ Native American/Eskimo		
☐ Multiracial		
☐ International (please specify): _____		

Current Employment: _____

Number of members in immediate family: _____

Parents' current annual salary:

(Please circle)

0-10,000	10,000-20,000
20,000-30,000	30,000-40,000
40,000-50,000	50,000-75,000
75,000-100,000	100,000 or more

Parent's marital status: (please circle)

Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

Highest education level of mother: _____

Highest education level of father: _____

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM, INSTRUCTIONS, AND INTRODUCTION SHEET

**Michigan State University
Counseling Psychology Department**

Adolescent Informed Consent Statement

Purpose of This Study

The research study is entitled: Identifying Correlates of Urban "At-Risk" Adolescents' Life Style Decisions: A Study of Racial Identity, Vocational Identity, Psychological Adjustment, and Coping. This study is set up to look at the decision-making process of adolescents. The study will look at how the participants' racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles affect how they make positive or negative decisions.

Participation and Confidentiality

Taking these tests is completely up to you. You may decide to not participate at any time. You can make this decision with no penalty. Data gathered will be held in strict confidence, Confidentiality will be strictly upheld. At no time will your name or personal information be released. Consent forms and questionnaires will be separated from each other. Names of all participants will never be associated with their responses on the questionnaires. The investigators, Mr. Hill and Dr. Smith, will have access to the answers to all measures. The results will be coded to protect the your privacy. Coded information will remain secured with Mr. Hill and Dr. Smith. These will be the only individuals who will have access to this information. All information will be stored under lock and key with Mr. Hill and/or Dr. Smith. The information will remain stored until the study is completed. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Procedure of Research

Participants are asked to complete all five (5) measures. The packet will include the following measures Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale Form B, My Vocational Situation, Affects Balance Scale, Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, and the Decision-Making Sheet. The measures should take no longer than forty-five (45) minutes.

After completing of the packet, each participant will be encouraged to fill out a raffle ticket. The ticket is used to select three winners of Michigan State University apparel. The use of a raffle is to encourage more participation from the subjects. After collecting completed packets from all participants, the raffle will take place. Prizes will consist of Michigan State University athletic wear. The prizes will range from a sweatshirt, shirt and hat. The dollar amount of the prizes will be \$15.00 to \$50.00. Winners will receive their prizes in the mail no more than one month after the completion of data collection.

Agreement to Participate

At this time your permission is asked to participate in this research study.

YOU INDICATE YOUR VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE BY COMPLETING AND RETURNING THESE QUESTIONNAIRES.

*I _____, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
(Adolescent please sign your name)

The investigator for this study is Martin F. Hill, a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Michigan State University, working under the supervision of Dr. Gloria S. Smith, a professor of the Counseling Psychology Department. You may contact the Investigator, Martin F. Hill, at the listed address below regarding any questions, concerns, or requiring debriefing after participation in the study. Mr. Hill will address any questions raised about participating in this study. If at any time you feel a need to discuss any personal or professional concerns, please feel free to contact the Michigan State University Counseling Center at (517) 355-8270. You may receive a copy of the finding and a summary report from Dr. Smith or myself upon completion of this dissertation. A team of psychologist would be available to provide counseling if someone was seeking services. Since free counseling services are available thru the MSU Counseling Center to students, the researcher would make arrangement with the CC for seeing students if their services were needed.

Thank you for your participation and for taking the time out of your busy schedule. Please mail the following material in the envelope provided to the following address or return the completed packets to you instructor:

Martin F. Hill, M.A.
Central Michigan University
Counseling Center
102 Foust Hall
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859
hill1mf@cmich.edu

Or

Dr. Gloria Smith
433 Erikson Hall
Counseling Psychology Department
East Lansing, MI 48824
GSMITH@msu.edu

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to write either of these researchers. If you have any questions about your role and rights as a subject of research, you may contact Ashir Kumar, MD at 517-355-2180 or ucrihs@msu.edu.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING PACKET

1. Read and sign the consent form
2. Complete the Black **R**acial Identity Attitude Scale Form B
3. Complete the My Vocational Situation Scale
4. Complete the Affects Balance Scale
5. Complete the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences
6. Complete Risk Involvement and Perception Scale
7. Complete the Demographic Form
8. Mail ALL completed tests back to researchers.
(Place materials in envelope provided and mail)

**Michigan State University
Counseling Psychology Department**

Introduction sheet

Dear Potential Participant,

This memo is to introduce you to my study focusing on decision-making. Currently I am a Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology and I am working on my final requirement to complete my degree. The request is for you to fill out the following surveys and sign the consent form included.

The research study is entitled: Identifying Correlates of Urban "At-Risk" Adolescents' Life Style Decisions: A Study of Racial Identity, Vocational Identity, Psychological Adjustment, and Coping. This study is set up to look at the decision-making process. The study will look at how the participants' racial identity, vocational identity, psychological adjustment, and coping styles affect how they make positive or negative decisions.

Your requirement would be to fill out the surveys, which should not take more than 30 minutes, sign the consent form, and return all the completed materials to the Counseling Psychology Department office. The office location is Erikson Hall, Rm 440. Upon completion of these surveys you will be entered into a drawing for MSU gear. After collecting completed packets from all participants, a raffle will take place. Prizes will consist of Michigan State University athletic wear, ranging from a sweatshirt, shirt and hat. Winners will receive their prizes in the mail no more than one month after the completion of data collection.

Thanks for your time and I'm hoping you will consider giving a little of your time which will go a long way in helping better understand the decision-making process of your age group and college students in general.

Thanks again,

Martin F. Hill, M.A.
Counseling Psychology Graduate Student

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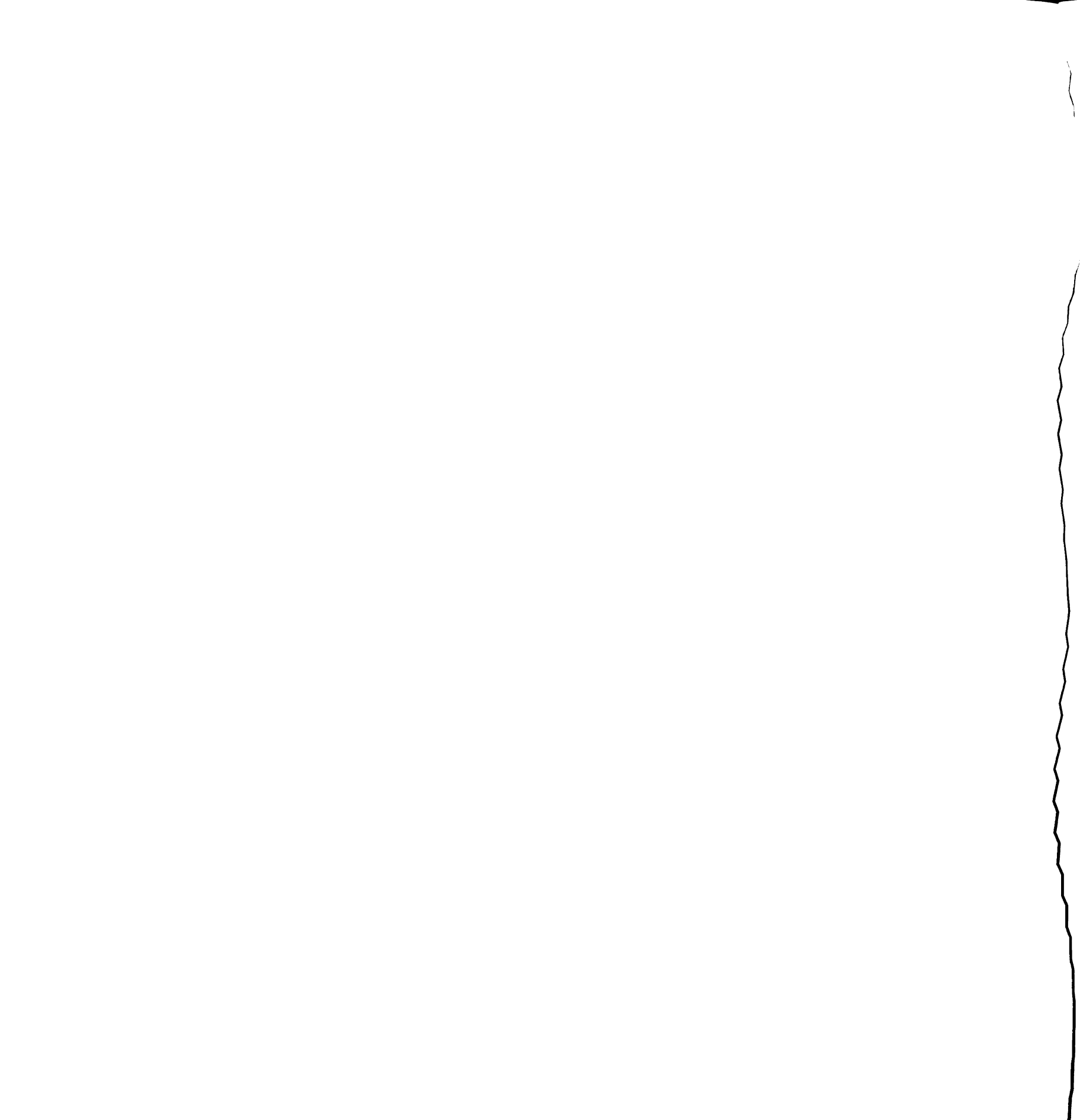
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