

Post-Secondary Education Decisions of High School Black Males in St. Thomas,  
U.S. Virgin Islands (A Case Study)

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to understand the perspectives of young Black males toward post-secondary education. A qualitative case study research design was selected because it allowed the researcher to examine in a holistic fashion the complexities of how the issues of school, home, community, and peers function in the life of a young Black male in St. Thomas, USVI; and how these issues in his life yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education.

A case study using taped interviews and observations of one high school Black male and his mother was conducted. Data were analyzed using Ethnograph and a coding matrix based on the tenets of grounded theory. The findings showed that the young man was ambivalent about the educational process and about his plans concerning his preparation for the future. In high school he saw three options: enlisting in the military, engaging in full-time employment, or pursuing a college education at the University of the Virgin Islands as long as he could achieve success. He viewed all three paths as equal. His family's influence had a profound impact on his decision to participate in advanced education despite his lack of commitment and his underachieving high school career.

The educational issues in the territory signal the need for territorial policy makers to initiate educational improvements in the public schools and to mandate, at the university level, an information and recruitment program for young males to improve the demographics of post-secondary education in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Recommendations for further research are offered.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in loving memory of my beloved daughter and father.

Suzette Murphy, whose resilience and courage have given me the inspiration to continue and complete this project.

and

George Harris, for his unfailing support and patience. He has taught me how to persist until the end.

I thank God for letting them into my life

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

And herein lies the tragedy of the age:  
not that men are poor,  
-all men know something of poverty;  
not that men are wicked,  
-who is good?  
Not that men are ignorant,  
-what is truth?  
Nay, but that men know so little of men.

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Education is thought to be the bridge towards social, political, economic, and cultural freedom. John Dewey, the foremost thinker of the Progressive education movement, believed that education was essential to the total development of an individual—mentally, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially; and that this individual would be better equipped and better able to serve and improve society (Dewey, 1956). Given this philosophy, education is seen as having a social rather than an individual function.

Most educational studies read by me were done on Blacks in America where the social and economic conditions differ from those in the U. S. Virgin Islands (USVI). In the USVI, the senior officials are almost invariably Black. Many Blacks on the island engage in small businesses with variable degrees of success. Even to a casual observer, most enterprises are on a small scale, with the exception of about a dozen large resort hotels and their immediate suppliers as well as several large tourist-oriented retailers. This represents the longstanding entrepreneurial culture of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas, USVI very early on became a trading community rather than a plantation community. Today, almost all economic activity on St. Thomas, outside of the activities of the government, is based on tourism. The standard of living is very high, especially by Caribbean standards, unemployment negligible with continued demand for immigrant labor. What poverty there is seems to be based more on long-term welfare dependency than on the lack of economic activity.

The educational research done on African American males on the U. S. mainland examined what families were doing to raise academically successful African American males, and what factors contributed to success (Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif, 1998; Ross, 1998). Other studies sought to address and understand causes for non-participation in the education system by Black males (Dunn, 1988; Hopkins,

1997), while others examined the social context of schooling with regard to school retention, expulsion, academic achievement, attendance and participation (Garibaldi, 1992; Polite, 1994). The literature abounds with studies documenting persistence and resiliency within higher education by minorities, particularly African American males (Baker and Velez, 1996; Carnoy, 1995; Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield, and Royster, 1991).

Yet, today many Black educators and professionals are still concerned with the plight of young Black males in our society. Some view this situation as a spiraling downward trend that cannot be positively linked to any single reason. Some attribute the trend to the deterioration of urban communities due to drugs and increases in violent crimes; some blame racism, while others hold that the decline in jobs prevents the Black male from fully participating in society (Polite and Davis, 1999). Some researchers have cited the expanding number of single-parent-headed households as one of the numerous problems associated with the failure to pursue post-secondary education (Mason, 1999).

Caribbean scholars (Noguera, 1994; Walker, 1997) also noted that there is a growing popular youth culture in the eastern Caribbean islands—one of resistance among Caribbean Black youths, specifically Black males. Noguera (1994) and Walker (1997) attributed this trend to underemployment, unemployment, poverty and crime. This phenomenon of "resistance" or "dropping out" has been documented in the literature of western society.

The youth culture of resistance to which Noguera (1994) and Walker (1997) alluded seemed only to be affecting young minority males who think that education beyond secondary school does not guarantee prestigious employment as it once did during the colonial period. Noguera (1994) and Walker (1997) contended that the appeal of education as an avenue to upward mobility has begun to wane in the eyes of young Black males in the eastern Caribbean. However, it is not clear that there is any difficulty in obtaining employment for Virgin Islanders. It appears that for Virgin Island youths, employment after high school is not an issue, even though it is statistically impossible to prove since the unemployment figures do not include individuals who were never employed.

During the 1980s, college campuses across the United States experienced a decline in male enrollment according to the 1988 statistics from the Center for Education Statistics. This trend continued in the last decade of the twentieth century, more pervasively among Black males. Although the statistics may be difficult to interpret and fluctuate considerably from year to year, the Sixteenth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education (1998) reported that minority female high school graduates are more likely than their male counterparts to participate in higher education. Carter (1990), reporting racial and ethnic trends in college participation between 1976 and 1988, noted that despite the progress in educational attainment of Blacks and other minority groups, these groups are still under-represented at all levels

of post-secondary education. Carter (1990) and others contended that Black males in particular have lost ground in college attendance during the mid-eighties (Dunn, 1988; Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield, and Royster, 1991). The decline in Black male enrollment represented a loss of 7% when compared to a 3% decline for White males and a 15% increase for Black females as reported by Carter (1990) and others during the period of 1976 through 1988.

Busby and Barrett (1988) believed that the lack of participation by Blacks in higher education would have an adverse impact on areas of Black life (e.g., illiteracy and underemployment). One way this has begun to impact is in the noticeable decline of minority male teachers in American schools, here on the mainland and in the U. S. Virgin Islands. Busby and Barrett (1988) pointed out that in one decade undergraduate degrees in education from five historically Black colleges and universities had decreased more than 50%. Many scholars believe that Black teachers are needed to provide Black role models and to help counterbalance negative role models prevalent in many Black communities (Busby and Barrett, 1988; Garibaldi, 1992; Hopkins, 1997; Polite and Davis, 1999; Ross, 1998; Slater, 1994).

One recent study examined the reasons for the disproportionate failure rates of young urban African American males (Towns, 1996). Towns' ethnographic study of third and sixth grade classrooms in a low-income African American community revealed several issues. First, the conflict between ideology of the school and reality created a "structural" hypocrisy, so pervasive and deep-rooted that those who participated were not always aware of it. Second, she argued that the socialization patterns of these African American males predispose them to reject this hypocrisy, which only grows worse as the students get older, resulting in a resistance to authority and learning, and ultimately failure in school.

The demographic on dropout rates on the U. S. mainland clearly demonstrates how early the academic failure of African American males begins. Finn (1989) posited an identification-participation model that accounts for school withdrawal among at-risk students. The model suggested that unless students identify with school, have a sense of belonging, feel welcome, respected and valued, they will begin to disengage and finally "drop out." These observations were noted in minority children as early as the seventh grade.

The 2004 U. S. Virgin Islands "Kids Count" data book published by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands illustrates that the risk for students dropping out in the U. S. Territory continues to peak at the ninth grade. The analysis over a five-year period, 1997-2002, shows a decline in secondary public school dropouts, except for the school year, 2001-02, where there was a significant increase of reported dropouts as a percentage of enrollment from 3.3% in 2000-01 to 3.7% in 2001-02. In 2002, the dropout rate in the USVI was 11 % (748 students), somewhat above that of the 2001 national rate of 10%. However, this statistic affirms a downward trend over five years. The National Center for Education Statistics reported

that in the 2000-01 school year dropout rates were high for Black and Hispanic students in the reporting states including the USVI. The USVI Department of Education reported (Table 1) that in the 1999-2000 school year Blacks made up a large percentage of the dropout rate, 83%, while the Hispanic rate was 16% of the total number of dropouts, which totaled 487 students.

Table 1

*Public School Dropouts 1999-2000 By Race/Ethnicity and Gender*

	Native American and Asian			Hispanic			Black			White			Totals		Total
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	
St. Croix	0	0	0	35	27	62	120	52	172	0	0	0	155	79	234
St. Thomas	0	0	0	13	5	18	99	135	234	0	1	1	112	141	253
Total	0	0	0	48	32	80	219	187	406	0	1	1	267	220	487

Throughout the years, St Croix has experienced the diversity of a Spanish culture through the continual migration of their Latino neighbors from the island of Puerto Rico and immigration from Santo Domingo. The 2000 U. S. Virgin Island census depicts a 14% Hispanic/Latino population in the islands. In St. Thomas alone, Latinos represent 7% of the total population. The tourist economy on St. Thomas has attracted other ethnic groups (i.e., Middle Easterners and Indians), many of whom are merchants in the retail industry. The island of St. Thomas also boasts a small subgroup of descendants of French immigrant planters who fled the British intolerance for Catholicism from various Eastern Caribbean Islands.

Corbin (1975) and other Caribbean scholars have long examined the relevancy of education in the Eastern Caribbean. Corbin (1975) stated that as far back as the fifties, Sir Philip Sherlock was heard as having commented on the state of education in the Caribbean. He stated:

*“...in the schools, the content of education was unsuitable to West Indian conditions so that many children never learned to begin to sort out the world of reality for themselves since the world of the book was so different from their own world.”* (p. 30)

Many throughout the post-colonial era have expressed this sentiment. In the English-speaking Caribbean, education was geared for life in Britain (Bakker-Mitchell, 2002). Today, education has undergone significant changes in the Eastern Caribbean states. Since the independence of some countries like Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Guyana, there is a degree of localization of syllabus and examination content (Brock, 1986).

## Background

The United States Virgin Islands (a group of three islands until recently when Water Island was transferred from federal to local control), located at the northernmost point of the Caribbean chain known as the Lesser Antilles, had long experienced relative obscurity up until World War II. The history of education in the U.S. Virgins has had a checkered past. Under the 250-year Danish rule, native Virgin Islanders were educated, not necessarily for enlightenment, but for "moral uplifting."

Because of the small size of the islands, European colonization was relatively late in coming. The Dutch, English, and Spanish all made unsuccessful attempts at colonization in the middle of the seventeenth century, but the French crown finally took control of St. Croix and St. Thomas around 1650. According to Varlack and Harrington (1977), the first consignment of African slaves was brought to the island of St. Thomas around 1673. The Danes asserted authority over uninhabited St. John in 1684, but did not settle the island for over thirty years. The French also introduced African slavery on St. Croix and the island was fairly prosperous. However, the French could not control the islands due to piracy and left for Haiti towards the end of the seventeenth century. Danish influence in the area grew until Denmark formally purchased the islands from France in 1733 and later organized the islands as the royal crown colony of the Danish West Indies.

In 1755, the Danish crown initiated an effort to spread God's word among he slaves by making them literate enough to read the Bible. This effort was to come from missionaries dispatched by the state Lutheran Church of Denmark. Small groups of missionaries were dispatched from Denmark but their religious duties did not allow them much time to organize the mandated education program. By 1799, the effort was declared a failure by the Governor of the Danish West Indies (Hall, 1987; Lewis, 1972). The period in the second half of the eighteenth century was the most prosperous for the Danish colony. Trade flourished on St. Thomas, as did plantation agriculture on St. Croix. In 1802, Denmark became the first European nation to legally end its involvement in the slave trade, but an illegal trade continued in the Virgin Islands for at least another twenty years.

Early in the nineteenth century, Alexander von Scholten was appointed Governor. As a close friend of the Danish crown, he knew emancipation of the slaves was the goal of the King and the Crown Prince. Working toward that goal, he reinstated efforts to educate the slaves to be good Christians. However, instead of renewing the failed efforts of the Lutheran church, he chose to use Moravian missionaries on the islands who had enjoyed considerable success when sympathetic planters supported them (Hall, 1987; Lewis, 1972).

In 1841, von Scholten opened the first school for slaves on St. Croix. Later, 17 others were opened over all three islands—five in St. Thomas, four in St. John, and

eight in St. Croix. In 1847, the Danish crown announced its Emancipation Plan that conferred freedom on all children of slaves born after that date with the mother's owner compensated at the time of a live birth. After a ten-year period, the remaining slaves would be freed with compensation for the owners to be determined during this period. The adults already living under slavery refused to accept this plan. Slaves on St. Croix rebelled first. Von Scholten massed his forces there, but was unable to establish his authority outside the capital of Fredrickstaad. Few lives were lost, but the insurrectionists under their leaders, General Buddhoe and Moses John, were clearly in control of the island. Von Scholten made the offer of emancipation in an attempt to restore order. Some planters objected and said they would not be bound by this act.

However, on July 8, 1848, the threat of a simultaneous slave revolt on all three islands forced the Danish crown to emancipate all slaves immediately (Hall, 1987). The Danes chose not to resist for several reasons. First, the Danish crown was committed to emancipation and there was no will to enforce slavery. Second, St. Thomas was an entrepreneurial culture in which the majority of people of African descent had already become free workers. Finally, there was a folk memory of the bloody slave insurrection on the island of St. John in 1733. Exhausted, von Scholten returned to St. Thomas to formally announce emancipation and was immediately forced to resign following this ceremony.

Von Scholten's theory that Christians would accept gradual emancipation was discredited. Actually, the planters were convinced that literacy allowed the slaves to understand and reject the plan and to communicate among themselves their plan for a revolt.

The Danish governor ruled the islands through a council of local planters drawn from the prominent and wealthy. The planters continued to believe that von Scholten's educational reforms contributed heavily to the slave revolt, which diminished their support for education throughout the remainder of the Danish administration of the islands. Also, the majority of these planters were Roman Catholics of Irish descent which caused them to resent von Scholten's having used Protestant missionaries to teach their slaves (Turnbull, 1976).

After the American Civil War, the United States had several discussions with the Danish crown about purchasing the Danish West Indies. Terms were actually approved for the purchase of St. Thomas and St. John (St. Croix had been wrecked by a hurricane and was considered worthless), but the treaty never came to the floor of the Senate because of the Johnson impeachment. Several more attempts were made to purchase the islands, but the threat of the Germans acquiring the islands after World War I as part of a peace settlement drove the United States to finalize the purchase of the Virgin Islands in 1917.

After years of neglectful Danish rule, citizens of the islands saw the U.S. involvement as being a progressive move. They were disappointed to discover that the Americans were more racist than the Continental whites living with them in the islands. Although during Danish rule, the Continentals displayed an air of superiority over the natives, the doctrine of class distinction was more acutely felt than race until the transfer in 1917. Free Blacks and Creoles of mixed race associated equally with whites of similar economic status (Campbell, 1943; Lewis, 1972; Murphy, 1977). Under the American Navy administration, the system was one of race. Also, the Americans chose to retain the Danish system of government—an appointed governor who ruled the islands through a council of prominent local citizens. They were just as reluctant to tax themselves for an education system as their predecessors were in the nineteenth century. Further, the administering officers of the U. S. Navy were more concerned about the military uses of the islands and treated the welfare of the populace as a distant afterthought.

At the time of the purchase of the islands by the Americans, one-fifth of the total population had been born in other West Indian islands (Albuquerque and McElroy, 1985). When the American bases closed after World War II, the islands lost roughly half of their population. However, the large-scale immigration began after 1960 as a result of an expanding tourist industry and the island's dependence upon inexpensive "alien" labor to satisfy employment needs (Creque, 1970; Murphy, 1977). According to Murphy (1977), immigration alone accounted for 65% to 75% of the total population increase (which totally recouped the earlier loss) between 1960 and 1970. The increase in immigrant population presented many challenges for life in St. Thomas. There was a strain on many social services, housing, medical services and public education. There was no classroom space to accommodate the children of these "alien" immigrants who were legally prevented from attending public school until 1970 when the U. S. District Court decision ruled that the children of "aliens" must be admitted to the public schools under Federal law. Varlack (1974) noted that in this case anticipated enrollment was underestimated and in one year, the school population rose 33.5%.

At the same time the islands were struggling to find resources to comply with the court's decision of educating "alien" children, the islands' main industry, tourism, suffered a series of setbacks. The U.S. mainland was affected by an economic downturn, which impacted the number of visitors going to the islands. Also, several incidents on the island of St. Croix, chiefly the Fountain Valley murders, which seemed to have racial overtones, further reduced the number of tourists. The resulting loss in tax revenue could not have come at a worse time for funding and expanding the education system.

## Statement of the Problem

With the purchase of the islands in 1917, the United States instituted a policy of "Americanization." An imposed American school curriculum was developed and thrust upon a West Indian society in order to create true citizens and legitimize the islands as an American possession (Corbin, 1975; Murphy, 1977; Turnbull, 1976; Varlack, 1974). According to Turnbull (1976), the education system was the means by which the "Americanization" process would take place. There is little doubt that the policy of "Americanization" bears some resemblance to the dominant culture of instruction used to acculturate immigrant students in the early twentieth century as outlined by Stubblefield and Keane (1994) and Kett (1994). Additionally, Turnbull (1976) tells us that "the education system is traditionally American; in its philosophy, curriculum, instruction, administration and supervision, finance and support" (p 66). Further, American methods of testing for admission to higher education are present.

Some Caribbean scholars (Corbin, 1975, Varlack, 1974; Murphy, 1977; Turnbull, 1976) contended that the American educational testing program, which is deeply imbedded in the Virgin Islands educational system, has produced a handicap to achievement in Caribbean students given that the culture and language are not mainstream American and that the physical environment of the Caribbean islands is so different from the mainland. Governor Ralph Paiewensky, ninth governor of the USVI during the period of civilian administration, noted that one of the major problems of education is caused by insufficient knowledge of the social fabric of life in the West Indies. Murphy (1977) contended that mainland decisions are based on the premise that the West Indian family structure is like that of mainland USA (i.e., a nuclear family with children of two legally wed parents). "The West Indian lifestyle which often includes a man with many consensual wives and the children by them, and women with children by several men is quite different" (p.148).

Recent demographics from the University of the Virgin Islands on St. Thomas indicate that SAT scores of the U. S. Virgin Islands youths lag behind their peers on the U.S. mainland. Further, there is a shift in the proportion of male students at the university. The female student population in the year 2000 outnumbered the male population 3:1, a gap that had been widening in recent years. A similar phenomenon has been observed on the U. S. mainland. The many issues underlying such major demographic shifts, particularly as they play out in the life of a Black male in the U.S. Virgin Islands, is the primary focus of this study. Looking in depth at the interplay of these issues in the context of the family, home, school, and social existence of a Black male is the primary methodological approach of the study.

## Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the systems of school, family, peers, community, and economics function in the life of an adolescent Black male in St Thomas, U. S. Virgin Islands?
2. How do these issues in the life of an adolescent Black male yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education?

## Significance of the Study

Despite the scholarly research undertaken by Murphy (1977), Turnbull (1976), and others regarding the history of education in the U. S. Virgin Islands, no scholarly research has been done that examines the perspectives of Black male students toward post-secondary education. The purpose of this research is to give voice to this segment of the population so that a better understanding of how to improve the demographics of post-secondary education in the U.S. Virgin Islands will emerge. This research can contribute to the field of adult learning by adding to the present body of knowledge and indicating pathways for future research. More importantly, it may help to stimulate discussion in promoting a more vigorous adult education program in the USVI with an emphasis on a more hands-on program for high school graduates.

## Limitations of the Study

The study will be confined to a single case comprising of a student and family member in St. Thomas. The data-gathering instruments (interviews and observations) are not specific to conditions in St. Thomas.

## Delimitations of the Study

Subjects selected for the study are limited to Black male high school seniors or recent high school graduates on St. Thomas. The study will be descriptive with no attempts to generalize findings to a larger population outside St. Thomas. There are no known risks involved to the subjects. The study will provide added knowledge to the body of research already done.

## Definition of Terms

Alien – A term applied to those who immigrate to the USVI from other West Indian islands.

Americanization – the means by which one is acculturated to the American ways, standard of living, and national allegiance.

Continental – A term applied to migrants from the US mainland who may be White or Black or of mixed race.

Danish West Indies – Also known as the U. S. Virgin Islands. It was the name used during the Danish rule of the islands prior to 1917.

Hispanic/Latino – relating to the language, people, or culture of Latin-American origin or descent.

Native – A term applied to those born in the USVI who may be White or Black or of mixed race.

Organic Act - In 1936, this Act established local government under the control of the Secretary of the Interior. The Act was revised in 1954, making it analogous to a state constitution and replacing the makeshift Organic Act of 1936. Under the Territory's 1954 Revised Organic Act, the government of the U. S. Virgin Islands was appointed by the President and reported to the Secretary of the Interior. However, under further reforms in 1968, the U. S. Virgin Islands now have a democratic form of government since 1990.

Slave – A person of African origin or descent, even though there were slaves from European descent brought to the Caribbean.

West Indian – People who grew up speaking English in the Caribbean Basin and who share common attributes.

## Organization of the Study

The main body of this dissertation will be organized into five chapters with the transcribed interviews as appendices. Chapter one contains the background and introduction of the study. Statements of the problem and the purpose were introduced. Research questions that guided the study were identified. The significance of the study was presented with limitation specified and terms defined. In chapter two, topics that provided the background for the study were presented in a literature review.

An account of the research design, the study sample, and the method procedures are presented in chapter three. Chapter four provides the findings of the study based upon the analysis of the data collected. The analysis is summarized and discussed in Chapter five with conclusions concerning the research topics, implications for practice, and questions for future consideration presented.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The object of education was not to make men carpenters  
but to make carpenters men.

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Education of Black People*

The review of the literature concerning Black males and their educational experiences examines the social, political, and economic aspects of education in the United States, while the paucity of Caribbean literature examines the socio-historical and cultural context that impacts the Black male and school achievement in those societies. On both fronts the picture is troubling for Black males. They are depicted as dysfunctional, threatening, under-educated, unemployed, drugged, and an incarcerated population of misfits whom some see as rejecting the hegemonic standards of the dominant European-American culture (DeAlbuquerque and McElroy, 1985; Noguera, 1994; Polite and Davis, 1999).

The literature review is categorized into two areas: (a) Background on the United States Virgin Islands with a brief discussion on the education relevancy for people of Caribbean culture from a historical educational perspective; and (b) a framework for looking at Blacks and education in the Virgin Islands drawing on John Ogbu's work on racial stratification to frame the review around class rather than race.

#### Background on the U.S. Virgin Islands

##### *Historical Perspective on Education*

The early educational influence in the U. S. Virgin Islands was that of missionaries (the Moravians followed by the Danish Lutheran Church and again, the Moravians), while for two centuries the Danes who governed the islands made little effort to establish their culture in the islands. For example, the language of the islands was a Dutch-based patois until replaced by English during the course of the nineteenth century—Danish was almost never heard. The Danish West India Company that administered the islands was not interested in colonization in the same manner as the English, Spanish or even the French were. The Danes were newcomers to the concept and their primary interest was in profitable trade (Reid, 1941).

Education during early slavery days in the islands was one of Christian religion. According to Turnbull (1976) and others, the philosophy of education in the Virgin Islands during Danish rule held that "education was necessary to build,

maintain, and improve the moral character of the people as well as enhance their religious life" (p 5). This was not unlike slave education in the American south, where missionaries educated some slaves by using the Bible as the only form of education with the permission and cooperation of the slave owner.

Hall (1987) reported that in most plantation societies in the Caribbean, any schooling for whites, and more so for slaves, was of low or no priority. However, during the mid-nineteenth century, the Danes made attendance in school compulsory between the ages of seven and thirteen. It was 100 years after the missionaries established Bible schools in the Virgin Islands that the first public school was opened on the island of St. Croix. Other public school openings followed on St. Thomas and St. John. Before and after emancipation, education suffered serious limitations, according to Reid (1941). Appropriations were meager; the Protestant and Catholic churches conducted the schools with financial assistance and supervision by the government; and free secondary education was virtually non-existent (p. 460).

Since 1917, with the acquisition by the United States, the islands have experienced sporadic waves of immigrants from the Eastern Caribbean islands who were attracted by the periodic booms and lax immigration restrictions. These Eastern Caribbean "aliens" contributed to the islands' culture and as such brought a different philosophy of education to their northern Caribbean neighbors. As suggested by the model advanced by Paulo Freire, the British colonial education was a form of indoctrination and control that continually advanced those individuals who most closely acculturated into the British hegemony. For the very few who successfully competed in round after round of academic competition, there were scholarships, entry into the professions, and a secure future.

There are multiple Creole Caribbean dialects spoken in St. Thomas, depending on origin of speaker. These dialects may be difficult for someone to understand who is not use to Caribbean accents. The Creole-Dutch-English dialect is indigenous to the people of the U. S. Virgin Islands.

During the first years of the American naval administration of the islands, church schools were taken over by the government, public funding of religious schools was discontinued, and religion was eliminated from public schools (Reid, 1941). Over the decade of the 1920s school enrollment rose despite the decrease in the islands' population and free secondary education was gradually expanded until the first twelve-grades program was instituted in Charlotte Amalie in 1931 (Reid, 1941).

Despite these progressive steps, Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes in 1928, through a survey of educational needs and facilities, found that educational training was not properly funded and education was out of touch with the social and economic needs of the Virgin Islands. Reid (1941) believed that of all the views and recommendations made in the early years of reshaping the education system by

various officials, only one person, Governor Paul Pearson, 1931-1935, came close to formulating a philosophy of education to fit the social and economic realities and needs of the islands. Governor Pearson stressed the importance of adult education as a means of improvement of the community and suggested an adult program that called for coordination of all public agencies.

Lewis (1972) believes that the Department of Education is among the most powerful departments of the territorial government. It has maintained its prominence as a well-funded department in the government. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), the U.S. Virgin Islands spent \$6,677 per pupil in the public school system. Yet, the public secondary high schools lost their accreditation in April 2002 during the administration of Governor Charles Turnbull, former principal of Charlotte Amalie High School and former Commissioner of Education. The critical report from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Accreditation was never fully responded to by the then Commissioner of Education.

For any state government in the United States, this would seem to be an odd occurrence, especially where the chief elected official is a career educational professional. The major deficiencies cited by the accrediting board are (1) unacceptably high levels of absenteeism by students; (2) significant failure of teachers to report as scheduled; and (3) lack of a working plan to provide substitute teachers within the system, according to a source at the Charlotte Amalie High School. This leads one to question if this is a society which values education or has the resources for a viable secondary education system.

### *The Education System in the United States Virgin Islands*

Subsidized by federal grants, the government of the U. S. Virgin Islands is responsible for the public education system. The system functions just as that of the United States mainland. It provides education for school-age children from kindergarten to 12th grade with compulsory education for all children between ages five and sixteen. According to the 2000 census, in the U.S. Virgin Islands approximately 32,000 students are enrolled in public, private, or parochial schools. The breakout of students attending all schools in St. Thomas during school year 2001-02 is shown in Table 2. The system also boasts a four-year land grant institution of higher learning, the University of the Virgin Islands, with campuses on both St Thomas and St. Croix. It is estimated that 3,100 full or part-time students are enrolled in one of the 33 fields of undergraduate studies or master's level programs at the university.

Table 2

*Total School Population in St. Thomas, USVI, School Year 2001-02*

School Type	No. of Students	Percentage of Students
Public	8,619	77.7
Private	893	6.3
Parochial	1,774	16.0
Total	11,086	100.0

Since 1917, under United States ownership, the educational standards of the islands have been significantly raised. Prior to U. S. involvement there were no high schools and no formal training for teachers. Illiteracy rates have declined with the enhanced educational standards and training of teachers. The last year under Danish rule, 1916, the total appropriations for educational expenditures were around \$19,000; 26 years later, it was \$119,000 (Reid, 1941). Today, appropriation for education is around \$36 million (Dept. of Education Appropriations, 2002).

At the end of the twentieth century, high levels of school dropouts, especially for middle school students and overall low academic attainment are still problematic. In the 2000 census, almost 40% of the islands' residents over 25 years of age had not completed high school or taken an equivalency test. On the island of St. Thomas in the year 2000, 253 secondary students out of a population of 4,475 were dropouts. The mean SAT scores were 395 for math as opposed to the national mean of 514, while the verbal mean was 412 against a national mean of 505.

It has been pointed out by many that the school system has been the principal medium of indoctrination into the American way of life (Turnbull, 1976; Varlack, 1974). The Virgin Island education system is based on the American egalitarian model even though a large number of its foreign-born immigrants are from the Eastern Caribbean islands whose educational systems are based on the British model of meritocracy. In the American system of education, all students are encouraged to be successful and pursue a degree in higher education while the British model creates a limited number of places in higher education reserved for only the most academically successful.

### *The Government*

After the purchase of the islands from Denmark in 1917, the islands were initially administered by the U.S. Navy and in 1931 came under the administration of the Department of the Interior. Today, the structure of the local government is derived from the U.S. Congress under the revised Organic Act of 1954, which declared the islands an unincorporated territory of the United States. A governor, elected by the people, oversees 22 departments, agencies, and authorities. The total employment in government service is approximately 12,900 persons—about 12% of the total population of the islands. Local government employment accounts for 93% of all government employment. Government remains the largest single source of U. S. Virgin Islands jobs. Additionally, the U. S. Virgin Islands has one non-voting delegate in Congress. According to the 1999 report on the state of the islands, two-thirds of all expenditures in FY 1996 came in the form of grants to the local USVI government entities.

### *The Economy*

The Virgin Islands economy during the 18th century and early 19th century was based on an agrarian society—sugarcane produced by slave labor, in St. John and St. Croix, and a free trade port in St. Thomas. "St. Thomas with its free trade port became a flourishing center of the Caribbean commercial system" according to Lewis (1972, p. 8). St. Thomas produced a unique slave society because the island had few planters, a fairly large middle class of professionals and merchants due to its trading activity, and a slave population amounting to one-half the residents of the island. It is this trading community economy that saved St. Thomas from such disasters as slave rebellions which crippled St. Johns for almost a generation.

### *Economic Development*

At the time of purchase of the islands by the United States, the Virgin Islands economy was in decline. The tourist trade has been largely responsible for the development of the islands (Varlack and Harrington, 1977). The economy boomed in the early 60s after the temporary demise of Cuba as a North American tourist destination. "The islands continue to ride the crest of an economic wave of prosperity with a thriving tourist industry" (Creque, 1970, p.164).

The World Factbook (1999) reported that tourism is the primary economic activity accounting for 70% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 70% of employment on all four islands. Sources of employment that are tourism related include retail sales, services provided by recreation, motels, hotels, and restaurants. This comprises about 32% of all paid employees. In St. Thomas alone it accounts for almost all employment activity, except for some service-related jobs including the government. The islands experience a low unemployment rate when compared to major cities on the mainland. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics report on unemployment, the U.S. Virgin Islands unemployment was at 4.9% in 1999—up 1.2% from 1992 and down less than 1% from 1996. The rapid economic development has resulted in numerous jobs in retail services and recreation, which are directly dependent on tourist expenditures. Tourist expenditures have increased more than thirty fold over the last forty years and are now estimated to be over 500 million dollars annually. What the U.S. Virgin Islands lack in natural resources, they make up for in tourism (Creque, 1970).

The islands also manufacture textiles, rum and rum products, watches, and pharmaceuticals. The economy is also supported by one of the world's largest petroleum refineries, situated in St. Croix. The Virgin Islands government initiated a tax incentive program to encourage new industries to locate in the islands and provided special tax incentives on worldwide exports, which have enticed over 2,500 foreign sales corporations to be established. According to the 1999 report on the state of the islands, this has spurred a related growth in financial service industries. Any decrease in tourism will no doubt have a profound effect on the U.S. Virgins in terms of economic development. The industry is unstable and is easily affected by the economic winds. Any change in the United States to reduce the dollar outflow (e.g., the death of Castro and the opening up of Cuba to tourism) or a change in the special customs exemption accorded visitors to the U.S. Virgins will have a deep impact on the economic conditions of the islands.

### *The Population and Labor Force*

The population of the U.S. Virgin Islands was estimated by the Census Bureau at 108,612 as of 2000 with 47% estimated to be living in St Thomas. Immigration to the U.S. Virgin Islands has declined from the levels experienced during the 60s and 70s with the economic boom. The islands were dependent on inexpensive "alien" labor to satisfy the employment needs of the burgeoning tourist industry. Creque (1970) informs us that as long as the islands continued to be a low-wage area, the only workers that were attracted were the down-island underprivileged "aliens." Native Virgin Islanders were in a minority in the 60s and 70s according the Census Bureau. Today, the natives are in a majority for the first time in 30 years. The 1999 World Factbook on the state of the islands informs us that the per capita income of the islands was approximately 80% of the average per capita income of the U.S. mainland or \$12,000, while the 2000 census depicts a mean household income of \$34,991.

## *Federal Relations*

The report on the state of affairs noted that political status was not an issue. Twenty-eight percent of eligible voters went to the polls to vote on the islands' future political status. They were voting for statehood, which did not seem practical due to the population size; Independence was not an attractive proposition since it would sever ties to the United States; commonwealth status would be a self-governing unit voluntarily grouped with the United States; an incorporated territory is the means of moving towards statehood; free association would allow the territory to write its own constitution while maintaining a relationship with the U. S.; and the status quo was to remain an unincorporated territory. Overwhelmingly, the vote was for continued or enhanced Territorial status.

Recently in the U.S. Virgin Islands-Federal relations was the transfer of Water Island, the fourth largest U.S. Virgin Island and a federally owned property, to the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands. This multi-phase transfer took place on December 12, 1996.

## Conceptual Framework and Background

### *Theoretical Overview*

While many scholars (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Garibaldi, 1992) have recognized the role of external forces (societal and school) in creating academic problems for minority students, the burden of "acting white" and its effects on African American students seems to be another factor that adversely affects Black adolescents' school performance.

One of the more thought-provoking explanations as to why African Americans are not achieving academically in school was presented by John Ogbu (1987, 1990) and supported by other research (Garibaldi, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Ogbu (1987) and other scholars (Hawkins, 1999) believed that African Americans lived in a kind of paradox. They occupy the broken rung of a caste-like society and are expected to work as hard as whites for fewer rewards. He purported that there are several issues at play. First, he asserted that African-Americans are denied equal opportunity through a job ceiling (Ogbu, 1987) and are systematically prevented from taking full advantage of the American educational system. African Americans, according to Ogbu (1987), have in the past received an inferior education, which precludes opportunities for higher education and therefore high status jobs. He concluded that since this practice of providing inferior education for minorities has lasted for many generations, it is not beyond the realm of possibilities to suggest that it probably

resulted in the evolution of a tradition of inferior academic performance among minorities (p. 319).

Second, he asserted that it is not only societal forces that affect minority school performance, but schools contribute to the academic problems as well, both intentionally and unintentionally. Among the subtle mechanisms illustrated through various research studies is the lowered expectation of teachers and administrators (Hawkins, 1999; Ogbu, 1987; Suskind, 1998). The failure of school personnel to understand and respect minority children's cultural learned behaviors often results in conflicts that obstruct children's adjustment and learning (Ogbu, 1987, p. 319).

Third, as a result of this paradox, Ogbu further argued that African Americans have chosen not to work as hard as Whites, and, in an effort to reduce the dissonance about expending effort for fewer rewards, they have adopted alternative strategies to reduce their anxiety about school achievement which in turn further limits their striving for academic success. Finally, Ogbu (1987) and others believed that "the experience of slavery with its trappings of "compulsory ignorance" has meant that African Americans have had limited development of academic tradition" (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 179).

Ogbu observed that the negative treatments minorities have been exposed to have an effect on how the minority perceives and responds to schooling controlled by the dominant group. He also noted that not all minorities perceive or respond alike and the schooling is not affected for all minorities to the same degree. In an effort to capture the ethnic variation in school achievement of minority groups, Ogbu (1987) devised a typology of minority groups.

A useful framework for discussing the lag in school performance and educational attainment among Caribbean Blacks has been suggested by John Ogbu. Ogbu (1990) asserts that in order to understand the persistence of why African Americans continue to lag in school performance and attain less educationally, an alternative framework of racial stratification is needed. He contends that racial stratification is a construct consisting of instrumental and expressive barriers erected by the dominant group and by instrumental and expressive responses manifested by those being dominated—the minority group. Ogbu (1990) posited a model of racial stratification that includes four dimensions (Appendix A). The dimensions include (1) instrumental treatment of African Americans by white Americans; (2) expressive exploitation by white Americans; (3) responses by African Americans to this treatment; and (4) responses by African Americans to this exploitation. Ogbu further explained that the "expressive barriers and exploitations refer to conscious or unconscious treatment of racial minorities that satisfy the dominant group's psychological needs while the expressive responses, conscious or unconscious, by minorities to this treatment satisfy their own psychological needs (i.e., the need to maintain a sense of their own self-worth and integrity)" (p 4). Ogbu (1990) believes that in a racially stratified society, both the expressive exploitation and expressive

responses are institutionalized as emotionally held beliefs that justify attitudes and behaviors towards each other.

A second important point Ogbu (1990) made was on the distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary entry into the United States and between immigrant and non-immigrant minority status. He defined an immigrant minority as "one who came to the United States voluntarily to better their economic well being or to have greater political freedom; while an involuntary (or castelike) minority is one who was brought into the American society through slavery, conquest, or colonization" (p. 6). He contends that both groups experience prejudice and discrimination at the hands of the dominant group. However, they perceive and interpret these experiences differently and therefore, respond differently.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) perceive that academic achievement requires crossing cultural boundaries and taking on behaviors of the dominant culture. This hypothesis was supported by Pollard's (1989) study. Pollard asserted from his data collected by survey questionnaire of 361 minority students from the urban underclass that "high achievers were more likely to be involved in school activities than low achieving students, and high achievers were more likely to view themselves as having high academic abilities such as doing well in school" (p. 307). Pollard (1989) further contends that these variables reflect values espoused by the dominant culture. High academic achievement by African Americans is not without a high cost. Clark (1991) suggested that in a society that is predicated on a dominant-subordinate relationship between African Americans and Whites, adolescents must develop strategies for handling their subordinate race or class status. She further purports that some students may be oblivious to racism and discrimination as barriers to their success. Fordham (1988) characterized this oblivion as a "raceless identity" that includes denial of racism, lack of closeness to other African Americans, and endorsement of mainstream values. These academically achieved individuals are subject to many forms of peer group pressures against academic striving as described by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Fordham (1988). The many forms of peer group pressures include but are not limited to student labeling (e.g., "brainiac," exclusion from peer activities, and physical assault. This dilemma of Black adolescents though recognized has not been extensively discussed in the literature.

It has been widely observed that group membership is important in Black peer relationships, a behavior that is taught early from parents and peers. This group orientation has been identified by some as a "kinship" (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Lubeck, 1988). For Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) students, peer group was seen as a source of support, acceptance and approval. The struggle for their students was in achieving success while maintaining support and approval by their peers. As adolescents these struggles could lead to confusion and discouragement in role identity (Erikson, 1968).

## *Popular Culture and Youth Resistance*

One facet of colonialism was to guarantee success in future careers for a very limited number of highly scholastic individuals, usually males. The more these individuals identified with the dominant culture, and accepted its norms and standards, the smoother the way became for them (Williams, 1994 reprinted). Brock (1986) believed that this is a legacy of colonial education. As independence approached, Caribbean thinkers and scholars such as Williams (1994 reprint) urged the new island governments to change their post-secondary curriculum to include vocational education. "The studies of the ordinary secondary schools should be brought into closer contact than at present with the practical affairs of life..." (Williams, 1994 reprinted, p. 417). The ability of these small states to create appropriate employment opportunities for the large number of secondary school graduates was beyond the capability of their economies. Williams (1994, reprint) and others (Bakker-Mitchell, 2002; Fergus, 1987) believed that a West Indian community predominantly engaged in agriculture to be based upon a literary curriculum prepared students only for a white-collar career in which opportunities are limited. Nevertheless, vocational education was colored by memories of slavery upon the minds of the West Indian intelligentsia with their aversion to and contempt for manual labor, as succinctly stated by Williams (1994, reprint). Parents thought that it was a great achievement to have their children educated for a white-collar job.

Also, the tendency of educated Caribbean people to identify with the former colonial power further discredited the recommendation for a new educational approach that tended to reinforce the British tenets as observed by Campbell (1987). "But in their search for this escape out of the ranks of the working class, many children of the poor who got this passport effected a level of alienation which was expressed in snobbishness, idle boastfulness, and oftimes an affected Oxbridge accent" (p. 124). The focus to revise the curriculum to include vocational education did not readily materialize; therefore, during the sixties and seventies, the Eastern Caribbean islands saw a surge of highly educated youths competing in a limited opportunity economy.

### *The Rastafarian movement*

One manifestation to the popular youth culture of resistance to education in the Caribbean is seen in the Rastafarian movement. The roots of the Rastafarian movement began in the hills of Jamaica, rejecting the European cultural norms. The movement encouraged cooperation especially among families and the pursuit of agrarian and hand-made craftsmanship types of work. They also sought greater communion with African cultures, which they regarded as the true source of the Caribbean character. Rastafarians understood the importance of education but they aspired to the kind of education which would not alienate them from their communities" (Campbell, 1987, p.124).

Some Caribbean thinkers espoused the Cuban model of education with free education for all through all levels. This model produces a large number of professionals in all fields of endeavor. However, these professionals are not guaranteed high-status, well-paying jobs. In Guyana, the university system broke away from the University of the West Indies in an effort to bring their system closer to Guyanese cultural roots.

In his discussion of the role of popular culture and youth resistance in the Caribbean, Noguera (1994) spoke of the affirmation among the Caribbean youths that is "extremely important to the survival and dignity of the oppressed" (p.10).

### *Conceptual Framework*

Ogbu's theoretical construct appears to be an appropriate framework to use for the academic experience of Caribbean students because (1) the Virgin Islands are one of the few jurisdictions left in the western hemisphere whose educational system is adopted and modeled after that of a dominant culture—United States without regard to the needs and sensibilities of the people of those islands; and (2) the islands have a long-standing history of immigration/emigration which relates to a boom or bust economy. Their eastern and southern Caribbean neighbors make up the bulk of the Virgin Islands immigration, about 74%. They brought with them a different educational vernacular (one whose educational systems are based on the British model of meritocracy). The 2000 census stated that the largest group of foreign-born residents, 19.5%, is from the island of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Many observations can be made even by a newcomer to these islands that show how firm the American grip is on the U.S. Virgin Islands, despite the large immigrant group of eastern and southern Caribbean persons. This group of immigrants, who should have presented the least cultural resistance for social integration, seems to have presented the greatest problems, primarily for economic reasons. Mathews (1970), and De Albuquerque and McElroy (1985) indicated that early on it was thought that the eastern and southern Caribbean immigrants would undeniably grow as the Virgin Islands continued to prosper in their association with the United States. But this was not the case. Even so, it was perceived that native Virgin Islanders found themselves competing for scarce employment available to those who lack technical and professional training.

The "aliens" were treated as the underclass in Virgin Islands society. Despite the poor welcome and disrespect they received, these eastern and southern Caribbean neighbors managed to integrate themselves into the Virgin Island society. Culturally associated customs like cricket and soccer are now replaced with football and baseball. These observations are supported by Mathews (1970) who states "the antagonism between the native Virgin Islanders and the Caribbean 'alien' is understandable to the Marxist, but not so understandable to the sociologist or the cultural anthropologist"

(p.170). The relationship between "locals" and "aliens" was further characterized by de Albuquerque and McElroy (1985) as a class stratified society. The term "locals" is used to describe all persons born in the U.S. Virgin Islands since the term "native" to the Census Bureau means anyone born in the United States or in any of its outlying possessions.

De Albuquerque and McElroy (1985) indicated that the two-tier colonial legacy has been modified into an American class configuration; "the upper tier predominantly white and brown, but includes a rising number of Black professionals; the middle class, spawned during the 60s boom, is brown and black, and predominantly natives; while the working class and lower class remains primarily black and brown (Puerto Ricans on St. Croix)" (p.137).

Ogbu's construct on racial stratification helps one to explain the complexities in behaviors observed in different groups in the U.S. Virgin Islands even though a class stratified society. This research study seeks to identify if similar norms within peer groups exist as identified by Fordham and Ogbu (1986). Is there a peer group at work and is it shaped by gender, culture, or race or some combination of the three? The study further seeks to analyze the impact of group thinking on the decision about participating in the post-secondary education phenomenon by Black high school seniors in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It examines the subjective school experiences of these young men—to listen to what they say as they transition from adolescent to adult life.

The study also examines the school and family life that influence their experiences. How do school and family life help to shape their experiences? This research will help to provide a better understanding of how to improve the demographics of post-secondary education in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The voices of these youths will be the instrument in providing this understanding.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The trouble with generalizations is that  
they do not apply to particulars:

Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*

This chapter describes the methods used to explore the research questions that yield a perspective on how a young Black male made decisions about participating in higher education in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. The objective of this study was to examine the perspectives or views of one high school Black male in his natural settings of school and home: what concerned him; what were his feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and decisions concerning post-secondary educational pursuits.

This type of research issue is best explored using a case study and grounded theory approach within the participants' natural setting which allows for a more focused study and a richer description of the contextually bounded phenomenon (Merriam and Simpson, 2000; Swanson and Holton, 1997). Lincoln and Guba (1985) made a profound distinction between the conventional mode of inquiry that created the context to fit the outcome, and the naturalistic approach, which seeks to make sense of the data in ways that would maximize understanding of the phenomenon being studied in its context.

Swanson and Holton (1997) and others suggested that case study research offers benefits not actualized with a deductive mode of inquiry. It allows researchers to focus specifically on the phenomenon of interest revealing richness, holism, and complexity of the events occurring in their natural settings. Merriam and Simpson (2000) believed that inductive research is an appropriate strategy when little is known about a phenomenon, and school-related issues involve highly complex factors that cannot be totally explained through quantitative methods.

Since this study sought a holistic description and interpretation of the events and since there is little known about the phenomenon in the U. S. Virgin Islands, a qualitative case study approach was used to focus on insight, discovery, meaning, and interpretation based on information gathered through interviews and observation rather than the use of a hypotheses testing methodology. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the systems of school, family, peers, community, and economics function in the life of an adolescent Black male in St Thomas, U. S. Virgin Islands?

2. How do these issues in the life of an adolescent Black male yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education?

"Naturalistic inquiry is always carried out in a natural setting since context is implicated in meaning" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.187). Their argument is that meaning is contextual and constructed reality cannot be separated from the world in which it is experienced. Furthermore, unlike the conventional mode of inquiry that relies on paper and pencil as instruments, the instrument of choice in qualitative research is human. The human as the instrument is not a novel concept in research. Anthropology for years has always utilized this form of instrumentation. The researcher in the naturalistic inquiry builds upon experience and instinct in implementing the inquiry through forms of interviews, observations, documents, and cues as an appropriate method.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) aptly point out that there are certain characteristics that uniquely qualify the human as the instrument of choice for naturalistic inquiry. They are:

- Responsiveness – through instinct, humans can respond to environmental and personal cues that exist and thereby interact with whatever the situation calls for.
- Adaptability – imperfect as humans are, they are infinitely more adaptable than any instrument developed to assess a particular factor, since it may be utterly useless for assessing another factor. Also, humans can be multitasking.
- Holistic emphasis – Everything surrounding the phenomenon in its context must be considered as all of one piece and the human instrument is the only one capable of taking in all that is going on in one view.
- Knowledge base expansion – Humans can function both in the domain of what is known and what is felt. "Extending awareness of a situation beyond propositional knowledge to the realm of the felt, to the silent sympathies, to the unconscious wishes, and to the daily unexamined usages will lend depth and richness to our understanding of social and organizational settings (p 194).
- Processual immediacy – the ability of the human instrument to process data as it becomes available.
- Opportunities for clarification and summarization – the human instrument has the unique capability of summarizing data on the spot and feeding it back to the respondent for clarification, correction, and amplification.

- Opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses – the atypical response has no utility on an ordinary instrument and will be discarded because it cannot be coded or otherwise aggregated. On the other hand, the human instrument can explore such responses not only to test their validity but to achieve a higher level of understanding.

When the researcher begins to interview, the inquiry takes on the form of successive iterations of four elements: (1) purposive sampling, (2) inductive analysis of the data obtained from the sample, (3) development of grounded theory based on the analysis, and (4) projection of the next steps in a constantly emerging design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These iterations are repeated until redundancy has been achieved.

The goal of any qualitative research is to find meaning from human behavior by exploring attitudes, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and anxieties. More succinctly stated by Merriam and Simpson (2000), "to delineate the process of mean-making, and describe how people make sense out of their experiences" (p. 98). Mean-making is explored through the process of observation and data gathering that should be done according to Patton (1990) in a non-threatening and unobtrusive manner so as to build trust with those who are under study.

To determine the trustworthiness of a study in the qualitative sense, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed from some of their earlier work that a better fit to look at reliability and validity with naturalistic inquiry would be to think in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. One means of establishing credibility is through triangulation. Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation—the use of multiple data sources, multiple methods, multiple investigators, or multiple theories. Denzin's logic of triangulation according to Patton (1990, p.199) is based on the premise that "no single method can adequately solve a problem since different methods reveal different aspects of empirical reality." The weakness of one method may be the strength of the other. Therefore, by triangulating one could achieve the best of both methods, thereby alleviating bias on the part of the researcher.

Both Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Patton (1990) agree that triangulation is an ideal technique to providing credibility. Although it can be expensive and time consuming, Patton highly recommends its use where possible. In this research study, the researcher used interview techniques coupled with observation.

## Procedures

### *Acquiring Permission and Access*

Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that the researcher requires four items before the research begins; (1) making initial contact and gaining entry to the site, (2) negotiating consent, (3) building and maintaining trust, and (4) identifying and using informants. Several informal discussions with the principal of the high school led to the completion of the research application (Appendix B) that was forwarded to the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States, Department of Education and approved through the office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. The high school principal and the Insular Superintendent approved the research project prior to the approval by the Commissioner of Education.

All school officials received a copy of the approved research application. Specific information regarding informed consent for participations as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used.

1. Intent to maintain confidentiality and anonymity;
2. Measures to prevent raw data or process data from being linked with a specific case;
3. Measures to limit access to data on a need to know basis;
4. Notice that anonymity cannot be absolutely guaranteed;
5. The respondent's right to withdraw at any time;
6. Specific steps respondents should take if he or she decides to withdraw;  
and
7. Notice that participation is entirely voluntary.

### *Respondents*

The high school guidance counselors were asked to identify and recommend Black high school seniors who had indicated that they were not interested in pursuing higher education, and who were characterized by one or more of the following criteria:

- Black male of African heritage (not Latino), to include one subject of Eastern Caribbean heritage;
- Those who had taken the Scholastic Aptitude Tests with medium to high scores (i.e., high enough score to justify applying);
- Those who had not taken the Scholastic Aptitude Tests but had a high grade point average (i.e., high enough grade point average to justify applying); and/or
- Those who were not involved in fatherhood.

The high school's guidance counselors and/or teachers identified four students for an in-depth interview. Students who were identified were willing to have their parents or guardians involved in the inquiry as well. The informed consent (Appendix C) was also provided to the parents or guardian who participated in the study. Other techniques of the naturalistic study involved observation and non-verbal cues. Non-verbal cues and observations were used in a supplementary fashion as discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 276).

Since naturalistic investigations are tied so intimately to contextual factors, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible. Therefore, in this study, a case study design based on in-depth interviews and observation was used. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested that theoretical sampling (sometimes referred to as purposive sampling) is designed to be applied in the process of ongoing collection and data analysis associated with the generation of theory. Purposeful sampling possesses particular characteristics suitable for the process of ongoing data collection and analysis associated with generating theory.

- The sample design is emergent because it cannot be drawn in advance;
- Serial selection of sample units is achieved by selecting each unit of the sample only after the previous unit has been tapped and analyzed. This allows for contrasting and filling in the gaps;
- Continuous adjustment of the sample as a working hypothesis begins to develop about the situation. Sampling then becomes more focused on units that seem more relevant;
- Sampling to a point of redundancy is achieved if the purpose of sampling is to maximize information and no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units.

### *Confidentiality*

An informed consent (Appendix C) was provided for each participant in which he or she would acknowledge having read and agreed to the stipulations outlined. The statement provided a space for signature and date by each participant. In addition, each participant signed and dated that he or she agreed to be audio taped. To ensure anonymity, all individuals, that is, teachers, administrators, mentors, parents, and school staff, were assigned a pseudonym.

### *Interviewing*

Dexter (1970) suggested that an interview is a conversation with a purpose. As such, the interviews in this inquiry were unstructured conversational style in order to

explore subject areas in depth. The fundamental idea in naturalistic inquiry is to provide a framework in which the respondents can express in their words their own personal perspectives on the issue under study and for the interviewer to learn about the world of others (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). I selected interview topics (Appendix D) that would cover a broad range of issues that would capture the respondent's voice, feelings, attitudes, thoughts, anxieties, and opinions. One of the three guiding themes that underlie Rubin and Rubin's approach to qualitative interviews is to hear and understand what the interviewee thinks and to give him/her voice. Two other themes the authors reported were: (1) it is required to have an understanding of culture for a successful qualitative interview; and (2) since interviewers are not neutral actors, but an active participant in the process, their emotions and cultural understandings will have an impact on the interview.

Patton (1990) indicated that there are basically six kinds of questions that can be asked of people:

1. Experience/behavioral questions that seek to expand upon the respondent's experiences and behaviors;
2. Opinion/value questions that seek to understand the cognitive and interpretive processes of individuals;
3. Feeling question that seek to understand the emotional responses of an individual to his or her experiences and thoughts;
4. Knowledge questions are asked to ascertain what factual information the respondent has;
5. Sensory questions attempt to have the respondent describe the stimuli to which he or she is subject;
6. Demographic questions are usually concerned with the identifiable characteristics of the person being interviewed (i.e., age, education, occupation, marital status, and so forth). These questions differ from knowledge questions in that they are more routine in nature.

The student in the study was interviewed in his school setting, public library, and university library as well as by telephone. One family member was interviewed in her home environment and by telephone. I transcribed the audio taped interviews and field notes. Familiarity with the data during transcription assisted in the coding process. The transcriptions were reviewed by me and then mailed to the interviewees for their review for accuracy and confidentiality prior to the coding process. Any necessary corrections to the transcription were made at this time. I also used the transcribed information, field notes, and a computer software program, Ethnograph, to

sort the data. I further created a coding matrix to arrange and refine the coding process, which is discussed in detail later on.

### *Observation*

While an interview permits a respondent to move back and forth in time, direct observation, on the other hand, provides the here and now experience (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study some observation, by necessity, was covert. However, every effort was made to be as unobtrusive as possible. At the outset of the interview period, observations were unstructured and unfocused. This is not unusual for novice researchers according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). Patton (1990) and others present a list of things to observe. They are:

The physical setting – what is the physical environment? What are the physical attributes of the surroundings and the anticipated behaviors?

1. The participants themselves – who is in the scene and what are they roles? What brings them together and who is allowed? What are the relevant characteristics of the participants?
2. Activities and interactions – what is going on? How do people interact with one another? How do the activities and people interrelate? What are the norms or rules that structure the activities? Is the activity typical or unusual?
3. Conversations - What is the content of the conversation in the setting? Who speaks to whom and who is listening?
4. Non-verbal communication - subtle factors like physical clues, symbolic and connotative meaning of words, and perhaps most importantly what does not happen that should happen.
5. Finally, the researcher's behavior since the researcher is as much a part of the scene. How is the researcher's role affecting the scene she is observing?

The field notes taken of what was observed were mainly of the behaviors and conversations within the physical setting of the high school. As I spent more and more time within the high school my vision of several reoccurring themes of behavior and conduct became clearer. On one of my numerous visits to the principal's office, I was present during an incident in which two young males were brought in for misconduct by non-uniformed security guards. The incident seemed to cause the principal a great deal of frustration about the school's ability to control such behavior among the male students.

The respondent did not answer any more questions than asked, nor did he provide any unsolicited information to the investigation. There was a certain guardedness among the young men with whom I spoke. For example, one important fact that SS4 neglected to reveal and should have during the course of the interview was an important piece of information about his sister's attendance at the University of the Virgin Islands.

A reflective journal was kept by me to record thoughts, insights, ideas, and experiences observed. All observations made by me took place either before, during or after each interview. Time constraints and resources did not allow for any additional observation sessions.

### *Limitation to Data Collection*

My ability to visit St. Thomas was limited to two or three times a year. Beyond that all respondents were volunteers and some weeks were a total loss with the researcher's time being limited in conducting a face-to-face interview with the respondent. Setting up appointments with the respondents did not always materialize until mid-week. Hours were spent waiting to obtain materials from both the school and education department. Staff did not consider my requests as part of their duties. There were other times when it took several hours to compile information even with a scheduled appointment and advance notification for the request. Additionally, the constraints of resources and time did not permit me to further conduct additional interviews with SS4's peers, teachers, extended family members, and others from within his close community.

### *Trust*

There was little doubt that there was a trust factor with respondents and some of the people in St. Thomas.

Establishing trust between the researcher and the respondents has been recognized as an important task in naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They assert that developing trust must be attended to from the onset of the interview and that it would vary from respondent to respondent. Respondents are likely to be candid and forthcoming if they respect the researcher and believe in his or her integrity.

I believe that during our conversation, respondent SM1 demonstrated this attitude toward me. She made a point of saying, "Mrs. Murphy, you know what I mean," recognizing that we shared a similar Caribbean heritage. It was more difficult to develop a trust relationship with respondent SS4 because he kept spinning his story,

using homilies that were probably learned from his mother during her conversations with him when she tried to interest him in getting an education.

### *Pilot Study*

A pilot interview was conducted during the week of May 13, 2002. The pilot was conducted to refine the interview process as suggested by Yin (1984). He states "the pilot case study helps the investigator to refine their data collection plans with respect to both content of the data and the procedures to be followed" (p 74). The two pilot interviews lasted about 20 minutes each and were conducted in the school setting.

The pilot assisted me in developing a more relevant line of questioning for use involving other respondents. As a result, some questions were rephrased in order to obtain a different outcome. Second, the pilot assisted me in understanding when the participants' responses indicated that a comfort level had not been established to broach specific topics. However, with follow-up interviews, a more conversational style of interview was developed. Finally, the Creole dialect of St. Thomas is not particularly difficult to understand, but certain idioms were used, for example, the word mine is used instead of my, which I assume reverts back to when the Virgin Islanders spoke the Dutch patois. Over the interview period, I became more familiar with some of these idioms.

### *Coding and Analysis*

Grounded theory research methodology was the process used in this naturalistic inquiry where the theory that emerged was grounded in the data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), there are four stages that comprise the comparative analysis of data in grounded theory research.

First, one makes comparisons of the incidents, and then generates tentative categories and properties to cover the incidents, using open coding to code each incident. Second is the comparison of unit changes from "incident to incident" to "incident with properties of the category" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p 108). Third, at this stage, a hypothesis is now generated and data are checked for their "fit" into the overall framework. When the categories become saturated, the collection of data ends. *Saturation* means no additional data are being found, and data collection ends. Finally, the actual writing of theory from coded data and memos occurs when "the researcher is convinced that his or her analytical framework forms a systematical substantive theory, and it is a reasonably accurate statement of what has been studied written in a form of what others going into the field could use" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p 113).

In this study, I used open and axial coding to analyze the data. First, I reviewed the transcript, making notes and comments, as well as recalling observations, (i.e., body language and tone). In open coding, the raw data were organized using a computer software program, Ethnograph. Second, data were coded and analyzed throughout the process of data collection using a coding matrix (Appendix E). The organized data were then reviewed line by line and code words and/or code phrases were applied. Third, the code words/phrases were placed into categories. The categories were constructed in hopes of answering the questions (what are the issues causing concern about schooling? Who is involved with the issues? How are they involved and to what extent? Using descriptive or inferential information about the setting from where the units derived. The objective in using open coding is to discover, name, and categorize phenomenon. Field notes were also coded in the same manner. Further, categories and subcategories were developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. The properties refer to the characteristics of the phenomenon while the dimensions represent the location of the properties along a continuum (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Fourth, to further refine the analysis, selective coding was used to relate the subcategories to a category that was uncovered during open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The categories that emerged were further refined at a higher level looking for concepts and themes with possible relationships and patterns in order to develop constructs grounded in the data.

Theoretical insights that emerge during coding, interviewing, and sorting data were recorded and kept as part of a reflective log into the relationships between the codes, categories, and emerging themes. Finally, I provided a case-specific explanation, but was unable to use the case later for a cross-case analysis to examine all significant variables found across all cases and identify and explain for any particularities in each case (Miles and Huberman, (1995). This rigorous coding was shared with a colleague in order to get feedback and assist with the interpretation. We questioned, probed, and challenged the meaning of the data. Further, my data findings and interpretations were challenged by three of my committee members.

### *Theoretical Sensitivity*

In all research, the researcher has to be concerned with introducing changes into the lives of his/her subjects. I think in the case of SS4, I may have introduced elements through his mother that may have moved him into college. I say this for several reasons. First, after my initial interview, I made several attempts to set up other interviews with SS4. In these unsuccessful attempts, I usually spoke to his mother. Therefore, she was aware of who I was and the reason for my calls to her son. In all these conversations she was most deferential towards me. Second, through these conversations, she was also aware of the fact that I was making multiple trips to the island and being from the tourist industry was probably aware of how costly these trips were and may have drawn her own conclusion that I was a financially successful

person. Finally, she was aware that I was pursuing a doctoral degree and may have pointed out to her son that my financial success and education were related. Between the time of SS4's second interview and my interview with her, she suggested to me that I encourage SS4 to work a little harder at his studies. At the time, I indicated to her that such behavior was not permitted, but I believe that being a subject of my research was a factor in SS4's life.

Additionally, being from a British colonial culture, I may have interpreted or read into SM1's responses to my questions during the interview. Part of this impression was how she referred to me throughout our interaction. She addressed me formally by my surname even though she knew my first name. I had the distinct impression that she looked at me as someone from a higher rung of the social ladder. While recognizing that there are biases in research, any potential bias in the analysis of this research is outweighed by the potential insights gained into this phenomenon.

### Summary

This section discussed the method of the study—how I gathered the information, collected and analyzed the data. Given the geographic context, and my discussion with colleagues and professors, the analysis of the data is plausible. However, the limitation of plausibility is constrained by limited access to the geographic area due to resources and time. The next chapter reveals the findings of the study and the themes that were discovered.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Education in the modern world is,  
More than anything else,  
Education of the people themselves  
As to the necessity of viewing their own education  
As a part of their democratic privileges  
And their democratic responsibilities

Eric Williams, *Education in the British West Indies*

### Introduction

This study was undertaken to describe how the systems of school, family, peers, community, and economics function in the life of a young Black male in St. Thomas and further, how these issues in the life of a young Black male may yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education. This chapter concentrates on the qualitative analysis of the data from recorded interviews conducted with one case, SS4 and SM1.

One case is presented in this study. The audiotapes of two other respondents were unusable and follow-up could not be completed with either subject since both enlisted in the U.S. military and left the island immediately after graduation. SS1's mother was not sure how he could be contacted. The third respondent failed to show up for two interviews he scheduled and opted out of the study later.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I describe the subjects. The second section describes the school setting in which the subjects were enrolled at the time of the interviews. A brief history and the learning environment are presented to frame the analysis of the data. The third section presents narrative summaries of the case. Finally, the themes that were developed and presented represent the researcher's efforts to organize the thoughts of SS4 as his relationships with school, his family, his peers, and the community are explored. The story of SS4 is used to illustrate the constructs.

## Subjects

The Caribbean islands that have a dominant tourist industry require a steady supply of bright affable young people who are high school educated, but they present little opportunity for individuals with advanced education (Alleyne, 1982, p. 18). There is no reason to think it is any different in St. Thomas. Even to a casual observer, most enterprises are on a small scale, with the exception of about a dozen large resort hotels and their immediate suppliers as well as several large tourist-oriented retailers. This represents the longstanding entrepreneurial culture of St. Thomas. One can demonstrate statistically that this is a blue-collar society. According to the USVI 2000 census, approximately 1 in 10 Black residents, 25 years or older, in the USVI are college graduates. Including all other ethnic groups; it is 1 in 6 U.S. Virgin Islanders who are college graduates. For African Americans on the mainland, it is approaching 1 in 7 who are college graduates, and for the nation as a whole it is upwards of 1 in 5.

Over a period of two years, a total of four interviews were conducted at the Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas, USVI. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Because of technical difficulties, two subjects' interviews were unusable, and their data are not included in the analysis. By way of an explanation, there are in a given year only so many senior boys at the Charlotte Amalie High School. The defining parameters greatly reduce the number of participants congruent to the study. Further, some within the parameters may decline to participate. Also, the size of the group is subject to the time spent by the school's guidance counselors to identify and contact appropriate subjects.

After the four initial interviews, I was unable to contact SS1 and SS2. Both had left the island for the U.S. military. SS3 twice failed to show up for two interviews he scheduled. When contacted a third time he declined and did not wish to go forward with the study. Therefore, I decided to concentrate on the qualitative analysis of the in-depth interview with SS4 primarily because his profile most closely conforms to the parameters established originally by me. These parameters are:

- Black males of African heritage (not Latino) to include one subject of West Indian heritage;
- Students who have taken the Scholastic Aptitude Tests with a medium-high score (i.e., high enough score to justify applying to college); and
- Students who are not involved in fatherhood.

Four initial interviews, face-to-face, were conducted with all four respondents and one family member. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with SS4 and SM1. Face-to-face interviews with SS4 were conducted on four consecutive days

in February 2003 at Charlotte Amalie High School and in February 2004 at the University library, while telephone interviews were conducted in March, 2003 and April 2004. Even though the initial interview with SS4 was conducted over a four-day period, the interview was consolidated into one text. SM1 was interviewed in February 2004 with a later follow-up telephone interview.

I used open and axial coding to analyze SS4's interview. First, I reviewed the transcript, making notes and comments, as well as recalling observations (i.e., body language and tone). In open coding, the raw data were organized using a computer software program, Ethnograph. Second, data were coded and analyzed throughout the process of data collection using a coding matrix (Appendix E). The organized data were then reviewed line by line and code words and/or code phrases were applied. Third, the code words/phrases were then categorized. The categories were constructed in hopes of answering the research questions (who, what, when, where) using descriptive or inferential information about the setting from where the units derived. The objective in using open coding is to discover, name, and categorize phenomenon. Field notes were also coded in the same manner. Further, categories and subcategories were developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. The properties refer to the characteristics of the phenomenon while the dimensions represent the location of the properties along a continuum (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Fourth, to further refine the analysis, axial coding was used to relate the subcategories to a category, which was uncovered during open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Finally, I reviewed the themes for possible relationships and patterns that emerged in order to develop constructs grounded in the data. Theoretical insights that emerge during coding, interviewing, and sorting data were recorded and kept as part of a reflective log into the relationships between the codes, categories, and emerging themes.

### Charlotte Amalie High School

#### *Brief History*

Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) is one of two public high schools on the island of St. Thomas, USVI with a current faculty and staff of 194. The current school campus setting was opened in 1955 to accommodate an increased enrollment. The student population during the 2002-2003 school year was 1591 students. Until February 2002, Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) was an accredited comprehensive high school offering college preparatory, technical preparatory, vocational, business, military science, and other courses with numerous opportunities for students to develop and excel beyond high school. A copy of the school's course offerings is attached (Appendix F). The CAHS lost its accreditation when the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Accreditation review team conducted their evaluation of the school's programs and effectiveness in April 2002. It found deficiencies in several areas (1) unacceptably high levels of

absenteeism by students; (2) significant failure of teachers to report as scheduled; and (3) lack of a working plan to provide substitute teachers within the system. CAHS has since regained its accreditation in May 2005 for a three-year period at which time they will be reviewed again. SS4 was a student at the CAHS when the school lost its accreditation and he graduated before it became fully accredited in 2005. The school sits in close proximity to downtown Charlotte Amalie overlooking the Charlotte Amalie harbor where many cruise ships dock daily with thousands of tourists crowding the downtown area. There is a large and obvious security presence at the school and, while I was a visitor at the school, its security seemed to be very active.

### *Learning Environment*

The enrollment demographic by ethnicity at CAHS during the school year 2002-2003 is depicted in Table 3, while Table 4 illustrates the male/female composition of the school's population. CAHS is one of the two public high schools on St. Thomas. The other high school is Eudora Keane, situated on the east end of the island. At CAHS during the 2002-03 school year, Blacks comprised about 94% of the student body while the Asian population was less than 1%. The female composition of the school's population was 54% with Blacks and Hispanics leaving school earlier (without completing) than other ethnic groups (Indians and Asians).

Table 3

*Charlotte Amalie High School Ethnic Enrollment, 2002-2003*

Ethnicity	Enrollment	Percentage
Blacks	1,490	93.6
Hispanics	76	4.8
Whites	17	1.1
Asians	7	.4
Indians	1	.1

Table 4

*Charlotte Amalie High School Male/Female Ratio, 2002-2003*

Males	Females	Total
733	858	1,591

Historically, public education in St. Thomas has suffered from a greater dropout rate than that of the USA mainland as depicted in Table 5. However, trends for a five-year period showed marked improvement in the school system's ability to keep students until graduation. The percentage of teens that were high school dropouts (ages 16-19) in 1997 was 22% and over a five-year period it had declined by eleven percentage points to 11.1%.

Table 5

*Virgin Islands Dropout Rate Compared to National Rate, 2002 Data*

U S. Virgin Islands Indicator	U.S. Virgin Islands		National Rate Percentage
	# of Dropouts	Percentage	
Percentage of teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16-19)	748	11.1	10.0*

\*National rate is for 2001

In the 2002-03 school year, the public school system continued to be marked by students leaving early, having made very little progress. This is depicted in Figure 1 by the drop in enrollment particularly between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades where there was a significant decline of 172 students. There were 262 graduates in the graduating class of 2003. In a discussion with the principal I learned that the Virgin Islands did not track student enrollment into higher education. However, she did indicate that such record keeping would commence in the foreseeable future.

Grade Level	Male	Female
9th grade	281	278
10th grade	169	218
11th grade	167	190
12th grade	116	172

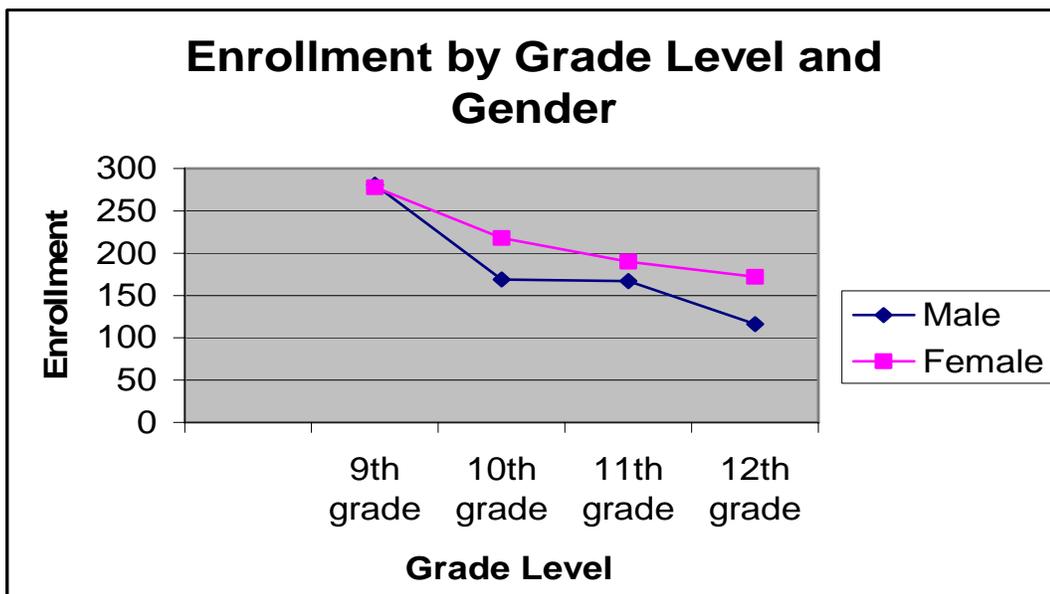


Figure 1. Charlotte Amalie High School Enrollment by Grade Level and Gender, 2002-2003

At the time of the study, the principal at Charlotte Amalie was a Black middle-aged female who expressed a commitment to education for all students. This commitment is reflected in the educational philosophy as well as the school's motto, "to excel always," which can be found strategically placed on the school walls in hallways and the principal's office. In addition, the school publishes a weekly calendar full of homilies (e.g., "bound for success") and information pertinent to school events. This publication also includes a personal message from the principal. The message varies from calendar to calendar depending on what the pressing issue is at the time.

#### *Mission Statement*

"To educate and prepare students to become responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners able to function at optimal levels in institutions of higher learning, in careers, and in a global society." The educational philosophy as the principal attempted to project to the students is guided by a belief that the purpose of education is to provide students with a framework of knowledge and skills necessary

to succeed in a changing global society. To support this belief, it is thought that three areas of focus are imperative—first, one must focus on the total growth of each student; in other words, one must focus on the intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, cultural, and social needs; second, maintain a safe and secure environment which would affirm to students, parents and community that safety is of paramount importance; and finally, that all stakeholders (students, parents, and community at large) have roles which impact directly on the achievement levels of students.

### Narrative Description

#### SS4

SS4, a 5'5" medium-frame eighteen-year-old mild-mannered Black male, who at the time of his initial interview was a senior at the Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas, USVI during the school year 2002-03. SS4 resided in a two-parent home, both of whom are foreign-born from the English speaking eastern Caribbean islands of Nevis and Antigua. This is a significant revelation because I believe that the decision to attend college was influenced by his mother's cultural beliefs. This revelation will be discussed later. SS4 described himself and his parents as family oriented and supportive, *"My family has always been a family from which you could always see unity in everything we do."*

He talked about older siblings, brothers who are living on the U.S. mainland. The second eldest brother served in the military, completed his service and remained on the mainland working in the field of computer science. SS4 also has a stepbrother, five years his senior, who grew up with the family and also served in the military. SS4's eldest brother is a building contractor who owns his business. SS4 implied that his brother who served in the military for eight years has his own software business and he (SS4) had a desire to work in his brother's software business. There is a sister who is fifteen years his senior, residing on the island. She attended UVI part-time and was a graduate from that university. All three of his mother's older children, two boys and one girl (except a step-brother) were educated through high school in Nevis, a British West Indian colony. Table 6 depicts the family unit.

Table 6

*Family Unit*

Family Member	Highest Level of Education	Age	Occupation
Father	High School	>55	Mason
Mother	High School	>55	Housekeeping
Brother 1	High School	37	Building Contractor
Brother 2	Some Graduate School	34	Software Engineer
Sister	College Graduate	33	Supervisory Sales Clerk
SS4	High School Senior	18	Student
Step-brother	High School	23	Military

He described his high school curriculum as general college preparatory while incorporating a number of vocational courses. He expressed a strong preference towards vocational classes. *"In the hands-on classes, we get our chance to make our mistakes, so we don't make the same mistakes when we go out in the real world. That is an advantage to me."*

He seemed very disappointed with his SAT scores and expressed resentment that students at a private high school were given classes to prepare them for the SAT while no such class preparation was given at the Charlotte Amalie High school even though it is listed on the course offerings (Appendix F). SS4's disappointment with his SAT scores may have been the result of not meeting the standards set by his mother and siblings. His mother had intervened in his education by obtaining tutoring for him during his high school years.

During the February 2003 interview, he declined to discuss with me his actual scores, but during a later telephone conversation implied that his scores were less than 500 on both mathematics and verbal. He indicated to me that he found out that the University of the Virgin Islands provided remedial work for incoming freshmen whose SAT scores were substandard—less than 500 on either math or verbal. He seemed embarrassed to admit that he had to take a remedial course. His responses to questions in that area were conflicting.

SS4, while a full-time student, was working as an evening manager at a fast food restaurant. He informed the researcher that his wages from his position with the restaurant were going to repay a loan from his mother for a computer and to purchase additional equipment and services for his computer.

## *Subject Mother 1*

(SM1)

SM1 is a middle-aged foreign-born Black female from the English-speaking eastern Caribbean island of Nevis, which at the time of her residency was a British West Indian colony. SM1 agreed to be interviewed after several telephone conversations with me. She is employed as a housekeeper in a large tourist resort. I believe that she has been employed in this capacity for some time since staff at these resorts is comparatively stable. SM1 also has a part-time job in the tourist industry to assist SS4 with his educational expenses.

Again, it is important to remember the context under which SM1 grew up. One, usually males, had to win a highly competitive scholarship to receive a college education in England since there were no universities established in the West Indies to educate the doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. There were, however, training schools for teachers and the clergy. Since there were so few scholarships, the British guaranteed them success for life. This issue has been discussed in chapter two.

SM1's husband is also foreign born from the English-speaking island of Antigua. He is a mason, formerly self employed, who was working for several concerns on the island. SM1 has three boys and one girl of whom SS4 is the youngest. The three older children are also foreign born from Nevis. SS4 is the only child who is born in the U.S. Virgin Island of St. Thomas and is treated somewhat like an only child since there is a 15-year difference between him and his sister. SM1 was very open in her communication with me when she became aware of the researcher's Caribbean background. She recognized a shared Caribbean heritage and prior to the interview she would make a point of saying, "Mrs. Murphy, you know what I mean."

## SS4's Story - Relationships

### *Secondary School Decisions*

My impression of this young man in the nearly two hours of conversation led me to believe that he was neither disdainful nor enthused about the educational process. This will be further discussed in chapter five. I found instead a sense of ambivalence not only concerning the educational process, but also about plans concerning his preparation for the future.

*"I filled out a lot of forms, but I have not sent them in as yet."*

SS4 was referring to college forms he had not completed and returned to recruiters at a college fair prior to our February interview.

Here it was mid-February, where SS4 was a senior in high school, about to graduate in May of that year and he was still contemplating the three courses of action he saw as being available to him. First, he was considering ending his education and taking on a full-time job. He indicated to me that one of his teachers he admired was working on placing some of the young men from the senior class with on-the-job training in school with the Water and Power Authority.

*"He (teacher) has connections to other building (project) which is being built and he said that he would like to put four of us on that job and some of us are going."*

On the other hand, SS4 seemed reluctant to stop his education as he equated getting a degree with a change in his status.

*"Really, I don't know what I would learn from college, but with the degree, I will have a good {education}. People will look at me differently than if I approach them without a degree."*

What SS4 was alluding to was that he did not know what he could learn, but he would be respected by others, peers as well as superiors, if he were a college graduate.

Secondly, he was also interested in the military for the computer training he might receive as his brothers had had earlier. However, SS4 distrusted the motives of the military recruiters and was exercising caution based on information he had received from friends and teachers.

*"...Now is not the time to enter the Army because they (recruiters) tell you lies, to get what they want. Some tell me experiences of others in the army might be good or bad, some of them are really bad. I get it from friends and teachers, so I am going to stay away from the army right now until I have experience more in life."*

When asked in a follow-up interview if he was still considering the military as an alternative after high school, he responded with a *"not right now. That is a last resort."*

While the military was seen as a last resort for SS4, he expressed concern about his friends joining because of the unpredictability of the war and this option may be the first choice for those who desire to leave the island, see the bigger world, and obtain training that can be useful in later life.

*"When people hear Army and Navy now, they are thinking about going to war. That is the biggest problem right now. They don't want to go to war, but still I know most of them don't have the financial backing to go to college..."*

I had the distinct impression that he may have been talking about himself because he expressed concern about financial support associated with college.

*"...there were a couple of meetings in the auditorium when they (recruiters) said that almost everything has to be paid back from loans. There were some scholarships you had to pay back. No grants."*

Thirdly, SS4 discussed higher education with some interest, but college seemed like such an undertaking for a young man who must leave the U.S. Virgin Island of St. Thomas for the mainland. It was very unlikely that he would go to a U.S. college—no arrangements were in place. Further, when asked about other college selections, he replied;

*"No, because I love my home island. No matter what, I do not believe that I would leave for any length of time, and to leave it and go to the States, would be too big of a transition for me because of the weather, the driving, and being so far away from home and people I know..."*

The University of the Virgin Islands presented itself as the only option, but no plan was in motion for UVI as well. To me, SS4 seemed to be contemplating his options since he had not yet formulated a definite plan and it was mid-February. He did not seem committed, despite his revelation that he had completed an application for UVI and he was waiting for word of his acceptance.

*SS4: I want to go to college, definitely – I think the University of the Virgin Islands*

*Researcher: What have you done recently to make this happen?*

*SS4: I filled out the application, and I am just waiting for the letter of acceptance.*

Also, early in the interview, SS4 was asked about the views and opinions of his brothers and their friends concerning college. He defended his position for non-participation in higher education. He claimed that college is not for everyone, and not going does not make you insignificant. He further expressed his views based on hearsay.

*"Some people say that college is not for everyone and some say if you never go to college, you will be nothing in life. But I hear that there are people on the street with diplomas, and some who never graduate from high school earning millions."*

He further admitted that such cases were rare and it took talent to fit the mold of a millionaire dropout.

Further, his ambivalence for furthering his education was couched in his experiences at Charlotte Amalie High School. I noted an apprehension about his ability to meet the challenges of the classroom work.

*"I passed most of my classes, like one or two I did not pass and that was my fault because I was not catching up on my work. I was procrastinating and this year I can see I have gotten much harder classes and I believe I will have to take just measures to see that the grades will be better. By next year, I should try to cut out distractions and I might even have to leave my job."*

His apprehension stemmed from the environment of the high school. SS4 was a kinesthetic learner. He indicated to me that he was more likely to retain information if he observed how it was done.

*"I found out that if I do a hands-on or I see something being done, I would more likely remember it than to just talk about it."*

What he also liked most in high school was a learning environment that afforded him experiential learning experiences.

*"In the hands-on classes, we get our chances to make our mistakes. So we don't make the same mistakes when we go out in the real world. That's an advantage to me."*

He felt that if he uses his hands, he is more likely to retain what he did.

*"If you are working in a hands-on environment, you might remember more than when you are in a class that is speaking...that may not be necessarily true for everyone, but with me, I found out that if I do a hands-on or I see something being done, I will more likely remember it than to just talk about it."*

I believe that part of his reticence to commit himself to a college career was that he felt that he was not adequately prepared in high school.

*"... and I feel that our educational level is well below how it is supposed [should] to be."*

When asked to elaborate on this issue, SS4 indicated that a stateside individual (this may be SS4's method of identifying one of the survey team members, perhaps) visiting the school had expressed some concern about the level of the curriculum.

*"...and the stateside person cited courses as excellent and they said that most of us are not working at a high school level, but like we are in middle school or elementary school in some cases."*

I was struck that someone this late in high school was still contemplating the options as discussed earlier and had no clear decision as to which direction he would take.

## *Post High School Decisions*

Despite SS4's ambivalence about his plans for the future, I contacted him a year later and learned from his mother that he was now attending the University of the Virgin Islands as a full-time student and also working as a night manager at the same fast-food outlet where he was employed during high school. This was an unanticipated twist of events, which added a new and interesting dimension to the study. He was no longer satisfying the criteria as previously outlined earlier in this chapter.

I was unable to schedule an interview with SS4 at that time because of conflicts with his school and work schedule. He indicated that he wished to continue the process of being interviewed and a later date was established for follow-up.

In October, 2004, I met with SS4 at the library of the University of the Virgin Islands. I did not recognize him as he had grown several inches and filled out to a robust young man. Although he had changed physically during the interview sessions, I heard much of the same statements from SS4. He recognized how fluid his situation was after high school when he reiterated a statement to me.

*"...when I graduated I had three choices. Come to UVI, work, or go into the military..."*

While extolling the virtues of his college experience during the course of the follow-up interview, SS4 reinforced my analysis of his situation in high school.

*"My parents are telling me to strive to see if I could graduate early. They are pushing me in the right direction. They are guiding me and telling me to share in computer education because you don't know how much it is worth right now, but since they are telling me to do it; I am trying to strive for it..."*

On the other hand, SS4 made a statement that made me question his commitment to school.

*"I passed most of my classes. Like one or two I did not pass and that was my fault because I was not catching up on my work. I was procrastinating and this year I can see I've gotten into much harder classes and I believe I will have to take just measures to see that the grades will be that good. But by next year, I should try and cut out distractions..."*

The distractions as described by SS4 were his job, friends, and activities with his friends.

*"... I would have to cut back on the time I spend with them. I would have to cut back on my basketball activities. I was into my basketball, hanging out on my job more than my school work and it should be the other way around. I should be into my school work more than hanging out on the job, friends and my basketball."*

I suspected that more was going on than SS4's interest in college. As the interview progressed, SS4 made comments that seemed to indicate that he was under his mother's influence.

*"With her [mother] hard work, she got me into UVI on time because I was not going to start right after school. I was going to take a while when she "pushed" me in and she "pushed" me basically into UVI."*

The word "pushed" in this context means to nudge in the right direction as the person who is doing the nudging sees it. This takes the form of a pro-active action—that is to do what is necessary to accomplish the task. In the eastern Caribbean culture, it is an attitude parents (more so mothers) take with their children concerning education, which takes precedence over everything. Even males obey.

### *Mother's Role*

During the interview session some of his responses seemed guarded and not forthcoming. I planned to interview one or both parents. Now, it seemed paramount to interview his mother since it appeared that she played a key role in her son's plans for the future.

SM1 took control of the situation (son's education process) by working two jobs using the funds from her part-time position to pay for his tuition and books.

*"I go into my partner box. I do not get any help. I make sure I get my partner box when I have to pay the money to the college for him. Every year (maybe semester) I pay up to \$1060, it all depends on the cost of books."*

A partner box is a cooperative saving mechanism common in many Caribbean cultures. Each member contributes a share to one person who is the banker. The banker distributes to one member the total sum collected. This is called having a turn. Each member can have as many turns as he/she has taken in the plan. Usually, a turn is timed to coincide with a special financial need in a member's life. As members are frequently friends and/or relatives, turns can be altered if a member has a financial emergency. A member not making his/her contribution is unacceptable and is regarded as a social disgrace in many Caribbean cultures.

SM1 further confirmed her commitment to support her son by supplying him with his college expenses.

*"It is I alone who saves the money for my son, I alone – no one else that is why I am willing to help him. Yes, I am the one. I work two jobs, and the two jobs I work are for my son. I know he is a young man, and he needs help and I don't want him on the streets, ...I try my best to help him, the best way I can. I try to give him everything he wants."*

SM1 tried to convince her son that a college education was the best avenue for him by communicating the value of an education through story-telling. She has a folk memory, having observed people she knew growing up who were successful after having an education beyond high school. These observations she passed on to her son hoping to convince him to pursue a college degree. SS4 discussed how his mother would give him various scenarios about education and success.

*"What she has done is to give me a scenario about how a person who goes to college is better off and does better in the world than a person who does not go to college and further his education."*

SS4 seemed to agree with his mother, at least in theory, since he moved in the direction in which his mother had pressed him.

SM1 wished a successful life for her son and steering him towards a college education was her means to that end. I believe that she [mother] equated her own happiness and satisfaction to son's success in college.

*"I am quite satisfied because I want the best for SS4."*

She indicated that she was content to continue financing his education even to the extent that she had also financed a car for him. When asked how important it is to see her son graduate from college, she commented that *"it would be one of my happiest days in my whole life to see that happen."*

SM1 demonstrated a protective attitude towards her son with a strong sense of responsibility for his underachievement through high school. She alluded to her son's struggles through his entire academic training. There was a point where she thought that SS4 may have been afflicted with some sort of learning disorder.

*"...Because you know, SS4 was very slow. ..when he was born, I had a little problem with him. ...When he should make a 'D' he made a 'B' and things like that. ...He was struggling all the way. Yes...he was struggling because I don't know if it was his eyes or what... They ran test on his and so, they did not find anything wrong with him, but still..."*

A significant obstacle that may have prevented SS4 from committing himself to a college education was his concern about paying for it. SM1 used her efforts to remove this concern and indicated her commitment long-term to her son. There was little left for him to ponder.

*"I tell him that he needs to stop working so hard and concentrate on college. That is the most important thing because really he does not have any demands to meet. I am the one who is taking care of him and his education is the number one thing for ME..."*

SM1 sees her son's education as an investment in his future. The sacrifice of her free time to work a part-time position to have the available funds for her son's education is not a small feat. She continues to reinforce her commitment as long as SS4 is moving forward with his education. However, she expressed a willingness to

withdraw this commitment if her son does not recognize her sacrifice and move forward more successfully in his academic work.

*"...If he tells me he does not want to go to college...I wash my hands from him and I would not work so hard..."*

Mother warned SS4 of her decision.

*"Well I asked him before the beginning of the semester; I said, ...decide what you want, because I am not going to spend anymore money on you if you are not serious. Let me know what you are going to do, and tell me now. So he said, Mummy, I am going back to college. I am going to continue."*

She has an inflexible schedule, working seven days a week with only two evenings off.

SM1 is concerned about her son's lack of commitment and is pressing him to do better in school. It appears that his lack of commitment is demonstrated by his failure to successfully complete all course work every semester.

*"I don't think he is doing well, ... I don't think so to me (It does not look so to me). His report card was not so nice this time."*

#### *Father's Reality*

Although I did not interview the father of SS4, I found it interesting that there was something of a contradiction in how he was viewed by both his wife and son concerning his [son's] college career. SS4 saw that his parents were behind him one hundred percent.

*"Right now, my parents are telling me to strive to see if I could graduate early. ...They are telling me to share in computer education because they know how much it is worth right now."*

In contrast, SM1 confided in me that her husband was not in concert with her plan for educating their son, especially on the financial end of it. He [father] felt that his son could come out on top without a college education. However, his father expressed a desire for his son to be involved with the computer science field because SS4's oldest brother seemed to be having a successful computer career and his father envisions SS4's involvement in the business as expressed by SM1.

*"His father tells him [SS4] about the computers because he sees [that] I have a son who is in the field of computers. He is encouraging him [SS4] to do the same, so that my elder son and SS4 could work together."*

### *Peer Association*

While in high school SS4 indicated that he enjoyed a close friendship with his peers. He called them "associates." He and his "associates" attended college and military career fairs as high school seniors. However, a more recent discussion with SS4, post high school, revealed his lack of involvement with some of his "associates" from high school who are now attending the university with him. I also asked him about the girls he knew from high school who are now attending the university with him, if he had any relationship with them and he flatly stated no.

Apparently, SS4 is still in touch with several other young men who attended high school with him, but did not continue on to the university. He definitely seemed to be in touch with one young man whom he notes admiringly has changed jobs several times since high school, each time improving himself in SS4's estimation.

### *It Takes a Village*

With regards to the broader community, SS4 seemed to find general support and interest in his welfare.

*"...I know a couple of people not related to me and if they see me on the street or see me at my place of employment, they will tell me, [you are] doing a good job, keep it up..."*

He also indicated that if he does something not meeting with community approval, his parents would know about it before he arrived home.

### Summary

The major themes that emerged from the analysis of the case illustrate the ambivalence with respect to how the family, culture, and learning environment have influence his decision concerning post-secondary education. SS4 was influenced by his school, teachers, peers, family, siblings and the culture on how he made his decision to participate in post-secondary education. The influence of the family and siblings were most significant and appeared to have a profound impact on his decision to move in the direction of his mother's influence. I was unable to tell what impact the community had on his direction since the data were limited. School and teachers appeared to have a negative impact. The school violence he witnessed, teachers' behaviors he observed, and his perspective on the learning environment and his learning difficulties have contributed to SS4's initial decision of not wishing to participate in post-secondary education. Another theme that emerged from the

analysis is his philosophical insights and beliefs or his perspective on life in general and more specifically on school, teachers, siblings, family and peers. He believed that in life, *"there are no right or wrong answers, but pros and cons for everything."* In discussing his approach to problem solving, his insights into his own behavior surfaced. *"I believe that I can overcome obstacles. The problem is not having enough time to approach the problem... but I procrastinate."*

To briefly summarize how the themes are associated with the broader construct of ambivalence, one influence in SS4's life that produced some ambivalence is seen by his brothers' success in the military. Both brothers appeared to be leading successful lives as seen by SS4. He knew that regardless of what promises were given by the military that it is not entirely a falsehood because his brothers are living examples of going into the military, receiving training and now having successful careers. While SS4 recognized the positive attributes of the military, at the time of his graduation, the military was not considered a viable option for him due to the imminent war with Iraq. He feared ending up in a combat situation.

Second, his negative experiences at the Charlotte Amalie High School, for example, school violence, teachers' inability to control the class, and the disrespect of teachers by students and vice versa, caused some apprehension on his part toward continuing his education. Clearly, he was uncomfortable in high school and did not wish attending UVI to be a continuation of similar experiences.

Finally, what was most pivotal is what he wanted out of life. He strictly spoke of material possessions; a home, earning a good income, and having nice possessions as defined by his culture in St. Thomas. He was not talking about achievements like being an officer in the military or graduating summa cum laude or even winning a scholarship to a prestigious graduate school. He would take any of the three paths, enlist in the military, engage in full-time employment similar to some of his classmates, or pursue college education at UVI, as long as his goal would be achieved. He was not sure which of the three would be the best path. He seemed to believe that he could achieve the goals he set for himself by taking any one of the three courses. As his mother pressed him more and more toward the college option, especially when she agreed to fund it, it became the path of least resistance. This decision temporarily minimized his tension arising from his ambivalence. Therefore, in some ways the question of what was really the best path still remained unresolved in his mind.

These themes, their relationship, and how they interact are discussed more fully in chapter five.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

On one point, therefore,  
there can be no question – no hesitation:  
unless we develop our full capabilities,  
we cannot survive.

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Education of Black People*

#### Summary of the Study

The idea for this study had its origin in a discussion I had with the then Commissioner of Health, Dr. Alfred Heath, and others. These Virgin Islanders were very concerned with the difficulty their male children were having with their academic careers. A year or so later, I was in possession of a demographic study commissioned by the University of the Virgin Islands. Looking through this study, it was striking to see that the ratio of young women to young men was 3:1 across all levels of higher education except for graduate programs where there were virtually no Black males. This phenomenon was seen not only in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), but the mainland was also experiencing a similar decline in male enrollment in most forms of advanced education.

Deeply interested in this trend, I decided to engage in a qualitative research design study that sought to examine in a holistic fashion the complexities of how the systems of school, family, peers, community, and economics function in the life of a young Black male in St. Thomas, USVI; and how these issues in the life of a young Black male yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education.

#### Research Process

Having made a decision to engage in a qualitative research design using male subjects who were either recent high school graduates or seniors in high school, I looked for participants in an urban church located near downtown Charlotte Amalie. I was acquainted with the rector and approached him for assistance with the idea. His response was that he and the church seemed to lose contact with the young men after

high school graduation. He was of the opinion that most left the island either for college or the military. He was not sure which attracted more of the young men.

As a next step, I entered into a formal process of gaining access to the high school through the Department of Education in the USVI. After having registered the proper application with the Commissioner of Education and the Insular Superintendent, I received permission to work with the principal of Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) to obtain participants. She further recommended that I work with two of her guidance counselors in identifying students to participate in the research.

The parameters that were outlined were as follows

:

- Black male of African heritage (not Latino) to include at least one subject of Eastern Caribbean heritage;
- Students who have taken the Scholastic Aptitude Tests with a medium-high score (i.e., high enough score to justify applying to college).
- Students who are not involved in fatherhood; and

Initially, the guidance counselors were able to identify three participants (I called them SS1, SS2, and SS3) with whom I met and interviewed in the school's career counseling office. Upon review of the audiotapes from two participants, I found that background noises from other students in school rendered the audiotapes incoherent. I interviewed a third subject at a different location in the school.

SS3 seemed to be a good candidate for the research. However, in a subsequent trip to the island, I made attempts to expand on the interview with SS3. He failed to show up for two appointments. Trying to establish a third appointment, I was told by SS3 that he was no longer interested.

The three initial interviewees were well-mannered young men who were enthusiastic about the interview process. What I recalled from the first two interviews was neither student was opposed to education, but they were not interested in furthering their education at the college level, at least not right after high school. I later learned that both enlisted in the military and left the island immediately after graduation. I later learned that the third interviewee who left the study was employed by the government and was not participating in post-secondary education. All three seemed to move forward with their lives. The school's guidance counselors did a decent job in identifying young men who may have had college potential. What I gleaned from our conversations is that all three had expressed similar sentiments about the learning environment. They believed that the high school curriculum could be enhanced and that there were alternative pathways to what they saw as a successful life.

During the same trip, I was able to secure one more volunteer from the high school for interview. SS4 was eager, cooperative, and very interested in the process. I conducted several interviews, face-to-face and telephone follow-up, with SS4. During the course of a later follow-up, I found out that SS4 was attending the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). This revelation shifted the focus of the study to include a young Black male who, for reasons to be discussed later, has moved outside the standard of the Virgin Island culture.

As the research unfolded, I thought it necessary to interview SS4's mother as she seemed to play a vital role in his post-high school decisions. The dynamics between SS4 and SM1 have been laid out in chapter four. The full text of the interviews (SM1 and SS4) with coding matrices can be found in Appendix E .

The research questions for this study are:

1. How do the systems of school, family, peers, community, and economics function in the life of an adolescent Black male in St Thomas, U. S. Virgin Islands?
2. How do these issues in the life of an adolescent Black male yield a perspective on and a decision about participating in higher education?

I felt that the data from SS4 and his mother, who were open and accommodating in their interviews, provided richness and can answer the research questions as outlined.

### Addressing the Research Questions

#### *Socioeconomic Nature of St. Thomas*

It seemed to be assumed that there was an unspoken rule about career aspirations for boys and girls as discussed by a nineteen-year-old sophomore at the UVI. He states that "growing up it was always known that the girls would go off to school and the boys would go to the military" (Ward, 2002).

There were factors the guidance counselors were not aware of when selecting SS4 as a possible candidate for the study. These factors were (1) his strong family support; and (2) his parental influence. There may be a cultural standard that directs scholastically reasonably successful boys into a non-college track. For example, SS4 claimed that he was never aware of the Scholastic Aptitude Test preparatory courses given by the high school or that UVI offered remedial courses to correct academically deficient areas. On almost all my visits to CAHS, I saw military recruiters from

various Uniformed Services. One was struck by the voluminous pamphlets and recruitment materials from the military at the high school. I never once saw any college recruiters.

In this society, the operators of taxis form the blue-collar aristocracy. They own the vehicles they use and may even control more than one. They have a highly sophisticated, very well structured lucrative business of moving tourists and locals around the island. The government operated bus service, VITRAN, for all practical purposes does not exist. These operators of cabs control the airport, cruise terminals, and downtown area. They appear to have a certain amount of freedom to work where, when, and how often perhaps as their finances dictate.

### *Economic and Social Mobility of Family and Peers*

As I began to draw some conclusions about where the study was going, a follow-up call to SS4 revealed that there were three of his Black male high school classmates at UVI with him. When asked specifically about his relationship with them in college, SS4 stated that he seldom interacted with them. Responding to a further question dealing with his relationship with any of the female classmates from his high school that are now at UVI, he again responded strongly that there was no relationship, which led me to believe that his girlfriend was not a college student at UVI. SS4 seemed to lack involvement in college life. He saw his peers as the young people who are working and did not relate to his classmates in college. I say this because, in the interview, he seemed very much in touch with his high school classmates who had begun working immediately after graduation and according to his mother he had now secured another part-time position. He even spoke admiringly of one young man who had had several jobs, but according to SS4 he had advanced himself with each job change.

SS4 described his family as being highly supportive and close-knit. His two older brothers (one a step-brother) are veterans of the U.S. military where both received computer training while serving. One brother remained in the computer field, self-employed on the mainland. SS4 spoke very positively of their accomplishments and even expressed a desire to join the second eldest brother on the mainland and help him with his business. Again, while recognizing the positive impact the military may have had on his siblings, this option was not a viable one for SS4 given his fear of ending up in a combat situation.

SS4's father was very supportive of the idea of SS4 joining his brother on the mainland. However, he did not contribute to the costs associated with his son's education and seemed inclined to disagree with SS4's mother on the significance of his son obtaining a college education to be successful in his brother's business. SS4 did

not make note of his father's position concerning his college education and described his family's efforts as highly supportive of his college career.

It is SS4's mother who is the prime driver behind his entering into college. She pressed him into registering and enrolling for college while he still had some doubts. She fully paid all his costs for the first two years (he continues to live at home and I had the impression that he was not contributing to the household maintenance). Despite his less than stellar academic performance so far, SS4's mother expressed her fervent hope that her son would grow into maturity, do better academically, and graduate.

### *The Male Educational Perspective*

During the interviews with SS4, he presented conflicting thoughts as if he were of two minds. It was not until I interviewed his mother that I fully came to realize one of the sources of his ambivalence. SS4 was operating under two contrasting mindsets: First, the social paradigm on present-day St. Thomas and second, the model which his mother presented as she once knew it as a youth in the British colony of Nevis. The two paradigms on the issue of education are in direct contrast. First, the model on the island of St. Thomas does not call for a highly educated workforce because of the entrepreneurial nature of the island and its blue-collar society. The model in St. Thomas is reinforced with young men throughout their schooling. The systems of school, his peers, and economics have all operated against his attending college. If it were not for his mother, he would not have gone to college despite the clichés he expressed about being respected as a graduate and having people quickly recognize him as an educated man by the nature of his expressing himself in conversation.

Second, in colonial Nevis, the surest way for a young man to be set for life was to have an education. This model presents a competitive process which produced few scholarships to Britain or Canada. These scholarships guaranteed, usually males, a profession for life. His mother has a memory of what she observed growing up as a young woman in Nevis. She believed that coming out of college then guaranteed success. However, in this culture, coming out of the University of the Virgin Islands today does not necessarily guarantee a similar success. Not fully understanding the dynamics of the of St. Thomas culture, she continued to press her son on the issue of getting an education to be successful. But more significantly, SS4 did not truly understand the value of a formal education. To fully understand this, the next section examines the issue further.

## Discussion

### *Cultural Perspective on St. Thomas*

There has been no historical record of any significant independence movement in the U.S. Virgin Islands either under the Danish or the American administration. The U.S. Virgin Islands is an unincorporated (not intended to become a state) territory of the United States; therefore, not all the provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply to the Virgin Islands. In 1993, a referendum was held in St. Thomas, USVI to determine the islands' future political status – it was voted on by the islands' populists overwhelmingly (80%) to maintain the status quo, which is for a continued or enhanced unincorporated territorial status with the United States. The U.S. Virgin Islands is one of three U.S. territories that have no benefit of state government, but rather share a subordinate relationship with the Federal government. Territories have no voice in the presidential election, but do have a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives. Residents pay no federal income tax or territorial sales tax. In Puerto Rico, which has commonwealth status, there are political parties advocating independence or statehood, but this is not the case in the Virgin Islands.

Virgin Islanders have come to rely and be dependent on the United States for their political, legal, and economic structure. This dependency is not apparent in those of their eastern Caribbean neighbors who are now independent nations but who were once colonies of Great Britain. De Albuquerque and McElroy (1985) observed that Virgin Islanders are "preoccupied with nativity (being a native) over competence and are schizophrenic about their dependent but lucrative American affiliation" (p. 53). For example, the Virgin Islands incurred severe financial costs as a result of two not so recent hurricanes in 1989 and 1995. The Federal government provided significant assistance in grants for home repairs and for public assistance. Within a year, St. Thomas was back on its feet and tourism never skipped a beat. The island Republic of Grenada experienced a similar fate last year when a major hurricane passed through the island, and they are having difficulty getting the infrastructure back on track as reported by expatriates.

It is apparent that SS4 is content with his vision for his future—working in the St. Thomas environment he knows and moving up to owning his own home with its material trappings. In some ways, SS4 had his mother do his thinking for him and displayed dependency on his mother's support. Influenced by his mother's hopes for his future, he entered college, but has not shown a level of commitment necessary to emerge as an academic success. It was as if he had one foot in the classroom and another in the world of work with its immediate material awards. His response to formal schooling seemed to be part of his confusion of culture values. This is discussed next.

## *A Response to Formal Schooling*

My definition of disdainful students is demonstrated by the students encountered by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Ogbu (2003). Those students were unreceptive toward education—espousing that academic success is a behavior solely in the domain of White Americans. At the other end of the spectrum is the protagonist in Suskind's work, *Hope in the Unseen* (1998), where a young Black male was so enthused with furthering his education that he was devoting every waking moment to scholarly activities. Neither of these characteristics was observed in this case.

Ogbu (1987) purports that the community in which some young African American males reside, given their limited exposure and experience, presents the local citizen of affluence, i.e., drug dealer as a very prosperous person. He seems to obtain his money without having to do hard physical labor. Again, given the limited exposure and experience of adolescent males on St. Thomas, which may be seen as a contained environment, similar to a stateside inner city, a parallel is seen defining community in Ogbu's terms. Under these circumstances, the relative economic affluence of some local business entrepreneurs e.g., taxi drivers, local restaurant proprietors is appealing to a certain significant segment of the young male population. Similarly to the inner city drug dealers, these small but visible business men become role models for young men on St. Thomas.

Two major employers on the island are the government and the tourist industry. The government jobs are riddled with nepotism (by knowing or being related to the right people guarantees some success in a government job). Attempting to do government work may seem like a dead-end to a young man. The young man in this case expressed at length his desire to join his brother in his computer business and later perhaps move on to start his own business. On the other hand, young women interested in a career, e.g., teaching or nursing would have access through the university to certification or licensure. This credential may even provide a way off the island for many of them.

In this case, the young man believed that he was not well prepared for a college education and therefore, a UVI degree seemed not to be worth the effort or investment as seen by him. He may have felt that he would have been better off working full-time and getting a leg up in life. I gleaned similar thinking from the other young men who were initially interviewed. Some saw the military as their option and acted on it while this young man was reluctant to place himself in a combat situation. Drawing on Ogbu's work (1987, 1990) with African American adolescent males and schooling, a parallel is seen in this case on the basis of implicit societal and cultural norms.

Whereas Fordham and Ogbu (1986) describe an explicit rejection of the value of formal education on the part of young African Americans, SS4 and his mother verbally endorsed the values of education, but his actions reflect only a small degree

of commitment to these values. Rather, his weak and ambivalent motivation toward education reflected more of the social and economic status of higher education in St. Thomas than of the beliefs and values of his mother.

### *Educational Issues in St. Thomas*

It could appear to a casual observer that the USVI does not invest a great deal of effort in its education system. Higher education for young men falls into the implicit belief that education is not necessary within that economy. When Professor Kabuka of the Business Department at the UVI was interviewed by the Daily News (June 13, 2002), he made a personal observation concerning the decline of Black males in education. He observed that when he began teaching around 1980 his classes were more than half males. For the past several years, he had rarely seen any male students in his graduate courses and in the undergraduate courses perhaps only 1 in 4 are males.

During this period of twenty to twenty-five years, other economic changes were taking place, specifically, the expansion of the tourist industry. According to a recent report (The Impact of Travel and Tourism, 2004) on travel and tourism in the Caribbean, tourism in 2004 generated nearly 38% of all jobs in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is probably even higher for St. Thomas and St. John's because St. Croix's tourist industry is not doing so well. The employment figures include typical tourism jobs (i.e., cooks, hotel manager, taxi driver), as well as other jobs impacted by tourism—agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.

The entire episode surrounding the lost of accreditation of the two public high schools on St. Thomas is a demonstration of what characterizes the culture concerning education. It was reported in the Daily News (May 3, 2002) [Unpublished Government report. Unable to obtain a copy of the original report from either the Middle States Association or V. I. Dept. of Education] that the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools sent group after group to work with the education administration in correcting the deficiencies, yet there was no improvement at the end of what seemed to be an exhaustive exercise. The then Education Commissioner failed to recognize the seriousness of the issue. She completely ignored the report to bring the schools into compliance forcing the Middle States to withdraw its accreditation. The lost of accreditation led to the Education Commissioner's dismissal by Governor Turnbull. To add to all of this, Governor Turnbull holds a doctorate degree in education and had been a former Education Commissioner. Given the seriousness of the situation and the governor's background, a reasonable person would have expected that he could have monitored this situation more closely. Nevertheless,

he was overwhelmingly reelected as governor. None of his opponents seemed to develop this issue during the elections.

There is another problem facing the Virgin Islands Education Department. Teachers are paid \$10,000 less than the U. S. national average which makes recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers from the mainland almost impossible. They are one of the lowest paying school districts in the United States. Further compounding this issue is the lack of certified teachers in the system. As reported by Mannes in the Daily News (August 6, 2004, p. 2), the Education Commissioner testified that approximately one-third of the teaching staff was certified, another third did not possess current certification, while the remainder failed to meet academic requirements to be eligible to be tested for certification. These were all grave issues that the Government and legislators must grapple with and begin to solve. SS4's lack of trying to do better and the forces pushing and pulling him are discussed next.

### *Motivational Theory and Learning*

Dunn (1988) reported the main reason why Black males avoided college was to achieve financial independence. As this case has shown, the friends of SS4 did just that. Their desire for money seemed stronger than their desire to continue their education. Dunn cited motivation as the second reason why Black males avoided college. They see it as a waste of time or may be suffering from low morale caused by negative experiences in high school.

The literature (Dyer, 1996; McCombs, 1991) concluded that the reality of time pressure prove to be frustrating for many teachers when faced with trying to motivate hard-to-reach students. McCombs (1991, 1994) argued that learners of all ages are naturally quite adept at being self-motivated and at directing and managing their own learning on tasks that they perceive as interesting, fun, personally meaningful, or relevant in some way to daily life. In reviewing the interview with SS4, he discussed how high school lacked meaning as teachers tended to be more theoretical and did not connect the discussions to daily life.

To a psychologist, motivation is a response to an inner source that results in some form of movement. SS4 had not tried hard enough even though he desired a college education and had some evidence (SAT scores) that he could do it. The energy to enroll came as a push from his mother and not from a motive inside himself, or not from an attraction of college.

From the data collected and analyzed, I explain this push and pull construct using the model in Figure 2. SS4 graduated from high school with a general ambivalence toward the future. As he explained it, he had three choices; enlist in the U. S. military, secure full-time employment, or attend the University of the Virgin

Islands. At each choice point there is a combination of forces that either push or pull him toward an alternative direction. His choice is the result of the sum total of all the forces. For example, the military was a viable option until the imminent war with Iraq. His response to the military enlistment was no longer a positive direction for him, but instead an alternative (work) led him to the next choice point of employment. One force pulling him toward employment was his securing a position with the TSA similar to some of his peers. This would have been a pull away from his next choice point. However, his mother's push toward college was stronger than the pull toward full-time employment. Therefore, with great apprehension he enrolled, with his mother's push, in college, his third choice point. The forces against college are represented by his negative high school environment and experiences he encountered (i.e., school violence and a disrespectful environment). These forces were not stronger than his mother's push to enroll in college.

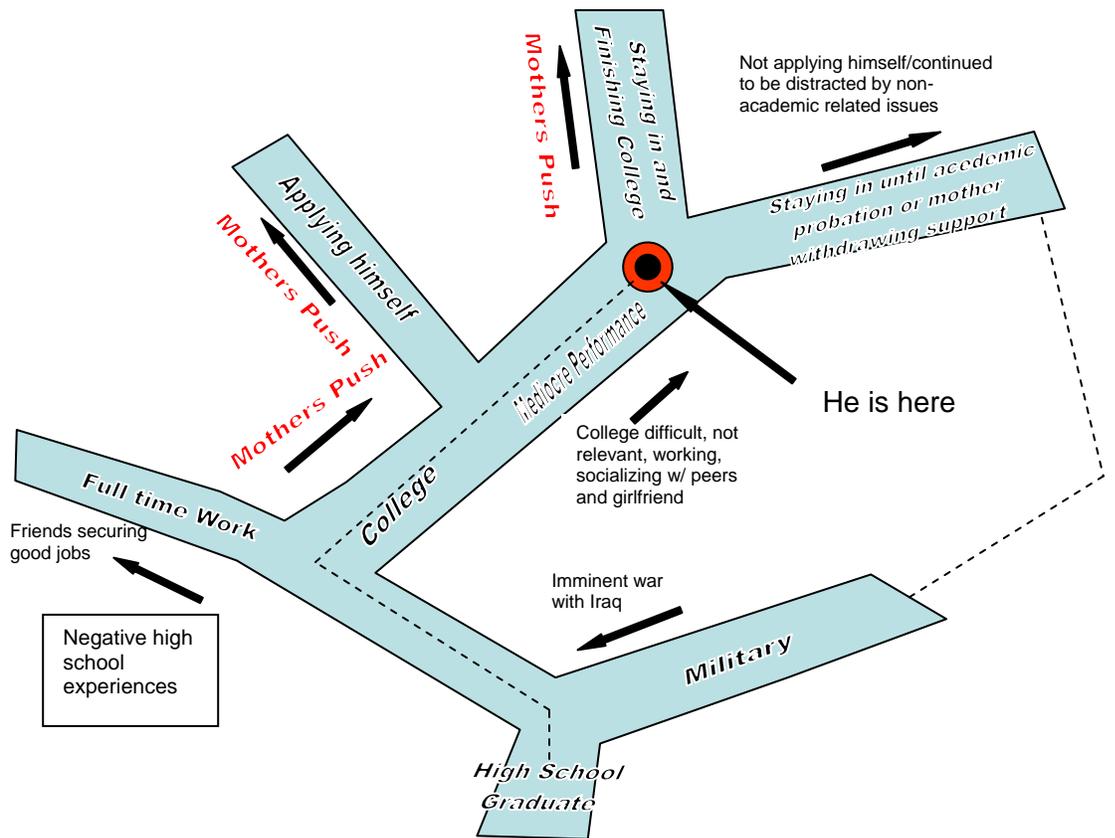


Figure 2. Path of Least Resistance Model

As he approached the next juncture along the path of least resistance, enrollment into college and the push from his mother were not enough to get him to

apply himself unless the work at college was the kind he thought he could do (hands on). There were other forces related to his not trying harder in school. For example, he articulated that the work was getting harder; maybe the work was not relevant; he was distracted by equally important activities as he recalled. These activities are depicted by his socialization with peers and involvement with his girlfriend, and working, which he thought was necessary to pay for his car. He recognized that there was not enough time for him to do everything, but because all were equally important, he never got around to applying himself to his studies consciously or unconsciously. The forces involved in his not applying himself were stronger than his mother's push to do well in school.

Finally, if he decided to stay in college as he told his mother he would, he would continue to wrestle with the choices before him until the decision was maybe no longer his to make. On one hand, he could continue moving in the direction his mother wished for him or he could continue to try not to risk his mother's threat to take away the push and punish instead (wash her hands of his college expenses). As well, he also risked going on academic probation or needing to work more that would pull him further away from studies. Either way is negative consequences toward resolving his ambivalence.

This model may be used and further refined since many young adults are faced with similar choices after high school.

## Conclusions

In a discussion with the high school principal, she made an interesting comment, which was *"if you figure out what these boys are thinking, let us know; because we cannot."* What I did find out was that this young man seemed to think, at least by his actions (not trying hard enough in college), that one can do well working in a blue-collar job and a college degree does not necessarily guarantee more money or success as it may have been defined by his mother's culture. He may have had a desire for a college education, but the motive from within and any attraction of college may have been missing. What the young men are also saying is that school is not relevant for them. The two participants that enlisted into the military believed that the curriculum could have been enhanced and that there were alternative pathways to what they saw as a successful life.

One of the limitations of this study is that it targeted one specific case. Therefore, this limits the generalizability of the study since the findings cannot be generalized to any other case. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that a case is but a snapshot of reality at a particular time and within a particular context. Although it is believed that if a case is complete and thick enough in description, generalizability of the research concepts and theory of one case to another, looking at the fittedness (that

is to say that the concepts and theories of one case can be applied to another providing the context is right), can be applicable. What has been discussed in this study applies to the specific circumstances of this case, but the notion of the constructs themselves can be extended to other situations. For example, the path to least resistance model depicts a process that can be generalized to another case within a different context with different outcomes. The study was further limited by the constraints of resources and time to pursue additional interviews of extended family members, peers, and teachers.

## Recommendations

### *Research Issues for Further Consideration*

This study could have benefited by further exploring issues which surfaced during the analysis of the findings. For example, SS4 always made reference to his brother's business and his aspiration to join him. Additionally, his mother also mentioned that his father was hopeful that this might happen. If possible, the future research could expand to interview this brother to get his thoughts on the reality of this course of action as well as his thoughts on whether or not the degree SS4 was pursuing would have been helpful in achieving this.

Further, at the end of the study, relatively little was discussed about his sister, and what was known came from SS4's mother. She appeared to be a mystery within this family structure. I found out much later that she was a graduate from UVI where she worked on her degree as a part-time student while working in the retail industry. She was also the baby of the family for 15 years before SS4 was born. How did she feel about losing her position in the family after the birth of SS4? One could assume that with the age difference, she may have had a hand in raising him. What was the relationship between the two as he was growing up? Could she have used the financial support the mother was lavishing on SS4?

How did the teachers see SS4? What type of a student was he? From the school's perspective, the only known reality was through the guidance counselor, who saw him as being a well-mannered, polite young man who had not planned on continuing his education further. It would have been enlightening to expand on this issue with one of his classroom teachers.

The school failed in demonstrating action consistent with their mission statement since SS4, who seemed to be a decent young man, was not well prepared or given the tools necessary that could have prepared him to succeed academically. Why did the school not get the message across to this young man? Does the school see this

as an institutional failure on their part? The school environment abounded with issues for further research.

Finally, from the research, I drew an inference that SS4 was more connected to his working "associates" than those in college. The research could have been illuminated by interviewing someone who regarded himself as a close associate of SS4, to get his thoughts on how he regarded SS4's college career.

This study, concentrating only on a high school senior, lacked an adequate number of subjects, thus prohibiting an opportunity for cross-case analysis. How special a case is SS4? It was somewhat difficult finding subjects who met the criteria, particularly in their second semester of their senior year in high school. With respect to future research, efforts should be made to examine college sophomores and juniors about their high school experiences. This approach might increase the possibilities to recruit more subjects and compare their experiences. What were the challenges and difficulties during high school? How did they end up in college when so many did not? What were the strengths and weaknesses in the system?

This study concluded that the economy and its implicit values for young people does not place a value on higher education and therefore, provided for the lackadaisical manner in which the educational system operated (bear in mind that one of the reasons why the Middle States withdrew its certification was the chronic problem of teachers not reporting for work). Another area of research for someone with a school administration background would be to examine the issue from the other side, whether the inefficiency and poorly performing education system contribute so little that it has lost value in the larger society. Dyer (1996) pointed out that in a developing country like India, teachers did not connect the quality of the education process with problems of dropout and non-attendance. She further asserted that the lack of identity by the teachers with the local community and the apparent hopelessness of their task provided no motivation for the students.

### *Policy Changes*

As previously stated, SS4 had not tried hard enough to go to college without his mother's "push." For the reasons discussed, there is a need for policy changes to address these issues. For example:

1. Colleges should be required to offer four years of work/study/internships to all students for whom it is appropriate. This would require Federal funding or the use of V.I. tax dollars.
2. Students should receive financial subsidy in addition to salary in their post college jobs for five years. This would require more Federal funding.

3. A national system of support groups, mentors, and counselors should be available to all students in their first jobs. This should be supported in part by their employers.
4. New industries and companies should be established through Federal support to widen opportunities in quality and quantity. In addition, a start-up for small businesses should be available.
5. To recruit and retain more male teachers, the government could provide higher pay for teachers and/or a recruitment bonus with a five-year commitment.

Since the needs and concerns of every generation differ, the university might wish to broaden their curriculum to focus on the interests of the young people coming out of high school. For example, offer courses:

1. Discussing human rights under the Constitution. Do elections work? Who owns the news? Why do we have rights?
2. Discussing human rights under legislation. Do we have good schools? And are we getting them? What kind of tax system do we have and why?
3. Dealing with jobs in the economy. How does the economy work? How to become rich? Who should go to college? What is out-sourcing? Should the Virgin Islands have out-sourced jobs?
4. Dealing with the environment and energy savings. Do we need better communities and transportation? Should energy efficient cars be required?

#### *Wider Implications for Policy Makers*

Wider policy implications for the education system in St. Thomas are several fold:

1. Strategies should be developed to enhance the quality of education and ensure an orderly process with a positive outcome for the next accreditation review.
2. If change were to be made, a logical first step would be to ensure that teachers' voices are heard in the making of policy (Dyer, 1996). They should be involved in the decision-making from the beginning in

matters affecting them, and not be excluded as it appears to be at present.

3. In concert with the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), the Department of Education should develop programs that are male-centered to expose young Black male students to advanced education and other career opportunities. The high schools could provide enrichment courses for advanced placement and attract UVI professors as guest speakers at the high school. Additionally, a joint effort between the university and high school could be forged to create a program that would allow disadvantaged but academically challenged students to attend UVI in the summer of their junior year. The program could be developed to involve the community, businesses and others, as the program's financial supporters.

### Speculation

If SS4's mother did not tire of supporting his academic pursuits or he was not asked to leave the university for his poor academic performance, he would probably muddle through and graduate with a low grade point average, which may not be helpful to him in the future. However, if his mother withdrew her support, it is highly unlikely that he would continue his education, because he would not seek financial assistance nor would he attempt to pay for it himself. Although I am not involved in SS4's life beyond this point, one would hope to see his growing into maturity; seeking out a mentor to help him through his decision making process; taking his academics more seriously; interacting more with the university environment; and achieving more than his present course of action would indicate.

The shortage of qualified teachers, both with respect to supply and adequate training, is considered a major handicap in the efficiency of the educational system in the U.S. Virgin Islands. In Dyer's work (1996, p. 37) she affirmed Kothari's (1970) belief that "the quality, competence, and character of teachers" in developing countries continues to be the most significant factor influencing the quality of education and its contribution to national development. Considering that low salaries and issues of relocation make recruitment of stateside teachers difficult, all efforts must be invested in developing a higher standard of professionalism among the current body of instructors and graduating students. This is where the University of the Virgin Islands has a role to fulfill in educating the current as well as the next wave of teachers and other professionals. I am encouraged by a report in the Daily News (December 28, 2004) that indicated that teachers in the U.S. Virgin Islands are now receiving tuition assistance from the V. I. Education Department to meet the V. I. Board of Education's certification requirement. It seems that this support has been an on-going effort to

bring the teachers in line with the federal designation of "highly qualified" under the No Child Left Behind Act.

It would be a radical notion to suggest a change in the culture. However, it is not so radical an idea to call for territorial policy that would bring about gradual change in teacher development not only in words but in action. The territorial government needs to invest its time, money, and efforts in developing its teachers and its education system.

## Summary

Over a century ago the well known and respected scholar, W. E. B. Dubois's repeated theme and belief was that the key to Black survival was the development of Black minds. He said, "The South, and more especially the Negro, needed and must have trained and educative leadership if civilization was to survive" (DuBois, 1973, p. 88). The people on St. Thomas might harken back to the words of this scholar.

The issue of why young Black males are rarely seen in higher education is a complex issue. The issue can be linked in part to an education system that performs poorly and places little value on the importance of educating its young. First, I provided an explanation of the issue by examining the economic activity. Tourism dominates the economic skyline and does not require a highly educated work force. Both Territorial and Federal governments are significant employers. As an example, enhanced airport security has created dozens of positions with the Transportation Security Administration in St. Thomas. Many graduating seniors from the class of 2003 were employed in these positions. Second, I discussed the history of education, which was not a well-funded priority during the Danish administration and the earlier military and civil administrations by the United States. Since the Organic Act of 1954 the funding situation is somewhat improved. Today, education is funded in the millions through territorial income tax and by Federal grants.

There are other factors not examined as part of this study. First, there are a number of retired mainlanders and continentals, absentee property owners who are solely investors, as well as major resort proprietors who are not interested in higher taxation. Second, there is a well-established private/parochial school system that siphons off the parents who are in a better financial position and could put pressure on the government to enhance the public school system. Third, being a territory does not give the U.S. Virgin Islands the power of a state government and therefore, makes them more subordinate to the Federal government. One can draw a similar parallel between the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the government of the District of Columbia in that both have no voting representation in Congress. Finally, the borrowed system of education from the mainland may not be the appropriate system. A more ethnocentric system of education may meet the needs of the people and should be further explored as once suggested by the first Governor, Paul Pearson (1931-

1935), whose philosophy of education came close to fitting the social and economic realities and needs of the islands.

It was John Dewey who contended that the role of education is for social transformation. Without overestimating this role, "If education is to play its limited part towards improving social mobility and widening choices, the quality of teachers has far reaching social implication" (Dyer, 1996, p. 37).

I grew up in a time when the Caribbean nations were seeking independence and education was one of the first concerns of which politicians and scholars seized control. There were many discussions around the Caribbean concerning the issue of expanding the access of higher education to many through a University operated by Caribbean people. Reflecting on the folk memory of others concerning slavery and colonialism, I wonder why young males of the Virgin Islands are not taking full advantage of the education system.

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