A PROFILE OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand positive profiles, if any, of African-American male role models through analyzing descriptive data. The central hypothesis of the study proposed that adult African-American males had a significant impact on the formation of young African-American males' family lives, neighborhood values, religious lives, educational progress, and career choices.

This research contributes to an understanding of how young African-American males perceive role models in building positive relationships. In addition, this study elicits much needed data that could provide a basis for developing strategies for both securing role models for young African-American males and producing programs designed to protect young African-American males from drug usage, violence, and dropping out of school.

More importantly, this study contributes to the effort to raise educational achievement among young African-American males by exploring and defining the nature of African-American male role models. This exploration yields information on unique needs of African-American males. It establishes that problems within the home, community, and school contribute to the stagnation of African-American males as a group and the weakening of the African-

American community as a whole. It further establishes possible incentives, strategies, and guides for selecting and placing African-American males in classrooms and community programs as role models. The major findings of the study were that African-American male role models are indeed key in promoting self-esteem, occupational development, community involvement, and family life in positive ways.

Qualitative methodology was used in this study through the grounded theory approach. In-depth, unstructured interviews were conducted by the investigator to gather data from the participants. Through the use of grounded theory, what was relevant to the study was allowed to emerge. The grounded theory approach relies on the inquiring mind of the investigator. Data was analyzed through an ordering process guided by open coding for the generalization of patterns, themes, and categories.

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A PROFILE OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

Chapter I

Introduction

Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, describes the state of at-risk American youth as follows:

> Substantial numbers of American youth are at risk of failing to reach adulthood, as well as failing to meet the requirements of the workplace, the commitments of relationships in families and with friends, and the responsibilities of participation in a democratic society. Many at-risk youth live in urban neighborhoods and also in rural towns where the stability of close-knit relationships is rare--where the sense of community that shapes their identity has eroded. They will seek jobs in an economy that will require virtually all workers to think flexibly and creatively as only an elite few were required, and educated, to do in the past. (p. 8)

Economic, political, and social changes have resulted in direct negative consequences of fewer educational and employment opportunities for young African-American males. Forty-two percent of African-American males aged sixteen to nineteen who are in the civilian labor force are unemployed. Twenty-four and one-half percent of African-American males between the ages of twenty and twenty-four are unemployed as well (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993). Approximately half of all African-American males are not in the work force (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993). Eighty-three and two-tenths percent of African-American teenage males live in urban areas and seventy-four and two tenths percent live in inner cities (Hill, 1992).

African-American youth who reside in inner city areas are much more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be employed than White youth

(Freeman & Holzer, 1986). These conditions have affected both their perceptions of opportunity and their actual access to the American dream of social and economic mobility (Gibbs, 1988).

Jaynes and Williams (1989) stated the following:

> Increases in the concentration of urban poverty among blacks have been especially damaging to the opportunities available for black youth. Highly concentrated poverty areas can be distinguished from other areas not merely by the race of the residents, but more importantly, by the kinds of access that the residents of these neighborhoods have to jobs and job networks, availability of marriageable partners, involvement in quality schools, and exposure to conventional role models. (p. 498)

"Meaningful employment provides the foremost social linkage between existence and acceptance as a worthy person in the eyes of others" (Hill, 1992, p. 44). African-American male unemployment has a strong relationship to the increase of African-American female-headed households (Gibbs, 1988). The end result is an absence of an African-American male role model in many households.

The overall upward mobility of African-Americans through employment is declining. According to Hochschild (1992), "Blacks in fact fall from middle-class status frequently enough for the economic insecurity to be well-founded." According to Hacker (1992):

> Black men continue to earn lower returns on their education and labor market experience than do comparable Whites. Black occupational advancement is not particularly impressive. Even professionals are concentrated in jobs at the lower end of the pay scale. (pp. 170-171)

A recent examination of demographic data revealed an extreme increase in single-parent homes in Stokes County, North Carolina, with African-American homes heavily represented. The majority of the absent

African-American fathers were unemployed or not otherwise receiving income (Report Card, 1992).

> The shift to day work among domestic workers and the incorporation of some Black women into the manufacturing sector paralleled changes in African-American family and community structures. Even though the hours were long and the pay low in the majority of occupations held by Black women, they did have more time to devote to their families and communities than that available to live-in domestic workers (Collins, 1990, p. 58).

The increased employment opportunities of African-American women and the decreased employment opportunities for African-American males produces more female heads of household. This decreases the opportunities for adult African-American males to be responsible role model figures.

> The functioning of Black families and American society cannot be enhanced until the highest priority is assigned to ensuring that Black boys, Black male youths, Black adult men and Black fathers are able to fulfill their responsibilities as productive members of our society (Randolph, 1990, p. 54).

The aforementioned problems of young African-American males signal a need for male role models to work with female role models in homes and communities. There are many female role models for young African-American males. Madhubuti (1990) addressed the need for male role models with the following analogy:

> Fathers are the missing links in the lives of many young African-Americans. In an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable world, absent fathers add tremendously to the insecurity of children. It is common knowledge that children function best in an atmosphere where both parents combine and compliment their energies and talents in the rearing of children (Madhubuti, 1990, p. 189).

> Most Black boys receive instructions in fathering from their mothers' discussions about absent dads. If there is anything clear in the African-American community, it is that these women are having serious difficulty teaching Black boys to be men, and by extension to be fathers (Madhubuti, 1990, p. 191). The analysis is not an attempt to condemn Black women who are trying against great odds to raise their sons to be men. It is a fact that they are not succeeding in great numbers but it is wrong to blame them for not raising strong Black men. Many of them have successfully helped Black boys make a successful transition to manhood (Madhubuti, 1990).

In 1993 the African-American male population was five and eight-tenths percent of the total American population (United States Bureau of the Census, 1994). In contrast, African-American males represented over forty-seven percent of the prison population in the United States in 1992 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1994). In addition, the present prison population of African-American males outnumbers those enrolled in colleges and universities (Hill, 1992).

"There is a one in twenty-one chance that a young African-American male will be murdered by the time he reaches his twenty-fifth birthday. In 1977, more African-American males died as a result of homicide than perished in the Vietnam War" (Majors & Billson, 1992, p. 20).

According to Jaynes and Williams (1989), the arrest rates of Blacks were higher than those of Whites. Great socioeconomic disparities were given as the cause of the gap between the rates. Blacks' deprived economic standing contributed to their disproportionate involvement in the justice system as victims and victimizers.

> The importance of society's focusing on the environment of young African-American males long before they become involved with drugs, violence, or academic failure cannot be emphasized enough. What is the true nature of these boys' early childhood development? Who is available to answer the call for male identity during those critical, formative years when positive male role models are most crucial (Holland, 1991, p. 40)?

Recent drug arrests in a Piedmont area of North Carolina have involved a substantial number of young African-American males who were once students in the district. Many were school dropouts or high school graduates who did not have the skills to be competitive in the job market (Dillard, 1994).

Surrounding urban school districts have experienced a tremendous rise in homicides (Moss, 1994). These homicides have involved African-American males between the ages of fourteen and thirty (McKay, 1994). According to Bridges (1988), former superintendent of the Wake County Public Schools, Raleigh, North Carolina, "The model for African-American male child development is broken, and we must fix it." (p. 1)

Statement of the Problem

There is evidence to show that African-American role models significantly influence the lives of young African-American males. There is limited evidence, however, that shows what produces positive influences (Walker, 1988; Chmelynski, 1990). This scarcity of information may be due to limited documentation and inadequate presentation of African-American males in positive roles. Much of what is documented about African-American males tends to be presented in a negative or victimizing manner (Gary, 1981).

> Research studies and official pronouncements all encouraged the perception that the pathology of the black underclass--unemployment, crime, welfare dependency, family dissolution, the breakdown of social values--is attributable to race, not poverty. Not only are the victims of racism blamed for their poverty, white society projects social pathology on all Black men and singles them out as indolent, violent, and irresponsible (Staples, 1987, p. 8).

According to Bennett (1989), much literature supports a myth that African-American males cannot maintain stable family relationships. He discussed the ten greatest myths that have long been used to discredit the African-American family and especially the African-American male. These myths are as follows: (1) the root of the African-American family problem is raw and uncontrolled sex; (2) loose morals; (3) African-Americans lack a family tradition and came to America without a sense of morality and a background of stable sexual relationships; (4) the bonds of the African-American family were destroyed in slavery; (5) the African-American family collapsed after emancipation; (6) the African-American family collapsed after the Great Migration to the North; (7) the African-American family is a product of white paternalism and government welfare; (8) the African-American family has always been a matriarchy characterized by strong and domineering women and weak and absent men; (9) African-American men cannot sustain stable relationships; and (10) the history of the African-American family is a history of arguing and fighting by hard-hearted men and heartless women.

Studies are needed which identify specific characteristics in role models and identify specific types of involvement that may serve as influences. Specific times and places need to be identified where role models

can intervene with the greatest success. This study could help accomplish these objectives.

Significance of the Study

A review of the young African-American male's educational progress reveals an alarming picture. He has not kept pace with White males, White females, and African-American females in educational success (Majors & Billson, 1992).

"Today, African-Americans have less effective control over the practices of child rearing and the educational-socialization of their youth than ever before" (Hill, 1992, p. 60). While engaging in problem-solving strategies for behavioral or academic problems, numerous African-American parents in a Piedmont North Carolina school district revealed much concern over the influence of popular culture. Social control of African-American youth has been lost to the dictates of popular culture and group acceptance (Hill, 1992).

Parents in a Piedmont school district of North Carolina attributed the unsatisfactory behavioral and academic standing of their children to peer pressure, the enticement of drug trafficking money, drug usage, low priority for achievement, lack of respect for authority, and low church attendance. During 1994 the school district experienced a record-breaking number of homicides and the third highest murder rate in North Carolina per one hundred thousand population (McKay, 1994).

Thirty-seven of the homicide victims were males. Twenty-seven of the victims were African-American males between the ages of fourteen and thirty-four. Police reports revealed that these killings involved robberies,

drugs, and arguments over child-support. Many mothers from single parent homes related the need for an adult African-American male figure in the young African-American male's life. In addition, they related how appropriate role models were lacking in the African-American community (McKay, 1994).

In Stokes County, North Carolina, school administrators' encounters with young African-American males who have committed serious or frequent disciplinary infractions in school or the community revealed the absence of the father figure in their lives. Eighty-six percent of the young African-American males who were long-term suspended from school for assaults or bring weapons to school were from homes that did not have a father figure. Some administrators' personal contacts with young African-American males who are progressing in the educational environment verify that they had significant involvement with a concerned father who lived in the home (Long-term Suspension Report of Stokes County, North Carolina, 1994).

Compounding these problems is the increasing absence of the African-American male role model in the school system. The number of African-American males working in education has declined to an all-time low. "Black representation in the teaching force nationwide has declined from eight and six-tenths percent to six and nine-tenths percent in 1989" (Stewart, Meir, & England, 1989, p. 146). Overall, the lack of a significant presence of role models has been disturbingly resonant, dramatically affecting educational progress, political activity, economic status, and the incarceration rates of young African-American males (Wright, 1991).

The closing of predominantly African-American schools during the early days of integration precipitated the displacement and scattering of African-American male administrators, coaches, and teachers (Hacker, 1992). These actions paralleled the increased absence of African-American fathers in homes. The immediate and long-range effects were fewer African-American role models that young African-American males encountered in schools (Hacker, 1992).

> The dominance of elementary and secondary education by women diminishes the number of role models in the schools for Black males and results in Black males' disproportionate reliance on their peer group for learning values and appropriate behavior. Eighty-three percent of elementary school teachers are women; only 2 percent are Black men. Forty-six percent of secondary school teachers are women; only 3.2 percent are Black men (American Council on Education, 1988).

This research involved the use of unstructured interviews of African-American males. These participants, however, were not randomly selected but were referred because of their success in the eyes of others. The interviews served to construct profiles of role models that had positive influences on their lives. This research gives schools and communities impressions of how African-American males perceive role models in building positive relationships.

This study provides data that can be used for the selection and recruitment of African-American role models such as community leaders, businessmen, religious leaders, and educators. These role models can be placed in programs designed to protect young African-American males from the external threats of social ills such as drug usage, dropping out of school, and violence in the home and community.

Swanson and Spencer (1991) addressed the selection and recruitment of African-American role models with the following policy implications or suggestions.

> The selection, recruitment, and placement of role models could affect policy development and changes of government. Public and private policy-makers must understand the coping patterns of the at-risk population as issues of relationship development and reaction behavior. Government and business leaders, the media, and schools must attack the myth that undergirds attitudes for growing hostility toward the at-risk population. Without such understanding this nation cannot establish the kinds of projects necessary to reduce poverty significantly. (p. 153)

> There should be forged alliances between schools, churches, social, and civic organizations, and businesses to develop a resource bank of role models who would regularly interact with students at the school sites in the community, beginning with the elementary grades. (p. 156)

The knowledge gained from this study could help schools understand the role of African-American adult male role models in schools. It could provide communities and schools with a guide to identifying people who are capable of transmitting values conducive to success for young African-American males, enabling schools and communities to develop strategies for saving generations of young African-American males from destruction.

Limitations

The population of this study was limited to African-American males from the Piedmont area of North Carolina. In addition, the study was limited to the earliest childhood memories up to college or university graduation or entrance into the workplace. The age of population members ranged from twenty-three to fifty-one years. The study did not include those males outside that delineation. Selection strategies included contacts with leaders of

fraternities, sororities, lodges, religious groups, educational organizations, and other citizens.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand positive profiles, if any, of African-American male role models through descriptive data. African-American males who have achieved some measurable personal successes in their lives were the participants. These men reported the degree to which the presence of African-American male role models influenced their earlier lives in a positive manner.

Garibaldi (1992), in the New Orleans Public School Study of 1987-88, found that recommendations for educating and motivating African-American males for success covered the social institutions of home, church, school, community, and business. These social institutions, despite decades of integration, are shaped by the social construction of race. Racism operates both to structure and to influence interaction of African-Americans with social institutions. In considering the impact that they have on the lives of young African-American males, this study was guided by the following **research questions**:

1. What influences of adult African-American males are present in early family life which could help shape the future lives of young African-American males?
2. What African-American males in the immediate neighborhood influence young African-American males during early life?

3. What roles do African-American males in early church or religious activities play in shaping the lives of young African-American males?
4. What African-American male role models are present in the educational experiences of young African-American males, and how do they influence the continuation, scope, and direction of their education?
5. What influences do African-American male role models have on the job or career choices of young African-American males?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were established for the purpose of this study:

Self-esteem - An individual's sense of self-worth or self-regard manifested in a wide range of feelings and actions (Beane & Lipka, 1987). This definition defines the self-esteem that produces success as defined in this document.

Role Model - An African-American male who is viewed as a positive influence which shaped in some way the life of another African-American male.

Church - An organized religious group.

Success - In the eyes of others, employed or employable, free of drugs, free of violence, economically supports himself and family.

Neighborhood - Functions as a place of residence and provides shopping, religious, health, and recreational services. In addition, it provides emotional and social supports (Ahlbrandt, 1984).

Mentor - A person who enhances another individual's skills and intellectual development. The mentor serves as a sponsor and may use his influence to facilitate the individual's advancement, guides the individual into a new occupational and social world and acquaints him with the values, customs, resources, and character of that world. The mentor may be an example that the individual can admire and seek to emulate. He may provide counsel and moral support in times of stress (Levinson, 1978, p. 75).

Coping Mechanism - Any technique used to survive, reduce stress, preserve pride, or preserve masculinity (Rosenburg, 1965).

Male Support Groups - African-American fraternities, lodges, professional and civic organizations.

Social Development - Building healthy and responsible relationships with family members and non-family members (Kalat, 1990).

Overview of the Chapters

A detailed discussion of Chapters II through V follows the introductory focus of this chapter. Chapter II contains a literature review. In Chapter III, the methodology employed for this study is discussed. Chapter IV contains a presentation of data and an analysis of findings. This study's summary of findings and suggestions for community, home, and school are found in Chapter V.

Chapter II

Related Literature

A careful exploration of literature was necessary to establish a foundation and background for understanding the perceptions that African-American males have of themselves and their role models. Those perceptions were examined from the following: (1) patterns present in the rearing of African-American males and their connection to stages of social development; (2) the search for pride on the way to manhood; (3) community influences that determine social development; and (4) the impact of education on self-concept.

The precarious economic and educational position of many African-American males in American society served as the most powerful incentive in the decision to pursue this study. The educational interests of the investigator served as catalysts for choosing the literature reviewed in this chapter. In addition, the investigator's interest in establishing the African-American male's role as an enduring and contributing figure in American society is the last but most important factor for the study conducted in this research project.

The African-American Family During Slavery

An understanding gained from researching or exploring the world of the African-American male could not have been fully accurate without the examination of the African-American family in existence during the period of slavery in America. The following literature provides a historical

perspective on the African-American family and documents how early social, political, and economic influences had an impact on the role of the African-American male in family life.

The family was the bedrock of early African social organization as well as the foundation of Africa's economic and political life. Because of the family-based character of African religions, the priests of the religions were the patriarchs of the family (Franklin, 1987).

The African-American family, in both early and modern America, is a product of more than one culture. According to Madhubuti (1990):

> There are in the Black community several family arrangements, but the two basic family types are: (1) monogamous or nuclear-man, woman and children; and (2) extended - (a) an extension of the nuclear, to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close neighbors and/or; (b) single-parent family (mainly women), to include children, male friends, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends; (c) poly-nuclear family, to include man, two or more mates, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends. (p. 77)

It is evident, however, that the dehumanizing effects of slavery broke many connections that the ancestors of present African-Americans had with the motherland. American slavery, through its cruel design, classified African-Americans as part of a plantation machinery that limited or altogether denied individual identity. As an example, slave marriages were rarely recognized either legally or informally (Scanzoni, 1976).

The cultural uniqueness of the African-American family unit is a manufactured state produced by slavery. Husbands and wives were the property that could be separated and sold at any time. Slave owners placed no value on promoting family ties or strong, lasting, or bonding relationships.

> There is no question that early in their sojourn on this continent, enslaved African-Americans plainly showed their concern about the family unit. Their loyalty to the family defied the efforts of slave owners to promote a casual attitude among African-Americans toward this all-important institution (Franklin, 1988, p. 23).

Historically, African-American families have attempted to create and maintain stable family relationships. The extended family presence has been evident during the childhood and young adult years of African-American youth (Collins, 1990).

In many families, both paternal and maternal family trees show the existence of a father and mother bound by marriage immediately following and in each generation after the Civil War. Often, courthouse records also document home and land ownership in each generation of paternal and maternal lineage. Oral documentation gives evidence that ancestors who were slaves acknowledged the existence of children of mixed ancestry. Moreover, they desired that plantation owners acknowledge paternity of their children of mixed ancestry (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990).

The presence of the father figure during and after slavery and up to the fifties and sixties is an important factor in any discussion of role models for the young African-American male. Ancestral oral history also chronicles the attempts of husbands and wives separated during slavery to locate each other after the Civil War. "Literally thousands of examples are known of slaves running away in search of members of their families" (Franklin, 1988, p. 23).

"The family was important to the slave community, if for no other reason than the lack of other institutions to which slaves could openly be committed. Many slave men preferred to marry women from other plantations" (Franklin, 1988, pp. 23-24). This was a strategy to avoid seeing any

insults, licentious passion of wicked slave owners or overseers, or stripes of the lash that might fall upon his wife (Franklin, 1988).

There is some research that illustrates the African-American male's presence in the family unit. Genovese (1978) noted that slaves made much effort to hold on to family members to keep families intact. The slave trade broke up many slave marriages, but according to Gutman (1976), large numbers of slave couples were allowed to remain on the same plantation and to continue in their relationships as husbands and wives. Gilkes (1994), in her discussion of Gutman, noted that he:

> demonstrates that within a system that denied the father authority over his family, slave boys were frequently named after their fathers, and many children were named after blood relatives as a way of maintaining family ties. (p. 152)

Moreover, Gilkes noted that:

> [t]he patterns [of new, extensive kinship ties] included, but were not limited to, a belief in the importance of marriage as a long-term commitment, rules of exogamy that excluded marriage between first cousins, and acceptance of women who had children outside of marriage. Kinship networks were an important source of resistance to the organization of labor that treated the individual slave, and not the family as the unity of labor. (p. 152)

"At the end of the Civil War, freedmen searched frantically for family members separated by slavery" (Franklin, 1988, p. 24). "In those early years after emancipation, nothing was more poignant than the sight of separated families attempting to re-establish their relationships. The institution of slavery had not destroyed the African-American family" (Franklin, 1988, p. 24).

The literature on African-American families provides a wealth of data on how blood relatives assisted each other with child rearing and with such

emergency events as birth, death, work efforts, and attempts to obtain freedom. They maintained their networks of assistance against formidable odds and continued these networks after slavery (Blassingame, 1979).

> Reproductive labor for slave women was intensified in several ways: by the demands of slave labor that forced them into the double day of work; by the desire and need to maintain family ties in the face of a system that gave them only limited recognition; by the stresses of building a family with men who were denied the standard social privileges of manhood; and by the struggle to raise children who could survive in a hostile environment (Dill, 1994, p. 154).
>
> This intensification of reproductive labor made networks of kin and fictive kin important instruments in carrying out the reproductive tasks of the slave community. Given an African cultural heritage where kinship ties formed the basis of social relations, it is not at all surprising that African-American slaves developed an extensive system of kinship ties and obligations (Dill, 1994, p. 154).

The Family and the African-American Father

A study of the socialization patterns of African-American children can provide insight into the role of the African-American father and how he builds family relationships. Most research on the African-American family has been built on a pathological concept of African-American family life (Peters, 1978). Robinson, Bailey, and Smith (1985) expressed the following:

> The problem with sociologists, with the exception of Cazenave's study of middle-class black fathers, is that they have expended little effort exploring the functional aspect of the husband/father in the intact lower-class urban black family. Their research has been focused primarily on the wife/mother and on the children. This may have contributed, unintentionally, to the apparent lack of visibility of the husband/father in the intact black family. Research abounds on children and on mothers of lower-class black families; however few of these studies illuminate this invisible man. (p. 136)

Robinson, Bailey and Smith, 1985 further stated:

> He is negatively portrayed in much of the literature (which appears to be basically impressionistic in nature). In effect, he is treated more as a problem which the black family must endure than as a functional component of the family (p. 136).

These authors made an important observation concerning the lack of visibility of the husband-father of the intact African-American family. A substantive evaluation of the African-American male shows that he has managed to survive in spite of the hardships created by racism (Billingsley, 1968; Gary, 1981; Staples, 1982; Willie, 1991). These hardships included the economics of unemployment, stereotypes concerning work and sexual habits, lack of educational opportunity, strangled pride, and poor housing. A lack of visibility does not erase the fact that the African-American male has locked within himself a desire to be a man.

Research by Nobles (1978) and Hacker (1992) gives documentation that African-American families of the sixties and seventies were strong units. He described the families as being capable of meeting the needs of their members under oppressive conditions.

A review of the family structures of forty junior and senior students in a rural high school in the Piedmont area of North Carolina during the fifties and sixties revealed six single-parent homes. The six homes that were without a father figure during that time had experienced that loss through natural death (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990).

The desire to expend energy in order to care for the family was strong among adult African-American males. Every father whose name was recorded had worked as a farmer or common laborer (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990).

Research by Allen (1978); (Sniderman, Tetlock & Carmines, 1993) had as one focus the family roles of African-American males. The study was mainly geared to observing the interpersonal dynamics and the socialization outcomes in African-American and White middle-class families.

Allen (1978) stated that he undertook the study because of the following reasons: (1) he felt that much of the major research on African-American families and their members mostly emphasized pathological interpretations; (2) African-American family life had been largely neglected; (3) research had noted that African-American male family roles had historically been neglected and de-emphasized. He felt that the studies of African-American women and children had been disguised to look like the studies of complete African-American families. They resulted in many negative conclusions about the role of the African-American father in family life. He hoped to illustrate that diversity by class, observable among African-American families, is the same type of diversity by class as in White families.

Class as defined here, relates to status attainment or position in society on a continuum of economic and social success as described by Collins (1990). In addition, Collins (1990) stated that race, class, and gender interlock as systems of oppression. They have been used to dominate African-American men and women in work, political participation, and other social structures. In addition, Zinn (1994) stated:

> [a]s Bonnie Thornton Dill puts it, when we examine race, class, and gender simultaneously, we have a better understanding of a social order in which the privileges of some people are dependent on the oppression and exploitation of others. (p. 307)

During the fifties and sixties, African-American families placed much value on identifying oneself with a respectable class of people. The home,

school, and church alike reinforced this mind-set. Factors that determined respectability included proper speech, proper attire, and future aspirations (Gibbs, 1988).

African-American communities were divided into classes of people. It was common for African-American families to be placed in the same category by White society and viewed from the same perspective. African-Americans have always been conscious of class and have categorized themselves accordingly (Gibbs, 1988). During the fifties and sixties African-American families believed in the entire community working together. They worked to foster a sense of togetherness for rearing children. The respectable classes of people in the community participated in applying this belief (Gilkes, 1994).

Many African-American youth in segregated schools during this same period had limited information presented concerning positive African-American males through state adopted textbooks. African-American teachers were credited, through their own research and determination, with presenting students a thorough knowledge of African-American male contributions to American society (Hacker, 1992). According to Hacker (1992), White schools felt no obligation to acknowledge Black contributions to society. Blacks were expected to accept the schools as set up by White society. Whites were unaware that this practice would have a damaging effect on the psyche of these young people because their ancestral cultures were distorted, marginalized, or omitted in lessons and textbooks even after integration.

In spite of their contributions to American society, most African-American males have very little information published about them. As an example, an examination of publications concerning Benjamin Banneker,

Edward Brooke, Ralph Bunche, George Washington Carver, Charles Drew, Matthew Henson, Langston Hughes, and Joe Louis served as verification that their contributions were published in a limited fashion.

Early African-American baseball players were ignored and kept out of the mainstream of professional baseball even though their lifetimes covered a wide period of time. Some of the players were the sons and grandsons of former slaves and some lived in rather recent times. They came from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, yet they made notable contributions to society. How much has been publicized about the examples this small sample of African-Americans set as husbands, fathers, and as outstanding Americans (Thorn & Palmer, 1991)?

While the polarization of class and the flight of the middle class have been important elements in the decline of the community, they have been only part of the problem. The decline in role models for African-American males has been a broad problem, cutting across class lines. It can be argued that there are numerous examples of African-American men who have maintained, supported, and provided for families. If more studies such as Allen's were geared to eliminating neglect of the male figure in the African-American family, the African-American father's positive position in the family unit would be more evident.

According to Allen (1978), the tendency in research has been to focus attention on lower class, inner city African-American families. Moreover, he felt that stable, low-income, inner city African-American families had tended to be ignored. Allen examined the African-American family from a comparative framework through an approach he termed the cultural-variant perspective. From that perspective, African-American families are treated as

distinct cultural forms, legitimate as they overlap or depart from conventional White family patterns and processes.

Allen sought in his study to explore race and gender variations in parent-child rearing goals (values), parent child-rearing practices, and parent interpersonal relations with the son and goal outcomes. The study specifically examined comparative role performances of African-American fathers in relation to the comparative socialization outcomes for African-American sons (relative to their White peers).

Allen's study of child socialization patterns which provided insight into the African-American male family roles and relationships resulted in the following findings: (1) African-American fathers were highly involved in the rearing of their sons; (2) African-American male family roles were grossly misreported in the past; and (3) if researchers continue to approach African-American families and family members as deviations from the White norm, they will continue to misunderstand the essential character of the African-American family.

The investigator does not view the African-American family and its culture as deviations from the White norm. African-American families represent a distinct cultural form in American society. The distinctiveness of the African-American family's cultural form resides in the unique cultural, historical, social, economic, and political circumstances which have shaped, and continue to shape their experiences as people.

Allen's work resulted in the following suggestions: (1) the need exists for more comprehensive studies of African-American family life through the use of various alternative theoretical frameworks with stress on humanistic

treatment of African-American families as legitimate cultural forms; (2) African-American men are as distinct from one another as they are alike. Thus, they cannot be fully understood apart from the recognition of that diversity; and (3) there is a necessity for research to be focused on the African-American male's role and responsibilities in family life.

The childhood experiences of African-American youth generally included attending family reunions. Proud African-American family-oriented males took part in these reunions. Family ties have always involved the African-American male. Family reunion organizations, are ties to the past. The organizations help unlock positive contributions that past African-American males have made. These contributions can serve as motivating elements for young African-American males (Blood, 1987).

Pride and Manhood

Years of oppression and a lack of opportunity have affected the African-American male's sense of worth as a person. As a method of coping with low self-esteem and fulfilling a desire for being in control of manhood, the young African-American male developed pride built on negative behavior. This is achieved by acting cool through attitude, body language, and violence. A large segment of literature, such as the following, deals with exploring behaviors related to being cool.

The path to manhood for the young African-American male is full of frustration and uncertainty. Many young African-American males in modern society exhibit a behavior characterized by a particular body language, speech, and dress that is abrasive to much of society. The behavior, whether

intentional or unintentional, is labeled as a "cool appearance." It is a coping mechanism that hides the frustration, lack of confidence, and lack of pride that hinders the male's feeling of masculinity.

Expensive clothing, shoes, and jewelry help establish the young African-American male's masculinity that raises him above the pressures of society. These young men create a way to boost self-esteem. It closely parallels the way White males boost their self-esteem through opportunities provided by good jobs (Wiley, 1990).

Majors and Billson (1992) explored the attitudes existing among young African-American males which they call "cool pose." These attitudes have resulted in a disproportionate number of African-American males, who are engaged in the rituals of "cool pose," to become statistics denoting homicides, school dropouts, incarceration, drugs, and stress that lead to disease or crime.

Majors and Billson (1992), expressed the following:

> Cool pose may be a major factor in frustrating love relationships and violence in the home and on the streets. Our hypothesis regarding the positive and negative aspects of being cool should be viewed as speculative and exploratory. It is only one way to enter the complicated world of African-American males and the special dilemmas they have faced for centuries. (p. 1)

"Black males' adherence to the 'tough guy' image is a major factor contributing to the high rates of interpersonal violence among Blacks" (Oliver, 1989, p. 22). Hence, the leading cause of death for Black males fifteen to thirty-four years of age is homicide (Center for Disease Control, 1985).

Hill (1992), in exploring the issues concerning attitudes and their connection with being cool, presented a central question for comprehending the behavior and attitudes of African-American men as follows:

> What happens to African-American men who accept society's definition of manhood, but are denied the resources to demonstrate their masculinity through traditional channels? An awareness of this precarious predicament is key to understanding the unique psychological and social drudgery which distinguishes African-American men from other sex-race groups in America. While objectively, the economic position of African-American women is worse than that of White men, White women, and African-American men, subjectively it is African-American men who are forced into the humiliating "double bind" of proving their manhood while being denied access to the legitimate tools with which to do so. The hopes, aspirations, attitudes, and behaviors of African-American men that are formed in this process of masculine attainment and its vicissitudes are a major motivating force behind much of the day-to-day interactions and lifestyles of African-American males. (p. 30)

Male - Female Relationships

Many authors have explored the actions of the African-American male in male-female relationships. The body of literature addressing such relationships offers a wide array of illustrations detailing how and why education and economics play major roles in determining the images people have of the African-American male in family life.

> Literature concerning African-American male-female relationships showed that financial problems, society's double standard in sexual relationships, and the socialization process all play prominent roles in producing conflict in the life of the African-American male. There seems to be general agreement that problems in African-American male-female relationships are largely discussed in terms of such factors as institutionalized racism and sexism (Karenga, 1979; Staples, 1979), the scarcity of African-American males (Braithwaite, 1981) and stress in daily activities (Staples, 1981, p. 166).
>
> Perhaps at the core of the problems in African-American dating and marital relationships are the perennial problems of jobs and adequate income to provide the material base for meaningful and satisfying relationships (Aborampah, 1989, p. 324).

According to Aborampah (1989), the extent to which a marital relationship can be successful depends partly on the extent to which partners are economically self-supporting. In the last decade, the median income of Black males had never surpassed two-thirds of the median income of White males.

> The success of the black husband/father in fulfilling his role as the provider of his family depends largely upon his ability to acquire the necessary purchasing power to sustain a competitive consumer position in society. Discrimination in employment practices, limited educational achievement, and limited occupational skills negatively affect the lower-class black male's opportunity to function effectively as the provider for his family (Robertson et al., 1985, p. 138).

The lack of facilities, supplies, and academic essentials were evident while African-American students attended elementary and high school during the days of segregation. Furthermore, African-American students attended undergraduate colleges that had to make do with much less than their White counterparts. At the same time, they were being prepared for the National Teachers' Examination and the Graduate Record Examination (Austin, 1979).

Many parents, through meager means and low paying jobs, motivated their children and used every financial resource possible to keep them in college. Significant numbers of African-American males graduated from college and went to work as educators in a segregated society. These men continued to be husbands, fathers, and role models to another generation of African-American children. Higginbotham (1994) addressed the exclusion of African-Americans from the job market:

> Job ceilings, institutionalized early in this century, were instrumental in excluding Black people from many industrial jobs--both positions they might have held in the past and new jobs that were opening up. Job ceilings were very effective means of keeping Black people in low-wage manual jobs--the lowest of all working class employment. (p. 116)

> [Their] existence prohibited Black males and female from following occupational mobility patterns open to both native-born White Americans and White immigrants. Over time, even first-and-second-generation White immigrants were able to move from menial jobs into unskilled and semiskilled factory work. The next generation might proceed into skilled industrial work and sometimes eventually into white-collar positions. (p. 116)

An obvious conclusion is that thousands of both educated and uneducated African-American males deserve headlines that say yes, they survived and made a contribution to society in spite of limited opportunities. Desegregation court decisions were factors in their survival. These men are still the men who must be above grade or a super African-American to get jobs in government, industry, business, education, and other areas of work.

According to Hare and Hare (1991), the African-American male is on the verge of vanishing from the college campus.

> Already on U.S. college campuses, all told, there are only two African-American males for every three African-American females. Assuming that everyone on campus graduates, (in fact, more African-American females than males will graduate) one third of today's cohort of African-American females will have to marry a non-college African-American male or scrounge, as few may be able to do, for leftover non-African-American males. The professional African-American female who marries a non-college African-American male will experience special difficulties in her family life. (p. 126)

> The shortage of African-American males on college campuses creates a shortage of future leaders. At the same time, as African-American females rise in the job market, the African-American male continues to lose ground in the economic underpinning and the psychological meaning to his masculinity. This fanned and deepened psychological and social alienation of African-American females and males create more single mothers without male social, economic, or emotional support in the rearing of male-abandoned children (Hare & Hare, 1991, p. 128).

The continuing problems facing African-American men reflect mostly problems of American society and the changes and needs of the economic system. The same old problems of racism, lack of values, and decrease in role models have helped render huge numbers of African-American males unqualified for admission to colleges or universities (Hauser, 1993).

The aforementioned predicament has become the headwaters for disinterest in college. In addition, crime, distrust, disrespect for people, poor housing, low self-esteem, low educational achievement, poor health, and drug usage have escalated. Homicides among African-American males increased from 7,265 in 1970 to 10,628 in 1991. In 1970, only 8 per 1,000 died by suicide. By 1990, that figure was 12 per 1,000. Moreover the homicide rate rose from 67.6 per 1,000 to 69.2 per 1,000 in the same period (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993).

The total African-American college population was 1,106,700 in 1980, and by 1992 that number had only risen to 1,393,500. Moreover, the percentage of African-American males within that population actually declined from forty-one and eight tenths percent in 1980 to thirty-eight and five tenths percent in 1992 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993).

The numbers of married family households in the African-American community have dropped noticeably since 1970. African-American marrieds comprised sixty-eight percent of households (male singles four percent and

female singles twenty-eight percent). By 1992, married households numbered only forty-seven percent. African-American male singles comprised seven percent and African-American female singles comprised forty-six percent (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Home ownership in the African-American community has undergone a noticeable change. In 1980, forty-eight and six-tenths percent of African-American domiciles were owner-occupied while forty-nine and six-tenths percent were rented. By 1990, forty-two and two-tenths percent were owned and fifty-three and seven-tenths percent were rented (United States Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Images of adult African-American males in the aforementioned roles or conditions are reflected in the low level of confidence displayed by many young African-American males. Without a future that offers a life of meaning, young males slip into a life of crime and frustration resulting in death on the streets or imprisonment. According to Richard Davis (1993), "[b]ecause of its greater vulnerability, the black family often suffers these effects and with greater impact than other families. The greater vulnerability of the black family is related to the erratic labor-force participation of black men." (p. 101) Wilson and Neckerman (1984) believed that the lack of adequate employment and the resulting inability to provide for one's family were directly related to the rising number of female-headed homes. They argued that there is a declining pool of marriageable African-American males--that is, those who can economically support a family.

Researchers Wilson and Neckerman (1984) believed that the problems African-American men encounter must be considered in any serious discussion about the rise in single-parent homes. Extremely high rates of

unemployment compound the stress encountered by African-American males who are attempting to support families.

As African-American male unemployment rises, it creates relationship problems resulting in fewer marriages and more homes left damaged from economic stress. This increases the number of female-headed households (Ellswood & Rodda, 1990). "Black males often use alcohol or drugs to help ease the stress and agitation of their daily lives" (Majors and Billson, 1992, p. 22).

The Black male's "inability or failure to play the provider role effectively is perceived as a sign of weakness and the impatient Black female is quick to condemn him to nothingness" (Aborampah, 1989). In addition, Majors and Billson (1992) stated that "the Black man who experiences economic role failure may compensate by defining masculinity in terms of being able to impregnate women and produce children." (p. 16)

Work has always been a major part of the African-American woman's life. According to Collins (1990):

> For African-American women the issue was less one of economic equality with husbands and more the adequacy of overall family income. Denying Black men a family wage meant that women continued working and that motherhood was a privatized, female 'occupation' never predominated in the African-American community. (p. 53)

It can be readily and easily argued that economics has been the driving revolutionary force in American history. American capitalism requires the periodic stimulus of new environmental and economic frontiers. The expansion periods for this country were the result of the need for new frontiers.

The African-American male has been involved in many of the dirty, dangerous, backbreaking, and low paying jobs that were necessary for progress. Their jobs included industry, various types of construction, agriculture, and custodial services among many others (Higginbotham, 1994).

Most African-American males have managed, though barely, to survive economically in spite of a last place position and placement in jobs that were low paying and dangerous. The nature of these positions have resulted in many African-American males suffering from devastating mental, social, emotional, and economic pressures that produce frustration when trying to handle White Society's definition of manhood.

How many individuals understand the double standard's production of the no-win situation faced by the African-American male? He is not allowed to acquire the resources to be a man capable of providing and protecting his family because he is, by White society's definition, not a true man. He is, however, expected by society to be economically responsible and as educationally able as other men.

The African-American male is expected by most African-American women to be a provider. It is verified by recorded, ancestral history that some African-American males owned land and purchased homes (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990). One must ask, however, what was the psychological price and toll paid by the men who struggled to accomplish this? Strong mental and spiritual conditions had to be present in those men who survived.

Sexual promiscuity leads to male-female conflict which results in high divorce rates, assaults, murder, high incarceration rates, and therefore additional male absences from the home. The United States Bureau of the

Census, (1994) revealed that there were 56,000 arrests of White Americans for offenses against families and children and 24,000 arrests of Black Americans for offenses against families and children. The number of African-Americans involved in family conflict, according to population was much higher than the number of Whites. Community and governmental action, according to Wilson (1987), geared to increasing employment for the African-American male, should be strongly used as a strategy to stem the violence and incarceration rates for them.

Changes and trends in marital status, marital stability, and child-rearing practices have been more pronounced for African-Americans than Whites. These trends have resulted in a higher percentage of African-American children living in households headed by females (Jaynes & Williams, 1989). In 1992, 69.2 percent of Black children living below the poverty level lived with mothers only while 42 percent of White children living below the poverty level lived with mothers only (United States Bureau of the Census, 1994).

Hill (1988) stated the following:

> Disproportionate incarceration rates of African-American males contribute to the formation of households headed by females. African-American males are less available as stable marriage partners because (a) their police records are barriers to legitimate work; (b) their low educational skills preclude them from all but menial jobs; (c) their periodic court appearances prevent them from obtaining and maintaining steady work; and (d) incarceration at faraway prison facilities keeps them from their wives, girlfriends, and children for long periods of time. (p. 12)

Community Influences

The literature that follows provides a picture and gives evidence that the community is an important environmental factor that helps shape the destiny of young African-American males as they move toward manhood. Community is, according to many authors, a vast arena of positive and negative influences that are in a pitched battle for the lives of young African-American males. Community workers engage in promoting those positive influences.

Gilkes (1994) noted that:

> James Blackwell's (1985) definition of the African-American community helps us to understand the context of their work. Blackwell argues that the community, although diverse, is held together by both internal and external forces. It is a highly diversified set of interrelated structures and aggregates of people who are held together by the forces of white oppression and racism. Unity within the black community is a function of the strategies developed to combat white racism and to strengthen black social, economic, and political institutions for group survival and advancement. (p. 231)

Gilkes (1994) also noted that community work includes all tasks involved in deploying strategies that combat racial oppression and serve to bolster African-American social, economic and political institutions which provide a broad process of group survival and advancement. This function of community also creates access to elected and appointed political positions, creates jobs locally and in the larger economy. Furthermore, it operates as a foil for ideas, stereotypes, and images that keep a group stigmatized. Essentially, community work is a constant struggle and consists of all efforts made to address oppression and suffering in their own lives and in the

community. It includes the efforts made to address solidarity and group kinship.

In considering the place of the community in the social growth of an African-American male, its position, importance, or rank is best described in the words of an African proverb that says: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The community has an awesome responsibility to fulfill if it intends to serve as a positive environment for youth.

According to Higginbotham (1994):

> [T]he middle class is defined to include the small traditional groups of self-employed shopkeepers and independent farmers, and the numerically larger group of professionals, managers, and administrators. This group, frequently referred to as the professional-managerial class . . . performs the mental labor necessary to control the labor and lives of the working class. (p. 114)

Higginbotham continued, drawing on Braverman (1974); Poulantzas (1974); Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1979); Vanneman and Cannon (1987) and noted that:

> In the modern capitalist state, [this segment of society] is designated as middle class because of its position between labor and capital. The primary role of the middle class is to plan, manage, and monitor the work of others. Its members have greater incomes, prestige, and education than other workers, but the social relations of dominance and subordination are key in defining their social class position. (pp. 114 - 115)

While African-American members of the middle class may enjoy certain advantages, they are still part of a racially devalued group. Understanding this unique arrangement demands a perspective that can investigate and interrogate how both race and class interact to shape lives. Racial oppression can be shared within the community but still mediated by one's position in the class hierarchy (Higginbotham, 1994).

Development of the African-American community has depended on the educational opportunities and progress of African-American males. The African-American middle class, an outgrowth of education, has been the major support of economic, social, and political progress in communities.

Recent decreases in the number of college graduates among African-American males compound their inability to be economic stabilizers in the community. According to Gregg (1989), an imbalance of educational and economic power between African-American men and women promotes dysfunctional behavior. Gender-directed hostilities drive a wedge between African-American men and women.

The African-American male's present dilemma creates an alarming threat to the future of African-American professional women. They do not have a pool of economically powerful and marriageable men for forming families (Randolph, 1990).

Angela Davis (1989) urged the importance of upgrading the economic status of the African-American community by moving males and females into a middle-class category and stated the following:

> The great majority of female-centered households are caused not by unwed women, but by the breakup of married couples with children. Of the single women headed families, only one-fourth have never been married; 28.7 percent are married with an absent spouse; 22.2 percent are widowed and 21.9 percent are divorced. (p. 77)

The aforementioned problems, according to Davis (1989) stem from an unstable U.S. economy; the "reverberations of which are being felt most acutely in the Afro-American community." (p. 79) In addition, Davis (1989) feels that "any strategies intended to alleviate the prevailing problems among poor Black people that methodologically target the family for change and

leave the socioeconomic conditions perpetuating Black unemployment and poverty intact are doomed to failure from the onset." (p. 81)

During the 1976 presidential election between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, African-Americans were extremely concerned about the growing cancer of unemployment. They gave Jimmy Carter the highest African-American vote in the nation's history. In the South, White landowners mechanized their farming methods. At the same time, industry in cities over the nation became more dependent on machinery than on the strong backs and hands of the African-American workers. The poorest African-Americans became the fastest growing segment of unemployed workers with the African-American male leading this segment (Johnson, 1976).

It is apparent from statistical data that the unemployment rate is exceptionally high (nearly fifty percent) for African-American youth (Riley, 1986). These figures indicate the possibility that a generation of young African-American youth may not have the experience of working for a living. This alarming picture indicates that one of our valuable resources, African-American youth, will not be equipped with the skills necessary for quality living. The end result of the unemployment problem is that we will have a generation with the characteristics of street youth who will neither speak the language of society nor live in the same world of reality.

The absence of fathers serving as role models in families is directly related to data that describe a tremendous rise in single African-American males from 1960-1980. As a result, quality of life in the community has declined (Davis, 1989).

According to Garibaldi (1992), remedies do exist for mitigating the crisis concerning the declining social, economic, and educational status of African-

American males. As a member of the task force of community leaders who produced a study for the New Orleans Public School System, Garibaldi had an opportunity to participate in activities geared to formulating strategies for improving the plight of young African-American males.

The New Orleans Public School Study offered recommendations involving the community's role in helping young African-American males follow a safe passage to manhood. It suggested that African-American male college students perform community services at local schools as tutors, and assistants. The positive role modeling and mentoring of these individuals can have a tremendous impact on young boys. The role modeling can further underscore for these youth the importance of doing well in the classroom. It is suggested that various segments of the community such as the media, businesspersons, religious leaders, skilled craftsmen, and members of social and civic organizations should also volunteer to assist schools. They should provide on a regular and on-going basis such resources as tutors, speakers, and counselors.

Role models and mentors can emphasize the importance of values, the work ethic and the appreciation of culture and the arts as they expose young African-American males to them. Communities must provide funding for such programs as they invest in the future of society.

The African-American community in the twentieth century has had groups of African-American males who have taken a leadership role in developing a system of self-help organizations. African-American males of the fifties and sixties were members of lodges, churches and even baseball teams. African-American males lobbied the state legislature for funds to construct school buildings for African-Americans in the Piedmont area of

North Carolina. In addition, they encouraged voter registration of African-Americans and sponsored Boy Scouts and 4-H Clubs, among other community activities and projects for youth (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990).

In most of the communities, a few of the men were educated and some had limited education. These males, along with other African-American males, inspired young African-American males to seek an education, become committed to community service, develop an interest in home, and develop a career in a spirit of national interest. Mixed with these men were the African-American teachers and school administrators of the community. Occupations of community males included a few barbers, a few factory worker, some farmers, and mostly common menial workers (The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina, 1990).

There has, however, been a destabilization of this heterogeneous and supportive community as class-based issues of access became more evident after integration. According to Richard Davis (1993):

> Isolated in segregated neighborhoods, blacks could use organizations like the YMCA, Boys Clubs, Boy Scouts, and sports teams ranging from baseball to track and field to augment the families ability to provide guidance. These activities were used to motivate black children, especially boys from low-income families. They created an opportunity for these boys to socialize with the stable, middle-class men who tended to organize them. Desegregation contributed to the separation of low-income boys from these middle-class mentors and from other upwardly mobile individuals who soon found it expedient to leave low income neighborhoods. Unlike the occasional visit of a Big Brother, these organizations provided an ongoing opportunity for Black youths to emulate successful men, but it also gave them a chance to see these men performing everyday activities. Without day-to-day contact with adults, children tend to develop a distorted and disjointed view of their values. (p. 70)

Changes in the job market and other economic and social factors have served to arrest broader upward mobility. Technological advances and the feminization of poverty have also been problems which have served to broaden the gap between lower and middle classes. It is not simply the case that the larger community has suffered a loss of heterogeneity coupled with the flight of the upwardly mobile middle class.

In an educational context, Nettles (1991) defined community involvement as the actions that organizations and individuals take to encourage positive student development. The roles of parents and families have received considerable attention (Tangi & Moles, 1987), as have partnerships of school and other entities such as universities and businesses (Bossone & Polishook, 1989).

Findings from program evaluations indicate that community involvement can stimulate student investments which are defined as students' commitments of time, energy, and other resources in pursuit of legitimate opportunities (Nettles, 1991). The popularity of community involvement stems in part from evidence that African-American students who succeed against the odds do so with the support of adults and important institutions (such as churches) in their communities (Nettles, 1991).

Hare (1988), in exploring the environment of at-risk African-American youth, stated the following:

> In considering the importance of role models, it must be emphasized that African-American youth run a high probability of exposure to successful role models in what has been called "the underground economy." In this economy they are exposed to numbers runners, drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes, and other assortments of creative and innovative characters with money, cars, and fine clothes. When models of legitimate success are unavailable and legitimate opportunity is scarce, then these youth are vulnerable to and recruitable to negative activities. (p. 35)

As a means of combating the negative activities in "the underground economy," Hare (1988) suggested that the African-American church is the institution most suitable for the academic and political socialization of youth. It is here that the African-American adult male role model can establish its broadest base.

Nettles (1991) reported that the African-American churches have always played major instructional roles. Religious and moral education have been in the form of such after-school programs as tutoring and summer events. His survey assessed the activities of 378 African-American churches. He found fifty-seven percent to be influential in the lives of African-American youth by their involvement in academic programs. Twenty-one percent were found to be influential by providing role models.

The African-American ritual that marks the path to manhood uses male role models to produce strategies designed to arm young African-American males with self-esteem, pride, and dignity. These elements are considered necessary for a successful entrance into the early years of manhood. By definition, these program rituals are role modeling activities that provide positive hands-on experience for young African-American males at various intervals of their lives.

An interview in 1986 with Dr. Nathan Hale, then a professor at San Francisco State University, drew a picture depicting a path for bringing the

African-American male to manhood. The picture was composed of a network of adult African-American males using a rites-of passage program and community resources to help mark the entrance of the young African-American male to the world of mature adult status (Pete, 1986).

Hale's program was designed to take control of and teach African-American boys how to use social demands that made the entrance to manhood meaningful. He felt that a lack of ritual placed young African-American males in situations that led them to define manhood in their own violent, detrimental terms that were devoid of educational achievement.

Robert Bridges (1988), a former school superintendent (now a consultant in the state of North Carolina), through his School-Community Helping Hands Project brought the home, school, and community into a joint effort aimed at educating the young African-American male. The project involved using adult African-American males as role models. These men, along with the resources of the school and community as support systems, helped young African-American males take advantage of learning opportunities.

Bridges' project (1988) focused attention on self-esteem and its relationship with low academic grades, subject failures, retentions, suspensions, and dropouts. The program addressed the negative influences on African-American male youth that are mainly due to: (1) lack of a male role model; (2) confused relationships with females; (3) low school involvement; and (4) poor skills development.

Bridges discussed the importance of a network consisting of a "personal model," who is an African-American male educator and a "community model" who is an employed African-American male. The "personal model"

worked to help a student move toward academic improvement with the help of the student's parents and teachers. The "community model" initiated efforts to develop meaningful peer relationships, improving grades, and developing leadership skills.

Much of the literature reviewed has emphasized a connection between positive self-concept in young African-American males and their continuous association with adult African-American males. If these young African-American males need positive role model relationships with adult African-American males, then we must consider the impact education has on their self-concept in the present structure of education in American society.

The Helping Hands Project, while experiencing success, raises the question of how African-American male role models fit into the overall scheme of an effective schooling process for African-American male youth. The program's success is based on the availability of adult African-American male role models.

Education and the African-American Male

The experiences of children in early childhood have a bearing on the way they view self, view and interact with others, and progress educationally. The reviewed literature indicated that, for the African-American male, one of the most important childhood experiences is education.

The primary goal is not necessarily to educate the African-American male with the promise that higher salaries and prestige are forthcoming, but instead to create communities of educated citizens who are capable of envisioning change, educated in ways of effecting community advancement,

and possessing elevated levels of self-esteem that enable the growth and development of individual lives and communities.

According to Gilkes (1994):

> Education is a case in point. Issues of self-image and self-esteem are related to educational success at the same time that employment discrimination and racist attitudes in the educational system account for the lack of African-American teachers. Educational failure locks many members of the community out of the economic system at the same time that political gerrymandering accounts for the lack of access to low-skilled but high-paying municipal jobs. (p. 233)

Self-evaluation is a variable that studies have viewed as being related to educational success. "Self-evaluation refers to the relative goodness an individual attaches to himself or herself or that he or she believes others attach to him or her" (Masters & Levin, 1984, p. 272).

During the days of segregation, the population of African-American students was given constant encouragement and a steady dialogue that swelled their minds with racial pride and a deep sense of the importance of achieving. This was especially true during the fifties and sixties (Bennett, 1994).

Examples of African-Americans who had achieved in spite of the odds were constantly used to motivate other African-American students. The combination of national and local African-American males who served as role models were major sources of pride for young African-American males. African-American teachers who stood before students in the fifties and early sixties stressed that learning was relevant because it was necessary for quality living (Bennett, 1994).

The teachers, both male and female, were the African-American students' connection with a world that went beyond their small towns. They created a new world of knowledge that opened avenues for their students to

explore things beyond their immediate surroundings. The male African-American principal and male teachers were responsible for bolstering their students' confidence that even in a segregated world, they could excel (Bennett, 1994).

Experience taught them that self-esteem and self-evaluation go hand-in-hand. Others outside of the home and family can be helpful sources to a young person. Many students were strengthened by the encouragement received from parents and other family members (White, 1983).

Madhere (1991) discussed why some African-American children possess high self-esteem but low self-efficacy and therefore do not succeed in the classroom. His explanation is as follows: "Self-efficacy theory, is concerned on one hand with the interaction between the appraisal of one's own capabilities; on the other hand it is concerned with one's judgment of the odds for success in prospective situations." (p. 49)

In the life span of an individual, the timing of experiences affects the type and amount of knowledge a child gains. In considering factors that affect the educational progress of a person, the influences of maturation and age must be explored (Turkewitz and Devenny, 1993). Time frames are used in geological time to study the development of the human species. Time frames are also used to study the adaptation process in the human species. In considering the time frame of ontogeny, Turkewitz and Devenny (1993) stated the following:

> Ontogeny on the other hand, refers to mechanisms that operate in the life span of the individual, from conception until birth. In individual development, the distinctive mechanisms concern those of maturation and age-related changes in social role and expectations, as well as those experiences that extend over a significant portion of the life span of the person. (p. 65)

Rioux and Berla (1993), in considering the importance of educational experiences in the early lives of children, stated the following:

> One of the most successful and enduring legacies of the War on Poverty is Head Start. In a dramatic fashion, national in scope, it fixed in the minds of millions that it was important to nurture and provide for the growth and development of the very young. It established, in a way that early childhood specialists had advocated with only modest success for many years, that infancy to age 5 represented a never to be repeated opportunity to have a marked influence on the development of children. (p. 11)
>
> In the nearly thirty years since Head Start's beginnings, the unparalleled establishment and expansion of new programs for very young children underscores how much it has become fixed in the public mind that young children-all young children-must have the services and support they need if they are to develop fully. This understanding and acceptance appears to run deepest for those very young children from low-income and minority families. (p. 11)

According to Webster and Schroeder (1979), "early childhood education covers a variety of programs and schools for young children." (p. 1) "When educators speak of early childhood education, they usually mean education for children from ages two through eight" (Webster and Schroeder, 1979, p. 2).

The key elements for growth of early childhood education are listed by Webster and Schroeder (1979) as follows: "(1) new attention given to the educational needs of the disadvantaged, especially minority groups; (2) experimental programs made possible by foundation and governmental grants; (3) additional research into learning patterns and needs of the young child; and (4) more working mothers." (p. 1)

In meeting the needs listed by Webster and Schroeder (1979), attention must be given to the culture and how it connects with learning styles. A child's successful learning in school can be enhanced by a teacher's facilitation based on a knowledge of culture and learning style. The direction taken with

this subject must be handled in a way that dispels any negative generalizations about any group of people or any member of that group (Guild, 1994).

In promoting maximum achievement for young African-American males, Shade (1989) and Hilliard (1989) advised utilizing research findings that revealed African-American students often value oral experience, physical activity, and loyalty in interpersonal relationships. With these points in mind, a teacher should use strategies in the classroom that emphasize discussions, active projects, and cooperative learning activities.

Teachers' perceptions of young African-American males are directly related to achievement and dropout rates. Failure to communicate with some segments of the young African-American male population results in low teacher expectations and low achievement levels for young males.

Educators, in providing positive and effective learning experiences for African-American males, must keep in mind that students will differ in learning styles at any age (Guild & Garger, 1985). According to Myers (1990), learning styles are functions of both nature and nurture.

Piaget, the noted Swiss psychologist, in discussing the developmental stages of children, defined adaptation as "the essence of intellectual functioning, just as it is the essence of biological functioning" (Pulaski, 1971, p. 6). Another statement made by Piaget on the developmental stages of children described a particular characteristic of a child as follows: "He sees everything in terms of himself and his personal environment" (Webster & Schroeder, 1979, p. 41).

According to Eccles et al. (1993), "some of the negative psychological changes associated with adolescent development result from their social

environments." (p. 90) In addition, these authors stated that "this mismatch develops and operates in two specific social environments, the school and the home." (p. 90)

How do early childhood education, self-evaluation, and the developmental stages of children described by Piaget, fit into the schooling and future of young African-American males? Studies show that "high expectations and effective pedagogical practices that foster academic achievement will generate positive self-concepts and enhance self-esteem" (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, p. 599).

> Excellence in education should be viewed as a combination of intellectual rigor, challenging content, and effective pedagogy. Equity means that every child has access to educational excellence and that every school is a delivery system that enables each of its students to derive the full benefits of intellectual rigor, challenging content, and effective pedagogy. The widespread academic failure of children from certain ethnic populations, in the face of clear demonstration that such failure is totally avoidable, is a national disgrace. The traditional pedagogical approaches and educational delivery systems that have been used to deal with at-risk minority students have often proven to be dysfunctional and anachronistic. They have tended to be rigid, uncreative, and characterized by low expectations (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, p. 599).

Marable (1990), in supporting the importance of self-concept in young African-American males, argued the following:

> If the curriculum of our public schools does not present the heritage, culture, and history of African-Americans, if it ignores or downgrades our vital contributions to a more democratic society, our children are robbed of their heritage. They acquire a distorted perspective about themselves and their communities. If they believe that African-American people have never achieved greatness in the sciences, art, music, economics, and the law, how can they excel or achieve for themselves? (p. 19)

What are the implications and plans that educators should consider in the early childhood of African-American males according to research findings? The Perry Preschool Longitudinal Studies, which were based on an entirely African-American population of students containing fifty-four percent African-American males, gave an overview of the effects of program methodology on African-American students. The overview, according to Berrueta-Clement (1984), was based on didactic and flexible programs. The programs were defined as follows:

> Didactic: Programs, which are teacher centered, which use external rewards and punishments, which consistently employ structured (Often ability grouped) class instruction and practice, which utilize abstract testing instruments and which place a high value on quiet learning environments.
>
> Flexible: Programs, which encourage children's choice from a large variety of concrete exploratory materials, which facilitate children's questions, which encourage a high level of interacting, which place a high value on children's emerging capacity to solve their own problems with a high level of adult support and guidance and which incorporate structured, observational assessment processes for analyzing growth (Berrueta-Clement, 1984, p. 2).

The studies mentioned in the Perry Longitudinal Studies made positive statements about flexible programs that contained a high percentage of African-American males. This leads to the observation that flexible programs of high quality are effective early childhood educational programs for at-risk students regardless of socioeconomic status.

It has been demonstrated that a high level of activity with concrete, manipulative materials increases the chances for a child to get very close to the fulfillment of the mental capability (Levenstein, 1971; Bruner, 1976).

According to Fagot (1973), children who are products of flexible early childhood programs are better able to operate on a high level of independent initiative and task persistence than children who were in a didactic program.

Schweinhart et al. (1989) offer evidence that students who participate in flexible programs have higher graduation rates, lower retention rates, lower unemployment rates, and lower teen pregnancy rates. They show skills that help them survive in an adult world on a higher level than their peers.

Teacher Expectations

Holland (1991), who proposed same gender classes as a means of saving at-risk African-American males, felt that a major psychosocial deficit rests in the lack of consistent, positive, and literate African-American male role models. The deficit is a reflection of female dominated faculties in most elementary schools.

There is a performance discrepancy between the African-American male and the African-American female. This puts African-American males in fourth place when we also consider their position in relation to White males and White females (Grant, 1994). The performance of the African-American female provides increased success and employability. This increased potential or contribution may serve to balance household and relationship roles between African-American males and females.

According to Ross and Jackson (1991), the research of the sixties and seventies clearly indicated that teacher expectations can and do function as self-fulfilling prophecies. They gave examples of research by Beez in 1968 that dealt with a study of Head Start children and found that teachers who had

high expectations for their students attempted to teach more words than those who had low expectations. The study also demonstrated that teachers' expectations for students' successes affected the teachers' behaviors in the areas of effort expended, goal setting, and in other areas. Their behaviors, in turn affected the students' behaviors.

> Additional research in the areas of teacher expectations and attitudes has found that White teachers are more likely than African-American teachers to hold negative expectations for African-American students, particularly African-American males, and that White teachers are more likely than African-American teachers to be out of sync with the African-American students they teach (Irvine, 1990, p. 244).

Ogbu (1986) argued that African-American males' lack of confidence in teachers and low expectations of them from teachers contributed to their ineffective learning experience. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) also argued that many African-American students saw academic achievement as a White value and this combined with peer pressure resulted in a rejection of academic achievement.

The decline in academic performance of African-American males can also be attributed to tracking, school suspensions, and low participation in academic courses. Hare (1985) stated that there was a dire need to investigate the school's role in academic differences between African-American males and African-American females.

It is necessary for young African-American males to realize at an early age that their ideas are valued and that high expectations are set for them. In the fifties and sixties, the reality of seeing African-American men in the community participating in school and community activities, as well as in work gave young African-American males the belief that they could achieve and be worthy people (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Integration has removed much of the opportunity for dialogue between African-American students and educators. Obviously, the dispersal of African-American educators throughout newly-integrated school systems necessarily decreased the amount of contact and dialogue between African-American students and educators.

It has been observed that attrition has also helped deplete the ranks of African-American educators. In integrated schools, African-American educators who retire are routinely replaced by White educators (Hacker, 1992). If these lessenings of presence are felt in the ranks of African-American educators in general, then the reduced presence of African-American males is particularly resonant.

Moreover, the opening of new and varied career opportunities produced by integration outside the schools attract men and women to fields outside education. African-American males who otherwise might have been educators, role models, and in dialogue with students have found careers elsewhere (Hacker, 1992).

The absence of meaningful dialogue has eroded self-confidence, self-esteem, and pride in race. There has been a definite decline in that special discipline that comes from the sharing of triumph and struggle in achievement. It is not the intention of this statement to discredit integration. The point is that integration fails when expectations stay in the realm of inferiority. It also fails when that less than a man image is stamped on the African-American adult male or young African-American boy (Bennett, 1994).

Washington (1982) investigated teacher perceptions of first and fourth grade students. Her findings indicated that both African-American and

White female teachers viewed African-American males more unfavorably than other groups.

A study by Grant (1984) researched the relationship between race and gender status and school experience. Results pointed to the fact that teachers rated African-American males lowest in educational ability. Classroom teachers more frequently reprimanded African-American males than any other group. Any praise given to them was qualified and on a less sincere basis than for the other groups.

Grant found in analyzing self-esteem that Black females had lower self-esteem than Black males but had higher educational achievements. However, the process of influence and encouragement tended to develop skills in females consistent with lower status professional positions. Adult roles of service and nurturance are encouraged (Grant, 1994).

According to Ross and Jackson (1991), researchers found a common thread that indicated that successful African-American students (especially males) were usually conforming, submissive, and prudent. This suggests that nonsubmissive and independent students may be undesirable and threatening in the eyes of teachers and teachers have lower expectations of such African-American male students.

A vast number of young African-American males fall in a socioeconomic level that presents a disadvantage in their attempts toward academic achievement. The major barrier stems from distrust and low expectations in the eyes of teachers toward African-American males who exhibit extroverted behaviors common to inner city males.

More exposure to positive images of African-American males would do much to give teachers confidence in believing that young African-

American males can succeed academically. Hence, role models for young African-American males have many opportunities to save them from destructive situations.

Educators must be thoroughly acquainted with the community environment of African-American males, be willing to adjust teaching methods and apply diverse strategies, and to assume the responsibility of being a role model for the student. According to Guild (1994), educators who believe that all students can learn realize the importance of understanding their culture and learning styles.

Role Models

What is a solution to changing the views held by teachers of African-American students who exhibit a "cool behavior" that is a result of negative factors in their lives? The positive role model is suggested in much of the literature as a step in stopping the trend toward an "endangered species" designation for the African-American male. African-American male role models such as fathers, professionals, and especially teachers, are considered to be an absolute necessity in order for young African-American males to progress in education.

"Cool behavior," though deployed as a mode of resistance, actually operates as a stage for performing real-life approximations of the very stereotypes of African-American males presented historically by racist elements to reify racial separation and racism. Moreover, the self-esteem generated in gangs, major sources of "cool behavior," is rooted in the group projection and performance of these negative stereotypes. Other, more

positive sources of self-esteem and resistance produce more beneficial results in the lives of young African-American males.

Where does the African-American sports figure fit into the picture of positive role models for young African-American males? Evans (1993), in analyzing college admissions at Harvard University, found that over 90 percent of potential African-American candidates for admission at Harvard are African-American females. Disturbed over the low college matriculation rate of young African-American males, he posed these questions: "What is happening to these young men? Who or what is influencing them? I submit that the absence of male role models and slanted television images of the Black male have something to do with it. "(p. 10)

Evans (1993) is of the opinion that most television viewers, non-White or White think that successful African-American males are athletes or entertainers. He believed that any random sample of television viewers would reveal that at least 90 percent could only identify athletes or entertainers in their naming of the most successful African-American males.

The top five choices of successful candidates probably would not include such African-American males as Colin Powell (former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), August Wilson (Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright), Franklin Thomas (the president of the Ford Foundation), Mike Espy (former Secretary of Agriculture), Walter Massey (the director of the National Science Foundation), Earl Graves (the publisher of Black Enterprise Magazine), or the late Reginald Lewis (former CEO of a multimillion-dollar business).

Current television heroes, according to Evans (1993), present a distorted picture to the American public that African-American males are capable of excelling only in some areas of society. He also argued that it gives young

African-American males a false idea of what success is or what it takes to be successful.

There was a period of time in which sports on the local and national level were positive activities for African-American males. Sports have served as a release or means of exerting expressions of manhood with African-American males.

Assaults on the self-esteem of African-American men are also a reality in the area of sports. Many talented African-American baseball players, were excluded from the mainstream of professional baseball. This illustrates how some discredited the African-American male.

Even in this modern era of baseball, testimony by Lou Brock (former African-American St. Louis Cardinals star), revealed that he did not get the same recognition as Carl Yastrzemski (former Boston Red Sox star) received when each reached the 3000 hit mark even though their accomplishments were only a month apart (Callahan, 1979). This is just another example of how a positive accomplishment by an African-American male was played down.

Gaston (1986), author of the poem "I'm Going to the N. B. A.," used his writing to show how self-concept and the aspiration of young African-American males are influenced by organized sports. The influence leads to negative results as young males assume that sports are a sure ticket to success. Education, therefore, becomes unimportant to many young African-American males. The lack of desire for education becomes detrimental to them as the reality of limited opportunity in professional sports leaves them as targets for unemployment and participants in crime.

The view that the public has of African-American males in settings that require physical power is dependent on the socioeconomic position of the male. Sports have provided an opportunity for African-American males to demonstrate masculinity through the use of physical power and receive economic rewards for their efforts.

A strange contrast occurs when the inner city young African-American male seeks a living and a masculine image on the streets. Majors and Billson (1992) described the street male this way:

> For young Blacks, especially those who live in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, the streets become the community living room, the sports arena, the recreation hall, the marketplace, and the political forum. Drug deals, hanging out, love affairs, gang rivalries, and training in conventional wisdom all take place in the streets. (p. 85)

Fear or respect for the African-American male is directly tied to a social class and economic system. Avenues must be made available for role models to positively influence street males and to mark realistic ways for achieving academic, social, and economic success.

Alternative Programs

In order to meet the demands of an ailing African-American society, a radical proposal has been made to establish separate classes for young African-American males and has resulted in several programs being organized and staffed with positive role models. The programs exposed the young African-American male to an educational environment that understood the personality behind the "cool pose mask."

In meeting the needs of African-American male students, some citizens have organized programs that emphasized special teaching methods

and cultural awareness (Ghee, 1990). Other programs have made use of school counselors to help young African-American males improve self-concept and to give parenting skills to parents (Parkham & Davis, 1987).

Communities, through service programs, must provide counseling that helps young African-American males handle the stress associated with low self-esteem and economic problems. Young African-American males, according to Larrabee (1986), have not sought the support of counseling services to cope with problems because of pride and a lack of counselors' abilities to communicate with them.

In exploring the need for counseling services, Larrabee (1986) advocated an affirmative approach. It dealt with clients from minority groups through a method that was based on "humanistic, existential thoughts and resulted in affirmation of client responsibility and integrity. Such an approach enabled counselors to build rapport in interviews without being perceived as passive helpers." (p. 26) The approach helped in overcoming the reluctance exhibited by young African-American males to fully participate in counseling sessions.

Opinions differ on the establishment of separate schools for African-American males. Whitaker (1991) mentioned the opinions of educational leaders as being in conflict on the issue of separate schools. Some psychologists have indicated that separate schools would isolate and hinder coping with society in later life. Positions taken by the National Education Association opposed the idea that African-American males should be treated differently in order to get a quality education (Whitaker, 1991).

The National Urban League (1991) argued that the special schools for African-American males will fail to prepare them for meaningful roles in a society composed of many cultures. Ascher (1991), in a report from the Office

of Educational Research and Improvement, found that the programs of separate schools shared the following components: (1) male role models-male bonding; (2) identity and self-esteem; (3) academic values and social skills; (4) parent and community strengthening; (5) transition to manhood; and (6) a safe haven.

The transition to manhood factor, according to Hill (1992), presented another view that emphasized the Afrocentric prospective. It promoted an appreciation for and utilization of the collective experiences of African-American people in every dimension of existence.

Strengthening the young African-American male's view of self was emphasized by using a 'rites-of-passage' program that provided the young male with a dignified passage to manhood. Also included in this program were elements of community, service, academic achievement, and social skills (Hill, 1987).

The East End Neighborhood House of Cleveland, Ohio, under the leadership of author Paul Hill, Jr., was an example of a 'Rites-of-Passage' Program. Hill (1992) described it as an experience which offered culturally specific activities that developed manhood. The philosophy of the program was based on the belief that the journey of life is a series of passageways that must be traveled to fulfill our purposes for being and that the journey begins with birth and ends with death. The 'Rites-of Passage' experience was a process of steps that marked the young African-American male's passage to manhood. It involved activities that employed the services of role models and the resources of an entire community to positively certify the attainment of manhood.

Gill (1991), in a report to a conference on troubled adolescents, presented arguments in favor of all-male classes for African-American males. Improving achievement and raising self-esteem were goals of the classes.

The major problems that the African-American male has faced were the attempts to make him a different being from other males in American society. The denial to him of true masculinity and a place of authority have always been a handicap to the psychological and economic well-being of the African-American male.

Educational settings for the African-American male do not have to be isolated from those of other people. It is necessary that African-American males have adult African-American males with which to identify, to emulate as role models, and to acquire those positive characteristics that mark entrance into a true and productive manhood.

Most races of people have some customs that are common to their particular group. The melting pot of American society has not allowed any group to successfully survive if they are made to feel inferior and different. It is crucial to train young African-American males how to communicate, develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and an appreciation for family and work. At the same time, this democratic society that our constitution protects does not have room for an isolated group of people who are taught and given reasons to feel that they are inferior to other human beings.

Watts (1992), in a discussion of strategies and ideas of manhood development organizations, found a theme called mainstreaming. It emphasized teaming up young men with older, "successful" African-American men who acted as role models. They demonstrated in a very tangible way what African-American men can achieve in the U. S. The men

supported and taught the young men what they needed to know to overcome societal barriers and become an integral part of this country's mainstream.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodology which was utilized for this study. Qualitative methods are most effective when they are used to discover how the participant sees the world. This objective makes it essential that testimony be elicited in the most unobtrusive and nondirective manner possible (Brenner, 1985).

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), has three major components. First, there are the data, which can come from various sources. Interviews and observations are the most common sources. The second component consists of the different analytic or interpretive procedures that are used to arrive at findings or theories. These procedures include techniques for conceptualizing data. The process is called coding and it varies with the experience of the researcher and the purpose of the study. The last component is made up of written or verbal reports. Their form depends on the aspects of findings being presented and the type of audience which is positioned to receive them.

A theory that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents is a grounded theory. That is, it is discovered, developed, and verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The research in this study was done through the grounded theory approach. The investigator began with an area of study and what was relevant to that area was allowed to emerge.

Theory is generated during the establishment of concepts in a study. Concepts and hypotheses in this study will come from analyzing collected data. Grounded theory emerges from a study when events, actions, and incidents observed in the lives of individuals produce patterns, categories, and themes that allow the formation of hypotheses. In this study, any resulting theory or theories would describe and explain the development of influences that role models have on the lives of young African-American males.

The study provided generalizations about role models for young African-American males. The descriptions of these role models could help in the selection of mentors for community and educational programs. The findings of the study described influences from home, church, neighborhood, and school that were present in the early lives of young African-American males. Descriptions of these influences centered on when and how they were present.

The Participants

Ten subjects were interviewed, ranging in age from twenty-three to fifty-one. The participants were African-American males selected from males identified as successful citizens. Local news media, referrals by citizens, civic organizations, and inquiries made by the investigator of educators, fraternity and sorority members, lodge members, college professors, and church

members determined selections. The African-American males selected for the study represented those males who have, in the eyes of others, remained free of violence, progressed academically, were employed or employable and been involved in positive community activities.

Eighty people were approached and asked to suggest names for possible subjects to be interviewed for this study. Thirty percent of them were women. A total of one-hundred fifteen names were suggested from the eighty people approached. Of the one-hundred fifteen possible subjects, sixty-two refused immediately, twenty-six refused upon learning that their comments would be recorded. Twelve were willing but unable to give the time because of work commitments. Two were willing but unable to participate because of illness. Three college students who were willing were unable to interrupt their academic schedules.

The participants, though not randomly selected, included college graduates, non-college graduates, professionals, semi-professionals, and blue collar workers. They came from various communities in Stokes and Forsyth Counties in the Piedmont area of North Carolina.

Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was used to gather data. There was no structuring of the activities. The investigator's procedure consisted of having a conversation with the participants. Data collection began with the investigator posing a question designed to prompt participants to share experiences through conversation on their terms. The unstructured nature of the interview allowed the participants to relive their experiences only as

they saw them. Sherman and Webb (1988) supported the process with these words:

> In-depth interviews of the participants lend meaning to their observed experiences. Observing, by itself, is never enough because it begs misinterpretation. Interviews permit researchers to verify, clarify, or alter what they thought happened, to achieve full understanding of an incident, and to take into account the lived experiences of the participants. (p. 188)

The analysis of the grounded theory in this study resulted in generalizations concerning role models in the lives of the participants. Probing by the investigator was employed to clarify shared data and gave the participants opportunities to expand their thoughts.

The perceptions, values, and beliefs of the investigator were recorded in a daily journal. This process allowed the investigator to monitor the intrusion of personal opinion and reaction into the research.

Data were collected from the interviewees by the use of tape recordings and hand-written field notes. The field-notes were reviewed immediately in order to maintain accuracy and clarify data at the interview site.

Telephone contacts were the first communication made with the prospective interviewees. A letter followed explaining formally the purpose of the research. It also made agreements between the interviewees and the researcher for establishing the confidentiality of the session and for scheduling interviewing sites and times. Each participant was interviewed one time.

The study began with a pilot interview. The pilot interview revealed those issues that were easily raised and gave the investigator practice in questioning techniques.

Before each interview, the subject was given a demographic data form. Conversation following the collection of demographic data was designed to establish rapport and make the participant feel comfortable with the investigator's presence. The conversation was not a part of the research data. After the informal conversation was brought to closure, the investigator proceeded with opening, nondirective questions concerning the research area.

McCracken (1988) expressed the following concerning opening questions:

> The first objective of the qualitative interview is to allow the respondents to tell their own story in their own terms. The investigator seeks to keep as 'low' and unobtrusive a profile as possible. In the case of question formulation, it is crucially important that questions be phrased in a general and nondirective manner. The objective is to 'spring' respondents, to move them to talk without overspecifying the substance of the perspective of this talk. In no instance may a question supply the terms of the answer it solicits. (p. 34)

As data were gathered and refined for analysis, the investigator kept a summary sheet to aid in gathering main points, revising and making additions to the coding system.

Analysis of Data

In bringing order, structure and meaning to collected data, open coding was used to generate patterns, themes, and categories. In addition, coding aided the investigator in making consistent data interpretation, analyzing field notes, and promoted relevance of data. Coding was essential in conceptualizing data. Codes used as organizational devices in this study were

essential for grouping, classifying, and clustering key concepts and important themes.

Procedures used in creating a start list of codes were designed according to suggestions given by Miles and Huberman (1984). The beginning coding system was the investigator's creation and was designed to comfortably allow the investigator to interpret data. The coding system was built around the research questions that formed the framework for this study (see Appendix D).

After each interview, notes were immediately reviewed and refined. They were carefully rewritten for effective interpretation of data. The immediate and systematic reviewing of notes provided new ideas for planning the next interview and expanding the coding system. The coding expansion developed as interesting events, people, periods of time, and emotions involving the life experiences of the participants unfolded. Codes were used to identify similarities, themes, categories, and patterns as experiences were described.

Reliability and Validity

The investigator attempted to be as skillful as possible in the interviewing process. It is difficult to address reliability in a traditional way when application is made to qualitative research. Differences in the backgrounds of investigators are likely to produce variations in interpretations of data drawn from observation of phenomena.

The investigator in this study promoted reliability by restating questions at different points in interviews to clarify a response or to address

consistency to a response. Best (1981) and Berger and Keliner (1981) supported this technique for fostering reliability.

The investigator in this study addressed validity by giving the highest attention to the accuracy and authenticity of data collected during this project. Conversations were tape recorded and transcribed in their original form. In addition, handwritten session notes allowed the investigator to preserve colloquial spellings, speech patterns, and dialect. Furthermore, the investigator secured clarifications from the participants, and conversations were immediately transcribed to ensure accuracy.

Participants were allowed to talk freely on any given question in order to eliminate any interference from the investigator. Wolcott (1990) advocated giving the interviewee the freedom to roam as freely as possible while the researcher records, takes notes, and makes accurate and detailed observations on conversations.

Summary

Within this chapter, discussion centered on qualitative research based on grounded theory, the manner in which it was used, and the method of data analysis used. The participants selected by the investigator generated data through in-depth interviews. The main thrust of this study is discussed in chapter four. Interview transcripts were coded, and emerging themes were analyzed.

Chapter IV

Findings Of The Study

Prior to a presentation of the data gathered in the interview sessions, it should be noted that the number of siblings that grew up in the households ranged from two to nine. The educational levels of the participants' parents were equally divided between high school graduates and non-high school graduates. College graduates represented the smallest number.

The sources of referral represent a cross section of African-American males. With the exception of the investigator, these sources were associated with the participants through various areas of their life experiences. The investigator discovered one participant through a newspaper article that told of his accomplishments with troubled African-American males in his area of employment. The other participants were discovered through referrals from a high school counselor, a banker, a coach, a college professor, a lodge member, a retired citizen, and church members.

The employment of the participants were rather evenly distributed. They represented business, industry, education, and students. The business employees included: a financial counselor, an airline office-worker, and a part-time mortician. Educators included a teacher in an alternative middle school for disadvantaged students and a high school counselor. The student representative was a pre-med university student.

This research touched on the earliest memories that made impressions on the lives of the participants of this study. Research questions focused the participants on their earliest memories of family, community, church, school,

and finally, career choices. Some interesting and informative stories emerged from their responses and follow in narrative form.

The first participant is an unmarried, 30 year old college graduate who works as an industrial supervisor. He remembered his father as the first man in his life. He looked upon his father as a positive role model. As a child of four years, this participant recalled how his father always tried to teach him how to do things. He related how his father put him on a tractor and let him drive it while he was there with him. He could remember learning his ABC's with his father as his first teacher.

> In my early life he was basically the only role model that I had. He was the only one I knew. He was the only one that I knew because I didn't have any uncles. We were sort of isolated to a certain degree. There were not a lot of males, but I do remember some of the neighbors. There was one particular man, he was not a positive role model. He was always drunk. I didn't understand this. There was this other guy and he always yelled and cursed all of the time. He and his wife used to fight. I never understood this and I wasn't used to that. It didn't necessarily affect me negatively because I didn't like that and I turned myself off to it.

This participant remembered his dad as a very loving family man who always wanted the best for his family and found ways to do things for them. He remembered how his father always got them at least one thing they really wanted at Christmas time even though the amount of money he had to spend was limited. "He would sacrifice and get it, you know."

The participant spoke of his father's gentle nature and relaxed state:

> He was not a hyper person and I liked that. I guess that's where I got my demeanor. He was a very smart man. He started my learning process way before I went to school. There were a lot of good things, a lot of great things! At the time I just went along and enjoyed it not realizing how important it would be down the road.

He remembered his mother's grandfather and always thought he was mean. This participant never really had much to do with his great-grandfather because of the impression he had of him. His mother must have known the grandfather in a different light because she thought the world of him. His great-grandfather died when he was six years old, but the memory he had of him was one of a grouchy old man who never smiled, talked, or laughed like other people. "That's why I don't talk about him like other people do."

When reflecting on his neighborhood, the participant gave a description that could be visualized by the researcher in a picturesque manner.

> The men would make an appearance and come by and borrow a tool or something. I guess that's true. I never thought about it. They were role models to a point. They always came to borrow a tool and they always had on work clothes, working in the fields or planning to work on something, planning to work in the gardens. Those people worked. They had the values of work. So I guess not realizing it they were instilling the values of work. I had the value of work. Indirectly being around them, I had the value of work. I had the value of working for a living. And then when we moved, there again, we were around men that had families and men that worked, took care of the families, treated you like you were part of their family--nice men, gentle you know, down to earth men. Nothing crazy or distorted about them, not doing something they didn't have any business doing.

He remembered one of his neighbors who drank heavily but was a good person. This neighbor's character far outweighed his weakness for alcohol because he took care of his family and was a loving man. He saw in this man qualities that were even lacking in his own father. The participant saw this man as being a person to whom he could go and share serious problems and emotions.

The participant viewed his church experiences in a positive manner. He did not have this opinion as a youth, but at his present age he could see the rewards of being associated with the church at an early age. More women were a part of the church than men. "There were a couple of men that took a genuine interest and encouraged you to do well; go to school, stay out of trouble, make good grades, and respect your parents."

When the participant was young he got tired of going to church. He wanted to stay home and watch television. When he started to drive, he wanted to get up on Sunday mornings and wash his car. He just wanted to do what he wanted to do, but there was a rule at his house that everyone had to go to church.

> I had an incident in church when I was about twelve or thirteen that swayed me for a while not to go to church. The minister said something that embarrassed me in front of the congregation. I never forgot that. To this day, its just like it happened yesterday. My feelings were legitimate. I felt I was being picked on. He was pastor of the church but from that point on I had no more respect for him. I didn't want to go back to church. I really didn't want to listen to him. I felt what he did was evil. I just had a feeling that it was a real evil act. I felt that he had an evil spirit about him. I went to church, I had to go. I didn't have good vibes about this preacher. I didn't feel comfortable around him.

As an adult, the participant felt that he was wiser because he has learned to accept confrontations as learning experiences and that being a preacher does not necessarily set one apart from other human beings. They were hard lessons to learn because he was brought up to think that preachers and teachers did not act in certain ways. "It was difficult to believe that preachers or teachers or whatever the profession, do things that maybe they shouldn't do."

This participant's impressions about school were bitter-sweet. He had an extremely positive fifth grade year in which he was challenged to do his best. His eighth and ninth grade teachers also stood out as teachers who challenged him. He felt these teachers had an interest in him and that alone made him want to excel. The participant was told by these teachers that the potential for him to excel in college was evident.

> My fifth grade teacher was a down to earth good person. He had the demeanor of the person I liked which was a laid back type of person. I don't like hyper people. They might not make good decisions. They're acting like they are accomplishing something but they are not. A-type personality people don't have any patience. You can't learn under people who are not patient. This man had the patience of Job. Knew his subject matter inside out, presented it in a way you could learn it and wanted you to learn it. He had a sense of humor. He was a lot of fun and made your learning enjoyable.

The participant said that the eighth grade teacher always talked to his parents. The teacher told his dad that he ought to go to school. "My dad said yeah, I think you need to go to school." At the time, the participant was not thinking about college. Neither of his parents had gone to college. This was the first time anybody had said anything to him about going to college. "So I had to find out what college was." He thought if his teacher said it, it had to be right. "Two positive people, very positive role models and both Black men."

This participant did not think that his female teachers liked their male students. He rarely heard his female teachers encourage him to do more.

> I had only one White female teacher who pushed me. An extremely positive person who took a genuine interest in what I was doing, wanted me to excel. She would average all of my grades for me for all my classes. You need to make a 90 in this class, I want you in the Beta Club. You're smart. She pushed me, I made it, I got in there.

He saw his high school teachers as cold and indifferent. They appeared unconcerned, with no time for extra encouragement. He did not find any outstanding high school teachers.

> It was at this point that I came to the realization that a lot of those educators who were primarily Caucasian had no interest in my excelling or anybody else's. I came to realize that this thing of racism does exist. For example, I could see things happening to me that did not happen to Joe under the same circumstances. Joe was encouraged to do better but nothing was ever said to me. I can't prove that but it existed and it still exists in today's society. I see it now just from being in the school system as a substitute teacher and on my regular job. It's sad but it's true. It's a fact of life and you just have to learn how to deal with it. I can honestly say about high school, if I had to relive my life I could skip it. A lot of people say they miss school. I do not miss it. I've only been back to my high school once since I graduated.

The participant felt that primary teachers were more nurturing, indicating that they were just more motherly, whether African-American or White. He related that it was probably harder to mistreat a child, "but as you get older the high school people didn't have that. I'm speaking of the White males. I never got encouragement from White male teachers in high school."

This participant related that he always kept the thought in mind from his fifth grade teacher that he had the intelligence to go to college. The teacher told him that by going to school he could get a job earning more money, that he would be more satisfied with a career and a job.

> I am a very determined person with or without encouragement. I appreciate people putting me on the right track, pointing me in the right direction. As I got older, I decided to take college preparatory classes. That's all I needed, someone putting me on the right track.

This participant saw his intelligence as a blessing. His good grades automatically put him on a college track.

> It's a blessing when you have intelligence. Man can't give it to you. Its a blessing, you use it. That's why its so important that when you're young to have good role models. If you have the intelligence and the potential you have to have somebody to encourage you and develop it. If you don't have that it will be wasted because a whole lot of people who fell through the cracks didn't have anybody to lift them. They came to school and smelled like urine, and were not dressed as nicely as others. All of those things play a part. People can say what they want to say. I went to school for twelve years and some students were perceived by the teachers as not being smart if they were not clean.

The participant saw himself as having been blessed because his dad worked and his mother stayed home and reared them. He went to school clean, bathed, and with his hair combed. He felt that those things really made a difference. An asset also related by the participant was the fact that his parents were able to buy a wide variety of educational material. He remembered having hard-back books with lots of stories in them, sets of encyclopedias, dictionaries, and all types of learning material.

As this participant's interview came to a close, he spoke of his employment as being a result of his interest in business courses in high school. An African-American counselor put him on the right track. He helped him seek financial aid for college.

The second participant is a 31 year old college graduate. He is employed in industry as a computer science specialist. He is married and the father of two children.

"I guess I'll start here," related the second participant as we sat in his living room and began our conversation. "I came from a family with a mother and a father. I have two brothers and two sisters. I was the fourth child and the middle boy. I was born in a Black community with relatives close by."

This participant remembered playing with a next door neighbor's son. They played in the sandbox as youngsters. They went to a segregated elementary school together his first two years in school. The schools became integrated when he was in third grade. As a third grader he had no idea of the difference integration brought. He told how in later years he and his childhood friend got driver's licenses. They took turns driving each other around. He reflected on the fun the two of them had at beaches, parks, and movies.

"In addition to my next door neighbor, there was a cousin and another relative who was a bit older, that I hung around with." They went swimming and rode bikes over the city and went to dances. The participant related that his cousin exposed him to a lot of new things because he was older. Because his other siblings were mostly older, his younger brother was the only sibling with whom he played.

The participant related that he had no academic problems in school. He found math easy and related that it went along pretty smoothly. Aside from his regular curriculum he enjoyed playing drums and basketball. Pick-up games in the neighborhood and backyard basketball games were common after school activities.

> As far as my father is concerned, we were not close in my early years. I didn't see him much, but he was in the house and provided for us. I didn't get close to him until I turned 15. As our family was growing up we went to church. My mother was a born again Christian. At that time my father was not. She pretty much made us go to church.

The participant stopped going to church once he got into his upper teens. Although his mother tried to make him go, he rebelled against it. About that time his mother became ill. As far as his father was concerned, work and providing for a family remained high priorities with him. His

father appeared not to see a need to nurture his family. There was a wide spread in the ages of the participant's siblings. His dad was older when he fathered his last two children, which may have been a factor. "I don't think we were meant to be. We just sort of came." The father finally became a member of the church, although the participant could not remember at what point he accepted Christ. "My father is an outspoken man, but we had a good relationship."

The participant spoke of being a quiet student in school, even though he did "okay." He admitted that he could not write papers but he was good with taking tests and choosing the right answers. He enjoyed fun, friends, and hanging around. His teachers were "okay" during elementary and middle school. "I had some teachers who were okay. My most memorable teacher, I enjoyed his class, a good natured Black fellow." The participant did have problems with teachers in high school. He related the following:

> Before integration I had two high schools in my hometown. I went to the predominantly White school. I noticed the difference in the way I was treated. They pretty much expected the worst out of the Black kids but the best out of the White kids.

The participant stated that he did not do well in Spanish because a White female teacher treated him differently by not expecting much out of the African-American students. He did not feel, however, that she realized that her low expectations represented a double standard to them.

The participant made a decision to go to college even though he did not know much about college. He felt that his good aptitude in math would aid him in the area of computer science. "My hometown was a mill town." The participant did not want to end up spending his life as a mill worker. Neither did he want a career in the military.

> So I said, I don't know much about college, but based on my choices it seemed like the thing to do. I went to a counselor to seek information about going to college. A Black electronics teacher persuaded me to use my ability in math.

The participant stated that during integration the predominantly White school received the African-American students with an air of superiority while the predominantly African-American schools received the White students in a friendly manner.

Being shy kept the participant from becoming involved in many extracurricular activities. He felt that he had gotten to where he was simply by the grace of God. He credited his mother with praying for him. His father said some prayers, as well as others who knew and loved him. He related that his mother died his junior year in college. Before her death he did not think about how hard she tried to help him, but he thinks much about it now. He saw himself as a bitter person after his mother's death and became hard hearted and did things he should not have done.

This participant is presently employed as a computer science specialist. His internship with the company while in college helped him secure a job with that particular company. "I did well in school. I graduated with a computer science major and a minor in math. I had three job offers, and I took the one that offered me the most money and did not require me to relocate."

In college, the participant made new friends as he became associated with students taking the same courses and the same major. They were considered to be the cream of the crop because his class was one of the top classes to come through in computer science. For this participant, college was

the place where he first realized that people were different because of their lifestyles. He met students from both rural and urban areas.

The third participant is 34 years old and single. He graduated from a mortuary school and is employed as a part-time minister and funeral director. The participant grew up in a home with three sisters, his mother and father. He described his home life as nice even though his father drank heavily. This participant said that the drinking occurred mostly on the weekends. Despite this, he saw his father as a great provider who was not abusive to his children. Also, his mother kept them in church. In the course of this conversation he referred again to his great upbringing.

> My father was good to us. He was all for us. I think the thing that disturbed me most when we were coming up was the drinking problem. But in later years he stopped drinking. Other than that he was a great dad.

The participant spoke of how good his grandparents and an aunt were to him. His father's sister was helpful to the family and especially to him. She encouraged him, and he always knew that his relatives were there for him and wanted him to be successful in life. "Growing up in school, I wasn't an A student. I probably could have performed better but that's all behind me."

Upon graduation from high school the participant enrolled in technical school. After becoming hired at a tobacco company, he dropped out of school with the idea that he would be in that position for several years. However, when layoffs occurred, he was in the group to be terminated.

> I could have, like a lot of young guys today, started failing or taking drugs, you know. I always wanted to be a mortician so I re-enrolled at the technical school. I received a degree in mortuary science. I enjoy what I am doing. I've had a beautiful life. Sometimes its been rough but I made it. I guess I could have given up and started hanging out with the guys but I didn't. I wanted to do something with my life.

The participant said that from the time he was a child, funerals always fascinated him. The thought of becoming a funeral director stayed in the back of his mind throughout his growing years, but he had not considered going to mortuary school until the layoff occurred.

He related that he grew up in a fairly decent community. By decent he meant that it was not a rowdy community. The participant described the people as being mostly relatives. He had a great aunt who lived near him and an uncle and his wife who often took him to church with them. He sometimes spent the night with them.

The participant enjoyed church because he practically grew up going to church. In fact, he stated that he had been in church all of his life but never thought he would become a minister. "It never crossed my mind even though I preached to my three sisters on the steps." That statement led to his telling me about his life as a minister.

The participant said that he had been a minister for four years and enjoyed it very much. He stated that he became frustrated at times but felt that he was doing the work of the Lord. The participant felt that at the time the Lord called him to the ministry, he was looking for thrills and did not want to become a minister.

His rebellion brought him many tearful hours and sleepless nights. He requested prayer from other ministers. He seemed very confused and constantly upset until he accepted the call. Afterwards he stated that

everything became very clear to him. He felt as if a burden had been lifted. The pastor of his church was very close to him at one point, but they appeared to grow apart as the participant accepted more religious responsibilities. Envy and jealousy appeared to play a role in the separation. The participant felt that his friendly outgoing personality drew the membership to him and possibly away from the minister. The friendship had been reestablished at the time of the interview. The minister had allowed him to preach in the church and to fill engagements at other churches which the minister was unable to accept.

Reflecting again on elementary school, the participant felt that his first grade teacher was good. She was not, however, forceful enough to give the kind of background his sisters received during their first grade years. He felt that he could have done better with some encouragement from his elementary teachers.

The participant described himself as an average student in middle school. He felt he did fairly well in high school even though Senior English kept him from graduating with his class. Later, he received a high school diploma.

His extracurricular activities were limited. He ran track for a few years but was mainly in a few of the school clubs. Outside of school he participated in the 4-H Club, a neighborhood club that was led by an African-American school teacher.

The conversation shifted again to the funeral home business. "Like I said, I had heard about a program for morticians." He consulted a local mortician about working for him. The mortician did not take him seriously and told him to get back with him in about six or seven months. He did, and

this time the mortician allowed him to work in his business after an interview with him. "I guess he saw maybe that I was interested and wanted to work. He asked me if I would go and further my education to become an embalmer." It was that bit of encouragement that caused the participant to enroll in school.

He continued to work for the funeral home throughout his schooling. He stated that he might want to have his own funeral home someday, but he felt that he was at a place where he needed more experience in his present position.

The subject of his community and school came up again. He mentioned school as not being all good nor being all bad but just something that he could not find words to describe. Of his community he said, "For a while I would be around guys that drank a lot, did marijuana, whatever. I never chose to go in that direction but I'm not saying I did not try things in life." He credited his not going in that direction to his parents and his upbringing. He felt that choices made by individuals determined whether they were good or bad.

This participant felt that individuals were responsible for determining what direction their lives would take. "I wasn't a bad person but I did try some things like drinking and marijuana. There were a few things, I guess it was a process that I went through in life during my teen years."

> Life itself is hard. You'll have ups and downs. I guess you have to do the best you can. With all the drugs that are out there, I believe if you always teach Christ first in your life He'll lead and guide you in the right direction. A lot of males didn't grow up in church but guys can come out of bad homes and make it. You can do whatever you want to do in life.

The fourth participant is a 27 year old who is engaged to be married. He is a college graduate with a major in computer science. This participant was formerly employed in banking and is presently teaching in an alternative middle school for at-risk students. The participant had little recollection of his growing years prior to age seven. Although his mother and father were alive, he was reared mostly by a great-grandmother who lived in the home. He was one of three children, and his family's economic status was low.

According to the participant, his mother had a profound interest in his being aware of his culture. He therefore learned much about family history. His first memories about his neighborhood were living in a housing project. Shortly thereafter he remembered moving to a better neighborhood. His first job was at the age of thirteen.

When speaking of his school, the participant remembered one teacher in particular who taught him to believe in reality and not fantasy. Later in his schooling the participant had a male African-American computer teacher who took an interest in him. He was never a discipline problem, but his academic standing, he felt, was not as high as it could have been.

His talent as a football player landed him a full athletic scholarship to college. "My coach believed in me. Said he saw something good in me. But he never told me what it was."

This participant saw his mother as the strongest influence in his life. She did not finish high school until she went back at age forty-eight and received a GED. "My father wasn't the driving force. He worked full-time on a job and had another part-time job."

In reflecting on his work experience, the participant shared that he had worked as a volunteer at a school, for a law firm, and for a bank. "I was under

stress at the bank, but it was a different kind of stress." The participant related that the stress was due to people he worked around.

He spoke of the African-American male school principal on his present job as once having told him that he could be a spark to change a person's negative attitude.

The participant saw himself as an at-risk student due to his economic background. His school was predominantly White. He spoke of his present home as being in a project neighborhood, but somewhat better than his recollection of his first home. He felt that he was a fairly consistent person; he had failures as well as successes.

He again spoke of his participation in a volunteer program that appeared somewhat shaky, but his determination kept him from leaving the program. He also referred to a program operated by volunteers at an alternative school. Most of the volunteers were not able to stay with the program because of the demands and personalities of the students. The participant was determined that these students were not going to chase him away. They were finally captured by his personality because "they knew I would be back the next day and that they could depend on me."

"Let me backtrack and tell you more about my father," stated the participant.

> My father was an interesting character. He was a loving father. My father has always worked and taken care of us and has had a big interest in our sports activities. He hasn't had a real big interest in what we were doing in school. He has always had a couple of jobs and always been kind of busy trying to keep things going, trying to keep food on the table. So he was our father, no real problems with my father. He never took a real big interest in our daily lives. But if we had a football game he was always there. He worked a lot and when we got home he was gone to work and when we got up he was gone to work. It was a situation like that.

The participant mentioned again that he lived in projects that he considered to be middle class. He saw his neighborhood as being good. When he was in the tenth grade they moved across the highway to a better neighborhood and a bigger house, but really the same area.

They never lived in the city. He saw that as a plus. He remembered his cousin who grew up in a city where the low income neighborhood was very violent. His mother felt that country living was better for her family. He was considered at-risk as a young African-American in a predominantly White school. "I wasn't as economically well-off as others who went to my school so that kind of threw me into that category." He was never, however, a major academic or behavioral problem.

This participant related his church association in this manner: "We lived in church. That's my mom's philosophy. My grandmother always took us to church." He spoke of attending a family church where every member was "some kin to you somewhere down the line." He mentioned the fact that two churches were side by side but the African-American people went to one and the Whites went to the other. The churches had the same name. The larger church was for the Whites and the smaller one was for the African-Americans.

> It's interesting the two churches have just now started to have services together. Even though we were side by side for so many years, we never had any intermingling together. My mother was a strong believer that prayers were always answered, that it would solve all of your problems. I always had to go to Sunday School, Bible school, Boy Scouts. Whatever was going on in the church, my mother's children were involved. When we were not working we were there. That was her way of keeping us from being involved in negative things on the street. There were some surrounding neighborhoods that were bad. She never wanted us to get involved with that type.

He could not understand, as a youth, why his mother did not want him to become involved with the surrounding neighborhoods. He said that in later years, however, he could understand it clearly. He related that some of the friends from the "bad" neighborhoods did have a chance to attend college and some did well.

The participant's mother did not condone premarital sex. She promoted marriage. Furthermore, she believed that the family should come together and discuss problems. As a result, none of the three children had children outside of marriage.

The participant, once again, returned to his high school years. He spoke of being highly respected in the predominantly White high school in the area of sports.

> The teachers I have met are negative. They expect the worst but hope that they can get something better than the worst. I have always found that if you don't expect anything of me, I will give you absolutely nothing. If you expect a great deal out of me, you'll get more than you would have gotten.

The fifth participant is 25 years old and single. He is a high school graduate and is employed in a factory. He also works part-time as a youth basketball coach. The participant recalled that he was about ten or eleven when he started to pay attention to role models. At the same time he became interested in listening and analyzing what other people said.

> I began thinking about what I wanted to do and what kind of influence they may have on me. My uncle was probably my main role model because he would always encourage me to get an education and try to help other people, you know, basically to be a good person, I guess.

This participant spoke of his uncle as being a career serviceman. He looked forward to his visits. His uncle always had the same message, "Keep

working hard and always concentrate on what you are trying to do, and if you can help somebody along the way you should do that also."

He spoke of his neighborhood as being a lot slower, a lot easier and less violent than neighborhoods are today. The neighborhoods appeared to him to be more family oriented.

> More people talked to you, just took time out to speak to you, have you over to their house. Now its more of a feeling that everybody is out for themselves. They don't really want to have that much time for you. I believe that the community back then gave you a lot more experiences with what was right and what was wrong. I didn't take part in any kind of community things, I was more of a house boy but now I am more outgoing and more outspoken. I enjoy talking to younger kids about the different experiences that were given me.

He related that his approaches to helping youngsters solve conflict would be valuable to them in avoiding violent situations. He said he tried to show them how to be respectable and to have manners. He did not feel that he was that outgoing in school because he was not very talkative. "I did what I had to do in order to make good grades. I was never a problem student."

As the participant talked about his teachers, he related, "There have been some good ones and there have been some that need a little bit of, uh, more of a personal touch to it when they teach and how they teach." He also added that it means a lot for someone to just call you aside sometimes and "just say, well, you are doing a good job, or you can do better than this or just to compliment you in general, or just to say, uh, I think you're a good student."

The participant saw the teachers helping the better students to get further ahead. He rarely saw them helping or encouraging the struggling students. He believed that one-on-one contact was greatly needed in schools today.

The participant saw a closer knit working relationship with the parents and teachers during his school years. He said that the students knew that the teacher had only to contact their parents if a disciplinary problem arose, and they would be sure to receive an additional spanking when they got home. Their parents were only a phone call away.

According to the participant, disciplinary problems in the schools today are blamed on the teachers and the administrators. If the child makes a bad grade or is involved in a disciplinary incident, the parents never feel that the child is at fault anymore. They are quick to blame the other child involved or the adult pursuing the matter. "While growing up, somehow it always seemed to be my fault as far as my parents were concerned when a teacher was involved. I was always made to apologize."

This participant began his participation in sports while in elementary school. His main involvement was in elementary school. Basketball was his best sport. He was encouraged by an African-American coach. Today, as an assistant coach, he has tried to give his team members similar advice given him by his coach.

He felt that church had changed a lot since he was younger. He believed that fewer young adults attend church today because it was more mandatory then than now. "Probably what I get from religion is totally different from what the older generation got. What you see in church today is what you see in night clubs at night. I guess its just a show thing."

Once again the participant mentioned his home life as being close knit. "I was close to my sisters." He related that his parents were just plain people and both worked as custodians for a company.

He described his dad as being a quiet person who did not talk much. His dad did, however, let him know that he wanted him to know how to work for a living. He described his dad as a person who believed in going to work even if he didn't feel like it.

"My dad liked to sing and would always sing in the choir at church. Even though he was a quiet person, he said the most when he was getting us straight for doing something he didn't like."

This participant described his parents as people who were not too outgoing. He related that his dad played baseball for fun. "They believed in helping and getting along with our neighbors." This participant again related that "they did not expect us to be in trouble in the community."

The sixth participant is a 31 year old college graduate. He is married and has one child. He is employed in industry. This participant considered himself fortunate to have grown up in a household where his mother and father were both present. He spoke of having very fond memories of growing up around both his mother's parents and his father's parents. He recalled being baby-sat by a cousin who was four years older. In addition, both his paternal and maternal grandmothers cared for him at times when his parents were away from the home.

The participant remembered going to his great-grandmother's rural hometown and spending weekends with her. He remembered going to his father's hometown and spending weekends with grandparents there.

When his mother was hospitalized for a period of time, he experienced a tender moment with his father. As a young boy of six, he had become so concerned about his mother's being in the hospital that he cried for her. His dad drew him close and assured him that everything was going to be all right.

"That's a very fond memory that I have of him. I guess it was his ability to understand." He felt that his dad always knew the right things to say and do at any given moment when he sensed that he was unhappy.

The participant gave the following response concerning his father's work ethic:

> My dad was, I guess you would say he was a jack-of-all-trades. He's a great handyman, was a gardener and a cook. He held several jobs while I was growing up. He was a security guard and convenience store operator. I even remember when he was studying for graduate school when I was about six or seven. So I guess being exposed to his hard work ethic kind of rubbed off on me.

When reflecting on his neighborhood, the participant stated "I've got very, very vivid memories of growing up." He remembered his first neighborhood as being set in a time when things were really peaceful. "This was another time, another era, people driving Novas down the street, listening to Philadelphia sounds, O.Js., Motown, people just minding their own business, the ice cream truck coming around the corner."

He remembered growing up in an apartment complex. This participant spoke of knowing all the children on the block and their parents. He said that this was a time when every adult took it as part of his or her personal responsibility to take care of his neighbor's children and keep them out of trouble. The participant spoke of how the neighbors told on the children when they got into trouble or were found doing something they should not have been doing.

> I remember across the street this old woman, I don't even know her name. She used to give us ice cream but she made sure we didn't eat it before dinner. I remember another neighbor across the street who had a daughter about my age. I remember an old man who used to come around the neighborhood. He reminded me of Colonel Saunders except he was Black. I remember when Larry Little was a Black Panther. He used to come around the neighborhood with the Black Panthers. All the little kids would gather around him. He would sit on the sidewalk and everyone would gather around him on the lawn and it would be like the Sermon on the Mount. Everyone would just be hanging out of their windows just to get a listen at what he was saying. I remember going up the street to this big field where my daddy and me and my younger bother used to fly box kites. It was a peaceful life, it was a peaceful neighborhood. We had cookouts in the summer.

The participant remembered his dad taking him along with his neighbor's daughter to kindergarten. He remembered being picked up in the afternoons by his aunt or by the neighbor who took care of him while his parents worked. As he reflected again on Larry Little, he stated that he did not remember much about what he said. He just remembered that whatever he had to say was captivating.

> His speeches were filled with something pretty profound; along the lines of Louis Farrakhan or Mohammed Ali. The people would stop whatever they were doing to hear him whether they were working on a car or cooking dinner. You couldn't see a blade of grass because everyone was sitting down listening to what he had to say.

This participant grew up Catholic. His mother was Methodist but converted to Catholicism before she married his father. His father grew up Baptist but converted also to Catholicism. He attended Catholic school through fifth grade. The participant felt that the nuns went about their duties in a serious manner. They made sure that the students got their studying done. The students wore uniforms and dress shoes. Sneakers were not allowed. There was an after school daycare program where they could change

into play clothes and sneakers. The play was always monitored. "Somebody knew where you were all of the time."

The participant felt that close monitoring is what is sadly lacking in the African-American community today. He didn't feel that the strict environment needed to produce well-behaved children is valued today. Even though his environment appeared strict, he confessed that he loved it. "I had plenty of people who cared about me, plenty of people who had my best interest in mind whether I realized it at the time or not."

The participant related that after the fifth grade he enrolled in public school. The family moved from an apartment complex to a house owned by his great aunt. He found public school work less challenging and excelled. He remembered fondly a huge birthday party that his parents had planned secretly for him. It appeared that his friends came by the dozens.

His extracurricular activities in junior high school consisted of band, football, baseball, wrestling, chess club, high I. Q. bowl, National Honor Society, junior marshal and president of student government. He took art classes as well as the usual scholastic classes.

The participant felt that his teachers always took an interest in him. In fact, he felt that his teachers took an interest in everybody that was trying.

> They took a special interest in people who tried harder or people who were really interested in learning things. Most of my teachers pretty much nurtured my interest in things, pushed me to do better and praised me. I think that praise is very strong. You reward someone by praise. I thrive off of it. If I do something and I do it well, I like to be praised for it. That's what I remember about my teachers collectively. They nurtured my interest in whatever they taught whether it was biology or mathematics.

His tenth grade biology teacher was also his assistant coach for wrestling. "So he had his eye on me in the classroom and outside of it as well." He thought it was pretty cool to have a teacher who was also his coach.

He was persuaded by the parishioners of his church to attend a large college following his graduation from high school. He was excited about having a chance to compete with some of the most brilliant students in the country.

> It was a culture shock. I didn't like it and I did very poorly. I grew up surrounded by White people and Black people and people of different religions. I guess the culture shock came from knowing that it wasn't just the prejudice but it was growing up and not knowing how to deal with it, because I never had to deal with it until I went to college. Not having a Nikki Giovanni book under my arm telling me how to handle such situations, being a long way from home, not being around anyone I grew up with, and finding out that some people weren't so friendly but just pretending to be really blew my mind. I was in the school of engineering which wasn't my bag. Although I excelled in physics and mathematics, it wasn't my forte. It really wasn't my strong interest. I was more interested in literature.

The participant left the university, returned to his hometown and did not attend school for a year. People told him that once a person dropped out of college it was harder to go back. After the year was up he enrolled in a local college that was predominantly African-American. His concentration was in the area of his interest. He was a straight A student.

Eventually the participant applied to a predominantly White college that was more prestigious and continued to excel. Looking back, however, he felt that the African-American college professors took more of an interest in him. He felt the predominantly African-American college could have offered him more career choices as an African-American male than the predominantly White college. He eventually earned a degree in English from

the predominantly White college. "I am still not sure what I am going to do with it. I was just determined to major in something that I liked."

His present job is not associated with his degree. He chose not to go on to graduate school though it is still an option. He felt that he needed a break from studying.

The participant got married and started a family. He stated that he was now ready to attend graduate school. He did not feel that a B. A. degree in today's world would be sufficient. He equated it to a high school diploma. "You've got to have a Masters or Ph.D. now. You've just got to." He said that he was planning to venture into business, public relations, or advertising. He is presently free lancing with a small company owned by a friend.

The participant felt that religion was important in rearing children. He spoke of the necessity of being well-versed about the Bible, having a strong belief in God. He felt that Christianity was the thing that prevented individuals from committing major sins.

> As of late, my daddy is still the major influence in my life. As a new homeowner, when I need advice on things, I consult my dad. My dad gives me marital advice, fraternal advice, and advice about being a handyman around the house. I hope I will learn enough from my dad to pass it on to my children.

He spoke of his pastor as being a major force in his life. Many men who were in his dad's fraternity have served as role models for him. This participant's decision to become a part of the Baptist church was based on a discussion that he and his fiancee had prior to their marriage. "We didn't want our children to grow up confused, trying to learn two doctrines."

The participant started attending his wife's church and found satisfaction there. "The Bible to me up to that time, wasn't living. By that I mean I couldn't apply it to everyday situations." After hearing the minister's

sermons over a period of time, he could see the relevance of the Bible. He decided to join the Baptist church. "There was always something lacking growing up Catholic."

The seventh participant is an unmarried, 23 year old Pre-med student. He grew up in a rural county in an area of poor African-American people. "It was a rural ghetto." His parents did not allow him to associate with a lot of the other children so he did not have a lot of male friends while growing up. His main playmate was his cousin. His father and mother worked in education. "I like the path chosen by my father and his characteristics as far as school is concerned."

My father was usually calm, quiet, and dedicated to his job. He never seemed to get upset over problems. My father always appeared to be interested in things that I wanted to do and always encouraged me to do my best.

The participant's maternal grandfather was a church pastor whose denomination had one of the largest African-American congregations in the country. He regarded his grandfather as a positive role model. "He is a holiness preacher and a positive influence." His maternal grandmother was also a minister.

His mother's attitude concerning the church was a negative one; therefore, there was not a religious background present in the home. This attitude, he felt, stemmed from a disagreement with some of the church's doctrine. Because of this he was never made to go to church even though his mother had not lost her belief. "I spent many summers with my grandparents and went with them to church. As far as church is concerned, I never went on a regular schedule."

For the past two and one-half years he has been going to a Baptist church with his girlfriend and at times on his own. He said his only reason for going was because his girlfriend was going. The participant said he got very little out of church. "I don't believe there is any right religion. I don't understand or necessarily agree with what the present minister is saying. I have never really joined the church but I have gone to several local churches."

The participant had little association with African-American teachers. He felt that what he learned about American history was from a White perspective.

He spoke of his high school experience as being horrible with virtually no social life. "There were not any Black students taking college preparatory courses with me." He said that ninety percent of the African-American students were in special education. He did not feel that he could build a relationship with those students because of his college aspirations.

He spoke of his classes as having no African-American males and very few African-American females.

> There were a lot of pregnant Black girls around. Most of the Black students had no plans for the future. One Black girl liked me but I couldn't associate with her because she had no future goals. I wasn't able to establish any fraternal bonds with other Black students.

This participant was accepted to a predominantly White university after graduating from high school. He stated that he would not have felt secure in a predominantly African-American university. "I would have been scared to have gone there. Psychologically I feel I have been damaged by a lack of experience in bonding with other Black students." Since he has been in college, he has formed an association with both Whites and African-

Americans. He felt that the bonds he had established were very strong ones. He also said he had pledged to one of the few non-White fraternities on the campus.

The participant related that while in high school, there were no girls for the African-American boys and no dances or parties. He was not active in sports but did join other types of clubs. In reflecting again on his community, he saw the people as more friendly than people today. They did things for each other but there were still a lot of things going on that were not good for young people like himself.

The participant related that some of the promising African-American students that attended his high school did not go to college because of their lost direction. He solemnly stated that most of the girls his age had children or are pregnant. Some of the male friends he had are incarcerated, deceased, or on drugs. He did not see much in the community to help give anyone direction.

The eighth participant is 34 years old and is married without children. He is a college graduate and is employed in city government. This participant was very proud that he was named for his dad. There was much, he felt, that he had to live up to in carrying that name. The participant grew up in a family of three brothers and four sisters. He spoke of having seen examples of positive African-American males on a fairly consistent basis.

> In front of me and back of me, on both sides of me, the males were present in those homes. They were thought of as extended family. When I say extended family, I am speaking of someone who assisted in my upbringing in terms of guidance and assistance and when needed, discipline.

He related a story about breaking a neighbor's window while he and his brother were playing ball. The participant's dad seemed to have known

about it almost immediately. His dad and the neighbor came to an agreement on what the punishment should be. The boys had to pay for the damage in time devote to mowing the neighbor's yard.

The participant spoke of the households who lost adult male figures through death. "In growing up I just remember mostly households with a mom and a dad always present and I saw that as a positive influence." As a child he dreamed about someday having those same responsibilities and felt that he would mirror their practices.

According to the participant, his dad was a strict disciplinarian who worked two jobs to support his wife and family. He said that his father was not at home a lot because of his work schedule. During the times that he was there, usually weekends, he did things together with them as a family. This participant spoke of how his parents took the children to church every Sunday. "At that point we didn't have a choice." He said that his dad was very active in the church. He was a member of the choir, the board of ushers, and the board of trustees. He performed other services as well.

The participant related that "at home we had devotional periods as a family and at the table." Because of his father's work schedule most of the Bible stories were shared by his mom. "My dad's guiding influence resulted in myself and my brothers coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. That was a real vital influence."

There were male role models in the participant's church who served as Sunday School superintendents, Sunday School teachers, and Vacation Bible School teachers. "I really can't say anything negative from my exposure to African-American males in my early life."

The participant said that he became more active in church during his junior high and high school years. The family moved their membership to another church due to urban renewal. He shared that his father made the lone decision to move the family to a different church. "There was absolutely no family discussion on the matter." The new church appeared to be more active than the previous one.

The participant spoke very proudly about being asked to participate in a bus ministry that was comprised mostly of African-American male church members. His duty was to make door-to-door Saturday visits for witnessing and inviting people to church. He became a church van driver whose responsibility was to go on college campuses in the area and provide the students with transportation to church.

The participant stated that he attended an all-male African-American college where his brother had gone before him. He encountered several African-American male role models but he spoke of one in particular. This person was head of a Christian organization on the campus. This participant felt that joining the organization kept him focused with his social activities. It was at this college that he was exposed to numerous famous African-American speakers. Among them was Arthur Ashe. At that point the participant reverted to junior high school again. He said that he participated in sports because of the influence of an African-American male.

The participant spoke of his Boy Scout group which was headed by an African-American male in his church. He was also able to become involved with an athletic league through his church. The participant felt that the scouting program was a good influence because it was an opportunity to learn about responsibility.

This participant found academics to be a constant challenge during his early school years. There were few African-American males present in the school. "In fact, I don't know if there were less African-American males present in the school or that they were just spread out over the system."

The participant related a story about learning his multiplication tables. He said that the teacher would line them up across the board and see who could go the longest telling time tables and giving the answers.

> I think it was fourth grade. He called them out. We got a chance to stay up and continue reciting. There was a reward for those who could stay up the longest. Those who missed had to pay the penalty and the penalty was giving him, as he called it, a 440. It was like you getting ready to sprint and he would just lay it on us. Depending on how many we had missed, he'd swat us one, two, and so forth times. That was a strong way of disciplining someone but it encouraged us to learn because we didn't want that treatment anymore. At the time I really didn't appreciate it. I am thankful I only had to get one swat but I do remember that seven times nine is sixty-three.

The participant had his first experience riding a bus in junior high school. The bus was driven by an African-American male. He had wanted this experience because his brothers and sisters had ridden the bus for several years. It was not as exciting as he had anticipated, but he endured it. The participant just simply was not that excited by any facet of school.

> I guess I was looking for things. That's why I went out for basketball. I said hey, I'm tall enough to play basketball and I can do it. There were a lot of other people who encouraged me. And you know I did it.

The college issue came up at the end of high school and he was asked if he had planned to go to college. He did not know that he had a choice because all of his seven brothers and sisters had attended college. He said it was really the thing to do in his family. It was expected of them and his

parents expected it. "To back up a bit, my dad had a fourth grade education and he supported our family through custodial type work."

Prior to having come to North Carolina, this participant's parents were farmers. They saw the move as an opportunity to get out of farming because farming was becoming less profitable in the changing times.

His parents brought five children with them to North Carolina. Four more children were born after the move, including the participant.

> Just seeing the determination that my dad had with his lack of opportunity for formal education was amazing to me. I watched him, someone that didn't have the papers but managed his finances to move his family from one state to the next. Immediately securing employment represented a person with a strong work ethic. I don't recall him ever being out sick in the vast numbers of years that he worked. The only time he missed work was due to vacation or death in the immediate family. Even then he seemed to have work on his mind.

He viewed his father as being dedicated to his job. The participant admired his dad for wanting to be gainfully employed, for being able to support himself and the family and for adequately providing for them even though he was not making a significant amount of money. "We never went hungry and we always had clothes to wear."

He spoke of his parents working together as a team. Although his mother never worked outside of the home, she would do small chores for her neighbors, such as ironing or keeping the neighbors' children. He remembered his mother ironing shirts for a neighbor, a minister, who lived across the street. "Since my mom was at home all of the time, she kept the extra keys to the neighbors' houses."

The participant felt that even today his dad's influence is a guiding force in his life. His dad is now a double amputee. He developed diabetes

after his youngest brother was born. Within the last sixteen years he developed serious problems because the disease was at a critical stage when discovered.

> He never really stopped. He got hand controls on his car and continued to drive. The license bureau refused to give him a license initially. He talked them into giving him a restricted license. He got hand controls on his car which showed his determination. I admired him for not letting it get him down. He continued to sing in the church choir. He purchased prosthesis and learned to walk without crutches. He even cut the grass once but we put our foot down and forbade him to try it again. We felt it just was not worth the risk.

The participant shared that his parents were not financially able to provide college tuition so he worked at various odd jobs. In fact, practically all of his life he worked to earn money. When he was in elementary school, he worked in order to have lunch money. He carried papers and even worked in a grocery store during high school. He worked in restaurants and with a recreation center. At the time he was just in the eleventh grade. It really made him feel special to have the responsibility of opening the center each day. "But you know because of the work example my dad had shown us, I knew I had to be there on time and really early.

The participant said that he was able to complete financial aid papers to get a need based scholarship for college. After college he worked to pay back the student loans he received. He said that in college he was exposed to things that he never thought he would experience.

After graduation from college he was torn between going to graduate school or working. He realized that he was not financially able to continue his education at that point.

His first employment was with a school system. He later got into banking. He did some publishing, worked with government services, and

worked in sales and marketing. "I really desired to be in business for myself and not working for someone else. I just never saw myself working for someone else on a long-term basis." He said that this was instilled in him because he felt that African-Americans should own their businesses.

> I respect what Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement did. It was not just that we should be able to go to various places to eat, but to own them. I'm not just speaking of restaurants and hotels in general, but other establishments also. I admire such men as John Johnson and Joe Dudley.

When he came to the area, he encountered an African-American male who had been a major influence during his growing years in his hometown. This man was working as a banker. The participant was not aware that this person had moved to the area. He was happy to be able to continue using him as a role model. There were times when he was low on finances and this person advanced him loans. "When I was approached about going back to my hometown on weekends to work with the scouts there, I did because I felt this was my opportunity to reach out to other young Black males just as this person reached out to me."

This participant, in closing the interview, shared that his hometown mentor that he spoke of as advancing him loans, was an excellent business example. He was probably the cause of the participant's having taken the direction that he did. "Even now I see things that I want to do because of his influence."

The ninth participant is a 25 year old who is married and is the father of one child. He is a college graduate and is employed as a supervisor in a factory. This participant remembered spending a lot of time with his grandparents. He looked upon them as true role models because they set the foundation and standards that were responsible for the values he established

in his life. His parents worked and at the time he thought they just did not want to take care of him. The participant had two sisters but no brothers.

> If I had followed my daddy's role I wouldn't have gone to college. He wanted you to be a good hard working man. He often told me you make more money on the floor of a factory than these college jobs. My grandmother taught me that if I made a dollar I should save fifty cents. I always remembered that. I hung around a lot of hoodlums, people who were in my class. I thought that was what I wanted. I guess I was looking for a friend, a father role model, someone who could lead. I was confused. I had a father who wasn't there so I felt some of these men could supplement for my father. As a Black person, it's rough. I guess that's what I was looking for. I was looking for a Black male friend role model as I was growing up because my father was never there. I didn't see him until I was about thirteen or fourteen because he was always working swing shift and always slept during the day. So my grandparents always worked with me. I guess that's why I got where I am today. If I worked around the house and didn't do it right, they would make me do it over again.

The participant shared with me that he got into a lot of trouble while going through junior high school. He thought the things he did were cool things to do. "I didn't have anybody to go home to." Later his mother worked first shift and could be at home in the evenings, so he went to live with her.

> She was sympathetic and sensitive toward me, so she never tried to correct me. She would just say all right don't do that anymore. My daddy was still always gone but at least I didn't have to live with my grandparents anymore.

The participant felt that African-American teachers should have given him breaks. He did not understand that the pressure they placed on him was designed to help him become a successful person. "I didn't understand those things until I got into the work force and became a supervisor." He said that if he had to go through high school again he'd never give the trouble he had given. The participant said that he did the very opposite of what his father

wanted him to do because he was still very angry about his absence from the home when he was growing up.

> I drank beer because daddy hated beer. He drank liquor and smoked so I didn't smoke. Anything he did I rebelled against because I felt he wasn't what I wanted him to be. He always put me down. I guess my dad was frustrated and took it out on me. Once he told me that all he wanted to do was to provide for us and that he didn't want us to turn out like him. I guess he took it out on the ones close to him and that was tough.

He saw his senior year in high school as the beginning of his racial problems. The assistant principal once related to a White friend of how he thought that he should stay away from "those niggers" and if they worked together, the Whites could get rid of them at school. The White friend shared this information with the participant. The participant later worked at a grocery store where he experienced racist attitudes in the employer. He was given the menial tasks to do.

> I was really trying to get away from racism. I tried hard to find the good in White folks, but from eighteen to twenty, all I saw was the negatives. They kept hounding me. At the store I was demoted from bag boy to stock room without reason. When I asked my supervisor why, he didn't want to talk about it. When I discussed it with my dad, he just said shut up and go on. He was brought up to honor the White man and that's what he wanted me to do. When I go to church I look up at this blue-eyed Jesus that I'm supposed to honor.

The participant stated that he tried hard not to believe in racism. Once he hit the work force, however, it appeared to be never ending.

> It came full blast on me, no promotions, just stagnated. I became frustrated. As a high school student, I tried to get along with the Whites and they appeared very friendly toward me. I would slap them on the back and laugh and they would do the same to me. On my job I set out to get even. I became very bitter.

His aunt was concerned about what would happen to him if he lost his job or was laid off. "I said, 'I've been there too long to get laid off.' That's the

way my mind once thought. I'm going to have me a BMW. I don't need to go to college." His aunt knew that his kind of thinking was detrimental to his well-being and she became angry with him. "I used to make my aunt and uncle so mad they would want to hit me. My uncle would just get up and leave. Do you know that three weeks later I got laid off?"

The participant's aunt helped him get enrolled in a community college. For about a year, he was not serious about college. He met many girls and started dating around. Finally his uncle, who had a master's degree in education opened his eyes. He felt his aunt and uncle were right to pressure him to go to college. "My daddy just said pursue work." Later, this participant went back to a full-time job. He slacked off in his grades because "I was mighty tired. I've got to quit, so I paid my car off and got my insurance caught up."

The participant's racial problems on the job seemed even worse than before. "You know they were going off on Blacks and all that stuff. I didn't feel comfortable working with the uneducated for the rest of my life anyway because I knew I could do better."

While in college, the participant's religion teachers had told him he should never settle for less than his best. He graduated from college with honors.

> They were supposed to give awards to all of the presidents of the clubs. I was a Black president so they gave it to my vice-president. All of the other presidents were White so they received their awards. It was really a shock to me. All the presidents but myself received the awards and it hurt. You know, really bad. That's when I was determined to go even further. I said forget this man. I turned down job offers. I said why am I going to go on working and be limited to just an associate degree? I want it all.

He enrolled in another college and was recognized in Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities. He received numerous other awards. From that time on he had a cold heart. His religion teacher changed his mind, telling him that there were good White people as well as bad. The teacher instructed him to search for the good. He felt his best exposure to religion came from college.

The participant distanced himself from the church and its teachings as he knew it from his grandparents religious guidance. He related that his personal observations about the church left him with a lack of confidence in the church.

> I've seen so many preachers leave the church because of embezzlement and infidelity. Because of all of this corruption I lost my faith. I saw the women trying to outdress the others. I saw a pastor out there messing with half his congregation with his wife sitting on the other side unhappy. I saw an unhappy home, children all psychologically scarred just as I was. The preacher did more stuff than I ever did. I didn't learn anything in church. All I heard was screaming and hollering.

The participant's experience in religion classes filled a gap that was left by the church. He found the in-depth study of the Bible in his religion classes.

> I wanted to learn to interpret the Bible, to go verse by verse and brainstorm what they meant. All I saw at that church was a big show and a lot of money going out. I finally took up Louis Farrahkan's belief. He taught me how to talk. He taught me how to communicate.

The participant spoke of drug dealers in his community and how he saw them as "people who wanted to get it quick." He talked about where it led them, saying that most people around the neighborhood honored the drug dealers because they had the finest women, the finest cars, beepers, and flip phones, but it led to evil. He said his religion taught him to add honor to intellect. "The car defined the drug dealers' identity. He could not accept

himself for what he was. The White man's done a good job of dividing us up. That's why I carried my problems to Black men."

The participant saw the African-American woman as advancing further than the African-American man. This, in his estimation, made the woman feel superior to her mate. Many, he said, had the idea that they did not need a man because they could do whatever the man could do. The participant said his wife made a lot more money than he did, but that he accepted that because he knew she always would.

> A Black woman will always be promoted over a Black man. Education is the key to success. If I had never gone to school, I wouldn't have understood why my wife was making more than I. I would probably have abused her. Because I understand, when she comes home tired, I comfort her. I don't insist that she get my dinner ready.

He said that his grandparents always told him that "a person had two ears and one mouth for a reason, to talk once and listen twice." The participant related how values taught are sometimes ignored.

> I think that all of us had a good foundation at the beginning but kind of diverted from and rebelled against those values. I wanted to see the other side of the coin. My grandparents had shown me only one side, so I went out and had all the fun I could and I found out that my grandparents were always right.

The participant felt that the problems of today were due to the fact that most people do not have role models. "They don't have people out there talking to them."

The last participant is married with two children. He is a 51 year old high school counselor who is also a minister. This participant grew up in a coal mining town. He was the fifth child of nine. There were six boys and three girls. His father was a coal miner and his mother was a housewife. At that time, nine was a typical number of children for most families as he

remembered it. Families with ten and twelve children were considered large then. The majority of people in that town earned their living by working the mines. There were two African-American lawyers, one African-American dentist, and several morticians.

> We had most of the material things that we wanted because the miners had a company number and could go to the company store and charge such things as clothing and other material things. For the most part we were pretty comfortable because the majority of people in that community had brand new cars. The men traded every year. The church houses were full every Sunday, and the people were well-dressed. I really didn't know that there were better ways of living until I got older. I was pretty much content and I had a great deal of security because families shared in the successes of each other. They shared in the grief and the sorrow and all those factors, so you had that comradeship there.

The participant felt that he still had close ties with his hometown. His feelings were very evident, even though there had been a separation by time and distance with many of those community people.

His elementary school had about three hundred students. During that period, coal mining towns were on the move with the northern states needing coal. Many of the people who came to his hometown originated from North and South Carolina. The participant's parents moved from North Carolina to West Virginia so that his father could work the mines. He spoke of the African-Americans living on one side of the railroad tracks and the Whites living on the other side of them.

As a high school student the participant's goal was to study mortuary science. He related that near the end of his senior year he realized that everybody did not die of natural causes. "I knew that I could not handle some of the things that I soon discovered were associated with death and dying. I

guess I was more fascinated with the fancy cars and the dress of the morticians."

After high school, the participant left home and went north to find employment. When he didn't find employment, he returned home. Still dissatisfied, he moved to the North to live with an aunt. This time he found a job.

The participant eventually realized that he wanted to pursue a college degree, so he quit his job. His father died during this time, so he returned to his hometown. Eventually, he enrolled in a local college to pursue a degree in social studies.

He taught school in a nearby county, but he became dissatisfied with the school system there and accepted a teaching position for a year in a northern state. He resigned there and moved to the South, where he was hired to work in a high school. It seemed that he was finally satisfied with his job placement.

During the summer of that year, he worked with the neighborhood youth corps. He needed the summer employment in order to maintain his present lifestyle as well as to earn extra money to pursue another degree. He enrolled in a master's program in guidance.

With the school system's changes he went through a period of reassignments to several schools before finally becoming stationary at one school. He was appointed to the position of counselor. After four years, an additional counselor was appointed. Within the next two years, one of the counselors was reassigned because of a drop in enrollment at the school. Even though he was the senior counselor, he was the one who was reassigned. "I knew that my performance as a counselor was good. The only

explanation I would give to the move was that I was Black and the second counselor was White." He said that he accepted all the moves and viewed them as learning experiences.

The participant felt the call to become a minister. He attended a nearby Bible college and later a seminary. He earned both ministerial and Masters degrees. The greatest experience, he said, would be to look back and realize the lives that he had touched, both in the field of education and in the church.

In reflecting again upon his early life, he was very proud that he had been reared in a community where people were concerned about each other.

> My mom and dad were hard-working Christian people who brought us up in the church. Church has been a part of my life all of my life. I would say church and community are factors that helped me to be where I am now. There were strong African-American men heading households. We had an opportunity to look up to these men. We knew they were coal miners down digging in the dust of the ground but on Sundays you would see another person. They were in leadership positions in the church. The women of the community were very connected. You had more than one mom or dad looking out for you. You had a lot of school teachers who were the motivators. I think somewhere within those years I was determined to accomplish something in life.

The participant spoke of dissatisfaction with the job he had found in the North because it was custodial work. He said he saw young fellows with ties and suits on about his age and he realized he could not continue pushing the broom. After seven or eight months, he got a job in a medical laboratory. The job held real potential for him and there were students majoring in pharmacy. He probably could have stayed there and moved up through the ranks but something continued to tell him that he should go on and get a degree.

> I worked in that medical laboratory and I wore a long white jacket all day long around those pharmacists, but early every other weekend I had to go in and push that broom. I had to mop the floors and clean the ash trays. The janitorial mentality was still there. That was when I decided to move on.

The participant felt that he would not have obtained a degree if he had stayed there and taken a chance on advancing through the ranks when there were several pharmacists who could have replaced him because they had a degree. He was doing some of the things that required a degree but the mere fact that he had to perform the janitorial services on the weekends kept him from becoming too complacent.

The participant's community once again became a part of the interview. He spoke of his best friend while growing up and how he became a medical doctor and later obtained a Masters and Ph.D. in education.

> Several of my classmates have done well. On the other hand, there are some who have gone in the opposite direction even though they came from the same background we did. As I said, the homes for the most part were headed by strong Black men but many of those men were not pushing their children toward college. I think most coal miners wanted their children to do better than they did, but that did not necessarily include going to college. My mother told me later in life that my dad always prayed that none of his sons would work in a coal mine, and none of us did. He never dreamed that one of my sisters would work in a coal mine, but when it was opened up to women, she did. It appeared that in coal mining towns, the company owned you. We all grew up with the mind that you could go up North and get a job making a hundred dollars a week where you could live comfortable. My take home pay was less than half of that. It turned out to be a blessing that I didn't get a piece of the pie because it forced me to come back and do what I always wanted to do.

In speaking of his school years, the participant confessed that he did not like elementary school because the teachers were very much in authority. Very few appeared to rule with love and tenderness.

> I always felt that most of my troubles appeared in elementary school. I really could not quite get into this school thing until I got into junior high school. My junior year in high school proved to be a down year academically because I was having a good time. I knew what I should have been doing but I was being liberated. Many of the teachers would warn me that I should become more serious about my work. Later I could see where they were coming from.

This participant spoke of his sincere love for his godparents. They appeared to adopt all the children in the neighborhood because they had no children of their own.

His community activities were limited. There was a man who promised faithfully that he could organize a Boy Scout group but it never materialized. In later years the participant came to realize that the man was overly committed. At the start of his eleventh grade year, this participant joined the Junior Masons. That was probably the only community group in which he participated.

During high school, he participated in the band. The band director, who was a male African-American, spent a lot of time with the students. He stated that the students had so much respect for him that he could treat them any kind of way and they still loved him. He did not have the same association with the band director's replacement after he retired, so he quit the band. The next year, to his dismay, he had been assigned that same teacher in another class. He felt that he paid that entire year for dropping out of band.

The participant ran track his senior year but he stated that his life centered mainly around the church and school. He said that if he had it to do again, he would want to grow up the same way.

Summary

The interviews were conducted with ten African-American males from the Piedmont area of North Carolina. The interviewed men discussed the earliest recollections of their lives in the areas of family, community, church, education and career choices.

The ten participants were products of two-parent homes. Their fathers were all employed beyond the boundaries of home while some mothers were either employed or homemakers. Kin and fictive kin played major supporting roles in the majority of the participants' early lives as did many "othermothers" of the community.

The participants could be considered as lower-middle class during their earlier years with upward mobility into middle-class in later years. A major difference was that of family size. The siblings ranged from two to nine. The majority of the families were active in church activities. The findings and suggestions for community, home and school will be discussed in chapter five.

Chapter V

Introduction

We often read about animal rights and environmental rights, yet "no visible group seems to be interested in spending any energy to save the African-American male" (Wright, 1992). The escalating homicide and prison rates, the high school drop-out rate, the break-down in moral values and the increases in single parent homes have collectively pointed out the importance of, and the need to address the acute nature of the African-American male's dilemma in society.

The bleak outlook that recent research and almost daily newspaper reports have given to this issue places the African-American male in the endangered category. Statistically, African-American males have been the most likely candidates to score lower on standardized achievement tests, drop out of school, be labeled as mentally handicapped, be expelled from school, and be placed in low ability classes. The investigator, in addressing concerns raised in this study, has investigated the positive effects of adult African-American role models on young African-American males (McKay, 1994).

In this study, data were gathered from young African-American males who were successful due to positive influences by adult African-American male role models. From the findings of the study, conclusions and suggestions for practice for community, home, and school are presented.

The sample of this study consisted of ten African-American males ranging in age from twenty-three to fifty-one. The participants were identified by educators, church members, fraternity and sorority members, lodge members, college professors, businessmen, and by the investigator

through a local newspaper. Interviews were scheduled and conducted at the residence of each of the ten participants.

Summary of Findings

Fathers were mentioned frequently as having been major influences in the lives of many participants. A majority of the participants acknowledged that while they were growing up their fathers provided for their families and held more than one job. Certain participants related that they had limited time with their fathers because of work. Several of them mentioned being exposed to a strong work ethic.

In addition to the dominant theme of the paternal work role, the sub-theme of extended family support emerged. Extended family members were often mentioned as having taken part in the participants' upbringing, which was consistent with the findings of Collins (1990). Often values were instilled by these family members. Some of the family members included grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The family members were valuable to the families' livelihoods because they allowed parents to be gainfully employed or aided them in family crisis. Other assistance came in the form of monetary and moral support.

The second sub-theme that emerged was the fact that fathers were often instrumental in encouraging their sons to pursue education beyond high school. They wanted a better life for their sons than they had. In some instances, education was expected because the parents were educated.

A second dominant theme emergent from the study was that personal and caring relationships developed among fictive kin. African-American

males in the immediate neighborhood influenced young African-American males during their early lives. Several participants emphasized how the neighborhood was an environment that helped them develop meaningful relationships between peers and adults. Some mentioned the fact that they idolized African-American male personalities who were just ordinary, stable citizens. Some of the men were in leadership positions in the church and in the community. The people of the community, according to many participants, were motivating as well as surrogate parents to a degree. Because of the close-knit structure of the neighborhood, families shared in the successes, grief, and sorrow that came into play in their daily activities. Community activity of this variety is consistent with the findings of Collins (1990) and Dill (1994) in their discussions of the support roles of kin, fictive kin, and surrogate parental figures in African-American communities.

A sub-theme that emerged was that of a community work ethic. The participants were products of low-income neighborhoods. They recognized the participation of their neighbors in work activities. These work activities included employment and working around the neighborhood. They spoke of how African-American men were recognized as heads of families because the participants were impressed by seeing them going to jobs and on weekends doing small jobs around their homes.

Another emergent sub-theme was that participants often recalled having opportunities to play. Some participants mentioned some form of play such as flying kites, playing ball, or riding bikes. Some of the participants were involved in backyard play and familiar childhood games. The neighborhood environment, in many cases, offered safe interaction among neighborhood children.

The rule that the participants had to go to church was a fairly common rule in most of the households. Church attendance and family involvement emerged as a dominate theme in the narratives of many participants. The majority of the participants' families consistently attended church. A few of the participants were involved in activities sponsored by the church.

Christianity played a major role in the lives of several of the fathers. A significant sub-theme emerging from the discussion of religious influence was the religious activity of some of the participants' fathers. Some were strong and active participants in the official make-up of the church. Others merely held membership.

The presence of the fathers was evident on Sundays when they attended church with their families and took an active part in the church service. Some fathers were solid and motivating participants throughout their children's lives as well as supportive of their children when they became involved in church activities.

Another significant religious sub-theme emergent from the narratives was the development of serious adult religious activity among the participants resulting from early childhood religious experiences. In many cases, participants who described exposure to religious activity early in their lives also noted a continuation of religious experiences.

The absence of African-American male educators in schools after integration was a dominant theme in the discussions of education in the participants' narratives. In evaluating what African-American role models are present in the educational experiences of young African-American males and their influence on the continuation, scope, and direction of their education, many of the participants expressed that after integration educators

were primarily White or African-American females. The few African-American males were spread out over school systems. Many stated that they encountered few African-American male teachers during their school experience.

The sub-theme of fair and unfair treatment emerged from the discussion of African-American male presence in education. Many of the participants saw their elementary years as nurturing years. The participants expressed that many female elementary teachers, African-American and White, treated them better than their high school teachers. African-American coaches were mentioned as being fair and encouraging educators.

The majority of the participants felt that a double standard was used by their teachers after elementary school. They saw this as an obstacle in their educational training. Aside from the African-American educators who motivated them, some received very little encouragement from White male teachers. Overall, the participants felt that they needed encouragement and compliments.

Also emerging from the discussion of education, was the influence of remaining African-American male role models in the educational sector. African-American athletic coaches were often mentioned as being guiding forces and influences in the lives of the participants. Participants were often involved in athletic activities within schools and the community. African-American coaches frequently provided encouragement and guidance for the participants.

Other educators were credited with giving encouragement and guidance throughout their junior high and high school years. Family

members and friends who were educated encouraged some of them to go to college.

Additionally, the sub-theme of parental expectations in education emerged from the participants' narratives. Many of the participants' fathers saw education as a way out of poverty and desired this for their sons even though many of them were not educated. Parents frequently supported the teachers' decisions on discipline.

A final dominant theme emerging from the study was the influence that African-American role models had on the jobs and/or career choices of young African-American males. African-American male educators in various job assignments within the schools were often responsible for the participants having chosen their particular careers. These educators were counselors, coaches, and classroom teachers. Although the numbers of African-American male educators were decidedly small, the influence of those who were in schools was significant.

An emerging sub-theme in the narratives was the influence of African-American males outside education who helped influence job or career choices. The participants spoke of African-American males in the community sector who encouraged and supported them in making decisions to pursue particular careers.

Participants noted the influence of members of fraternal organizations and lodges as well as family friends in the formation of their career objectives. They also noted the support and influence of African-American professionals on their developing career aspirations.

Suggestions for Community, Home, and School

A consideration of the participants' positive experiences reflects broad community support from parents, relatives, friends, professionals, the church, and schools. These entities provided a strong and beneficial emotional and psychological superstructure for the participants and contributed to their success as adult citizens.

This community superstructure can be reconstructed for contemporary youth through the development of a network of committed and interested members of homes, churches, businesses, and schools. The contemporary network of community can and must transcend racial, class, and gender distinctions. Communication and interaction between these elements of the community can allow high levels of support to be maintained for youth. In cases where contemporary affairs challenge youth or their families, a network of broad community support can help maintain the integrity of a child's environment. This variety of community support was noted by Dill (1994) as having been an essential element of African-American society, and beyond racial distinction, such support activity promises to be broadly beneficial.

The findings of the study indicated that support in the home was an integral part of the participants' lives. Fathers were present in the home and engaged in the work force, projecting a strong work ethic. Mothers were also in the home and providing nurture and support for children.

Contemporary changes in the American culture have altered the structure of the American family, especially the African-American family, and in many cases the support structure has been weakened or collapsed.

However, there are ways in which the postmodern African-American home can reconstruct and redeploy a comparable support structure.

Networks of formal and informal support can provide integral supplements to parental involvement. Relatives, friends, neighbors, professional colleagues, church members, clergy, local clubs, and parents of a child's playmates can all serve to strengthen and broaden the foundation of support for children and parents.

Where professional obligations and other sources of parental absence threaten to remove from a contemporary child's life the kind of support cited by the participants, alternative interaction by relatives and friends can help maintain a constant level of necessary support. Where contemporary stress and domestic problems produce emotional and physical threats to family stability, church members and clergy can aid in productive ways. Such support systems correspond to historical foundations of community referenced in work by Gilkes (1994). When the absence of parents or financial difficulty threatens to limit a child's creative abilities or constructive play experiences, parents should act to tap clubs and fellow parents as resources for maintaining a high-quality of childhood experience for their children.

More support for parents can be found in more formal organizations. Agencies and professionals provide a highly specialized element to the network of support for children and parents. Physicians, hospitals, and health departments that are aware of and dedicated to assisting parents can, of course, provide necessary physical care of children by providing information to parents who might otherwise remain unaware of their children's special medical needs. Parents who are made aware of needs can seek those resources available. Moreover, social workers, mental health agencies, and

professional therapists can provide early intervention and solutions for parents having difficulty in maintaining a nurturing home environment.

Businesses, professional organizations, and churches can serve as important resources not only by engaging in direct support for specific families in crisis, but also by taking an active role in ensuring the daily health of the community. Businesses can, of course, provide substantial financial support for the maintenance of a healthy environment for youth. Professional organizations can give guidance to youth and families. Churches can provide both financial and spiritual support.

In order to lessen the negative effects of absent parents in working households, businesses can offer release time for parents to engage in school-related activities or more basic child care activities. Businesses can also provide sponsorship and space for community events and local club activities. Moreover, they can become actively engaged in recognizing parents in the community whose children have excelled in school or aided the community. Business has a history of supporting the arts, and local cultural events should receive the benefits of such support as well.

Professional and fraternal organizations are capable of offering guidance to youth seeking to become employed in various disciplines or seeking professional training in colleges and universities. They can also offer aid and advice to parents seeking to advance financially and professionally. Such organizations can provide mentors for youth and work closely with schools to ensure the success of youth.

Churches have the ability to offer direct and unique spiritual support to all members of the community, but especially to youth. Church activities could provide quality interaction time for families and necessary emotional

support for youth and families in crisis. The specialized mission of the church can also serve as an organizing resource to address problems within the community.

The findings of the study indicate that schools must address specific needs of young African-American male students. The participants' narratives revealed that their educational progress was hindered by both the low expectations of teachers and major systemic failures of the schools in general.

The keys to increasing achievement in African-American male youth are embedded in a larger need for educational reform. Teachers must be more global in their thinking and less provincial in their approach to cultural diversity. Beyond issues associated with the discourse of racial and ethnic diversity is the fact that teachers must also be equipped philosophically to adjust educational ventures to the varying economic backgrounds and gender-specific needs of their students.

Educational programming that is inclusive racially (for instance, the recovery and inclusion of African-American history and literature) must be accompanied by programming that supports high-level exposure to cultural and academic activity. This high-level programming is that which is unavailable to a broad range of students based largely on class and economics rather than race (for example, computer access and literacy). Issues of access and support related to gender (for example, female students' performance in the sciences and mathematics) must also assume a high priority in a systemic overhaul aimed at increasing academic access, experience, and support for all students.

Beyond the issue of curriculum is the need to educate and recruit teachers who are aware of the varying needs of a diverse student body and willing to engage both students and the community in a fashion designed to increase access and improve the educational experience for all students. This may indeed call for the diversification of faculty beyond the necessary reconstruction of the eroded African-American presence in education.

The narratives of the participants support the idea that African-American males need positive reinforcement and serious efforts toward bolstering their self-esteem. Moreover, it is exceptionally important that the males perceive not only that their cultural beliefs and experiences are received with equal respect as those of White students, but also that equality of instructional and disciplinary activity exists in their educational environment. Because some participants reported incidents of favoritism toward White students, teachers need to be sensitized to this form of behavior.

Although broad changes may be needed to benefit all students, it is exceptionally apparent that systemic changes in schools are needed to ensure the early educational advancement and continued success of the African-American male student. Attention to varying styles of teaching that facilitate learning for African-American males may improve the performance of the students and remedy the problematic issues raised by the participants.

Early intervention in the form of pre-school programming emerges as a potential positive influence on the educational lives of young African-American males. Furthermore, schools should look toward deploying teaching strategies that are designed to facilitate academic progress among African-American males by promoting a nonthreatening environment. This

type of strategy, emphasizing the role of the teacher as facilitator, may eliminate the need and pressure of having to act "cool". Broad systemic changes such as these specifically address the issues of contact and one-on-one instruction and nurturing that the narratives raise.

Especially where upper grades education is concerned, programming can be developed to aid the African-American male student. Participants often insisted that high school was an unpleasant experience, frequently included uncaring or nonsupportive teachers, and served to arrest educational advancement.

School-based programs emphasizing mentorship, advising, and peer counseling could serve to strengthen support systems for African-American males. In addition to the commitment to increased access and diversity, the schools could engage with willing elements of the community to capitalize on the gains made in the classroom. Such programming could also serve to embrace, reconfigure, and redeploy that element of community involvement that participants credited with shaping their lives and providing support. The influence of community leaders, religious groups, professionals, educators, and athletic coaches could be marshaled and deployed in the form of noncompetitive athletic activities that allow the community to engage in a similar type of joint activity mentioned by the participants in their narratives. In each case, nurturing and support duties are shared by the community and serve to increase educational performance.

School systems can engage in activities which not only expose African-American males to intellectual and social challenges but also help identify aptitudes and interests that the participants acknowledge were ignored or arrested in their own educational careers. Artistic and vocational enterprises,

historical field trips, and projects focused on specific and challenging areas of studies would serve as catalysts for academic development.

In order to remedy the hostile environment noted by some of the participants and in the case of exceptional children, educational institutions and educators could avoid labeling students or allowing curriculum guidelines to degenerate to the level of tracking students. Systems could make less use of pull-out programs which diminish community within student bodies and have traditionally created insurmountable barriers especially for African-American male students. More emphasis could be placed on integrating students with learning difficulties into classrooms and less on separating student bodies.

Perhaps most important is the realization that the actual number of African-American educators, especially male educators, is key in reconfiguring the American school model and developing a hospitable environment for African-American males. The participants' narratives reflected the positive influence of African-American educators on their development. The recruitment and hiring of significant numbers of African-American educators in high-visibility academic areas is an essential step in addressing many of the issues raised by the participants in the study.

This combination of strategies emerges from the expressed experiences and needs of the African-American males of this study. The suggestions for educators and the school are that major systemic modifications of this breadth and profundity are necessary to facilitate the academic and social success and progress of African-American males.

Additionally, participants' narratives imply that the school systems' attempts at producing social and academic success and progress must indeed

include connections with specific community activities. Extracurricular attachment to the community might well include community service. Community service projects embrace and redeploy the ideas of community activities expressed in the narratives and also address contemporary community concerns.

Although, the specific problems of family life cannot be directly intervened in by educational systems, educational ventures and partnerships with the community can indirectly influence the development of family life. Participants noted education as a positive influence on family life, even to the point of producing understanding within relationships and the reduction of family violence.

Joint programs of home economics and assertive parenting, and parental tutoring programs could serve to bring parents into the educational environment. Furthermore, programs of family economics, relationship studies, sex education classes and family planning programs could all serve to educate children and parents in ways that would facilitate the successful home life of African-American males.

Suggestions for home, community, church, and the future careers of African-American males are imbedded in suggestions for education. The intact male and female groups found in churches, businesses, fraternities, neighborhood groups, and extended families should form effective groups within the schools to serve as surrogate parents and educators should support and nurture the young African-American male.

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Appendix A

Letter to Participants

PO Box 173
Walnut Cove, NC 27052
_____, 1994

_____
_____
_____

Dear _____:

The purpose of this communication is to give you more information concerning the study in which you agreed to participate. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University of Blackburg, Virginia. A study in some area is one of many requirements for receiving a degree in the doctoral program. My study will center on adult African-American role models and their positive influences on young African-American males.

As an African-American male, my study holds great concern and interest to me. I am very concerned about low self-esteem, school dropouts, violence, and unemployment that exist in the population of young African-American males.

Hopefully, my study will reveal factors that will help schools, communities, and families recruit adult African-American males who possess certain characteristics that can influence the lives of young African-American males. Other young African-American males need to know about the positive influences that adult African-American males had on these young African-American males. Society needs to know about the efforts of positive male African-American role models in order to project a more positive image and to make note of their worthy contributions to our country's growth.

I appreciate your agreement to be a part of my study. Data for my research will be gathered through interviews. With permission, interviews will be tape recorded. All personal information and tape recordings will be kept confidential.

I am confident that my study will be of great benefit to society. Your cooperation to help me complete the study will be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Edward E. Hairston

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Participants

You have been selected to participate in a study concerning positive role models for young African-American males. Your comments in this area of concern will be of great interest to me.

I will take notes and tape record as we engage in conversation. Your name will not be used as your comments are integrated into the study. It is your option to participate or not to participate.

Questions to Initiate Conversation

1. What can you tell me about your early life with your family?

2. What can you tell me about your early life in your neighborhood?

3. What can you tell me about church and religion in your early life?

4. What can you tell me about your experiences in school?

5. What can you share with me about your career or job choice?

Appendix C

Demographic Information Form

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Occupation _____

Education

High School	Undergraduate Degree	Graduate Degree
Diploma ___	B.S. ____ B.A. ____	M.S. ____ M.A. ____ Other _____

Appendix D

Initial List of Codes

Category	Codes	Question
Family Influences:		
FI: Father	FI: FAT	1
FI: Mother	FI: MOT	1
FI: Grandfather	FI: GRF	1
FI: Grandmother	FI: GRM	1
FI: Brother	FI: BRO	1
FI: Sister	FI: SIS	1
FI: Cousin	FI: COU	1
FI: Uncle	FI: UNC	1
FI: Aunt	FI: AUN	1
FI: Other	FI: OTH	1
Internal Family Influences:		
IFF: Personality	IFF: PER	1
IFF: Discipline	IFF: DIS	1
IFF: Economics	IFF: ECO	1
Neighborhood Influences:		
NI: Recreation	NI: REC	2
NI: Crime	NI: CRI	2
NI: Neighbors	NI: NEI	2
NI: Peers	NI: PEE	2
Church Influences:		
CH: Minister	CH: MIN	3
CH: Member	CH: MEM	3
CH: Friend	CH: FRI	3
CH: Relative	CH: REL	3
CH: Other	CH: OTH	3

Educational Influences:

EI: Teacher	EI: TEA	4
EI: Administrator	EI: ADM	4
EI: Coach	EI: COA	4
EI: Student	EI: STU	4
EI: Relative	EI: REL	4

Career Choice Influences:

CCI: Father	CCI: FAT	5
CCI: Mother	CCI: MOT	5
CCI: Grandfather	CCI: GRF	5
CCI: Grandmother	CCI: GRM	5
CCI: Brother	CCI: BRO	5
CCI: Sister	CCI: SIS	5
CCI: Cousin	CCI: COU	5
CCI: Uncle	CCI: UNC	5
CCI: Aunt	CCI: AUN	5
CCI: Teacher	CCI: TEA	5
CCI: Administrator	CCI: ADM	5
CCI: Other	CCI: OTH	5

Appendix E

Contact Summary Form

_____ Site of Interview_____
Interviewee

Interview Date:_____ Today's Date _____

1. What main themes surfaced?

2. Summary of information gained from the five major research questions.

3. Additional information gathered from this interview that is interesting and important.

4. New suggestions from the interviewee.

5. Other concerns.

Vita

Investigator

Edward E. Hairston	Born June 3, 1940	Walnut Cove, NC

Educational Studies

Specialist in Education	Appalachian State University Boone, NC	1988
M.S. Ed. Administration	NC A&T State University Greensboro, NC	1971
B.S. Mathematics	NC A&T State University Greensboro, NC	1961

Experience in Teaching and School Administration

Principal	Southeastern Stokes Junior High School Walnut Cove, NC	1984-Present
Principal	Walnut Cove Intermediate School Walnut Cove, NC	1983-1984
Assistant Principal	South Stokes High School Walnut Cove, NC	1975-1983
Mathematics Teacher	South Stokes High School Walnut Cove, NC	1968-1975
Mathematics Teacher	London High School Walnut Cove, NC	1964-1968
Mathematics Teacher	Mary M. Bethune High School Halifax, VA	1961-1964

(Edward E. Hairston)