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# A Study of Influences and Life Choices: African American Males From an Urban Pre-Trial Detention Center and the Navy

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A STUDY OF INFLUENCES AND LIFE CHOICES: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

FROM AN URBAN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION CENTER AND THE NAVY

By

Patrick O'Neal Arnwine

A dissertation submitted to the Doctoral Program Faculty in

Educational Leadership in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

August 2001

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Study of Influences and Life Choices: African American Males from An Urban Pre-

trial Detention Center and the Navy

by

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This study was designed to explore the influences, experiences, and disparate life

choices of eight African American males from the Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention

Center and the U.S. Navy. The focus of this project was on the choices made by the

participants and possible reasons for those choices. Specifically, the research question for

this study is "How do some African American males from Jacksonville's Pre-trial

Detention Center and the Navy describe their life experiences and the influences of these

experiences on their choices?"

The framework for this project was a cross-case and cross-site study. The sites

were the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and the Navy. There were four

participants from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and four from the Navy. The

research yielded some interesting results.

All of the participants took full responsibility for their choices. At no time did any

of these young men blame anyone but themselves for the bad decisions they made.

Additionally, they did not verbalize that the race and gender of their teachers were factors in their educational experience.

Finally, there was no specific point at which the participants had a choice that resulted in their diverging from productive citizenship. What emerged from the research were factors, which in their aggregate, resulted in the decisions of the participants. The factors were parental control and resiliency. The participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center lacked many resiliency factors, which those from the Navy enjoyed. Whereas the home life of the participants from the Navy had the element of parental control, the home life of those from the Pre-trial Detention Center did not.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

A number of negative factors serve to marginalize the African American male. This is to say, African American males are not able to participate fully in American society because of these existing areas of concern that the following factors represent. The factors discussed in this study are crime, education and workforce readiness, and income. These negative factors have enabling stressors— poverty, family life, culture, and an unsafe environment. Unfortunately, many African American males share these factors, which for them are negative. Poverty and unsafe environment combine with the problems of an imperfect family life and the way that society deals with African American culture to produce an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. Many families scrape by on welfare. Young inner city youth may only get one meal a day and that may be lunch at school. Drugs and violence are too familiar to these inner city youth. Furthermore, because of these factors, African American males occupy a position on the fringes of society. These factors serve to put African Americans, and particularly African American males, at-risk. The following factors illustrate the plight of too many African American males.

Education & Workforce Readiness

As the 21$^{st}$ century begins, the quality of education and disparity between the education received by African Americans and White Americans have become a focal point. Quality education for all students is critically important to today's pool of workers. If students do not have the skills needed to enter the technical workforce of today and tomorrow, they may find themselves competing for the rapidly shrinking number of low-

skilled jobs. More to the point, King (1997) stated that the Black male found it 10 times more difficult to have financial success than did the White male.

The information presented here highlights the importance of education in workforce readiness. The lack of quality education clearly has a strong negative influence on the life experiences and life choices of African American males. Because of its importance, this study focuses, in part, on the educational experiences of the participants.

For every citizen who is ill prepared to contribute, society is deprived of a measure of safety and the benefits of potential taxes. This scenario is particularly true for many African American males. Because they may not be prepared to contribute positively to society, African American males are often disenfranchised, marginalized, and forced into an alternate lifestyle of crime, a lifestyle that costs tax dollars and diminishes safety for the community. To further illustrate this point, in 1992, 49.4% of African Americans age 16 to 19 and 40.1% of the African Americans ages 20 to 24 who did not have a high school diploma were unemployed compared to 27.7%, and 22.3%, respectfully, for all persons in the country (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1995). Further, in 1994, 14.1% of African American males, ages 16 to 24, were high school dropouts (Digest of Education Statistics, 1995). Many African American males are forced to get an education in alternative schools (e.g., boot camps and adult and juvenile correctional facilities).

<div align="center">Crime</div>

Crime has been a major problem among African American males. The African American male has been greatly over represented in the prison system. According to Tift (1990), in 1990 1 out of every 4 African American males between the ages of 20 and 29 was in the prison system in some capacity— parole, jail, or probation, in 1990. This problem has gotten worse over time. Gest (1995) reported that 1 in 3 African American men in their twenties was, in some way, in the prison system. Whereas African American

males aged 12 to 24 only represented slightly over 1% of the population in 1994, they were 17.2% of the homicide victims (Bastian & Taylor, 1994). According to the same report African American males from this age group were 14 times as likely to be murdered than the general population. Additionally, during the period of 1985 to 1988 African American youth were more likely to be victims of robbery and aggravated assault than their White counterparts (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). In fact, according to the same report, 80% of the violent crimes against Black American teenagers, ages 12 to 19, were committed by other Black teenagers. Finally, 9 out of 10 times, offenders and victims of these violent crimes were male (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). Wideman (1995), four years later, reported that whereas Blacks represented only 13% of the population in the U.S., they were 74% of the inmates who were serving time for drug possession. These statistics illustrate the profile of crime and its severity among Black males.

Truancy and delinquency are two of the many factors that have contributed to the negative experiences among African Americans. In 1993, African Americans accounted for 38% of the truancy cases (Bilchik, 1996). In 1993, the juvenile delinquency rates for African Americans were more than twice that of Whites (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996). African Americans comprise a much higher number of juvenile arrests than do other racial groups. In 1991, African Americans made up 43% of juvenile inmates in detention centers in the U.S. Across the country, Black juveniles represented 49% of those arrested for violent crimes in 1992, which was an 18% increase from 1990 (Morton, Roscoe, & Wilson, 1994). In 1995 African Americans only made up 12% of the population, but they represented 60% of the arrests for robbery in that year (Gest, 1995). Truancy and delinquency are part of many African American males' lives.

<u>Income</u>

Typically, the African American male does not enjoy the same income level as his White counterpart. The per-capita income of all African Americans was only $9,170 in 1991 (Lampe, 1993). Throughout all regions in the nation, African American males earned less on average than did Whites, even where their educational level was higher. When the African American male achieved education through college levels, his education was valued less than that of Whites in wages earned (Cotton, 1993). The negative effect of race increases as the African American male moves toward middle age. The African American male and White male difference in earning increases even through mid-life (Thomas, Herring, & Horton, 1994).

Many African American males attempt to enter the work force lacking proper social skills and are ill prepared to contribute positively to society. Being ill prepared also affects the African American males' earning power. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1996), of the African American males in the would-be high school class of 1992 who dropped out, over 45% had no income at all in 1993. In 1995 the unemployment rate for African American males ages 20-24 was 17.6% as opposed to only 7.9% of White males in the same age group (U.S. Department of Labor, 1996).

This research project examined the problems illustrated by the factors discussed here from the perspective of eight African American males. The problems, with which many African American males are faced, including high crime rates, poverty, and a high dropout rate, are consistently misperceived by the mainstream society as the total fault of the individual. As Polite (1994) noted, many of the reasons Black males find themselves in the predicament they are in today are due largely to lingering effects of slavery and institutionalized discrimination. This project also examined some decisions of the eight Black males of this study and their understanding of the possible reasons for making those decisions and how those decisions have influenced their lives.

Significance of the Research

The significance of this study rests in three areas: (1) providing a better understanding of the African American male, (2) adding insight into improving the learning environment of the African American male, and (3) adding insight into assisting in the proper socialization of the African American male in educational and community settings. Proper socialization means that youth are given the tools to succeed in today's society. These tools include the ability to compete in the workforce, a quality education on par with mainstream America, and acceptable social skills.

This research study added to the body of knowledge for understanding the African American male. Much has been written about the African American male and much of it is negative. The African American is often misunderstood, and if this misunderstanding continues it can only contribute to the widening gap that exists between African Americans and Whites. An understanding is the first step to change. The predicament in which African American males find themselves requires a change. If the current situation of the African male continues, African Americans as a people along with the rest of society will suffer. African American males are marginalized in our society, as are many minorities. The Black male may be the most marginalized. If society can deal with the issues of the Black male, it can deal successfully with the problem of marginalization of other minorities. Building more prisons is not a viable solution as most of the people imprisoned will be back in society at some point. All of a society's people should have access to its opportunities.

This study also added to the knowledge base of information about African American males that might, in the future, serve as an impetus for decision makers and

educational leaders to improve the educational environment of the African American male— including the policies and practices related to him. The African American male is negatively affected by some of the policies and practices to which he is subjected during his educational experience. For examples, Black males are assigned to special education classes far more frequently than their percentages in the classroom would suggest (Harry, 1994); the Black male is more likely to experience corporal punishment (Gregory, 1995); and his culture is misunderstood by educators who have little or no training in teaching a culturally and linguistically diverse student population (Smith, G. P., 1998). These examples highlight some of the unethical practices Black males encounter in their life experiences.

America must address unethical practices that serve to marginalize the Black male if his situation can be expected to improve. Ethics speak to the way human beings deal with one another. It is unethical that society alienates its citizens on the basis of their skin color, culture, or ethnicity. As an example, because so many African American males are in jail for felonies, a significant part of this country cannot even vote. These unethical practices also include Black males being less likely to be assigned to gifted programs than Whites (Harry, 1994). Black males also experience disproportionate expulsions and suspensions (American Vocational Association, 2000).

This project provides information to help facilitate the proper socialization of the African American male in educational and community settings. This area of significance speaks to the need for providing direction and a sense of motivation for Black male adolescents regarding positive values and socially acceptable behavior. The findings of this study suggests that, in contrast to Whites, socialization for many young African

American males may be better called marginalization. Socialization begins very early in childhood. For the most part, socialization for the White male means that he is being prepared to join a society that is dominated by people who look and think like him. On the other hand, socialization for the African American male often, including the school setting, means that he is forced to participate on the edge of a society that does not understand him. Many scholars describe a dual socialization into contrasting and different cultures— African American and European American (Hale-Benson, 1986; Leslie, 1998; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). It is not enough that African American males are proficient in social norms that relate to their own culture; they also have to be proficient in the norms of the White or dominate culture. If he is to survive and prosper, the African American male is forced to adopt the ways of his White counterpart (Hale-Benson, 1986). He must dress, speak, and groom himself according to a code of the dominant culture. Before he even gets the job or position, the Black male has to interview with gatekeepers who often view anything other than a dark blue or gray single-breasted suit as inappropriate dress for that interview. Thus, to even have a chance of getting a good paying job African American males have to be able to illustrate their ability to conform, at least at work. To even live in a nice neighborhood, Blacks have to endure all the things meant to keep them out by the White culture (e.g., being steered away from certain areas of town by real-estate agents and the use of code names for subdivisions like those that include the word Plantation). Because, in America, people are judged by how White they are or can act, the better the African American male is at adopting the culture and social norms of the White male, the more successful he is, to a point (Hale-Benson, 1986).

In summary, this research project has implications for understanding the way the African American male is educated and socialized. Much of the socialization of our youth is done at school. Too often, the African American male is marginalized from the beginning of his educational experience. The result is that poor education along with other societal factors such as drug abuse, high crime rate, and widespread violence have produced a segment of African American males that is considered to be a "lost generation" and an "endangered species" ("A lost generation," 1990, p.1).

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the life experiences and environmental stressors encountered by Black males. This study also sought to discover possible critical points of decision making in the lives of eight Black males when faced with similar educational experiences and other environmental stressors. Further, this report adds to the body of knowledge needed to support change in the policies and practices that educational leaders and community-service professionals use in educating young Black males and preparing them for citizenship.

There is a definite deficit in the learning experiences of Black males as compared to the middle-class mainstream students, and it can produce negative outcomes— incarceration and lack of job skills. As a result of a less than quality learning experience coupled with the many other factors, such as home situation, poverty, and environment, the Black male is often labeled at-risk. This work examined elements of the environment and educational experiences with which many Black males are faced before entering the work force and society at large. Finally, this project gave a voice to the young disenfranchised African American male— their own. This voice serves as a beginning for

a new discourse regarding the plight of the Black male. This new discourse could be a catalyst for change.

## Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions have been adopted.

Academic and behavioral outcomes - The presentation of results of the educational and social experiences via achievement scores, recidivism rates, and other statistics.

Communication - A system or mechanism of exchanging thoughts, messages, information, or ideas.

Conservatives – Refers to those individuals who are resistant to social change.

Culture - A pattern of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as material artifacts, produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to another.

Influences – This term include those things that affect ones decisions, values and attitudes toward life (e.g., community, family life, and education).

Learning experience – The classroom environment, instructional presentation, quality of teachers, teacher training, faculty/student relationship, policies, and quality of school facilities.

Life choices – Refers to the major decisions one makes that determine the path one takes in life.

Quality education - Education that is at least equal to that of the traditional middle-class mainstream student, which includes up-to-date educational materials, quality teachers, and adequate facilities.

Racial and ethnic descriptors - African American and Black are used synonymously and White is used interchangeably with European American.

Resilience - The ability to overcome or not be limited by obstacles.

Socialization - The passing on of values, culture, and acceptable behavior to the next generation.

Stressors – Those things that act as pressures on one life (e.g., crime, drugs, and violence).

Successful – This term refers to having a high school diploma (either by traditional high school or GED) at the time of the interview, and being employed and self-supporting.

Tracking – Separating and teaching students in groups according to their perceived abilities and needs.

Unsuccessful – Being incarcerated, not having a high school diploma at the time of this study, and not being employed and self-supporting.

Urban Pre-trial Detention Center – In this case refers to the jail facility in downtown Jacksonville that houses individuals awaiting trial, being held as a result of sentencing, or being held awaiting transfer to other correctional facilities.

Research Question

This study investigated influences, experiences, and disparate life choices of eight African American males from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and the U.S. Navy. Many African American males experience the same sort of stressors (e.g., poverty and an unsafe environment). Added to these stressors is the fact that the dominant culture views the African American culture as irrelevant to being an American. The conservative view is that everyone should assimilate and ignore their heritage. As used here, the term conservative refers to a worldview that is resistant to accepting full equality for all citizens regardless of race, ethnicity, and culture. Conservative also refers to a way of

thinking that supports policies and practices that have the effect of exclusion and that limit opportunities for marginalized groups who have not yet obtained full equality in the United States. Any of these stressors could have been the subject of a research project. This study was concerned with choices made by some African American males and the reason for those choices. Specifically, the research question for this study was "How do some African American males from Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center ant the U.S. Navy describe their life experiences and the influences of these experiences on their choices?" The hypothesis was that male role models, peers, activities, and parental control most directly affect the life choices made by young Black males. The following is a list of guiding objectives used to give direction to this study:

(1) To identify possible elements that contribute to positive and negative life choices of African American males.

(2) To explore similarities and differences in the educational experiences and community stressors of the study participants.

(3) To examine how some African American males describe success and how to achieve it.

(4) To discover a point of divergence. That is, this study explored the possibility of a critical point at which some African American males arrive in relation to life decisions that determined the positive or negative direction of their socialization.

(5) To discover a set of findings in the voices of the participants that might serve as a set of postulates for further research on the African American male.

In the course of exploring the research question, more questions arose. As stated before, there is much written about the African American male, but usually the key component is missing— the voice of the African American male. This project provided a venue for that voice. The perspectives of the African American males in this study

provided what raw statistical data could not— the actual human experience. This human experience was key to understanding the research question and providing a meaningful beginning for change. This reasoning was the driving factor for this project.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Selected bodies of literature were reviewed that were relevant to the young

African American males' experience. Factors in the socialization process of the African

American male include (1) the role of culture, (2) the educational experience, (3) the

family, and (4) the Black community. Any of these factors could have easily been the

subject of a study. These factors were necessarily limited in this literature review.

Included in the study are bodies of literature on Blacks in the military, Blacks in

confinement, and some models for successful socialization— mentoring, resiliency, and

employer-school partnerships. These models for successful socialization represented

positive examples of how a community and school could assist the young Black males

during critical points in their lives. The models explored here were not inclusive. Since

this was a qualitative study exploring life choices of Black males, it was important to

show models discovered from the literature as well as data gathered via interviews that

contributed to their proper socialization.

The educational environment of a society's youth is very important to the

continuation of that society. School is the major mechanism by which society transfers

values to the next generation. Further, school is one of the tools that society uses to

transfer its culture (Pai, 1989). America's educational system also has the inherent duty of

socializing its youth. If the young are not equipped with the proper socialization skills,

they cannot be expected to function as productive members of society or join the work

force in a meaningful way. There are many elements, for example, such as the teacher,

the teacher's perceptions and attitudes, curriculum, and environment which can

negatively affect the socialization of the Black male. The literature review that follows

discusses elements of the social and educational experiences of Blacks, specifically Black

males.

## The Role of Culture

Culture and race are particularly important and relate directly to a productive

learning experience for the Black male. One important part of culture is that of

masculinity. The African American community has always held a very different model of

masculinity from that of the European American culture. Hale-Benson (1986) reported

that through time, Black males have perfected a special walk, have placed value on being

cool, have cultivated distinctive handshakes and slang, and have shared common

manhood rites (i.e., playing the dozens, woofing, fighting, and vying for sports prowess).

Black males actually share a subculture within the Black community according to Hale-

Benson (1986). As a result of this micro-culture coupled with the traditional European

American classroom hierarchy (i.e., White males, White females, Black females, and

then Black males) it has been the Black male who suffered most from the effects of his

culture in the traditional classroom. As with other cultures not their own, the typical

European American teacher is not equipped or, in most cases, not inclined to

accommodate the micro-culture of the Black male. The typical European American

classroom is often organized to accommodate those of the mainstream— European

Caucasian students. As a result, the African American male has little to no chance of

experiencing an equal quality educational experience.

African American culture is one which values the group more so than the

individual and this is directly at odds with the dominant culture. For instance, Blacks tend

to regard direct questioning as confrontational (Kochman, 1981). Those of other cultures

who are not of the mainstream are at a distinct disadvantage from the onset of their learning experience. European American teachers deal with their Black students more negatively than they do their White ones (Casteel, 1998). The culture of students affects their learning styles because culture provides a way to process and interpret information. Blacks as well as other minority students need teachers who are accommodating of the cultural needs they may have that affect their learning experience (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Seltzer, Frazier, & Ricks, 1995). Unfortunately, many teachers misunderstand African Americans, especially the male (Graybill, 1997).

Language and communication styles are two of the most important aspects of culture. Language plays a critical role in educating children. The role of language has direct implications on the African American experience. African Americans are also judged by their language and communication style especially in the educational settings. For example, a high correlation exists between elementary school reading achievement test scores and standardized college admission's tests according to Hale-Benson (1986). This correlation suggests that a huge portion of what was being measured in intelligence and achievement tests were language/communication skills. Because of the way that Blacks communicate, they are often placed in learning situations that are not conducive to developing proficiency in language skills taught to those in mainstream education. Too many teachers typically have believed that Black English or Ebonics was substandard and a perversion of Standard English (Smith, G. P., 1998). At a minimum, future educators should be trained in the history of Black English, Black English as a sociolinguistic system, verbal tricks such as playing the dozens and Woofing and the nonverbal dimensions of communication, especially body language (Smith, G. P., 1998). Teachers

should not use the White American as a model to measure Blacks (Graybill, 1997).

The communication style of Blacks has been a topic of concern for many years. Many educators misinterpreted Black English as somehow an indicator that the student was deficient and required extra help in reading. Ethnocentric aspects of European American culture often equate being different with being ignorant and deprived, especially when it comes to the English language. Consequently, many African American students were found in English remedial classes where most of them did not actually belong (Kizza, 1991). Teachers should experience training in Black English as a sociolinguistic system before being placed in a classroom that includes African Americans (Smith, G. P., 1998). Teachers should also understand that what is considered nonstandard English does not equate to a need for special education. Many teachers treat the Black males' culture and linguistics with bias (Harry, 1994). Black students have been forced to be multi-dialectal but in many cases understand better and would prefer to respond in Black English. For example, Agerton and Moran (1995), conducted an experiment in which language samples were elicited from 17 African American preschoolers by 3 examiners: a white female using standard English and 2 African American females using either standard English or Black English. Samples elicited by the African American examiners contained more varied Black English features, with examiner usage of Black English eliciting the most features. This is not to say that Black English, Ebonics, or whatever labels it has, should be taught. The point is, according to Agerton and Moran (1995), that Blacks, especially inner-city youth, have a dialect by which successful communication is most likely to occur. America must come to grips with the fact that African Americans are a distinct and separate people with their own

culture. Teachers cannot expect to be totally successful at communicating their lessons if they do not take into account the way their students interpret what they say. The African American culture is a filter through which Black males interpret any and all information coming to them (Smith, G. P., 1998).

It does not take an expert in communication to note that in the classroom, Blacks have different rules for communicating than do Whites. Kochman (1981), for example, stated that the White culture valued the ability to control oneself. Many White cultural events do not allow for self-assertion or the spontaneous expression of feeling. Black culture, on the other hand, views showing off or being an individual as positive. The behavioral pattern, of course, spills into the classrooms. This behavioral pattern of Blacks often translates into behavior deemed unacceptable in the classroom. Along with other aspects of Black culture, this behavioral pattern and the ignorance of many teachers have contributed to the mis-education of Black students. Mis-education here refers to education that is lacking context and thoughtful consideration of Black communication styles and culture, factors which, if present, would enable better communication of knowledge.

The African American culture is at odds with mainstream White America. In many instances this negatively impacts African Americans. This conflict of culture manifests itself in all facets of the African American life.

## The Educational Experience

A considerable body of theory and research literature indicates that the educational experience for most Black males leaves much to be desired (Irvine, 1990; King, 1997). Characteristics of the Black male's educational experience include too few

Black teachers, too many other teachers who have not been adequately prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students and who do not understand African American culture, and too many teachers who are teaching out of their subject-field specialization (Smith, G. P., 1998). In addition, the Black male's typical educational experience includes a number of policies and practices that result in the under education of Black males and, in fact, mitigate against high quality education for most Black males.

The educational literature substantiates that having rare access to quality, culturally sensitive teachers is problematic in the Black male's typical educational experience. Most teachers are White females. Many of these White female teachers often do not understand the behavioral pattern of the black male (Harry, 1994). It should be stated here that the White male, at times, has also had difficulties in these settings. However, the difficulties of White males did not approach the magnitude of that of the Black male (Hale-Benson, 1986). Blacks and Whites view the racial mix of teachers very differently. Seltzer et al. (1995) reported that 50% of Blacks in their study felt that there should be more Black teachers as compared to fewer than 5% of Whites with the same feeling. Further, the lower income students— typically, poor Blacks— tended to experience educational environments that included classrooms not free from racial, cultural, and linguistic biases (Harry, 1994). According to Buxton (2000), Black students would also benefit from having more Black teachers in their classroom. G. P. Smith (1994) also advocated more minority teachers in the classroom. Additionally, according to Oakes (1990), minority students are more likely to be taught by teachers who are working out of their specialization than are White students. Oakes went on to say that principals in inner city schools saw their educators as less than highly competent.

Some problems Black students experience in the classroom begin with the training, or lack of training, of teachers. Typically, teachers have not been trained well in dealing with cultures that are not their own. According to G. P. Smith (1998), pre-service teachers should have training and study specific knowledge bases that will better prepare them to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) echo Smith's sentiments by asserting that students need teachers who can teach a diverse student population and match students' learning and performance opportunities to their needs. Elsewhere, Darling-Hammond (1998) has written that teachers should be equipped with training that allows them to understand differences that may arise from different cultures. Similarly, Casteel (1998) noted that teachers should be better trained to meet the needs of students who are from many different cultures.

Teachers' perceptions and misperceptions of ability as they relate to social class and the race of the student have also contributed to the lesser quality of education received by African American students. Beady and Hansell (1980) found that White teachers in predominately Black schools were less likely than Black teachers to expect their students to successfully complete college. Lower abilities were associated with race, ethnicity, and social status. Zimmerman, Khoury, Vega, Gil, and Warheit (1995) found that teachers may even tend to perceive their Black students to be problems in the classroom.

Contributing to the misperception of teachers is the fact that teachers are faced with classrooms that have students who are increasingly from low-income families. According to Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996), a quarter of all American children live in poverty. The fact that so many children live in poverty has been of particular

importance to Black students because they make up, or are assumed to make up, the greater portion of this population. If perceived lower ability is associated with race and economic status, then the need for understanding and well-trained teachers is even more significant to the Black student. As G. P. Smith (1998) noted, the research on teachers' low expectation of African American students that has accumulated from the mid-60s to the late 80s has consistently found that both preservice and inservice teachers have "higher expectations for White middle-class students than for African American, Hispanic American, and working class and low SES White students" (p. 77).

Some policies and practices mitigate against a positive learning environment for the African American male. Despite the would-be victory for minorities as a result of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954), most poor inner city students (normally Black and Hispanic) have still found themselves in an inferior learning environment when compared to their mainstream counterparts. According to Kozol (1994), the percentage of Black students who went to segregated schools in 1994 was at its highest point since Dr. King's death. In addition, many Blacks have been inappropriately placed in lower tracked curricula. In one school system she studied (Rockford Public Schools in Rockford, Illinois), Oakes (1995) noted African American students were over represented in lower tracks and that even though White students may have been assessed as having abilities that would have placed them in a lower track, they are more likely than other groups to be placed in upper tracks.

Education is second only to family life in the socialization of youth. If the education experience is negative, then a major portion of the socialization process is also

negative. The educational experience must be positive and of high quality if the Black

male is to experience proper socialization.

Family

Some conservatives may argue that one main reason White students tend to enjoy

a higher level of education than African American students is related to differences in

parent involvement. These conservatives would have us believe that the Black parents are

somehow less interested in their child's education. However, to the contrary, Marshall

(1995) pointed out that Black parents put great emphasis on education in raising their

children. While there is no doubt that parent involvement is important, unfortunately

parent involvement at school may not be enough.

Being a Black parent has also been complicated, typically, by low social and

economic status (SES). Many Black parents simply cannot afford to take off from work

to go to their child's school. Parental involvement goes hand in hand with parental

control. Unfortunately, many Black families are headed by a single parent; in many cases

that single parent is a female. In 1994, 82% of poor Black children lived in families

headed by a female and 63.2% of these children were less than 18 years of age (U.S.

Department of Commerce, 1996a). In 1996 the U.S. Department of Commerce found that

59.5% of Black children under the age of 18 lived in a single parent household. In today's

economy, it is very difficult for a single parent to provide for his or her family. A single

parent has much less time to go to the child's school, get involved, or spend time with his

or her children. Nevertheless, parent involvement is crucial to the social and educational

development of any child, particularly when it comes to establishing control and

boundaries.

Family structure is less critical than control over the adolescent male. Heiss (1996) found that parental involvement at school had little to do with the make up of the family. The African American family structure had a small effect on the educational goals that high school students set for themselves and the rate at which they dropped out of school. Further, according to C. Smith (1995), single-parent families did not correspond with disruptive family process or delinquent behavior among Black families. However, Smith reported that family control did have an effect on criminal behavior of the Black male. That is, African American families in which there was more control over the adolescent males had fewer incidents of delinquent activities. On the other hand, the structure and quality of the family life have a direct impact on the violent behavior of the Black male (Paschall, 1996). Paschall specifically pointed at stress and conflict in the family as contributing factors to the violent behavior of Black males.

The African American family is the major source of socialization for the African American male. Black families must function as the main socializing component of the Black male. There has to be an element of control in the family life of Black males. The school, family and Black community must work together with the goal being proper socialization of the Black male.

## The Black Community

Another body of literature suggests that the environmental context of the Black inner city community is strongly connected to the socialization patterns of Black males. Not only does the larger community affect the Black family unit, it also affects the school attended by Black males. These factors along with limited economic opportunities produce a number of stressors that are relevant to understanding the socialization of

Black males. Because the schools that minorities typically attend are in areas with low property tax, the quality of the facilities tends to be less than adequate. In his book <u>Race, Culture, and the Inner City</u>, Haymes (1995) quoted Harvey who said, "the flow of capital investment into the formation of the suburbs contributed to the abandonment and destruction of neighborhoods in the central city" (p. 79). Black workers in these areas tended to be among the poorest, especially when compared with their White counterparts. According to Handy (1993), the salaries of the poorest 10% of Blacks were only one-fifth that of the poorest Whites. This situation exacerbates the substandard living conditions of many African American youth who find themselves being at-risk. In 1994, 43.3% of African Americans under the age of 18 lived in poverty (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996a). The poor Blacks have become even more concentrated in the inner city. Again, according to Handy, only 1% of all poor Whites living below the poverty line lived in poor urban communities as opposed to the poor Blacks, of whom a full one-third lived in urban areas.

The community has always played a key role in the direction at-risk youth have taken concerning life's decisions. In a study done by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1997), it was found that the community in which a juvenile lived had more to do with his delinquent behavior than his race (Morton, Roscoe & Wilson, 1994). Watts (1993) also found that the path of the young Black male is connected to his community.

In contrast, there are authorities who contend that the plight of the African American is due to their not wanting to work and wanting to stay on welfare. Rubenstein (1996) stated, in his article about welfare dependency, that there was no indication that

the poor had any new willingness to work. Rubenstein also wrote that beginning in 1965, the African American male no longer wanted to work. Rubenstein seems to think that the Black male had become accustomed to relying on Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). According to Rubenstein, businesses left urban America because of the lack of people who were willing to work. Rubenstein's line of thinking, which tends toward describing the Black city community as pathological, is just not logical unless one's agenda is political strife and racial division. Less pejorative explanations of the circumstances in the Black inner city community are a more useful framework for understanding Black male socialization and for creating successful interventions for Black males who may he at risk. Other authorities counter the negative profile described by Rubenstein. According to Edelman (1987), the average number of children in a family who received AFDC was about 1.9, which was about the same size as the average number in families nationwide. Edelman also stated that people who received a combination of AFDC and food stamps, more often than not, lived below the poverty line. Finally, Edelman stated that since 1970 the birth rate for unmarried Blacks had gone down while the rate for Whites had gone up. Haynes (1995) seemed to have attributed White business flight to many factors, one being gentrification (architectural redevelopment where businesses move out of the inner city, the land is devalued, other businesses finally purchase parts back at a reduced price, and the living space of Blacks becomes smaller).

Whatever the stressors (e.g., poor surroundings, high unemployment, high crime statistics, and increased use of drugs), the community has a responsibility to its youth. This is to say, those community leaders and activists (including teachers and people in

business) should search for and model successful programs to help the youth in the community. As an example, one idea used by some communities was to have young Black men socialize with adult males who could serve as role models (Watts, 1993). There are many programs to help the so-called at-risk youth. These positive aspects of the Black community are addressed in the section of the literature review that describes models of success.

For many, the Black community contributes many of the negative elements to the lives of Black males (e.g., negative stressors). However, the situation of negative stressors in the community is brought about by many factors beyond the control of the Black family living there. These factors include the flow of capital out of the Black community and a conservative influence in America.

<div align="center">Blacks in the Military</div>

Blacks experience some level of success in the military. Blacks in the Army represented about 30% of the enlisted ranks and the same percentage of the top enlisted ranks (Gropman, 1997). African Americans enjoy many benefits in the military. For example, the military treats everyone in the same pay grades equal regarding pay and allowances, regardless of race. If someone is proven to be an active member of a hate group, he or she is discharged, as are those who engage in racist behavior (Gropman, 1997). The military has always been a career that offers benefits, which include medical and dental care and a retirement, and it also accords its members a level of prestige. For many African Americans, as well as White Americans, who did not go to college, the military has been a place where they could succeed and provide for themselves and their families. For decades, Blacks have seen the military as a way to pursue opportunities and

achieve some level of parity with their contemporaries (Boyd, 1998). With hard work,

one could expect to experience some level of success. According to Campbell-Rock

(1993), if the individual is willing to compete, opportunities are available in the military

for the African American. Unlike the not so distant past, Blacks, thanks to their

predecessors, can now expect a greater choice of opportunities in today's Navy (Wright,

1997).

While Blacks have definitely found benefit over the years in belonging to the

military, one should not think that all is completely equal. Blacks still do not enjoy the

same opportunities to enter the officer ranks (Campbell-Rock, 1993). Many people have

held the military in high esteem with regards to a so-called level playing field. However,

this so-called level playing field has never been completely level. Whereas Blacks

represented 30% of the Army, they represented only 11% percent of the officer ranks

(Gropman, 1997). All of the other services have experienced similar numbers, and in no

branch of the military have the percentages of Black officers reached parity with the

percentages of total Black personnel. Whereas Blacks represented 19.6% of the total

active duty force, they represented only 8% of the total officer ranks including warrant

officers. Thomas, Edwards, Perry, and David (1998) reported that in the U.S. Navy, only

about 40% of Black Lieutenants have been advanced to Lieutenant Commander,

compared to about 60% of their White counterparts. In other words, 60% of Black

Lieutenants were not advanced while 60% of White Lieutenants were. Additionally,

Thomas et al. (1998) found that White officers received many more promotional

recommendations on their performance evaluation than did Blacks. African Americans

usually received only assignment related recommendations on their evaluations (Thomas et al., 1998).

While many African American experience some level of success in the military, many factors still restrict equal access to opportunities for upward mobility. These factors include unequal evaluations and a very small representation at the higher levels of leadership.

<div align="center">Blacks in Confinement</div>

Many African American males are forced to get their education while they are incarcerated. Across the country it was reported that Black males had a higher incarceration rate before the age of 18 than Whites (Morton, Roscoe, & Wilson, 1994). That is, Black males under the age of 18 were more likely to receive their education in a correctional facility than Whites of the same age. Many Blacks in prison may never receive their high school diploma or equivalent. Ross (1995) reported that in mid-year 1994 there were 1,012,854 inmates in state and federal prisons and Blacks made up 46% of the prison population.

The incarceration of the Black male is seen as a cure for societal social problems, but incarceration without rehabilitation is no cure at all. Blacks have been blamed for many social ills in our society. As a remedy, Blacks have been incarcerated and, on top of confinement, they have experienced many instances of racism (Wideman, 1995). Since not all inmates are sentenced to life and therefore will re-enter society at some point, it is important to the welfare of the community that they experience at least some level of rehabilitation before coming back into the community. The educational system in correctional facilities is very important to the rehabilitation of those inmates. According

to Republican Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, it is important that correctional

facilities have meaningful rehabilitation of inmates and that the inmates have a job skill

and know how to read and write before being released back into society (Specter, 1996).

According to Davis (1995), the more education inmates received while incarcerated, the

less likely they were to be repeat offenders. One major problem of incarceration without

rehabilitation is that those who have committed a crime are likely to commit another.

Many criminals are repeat offenders; therefore, the community into which the

inmates would be released after completing their sentence would likely be less safe. For

example, the recidivism rate in Hillsborough County, Florida, was over 75% according to

L. G. Smith (1994) in her first annual report to the Department of Education. This

recidivism translated into Hillsborough County, Florida, being a community in which

over 75% of those in jail would get out to prey on law abiding citizens again. Adams

(1994) found that recidivism was reduced among inmates who participated in the prison's

academic or vocational program. Adams also found that inmates were more likely to be

employed after having been through an academic or vocational program while they were

incarcerated. This fact is significant because, as Pfannenstiel (1993) reported, detention

facilities provide the last contact that many juveniles will have with formal education.

The fact that many juveniles' last contact with formal education is in a juvenile

detention facility has major implications for the Black male. One implication is much of

the socialization that would have occurred in a normal school setting is happening in an

alternative school. According to Thomas et al. (1994), in 1991 about 44% of juveniles in

public juvenile facilities were Black and about 43% of the juveniles in detention centers

were Black. Many Black juveniles in these correctional facilities had been exposed to

teachers who may have considered them learning disabled when in fact they were not. These juveniles may have also attended schools that did not adequately address their attitudes, interests, and motivation (Pfannenstiel, 1993).

Many Blacks in the federal and state correctional systems have not finished high school and are functionally illiterate. Curcio (1995) surveyed 157 wardens and found that slightly over 9 out of 10 of them felt literacy was a problem among the youth under their charge. According to L. G. Smith (1994), up to 80 % of inmates in the Hillsborough County jail were functionally illiterate. Being functionally illiterate means that these inmates were not able to read a bus schedule or perform other tasks necessary to function competently in society. Participation in the educational programs in correctional facilities could have reduced the illiteracy of these inmates (L. G. Smith, 1994).

As a result of reduced illiteracy the life choices of these inmates are decreased. Increasing life choices are important to the success of the African American male. Too many young Black males spend time in the so-called correctional system. These young men are being marginalized and mis-socialized. The next section of this literature review describes some successful socialization models.

Models for Successful Socialization

It is at least as important to discuss positive models of successful socialization of African American youth who are at-risk as it is to describe the negative. In this section models are discussed that can play an important role in whether or not the African American male is properly socialized and goes on to make appropriate decisions in life. The building of resiliency in students, mentoring, and establishing school-employer teams are among the common models found in the literature.

Understanding models for successful socialization means understanding what it means to be at-risk. What constitutes an at-risk adolescent varies. Being an at-risk adolescent includes being at risk of dropping out of school, engaging in violence, being a criminal, and abusing drugs. The definition of at-risk could also be criterion based. For example, Palmer and Slicker (1993) discovered that a suburban Texas school district used the following set of criteria to identify those who may be at-risk:

> (a) Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills test failure (one or more sections); (b) failure of two or more courses in most recent semester; (c) Metropolitan Achievement Test scores in reading, mathematics or both, at less then [sic] the 10th percentile; (d) retention in a grade or placement in the next grade without passing the prior grade one or more times in grades K through 9; and (e) graduation in 4 years unlikely because of a numerical deficiency in high school credits. (p. 328)

Although there are no agreed upon definitions or criteria for "at-risk," the effects are common. These effects include some Black males' lacking proper social skills, being disruptive in the classroom, being a menace to society and most importantly, not contributing to the community in a positive manner.

<div align="center">Resiliency</div>

Whether or not an African American male succeeds or fails depends heavily on his resiliency. Resiliency is concerned with overcoming or succeeding in the face of risk factors such as poverty and violent surroundings. An at-risk youth's resiliency will help determine his ability to cope. His ability to cope is enhanced by parents or guardians establishing early and consistent expectations of proper conduct (Benard, 1991).

Throughout the literature on resiliency, two important factors seemed to be necessary for resiliency to occur: (1) a supportive family or at least one supportive guardian and (2) another outside positive adult influence, usually a teacher. Resilient youth had a positive relationship with at least one parent or guardian and in stressful situations they looked to teachers and adult figures (Tarwater, 1993). Most youth who are considered at-risk and resilient had a positive relationship with at least one guardian (McMillan, 1994). In a study by Floyd (1996), students who were identified as resilient acknowledged other adults besides their parents as having influence in their lives and assisting them in some way. Resilient youth usually found supportive networks in school (McMillan, 1994); whether it is a teacher or another adult, a positive adult model seems to be a key. Good mentors can also serve as positive adult models, and in many cases they do.

The underlying factors of resiliency include caring and support. Mothner (1995) reported on the subject of resiliency and found that caring and supportive relationships were important protective factors. The teacher must strive to be a role model for his or her students (Tarwater, 1993). Schools also have to find ways to build self-confidence in their students to prepare them for adult life. One way to build student self-confidence is to put students in situations where they experience success and thereby gain confidence in themselves. Building resiliency often means that students must participate and be made to feel part of the learning experience. Some ways to build resiliency included using cooperative learning techniques and cross-age mentoring, according to Benard (1993). Mentoring is an excellent way for adults to make a difference in the lives of youth and become part of a support network that helps build resiliency.

Black male adolescents need to be able to identify with more than the professional athlete. They need more positive male role models in the community. Teachers can also serve as role models. A group of 17 Black male teachers worked to help young Black male students who were identified as likely to have problems later at a school in Wake County, North Carolina. Their teachers helped to significantly improve the grades, attendance, conduct, and standardized test scores of 240 students (Etlin, 1992). These students experienced success they may not have otherwise enjoyed, and it enhanced their resiliency. The school as an organization also has a role in building resiliency in students. Adults, at home and school, who participated positively in the lives of successful youth helped to develop perseverance and an optimistic outlook, which are two very important components of resiliency (Floyd, 1996).

<div align="center">School and Employers</div>

The socialization of youth is a very important job of the schools. Each youth should be equipped with proper socialization skills to be able to function (i.e., work and positively socialize) in the American society. It is important that youth learn how to contribute in a positive way to society. Part of that contribution is work roles skills and other values that society deems important for its citizens to learn. One part of socialization is to learn skills that potential employers are looking for in employees. Many lists of skills describe what employers are looking for in today's work pool. Most of the lists emphasize habits, behavior, and basic competency in reading and writing. Employers are looking for an employee who is able to work well with others and many would-be workers lack this skill ("New Workforce," 1992). Some Black males are not

acquiring the basic requisite skills to go into the work pool. Today's economy requires that Blacks have up-to-date skills and credentials (Clarke, 2000).

Businesses should work closely and continually with schools to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to the youth learning proper work role skills and to keep them in school. In fact, one study reported that well over half of the high school dropouts were unemployed ("High School Graduates," 2000). Socialization also means being able to function appropriately in various social settings, including the work place. Employers and schools have a responsibility to work together to prepare today's workforce.

<p style="text-align:center">Mentoring</p>

Mentoring can help in the proper socialization of young people, especially for those youth who are having problems adjusting to the world that awaits them when they assume the role of being an adult. Mentoring is a tool that can be used to intervene in the lives of children who are considered at-risk and might otherwise end up incarcerated for a large portion of their lives. An effective mentoring experience can change the life path of a youth. Mentoring can assist youth in coping with negative elements in their lives (Novotney, Mertinko, Lange, & Baker, 2000). Mentors can come from all social economic statuses (SES), professions and cultures. Mentors are used in many prevention programs, intervention programs and churches to aid the at-risk children in making correct decisions in life.

Mentoring is one way to address problems of at-risk adolescents. Mentoring usually involves an adult and adolescent relationship, but there are fewer adults in the family today than in the recent past, especially in the Black family (Freedman, 1992). As a consequence there are fewer adults to serve as role models or mentors. As the number

of adults shrinks, so does the pool of traditional mentors. For many adolescents the lack of a positive adult role model may have contributed to their delinquency.

The mentoring experience may be most effective if the mentor is part of an effective mentoring program. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (1997), an effective mentoring program consists of four elements. The first is that there should be a process to identify those adults who may do harm instead of good to the youth that the program is intending to help. Secondly, the mentoring program should include extensive training on communication, tips on relationship building, and recommendations on the best ways to interact with adolescents. Third, the program should have a professional staff to match the mentor with a mentee. Fourth, a case manager should monitor and supervise the mentoring experience of each youth, including contact with the child, mentor, and guardian. In contrast there are also obstacles to effective mentoring. According to OJJDP (1997), there was a scarcity of resources to carry out an effective program. Further, the number of adults available to serve as mentors was limited.

Successful mentoring experiences can be key to the decisions at-risk adolescents make in their lives. Mentoring can be effective in reducing dropout rates. An effective mentoring program could also yield better performance in school on behalf of the mentee (Palmer and Slicker, 1993). According to a report published by Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America (1997) on their mentoring program, when compared to their peers, the mentees were 46% less likely to start using drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking. The report by Big Brothers/Big Sisters also stated that their mentees were 52% less likely to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip class. The mentees were 1/3 less likely to hit someone when compared to their peers and are more trusting of adults. If paired with the best mentor for him or her, the mentee will be less likely to exhibit symptoms that often lead to self-destruction (e.g., death or incarceration) when compared to those who are not in an effective mentoring program.

While there is no blueprint of what constitutes an ideal mentor, a successful mentor must have or should develop certain skills. These skills include patience, commitment, and being able to build relationships. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee is something that has to be nurtured and developed. In the relationship between the mentee and mentor, the roles should be clearly understood. The relationship, according to the OJJDP (1997), should be that of friendship and not a teacher/pupil or preacher/member of the church type of relationship. However, literature gathered from the Lighthouse Project of 1997, which was a minority over-representation initiative funded by OJJDP, showed that a mentor is more than a friend. According to the report, the mentors were trainers, listeners, guides, and friends to the youth. Further, the mentor and mentee relationship should be one that focuses on the needs of the mentee. The relationship should encourage individuals, the mentees, to pursue their own goals and develop to their fullest potential. The relationship can lead to enhanced communication skills on behalf of the mentee and result in better behavior at home and school. According to Grant (1994), the mentor becomes part of the mentee's support group— as friend, for example, and stand-in parent.

Of course, the list of models discussed above is not exhaustive. While there are many elements that serve to negatively socialize the African American males, there are also numerous examples of programs and models that can help in the proper socialization of the Black male. Models and programs that have the effect of contributing to the proper socialization of the Black male must be explored and incorporated in the Black communities.

## Conclusion to the Literature Review

The literature review revealed that many factors influence the socialization of Black youths. The most important factors determining the socialization of Black males include the educational experience, family life, and the community in which they grew

up. One of those elements, especially in their educational experience, was the culture of African Americans, which is consistently misunderstood and misinterpreted. This misunderstanding and misinterpreting of the Black culture results in unethical practices, which include over representation in low level academic tracks and jails and a less than quality educational experience that serves to disenfranchise and marginalize Black males.

The literature also revealed that a number of scholars are advocating that teachers must be trained and motivated to educate and positively affect the socialization of not only Black males but youth of all cultures, especially those students not of their own culture. The literature described new initiatives to enhance the training of teachers who will have students from multiple cultures.

Furthermore, the literature revealed that the family structure is not as important as control. However, the family of the disadvantaged student needs to be able to count on the social net that is supposed to be there to help the citizens of this country, without stigmatization or scorn. For example, females head many Black families. Society has a tendency to look down on single Black mothers; but instead of disparaging them, efforts should be made to make all families as viable as possible. One way to make sure all families are as viable as possible is for them to use available programs. Although programs appear to be shrinking, eligible families should be informed of these programs and should take advantage of them.

Finally, the community of any people should be such that it is healthy and positive in raising and nurturing its youth. The school is a major contributor in the socialization of Black males in their communities. Unethical practices in the educational experiences of the minority youth must be revamped so as not to penalize but celebrate all cultures. What follows is a study to see if the factors or elements experienced by successful and unsuccessful Black males are the same.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research project began with an interest in finding ways to deal with the problems faced by African American males that affect their transition into productive citizenship. The research question was narrowed to, "How do some African American males from Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center and the U.S. Navy describe their life experiences and the influences of these experiences on their choices?" Whereas, on the surface, this study may have appeared to be simply a comparison of two groups— four African American males in Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center and four African American males in the Navy, it was more than that. The bigger issue was to find possible elements upon which to work to assist in a successful transition into adulthood and society as a whole for the African American male. Further, the thrust of this project was to arrive at answers that described a critical point and decisions at this point in the lives of these young men so as to aid the positive socialization of other African American youth. The four participants from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and the four participants from the Navy represent the two case studies in this project.

The in-depth interview method was used to collect the data because of this method's advantage of revealing the participants' stories of their experiences in their own words. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), in-depth interviews are like conversations. This conversational method took advantage of the fact that the participants and the investigator, also a Black male, shared a common vocabulary, an advantage which Merriam (1988) stated as being one of the assumptions made in doing this type of research. The outcomes of the interviews with the participants were their experiences as they relate to the landscape/interview schedule for this study. The investigator facilitated the participants' sharing parts of their life stories by techniques that included asking

questions that require more than a yes or no answer, and getting clarification when needed (Seidman, 1991).

There were 2 to 4 interviews with each participant. Although every effort was made to keep all elements as consistent as possible, the most important thing was to gather information on the life experiences related to common questioning. It took more interviews in some cases than in others. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes each. When reporting on these interviews, the investigator used a combination of the styles of Robert Donmoyer and Raylene Kos (1993), Harry Wolcott (1983), Flowers (1989) and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). Thus, a description of the surroundings as well as the questions and answers are provided so as to give the reader a full account of the interviews and the stories that emerged. Wolcott (1983) provided an example of how to divide the discussion by topics when reporting on the participants' experiences. The outline of the landscape allowed the investigator to explore similarities. The investigator also asked questions to gather information that supplemented the answer given and that added more information (Seidman, 1991). These techniques combined to form a portraiture of the participants and locations so as to get answers that take into account the context (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997).

Data were also collected via literature review. The reviewed literature suggested several important factors, including role models, peer influence, and family influence in the education and socialization of African American males. These factors were explored during the interviews via questions to see whether the experiences of the participants— four African American males in Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center and four in the Navy— differed significantly. The investigator asked questions related to elements of the educational experience and environmental factors that put these African American males at-risk. If a theme developed from the interviews, it was expanded in the reporting of the research.

Rationale for Participants

Interviews were conducted with eight participants with the following characteristics:

1. African American

2. Male

3. Age 18 to 21

4. From an inner city environment

5. From a single parent/guardian household

The four participants from the Navy were experiencing, at least at the time of the interviews, some level of success. For the purposes of this research project success was defined as having high school diploma (either by traditional high school or GED) at the time of the interview, and being employed and self-supporting. The four Navy personnel represented the participants who made positive life choices. Being unsuccessful here meant being incarcerated, not having a high school diploma at the time of this study, and not being employed and self-supporting. The four participants from the educational facility at Jacksonville Florida's Pre-trial Detention Center represented the participants who made negative life choices.

There were specific reasons for selecting the participants according to the criteria above— from the age group of 18-21, from an inner city environment, and from a single parent household. First, the age range of 18-21 was chosen because this age range typically represents the transition into adulthood. This time frame does not in and of itself suggest a crossroads. While, it is true that by the age of 18-21 the participants have made many decisions that will weigh heavily on the rest of their lives, success or failure in life is certainly not determined at this point. Second, the criterion of being from an inner city

environment established similar background of surroundings for each participant. Many African Americans experience the same sort of stressors. It is worth knowing why some choose different paths from others when faced with the same sort of stressors. Finally, the criterion of being from a single parent household excludes this as the main factor for the decisions and paths these young men have taken. Many believe the plight of the African American male is due largely to being from a single parent household. Although being from a single parent household could be a contributing factor, this is not necessarily the main or only factor.

The protection of all participants was paramount. The real names of the participants were not used in the final report. The identity of those who participated in this study will remain confidential. Participating in this project was completely voluntary. All participants were asked to sign a confidentiality/consent to participate form (see appendix). The participants were the most important part of this research study. The project was discussed with them, and they were supplied a summary of the final project. The information discovered in this investigation will not be used intentionally to injure any participant. Each participant signed an informed consent form (see appendix). The proposal for this study went before an Internal Review board at the University of North Florida, and was subsequently approved.

<center>Measurement</center>

Qualitative research that uses interviews should have structure. The interviews were given structure by using the following landscape or interview schedule:

I. Family experience

II. Educational experience

III. Community experience

IV. Success

V. Point of divergence

Interviews were framed around the landscape/interview schedule discussed above. Data were collected using a tape recorder. The interview protocol sought narrative responses to questions concerning elements in the above landscape to include a version of the participants' life experiences and choices. The interview protocol gave structure and organization to the descriptions of the participants' experiences in order to directly address the research question. The researcher was an observer and participant by being involved in the conversations. The following is a list of questions that were included in the interviews as they relate to the landscape discussed above:

1. Where did you go to school?

2. Describe what it was like in the schools that you attended.

3. Did you enjoy school?

4. Did anything anger you or "turn you off" from school? If so, describe it.

5. What is the most important thing about school?

6. Describe the most important time frame during your school years. Why?

7. What does success mean to you? Why?

8. What does personal responsibility mean to you?

9. Do you know a successful person?

10. What points in your life do you consider key to the path you have taken?

11. Describe the major choices in your life. Why did you make the decisions you did?

12. Where did you grow up?

13. What was it like in the neighborhood where you grew up?

14. Describe your closest friend(s).

15. Did you enjoy growing up in your neighborhood?

16.    Did you see drug usage or violence?  Describe it.

17.    What, if anything, in your community affected your decisions?

18.    Describe your family life as you were growing up.

19.    What influence did your family members have on you and your decisions in life?

20.    What expectations, if any, did family members have of you?

21.    Describe the most important thing about your family.

22.    Who did you want to be like?  Why?

23.    What teacher stood out in your mind?  Why?

24.    What other adult stood out in your mind?  Why?

25.    What expectations, if any, did these adults have of you?

26.    What does leadership mean to you?

27.    Who do you think of as being the best leader(s)?  Why?

28.    Who was the most important adult in your life?  Why?

29.    Tell me about some of the opportunities that you had to accomplish goals in your life.

30.    What or who do you see as the main reason(s) for the choices that you made in your life?  Why?

31.    Do you feel that you have control over what happens to you in your future? Why?  Did you always feel this way?  Why?

32.    Describe the biggest opportunity you had?  What choice did you make and why?

The list of question above was, by no means, exhaustive. This list of questions facilitated discussion. Each participant had his own story to tell and other questions and points of discussion arose. The aim of the questions, follow-up questions, and discussions was to get the participants to reveal key decision points in their lives, as they saw them,

to effectively address the research question.

<center>Structure of the Study</center>

In organizing data for analysis categories were developed (Merriam, 1988). The research question and objectives provided the categories by which the data were organized. The research question was, "How do some African American males from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and the U.S. Navy describe their life experiences and the influences of these experiences on their choices?" The following was a list of objectives for this study that underscored the research question:

(1) Identify elements that contribute to positive and negative life course choices of African American males.

(2) Identify similarities and differences in the educational experiences and community stressors of the study population.

(3) Explain how some African American males describe success and how to achieve it.

(4) Identify a point of divergence.

Concisely, in analyzing these two case studies the investigator used the research question and objectives to filter the results of the study. The data collected were filtered through the following screens:

1.  Elements that contribute to positive and negative life course choices.
    This topic was divided into (a) elements that contribute to positive life course choices and (b) elements that contribute to negative life course choices.

2.  Similarities and differences in the educational experiences and community

stressors of the study population. This screen was divided into two topics as well— a) educational experiences and b) community experiences. I did this to better analyze the experiences of the participants.

3. Success, as seen by the participants.

4. Point of divergence. That is a specific point in the life of the participants that was critical to the path they took.

The computer was used to analyze and manage the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1988). Key word searches were conducted; that is, keywords were identified, consolidated, and used to access the point in the interview where the screen or category was discussed. For example, the key word of *success* was used to search the interviews in order to gather all relevant data for the screen of "How do some African American males describe success?"

The purpose of the study, which was to examine the educational experience and other environmental stressors encountered by Black males, was embodied by the research question and objectives. The research question and objectives helped to inform the portraitures developed in presenting the findings. The researcher used the technique of portraitures as described in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), which is painting pictures using words. Billson (1996) was used as an example of format and developing names for the participants. The participants' real names do not appear in the final report. The phenomenon of this study was the disparate life choices of some African American males— some making positive and others negative choices. The following is an outline and the topology of this research project:

Case Study I (four participants from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center)

I. Introduction to the site/context

II. Participants

III. Theme

IV. Analysis of dimensions/constructs

 A. Family experience

 B. Educational experience

 C. Community experience

 D. Success

 E. Point of divergence

Case Study II (four participants from the U.S. Navy)

I. Introduction to site/context

II. Participants

III. Theme

IV. Analysis of dimensions/constructs

 A. Family experience

 B. School experience

 C. Community experience

 D. Success

 E. Point of divergence

Synthesis: Toward defining a model for successful socialization

The accounts of the family, educational, and community experiences of the participants were their own. Interviewing the participants gave this study voice from a perspective that might not have otherwise been heard— the participants. The stories of

the participants generated the portraitures. Portraiture gives a pictorial view of the participants' perceptions of their experiences. The questions became dynamic as the interview sessions progressed. That is, while the investigator started out with a basic group of questions, the questions necessarily changed to accommodate the participants' telling their stories. The questions gave structure and organization to the interviews, but the issue of focus arose in every session with every participant. The investigator was very conscious of not letting the interviews stray too much. However, in some instances, a tangent discussion seemed to allow for a little more illumination and furthered the relationship between the participant and the investigator. The interviews centered on the research questions and the purpose of this work. The focus provided by the research questions and purpose contributed to the generalizability and consistency across the cases.

Inductive Analysis

The grounded theory approach was used in analyzing the data gathered during this research project. After the data were gathered via interviews and literature, a series of comparisons were made. For instance, the answers gathered from the two groups— four participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center in Jacksonville, Florida and four from the Navy— were compared to find common themes. The common themes and areas of differences were then compared to the literature review so as to render a pattern or list of items that explained the choices made by some African American males. The explanations and theories that emerged from the data analysis represented grounded theory (Creswell, 1994). Thus, the theory, reasons, and factors that were the result of the

research emerged from the data. The theory, reasons, and factors that the research produced also suggested areas for further exploration.

Limitations of the Design

This study did not seek to evaluate or compare schools, teachers, communities, or school districts. However, the study observed these environments to be able to provide starting points to improve, if needed, the learning environment, family life, and community experiences of African American males while providing a new discourse. This study also examined, via interviews, similar stressors encountered by the participants as they were growing up. Data was limited by the fact that it was from the perspectives of the participants. I assumed the truth of their voices. I began transcribing the interviews shortly after the final sessions. I conducted a literal transcription of the interviews and when I was not sure of what was said I asked the question again or I asked for clarification.

This study was limited by the size of the samples and by the nature of the two groups and locations. There were only eight participants. The participants were from two particular sites— the Pre-trial Detention Center of Jacksonville and the Navy. Additionally, the fact that Blue (one of the four participants of the second case study) was from more of a small town— Lake City— was not realized until after assembling this report. However, the experiences verbalized by Blue speak directly to the point that the urban experience is not confined to large cities.

There were a lot of unasked and unanswered questions. The young men in the Pre-trial Detention Center experienced some harsh things in their lives. While each young man could be a case study, it was not right or relevant to probe into these dangerous

areas. These areas include the murder of a parent, unresolved issues related to the divorce of the parents, attempted suicide, and events that one participant did not want to talk about at the time. Consequently, their life stories were necessarily incomplete. The factors were part of the rationale for structuring the study into two case studies based on the sites selected. By combining the stories of these young men into two case studies I was able to give a fuller portraiture of their lives. The lives of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center were similar, just as those of the participants from the Navy (with the exception of Malcolm) were similar. Malcolm's experiences were similar to members of both groups.

<div align="center">Analysis of Data</div>

Organizing the data was a major concern. There were data in different forms—taped interviews, personal notes, and information gathered from literature. The organization began with the transcription of the taped interviews, which was very time consuming. I interviewed ten Black males before eight were selected to become participants in this study. After the interview process was started, it was discovered that two did not qualify. All ten offered valuable insights, but the point was to keep the selection variables constant throughout the study.

Considerable time was spent thinking about organizing and structuring this project. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis the focus was on the research question and objectives, which was very difficult at times. The questions helped to give the report organization and structure. Maintaining focus was difficult because, as was discovered very early, there were many contributing factors which affect the plight of the Black male. The two sites/contexts for the two case studies were the Pre-trial

Detention Center of Jacksonville and the Navy. The participants are eight young Black males— four from the Pre-trial Detention Center and four from the Navy. A theme for both case studies quickly emerged. The theme was that the activities (e.g., football, basketball, and Big Brothers), parental control, peers, and a male role model led to the decisions by the participants. Although the hypothesis was borne out by the emergent theme, as Merriam (1988) pointed out, it necessarily evolved to accommodate the data gathered.

## Hypothesis

The initial hypothesis for this study was that male role models or mentors guiding the Black male would make the most impact on his being able to navigate successfully the hazards of his family, educational, and community experiences. After the analysis of the data began, the hypothesis evolved to include the effect of peers, activities, and parental control in the decision making process of young Black males. Specifically, the hypothesis is that male role models, peers, activities, and parental control most directly affect the life choices made by young Black males.

## Generalizability

The issue of generalizability in a qualitative research project is contentious at best. Traditionally researchers have had the attitude that qualitative research is applicable only to that study or phenomenon. Generalizability is a problem and a limitation (Merriam, 1988), but it is important that research have utility, as much as possible, beyond that which is being studied. Therefore, this research can be generalizable in the sense that themes identified in this situation can apply to other cases (Eisner, 1991). The generalizability of this research is enhanced by providing a rich and thick description

(Merriam, 1988). This rich and thick description may facilitate a vicarious experience for the reader so he or she may be able to understand and better interpret similar situations (Donmoyer, 1990).

Generalizability is important also because it gives credibility to this study. However, it must be said that, as Merriam (1988) pointed out, the point of qualitative research is not generalizability. Generalizability may help to make this project more acceptable in the traditional research circle and add to its credibility. The point of qualitative research is to look at a phenomenon in its context. Each phenomenon in a case study is peculiar to that case. Peculiarity of the phenomenon quickly made it clear that this research had to be treated as two individual case studies across two different sites. Concisely, the framework for this work was a cross-case and cross-site study. Therefore, it can be argued that this framework enhanced generalizability of the study because the phenomenon was studied in two different sites and from two different perspectives. The experience and discourse of the Black males at these two sites can be applied in general terms to others. It can also be argued that this cross-case and cross-site framework also aided the study's internal validity in that each participant and information gathered from both sites helped validate data.

<div align="center">Internal Validity and Reliability</div>

Internal validity is addressed via triangulation and the close involvement of participants in the study. Triangulation was accomplished by comparing information gathered from the participants of each context, staff members, notes, observation— prior to and after the interviews and the literature review. The participants are the most important part of this study and their in-depth involvement throughout was both

unavoidable and indispensable. Further, questioning at times was redundant so as to follow up on statements made by the participants and to check for meaning. The structured questioning enabled internal validity.

The next concern was reliability or the ability to replicate the study. As Creswell (1994) stated, the uniqueness of a case study within a specific context limits its ability to be replicated. To aid in replication, I made statements about my position, the selection of participants, biases and values as Creswell suggested.

First of all, I am a Black male. My position is that the family, educational and community environments shape the socialization of Black males and influence the life choices they make. Some of the answers to the questions about the young Black male's life choices may lie with the individual, but mostly the answers lie with the way the African American males are socialized in and out of the classroom. I only present my position and the fact that I am a Black male here to give some information about the researcher, which may be useful to anyone wishing to replicate this study (Creswell, 1994). I also hold that unethical practices and policies discussed earlier directly contribute to the predicament the Black male finds himself in today. I do not believe that a traditional two-parent family— mother and father— is the determining factor of the choices a Black male makes. I do, however, believe that a positive male role model, positive peers, activities, and parental control most directly affect the life choices made by young Black males. These are indispensable in the proper socialization of Black males. It must be mentioned here that positive male role model could be in the form of a father, uncle, mentor, or another significant adult.

My belief in the importance of the male role model is reflected in the selection of the participants, all of whom were from a single parent household. Before going on, let me state that no one can argue against the preference of a traditional family in the proper socialization of any child. The large number of single mother families in the African American inner city community, however, makes the traditional family unit more of an ideal situation than a norm. Therefore, a discourse must be developed that positively accounts for the success that many single parents have in socializing the young Black males in their families. This work provides at least a beginning discourse that highlights the successes of a single parent family. Further, this research project provides a discourse for understanding that the educational and community stressors encountered by the typical inner city Black male necessitate a positive male role model. Finally, this work provides illumination on the ethics regarding practices and policies relevant to Black males and some of the consequences that manifest themselves in the life choices that they make.

I also had to consider my impact on the participants (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1996). While interviewing the participants, I needed to make sure the rapport was such that they trusted me and wanted to be truthful. When building a rapport with all of the participants I discussed who I was, what I was doing, and the commonalties I shared with them. I gained their confidence and created a comfortable relationship with all of the participants.

<div align="center">Thickness and Richness</div>

I addressed the thickness and richness issue in presenting the life stories of the participants in several ways. The first way is that I used the transcribed interviews to provide the exact point of view of the participants. Using the point of view of the

participants and their own words enabled their voice to add context. The participants' interpretation of the elements of their experience (e.g., education and community) and the influences of these elements were best communicated via the participants themselves.

I also described the participants and context via portraiture. Portraitures provide a picture painted with words to help decision makers who read this work get an honest point of view and allow them to put themselves in the participants' shoes. Portraitures also allow the reader to understand elements which may have contributed to a phenomenon that may have gone unnoticed otherwise.

Finally, I couched my interpretations in the information taken directly from the participants and the literature that was reviewed for this project. The data gathered from the participants and literature provide a screen through which I analyzed the data. This screen, which was formed by the headings in the analysis, assists those wishing to duplicate this research.

## Naming the Participants

Fictional names for the participants were used as I wrote the portraiture for each case study in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The names that I gave the participants came from personal reasons. The reason I gave *Lil Man* his name speaks to the fact that I believe that it is very important that an adolescent male evolve into a man who takes his responsibilities seriously. Lil Man convinced me that he was determined to get back on the right track, finish school, and take care of his family, which at the time of the interview consisted of a daughter and a girlfriend whom he intended to marry.

The other participants were assigned names similarly. *Cat Daddy* got his name because of his trying so hard to be cool. Although he tried very hard to be cool, Cat Daddy was a young man who needed to be told that he can make it and to be given praise, which I was more than happy to do while I was with him. *Lil Bru* (the *u* is pronounced as the short u sound) simply reminded me of a little brother. I felt like lecturing to him and at the same time I wanted to hug him. *Big Man* is a sarcastic title that I gave to the last of the participants in the Pre-trial Detention Center. Big Man was not big, but he acted as if he were important on the streets and in the jail. I would not be surprised if Big Man were not a repeat customer at the jail in the future. *Baby Boy* was 18 and, as he let his guard down, he really seemed to be the baby of all the participants. I gave Baby Boy his name simply because I think of him as the baby of a family. *Hustler* was a very industrious young man. I call him Hustler because he has so many irons in the fire that he has to hustle to keep up with them. *Blue* wanted to be a police officer and a correctional officer, and he is a sailor. Since all these professions wear blue uniforms, I gave him the name Blue. *Malcolm* simply looked like a Malcolm to me. There was no rhyme or reason other than I simply liked the name Malcolm for him.

## Conclusion

A significant amount of time and consideration went in to the organization and structure of this study. The aim here, was to ensure that the portraitures painted by the participants presented useful data and followed a logical sequence in order to answer the research question and address the objectives of this study. Using the constructs of family, educational experience, community experience, success, and family provided consistency and an ample canvas to paint pictures of the experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER IV: CASE STUDY I

Pre-trial Detention Center

Jacksonville, Florida, is a beautiful city, but it is also one of great promises unfulfilled. Driving around Jacksonville one sees the typical things of a big city— nice areas and not so nice areas. There are many trees, open areas, and a warm climate. There are only a few months out of the year during which it gets cold here. Jacksonville is very spread out and, to me, this adds to its beauty. People are always talking about the businesses Jacksonville needs and how it is going to be now that the city has the Jaguar football team. They say that Jacksonville is a city on the rise, if only it could break the grip of those who would have it remain a big country town.

On the way to the downtown Pre-trial Detention Center from South Orange Park, I have a lot of time to think and take in the scenery. On Highway 17, I pass through the suburb of Orange Park proper and see many buildings from a not so distant past being used for modern businesses. Every time I go through Orange Park now, I can not help but think of the Ku Klux Klan marching down the streets two or three years ago. Continuing my journey, I pass through Orange Park and pass the Naval Air Station Jacksonville on the right. Traveling on, I pass Ortega (old money area of the city) and Florida Community College of Jacksonville, Kent Campus. Finally, I reach Interstate 10 East, which soon turns into Interstate 95 North as it enters downtown Jacksonville. There are many old and dilapidated homes downtown, but there is also a lot of renovation. When the city got the Jaguars, a professional National Football League (NFL) team, everyone felt Jacksonville would somehow be transformed into an oasis of jobs and business

opportunities. Jacksonville seems to be moving forward, if one does not think too much about the racially segregated educational system and the seemingly prevailing attitudes, which are frequently conservative to the point of exclusion.

Driving up to the Pre-trial Detention Center for the first time, I was impressed with its appearance, but once inside I got the same feeling that I got whenever I watched the "Underdog" cartoon as a child— depressed. As soon as I passed through the doors, I saw a booth straight ahead, with two officers who conduct their business through a window. On my side of the window a line of disgruntled friends and relatives were trying to get information about the welfare of their loved ones and perhaps even see them. The guards were very matter-of-fact in their dealings with friends and families of the inmates. Lockers line the wall on the left as one walks in to place valuables, cell phones, and umbrellas before visitors and briefcases are scanned. Along the other walls there are chairs for those waiting.

Finally, it was my turn at the window. I explained my project and how I was working with the educational facility to do my research. This process became less frustrating with subsequent visits. The officers in the booth called the educational facility to confirm my project. I got a visitor's badge and placed my umbrella, cell phone and valuables in a locker. I stationed myself at the metal detector and placed my brief bag on the conveyor belt that leads into an X-ray machine. Finally, an officer came and I was cleared to enter. The officer pressed a buzzer and I entered through the door and into another world. Having been there before, I knew to speak loudly to the officers in the control room as I told them what floor I wanted. I tried to sound confident as I did this.

Gaining access to the Pre-trial Detention Center was not easy. Fortunately, one of the professors on my committee knew the educational program administrator. I met with the administrator and she took me on a tour of the Pre-trial Detention Center and its classrooms. However, before I could get started on the project I needed a letter explaining what I was doing. I provided Dianne with a letter written by Dr. Joyce Jones briefly explaining the research project. Dianne routed the letter to the Chief in charge of the jail. The Chief gave her approval, and I was allowed access to the facility.

The Pre-trial Detention Center can be an intimidating place. Everything seemed to be dull gray and white. The whole building felt cold and there was always a buzz from the transformers that gave electronic lifeblood to the jail. There are six floors and the second through the sixth, where the inmates lived, were arranged the same. The two enclosed control centers were in the middle of each floor. The first control center after exiting the elevators controlled the elevators and access to the classrooms, the interview rooms, and the visitor section of that floor. There were two sets of elevators, one for the inmates and the other for visitors. The elevator for the inmates was on the opposite side of the main control booths, as one exits the elevator used for normal traffic (i.e., visitors, lawyers, and guards). When people want to go to another floor, they must first get the attention of the officer (which is difficult at times) and say where they would like to go. If one wants to go through a door, one must get the correctional officer's attention to open the door. The second control room divided the section where the inmates were housed with cells on two opposite sides. There was a corridor between the control centers. Directly on the opposite side of the second control booth as one enters from the corridor was a classroom or office, depending what it was used for on that floor. The rest of the

classrooms were located in the first section of that floor as one exits the elevators. The classrooms were part of the alternative school called "Pre-trial Detention Center School Number 176." Most of the participants came from this alternative school. Although most of the classrooms were located on the side of the building away from the cells, there was no mistaking them for traditional classrooms. The classrooms were part of the jail facility, and many of the students there came simply to get away from their cells.

The prison uniform they wore identified the inmates. Inmates wore green or brown prison uniforms— brown for juveniles and green for adults (18 years of age and older). The inmates also wore wristbands. A yellow wrist band meant that they have been sentenced; blue wrist bands were worn by those awaiting sentencing; orange bands meant that they were leaving the jail and going to prison; and gray was for those who are considered to be an escape risk. There was always the possibility of a commotion of some sort, and this was on my mind as the heavy steel doors closed behind me in every section of the jail.

During one of my initial visits in which the educational program administrator showed me around, one such commotion took place. As the administrator and I exited the classroom section of the second floor, the door closed behind us. Almost simultaneously, I heard a couple of loud voices (I could not make out what they were saying, but it was clear that there was a sense of urgency), keys rattling, and doors opening. Suddenly, two officers hurried out of the control booth and down the corridor toward us. We stood next to the wall and out of the way. The officers raced past Dianne and me. I was just glad they were not coming for me and I quietly let out a sigh of relief. My interest was peaked and my adrenaline was pumping. I thought to myself, what is going on here? The two

officers stopped at the locked door and began to beat the buzzer repeatedly for the officer who remained in the control room to open the door. Again and again they hit the buzzer.

Finally, the officer in the control room opened the door but only one officer managed to get through before the door closed again. The officer on the classroom side of the door rushed into the classroom, where he thought an inmate was threatening a teacher (the guards monitor the conversations in the classroom). Meanwhile, the officer on the outside of the door finally managed to get the guard's attention and she was buzzed through the door. All of this was for naught because the guards had misunderstood what was going on in the classroom and the teacher was in no danger, this time. I looked at the administrator. She seems relatively unmoved by this, so I unclenched my fists and started to breathe again. I hoped she had not noticed my apprehension. As we continued on our tour, I said, "That could have been really bad because the one officer was in there by himself." The administrator commented on my astute observation and explained that the guard in the control room would surely be in trouble because the guard who was left on the outside was the sergeant in charge. That incident stayed in the back of my mind throughout the interviews and reminded me of something I learned many years earlier— as much as possible, always be alert because you never know what may happen.

Unfortunately, there are many at-risk African American males in Jacksonville, Florida. One of the best places to find these at-risk African American youth is at the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center. The Pre-trial Detention Center houses around 100 adolescents along with the many adults who are serving their time or waiting to be sentenced. My work with at-risk youth around Jacksonville at Impact House and Duval Halfway House, both facilities that house juveniles adjudicated and sentenced to these

facilities, gave me practical knowledge in establishing a rapport with inmates at the Pre-trial Detention Center. Further, I visited the Pre-trial Detention Center on numerous occasions. I established a good working relationship with the administrator and have gained her support. I quickly discovered a number of inmates who wanted to participate.

Participants

Lil Man

I entered the small classroom. It was of the same colors as the rest of the institution— dull gray and white. There were about 10 chairs in the room and it had a slight scent of body odor. The windows were small and amounted to a glass opening in the cinder blocks that looked out over the parking lot. That is, one could look out if one could see over the wall that was about 2 feet from the window whose only purpose was to let a small measure of natural light into the classroom while preventing a possible escape attempt. The teacher was female, petite and White. The young men were convicted criminals, yet the teacher moved easily throughout the classroom unaffected by the sudden movements of these inmates. I have seen many people easily unnerved when Blacks move suddenly and aggressively, especially those considered at-risk. The instructor was young and seemed self-assured.

I immediately caught the eyes of those students whose minds were obviously not on their class work, which amounted to about 5 of the 8 students. Their attention was now on me. Soon thereafter I had the attention of the whole class. I knew that wearing my Navy uniform would get their attention from my experience with many other so-called at-risk young people. In a strange way my being in the Navy gave me a small amount of celebrity with them. At this point in time, they had determined to right their lives and

become productive citizens (at least they were trying to convince themselves as well as others of this). So, at the earliest opportunity I was bombarded with questions about how to get in the Navy or Army. It used to baffle me about how much emphasis Blacks put on military service, especially the Army, but I soon learned that it was not just Blacks. People from almost every ethnic background place a sense of status and even tie their dream of a better future to a career in the military. I answered the questions and then by catching the eye of the teacher I signaled that I was ready to get started on choosing participants. I sat down and began to scan the possible participants with a kind of scrutiny. The students were back to doing what they were doing when I came in, a couple of them at work and the rest socializing.

Right away I noticed *Lil Man* as I sat observing the class before asking for volunteers. Lil Man seemed very determined and that made him stand out in my mind. He sat in one of the chairs in the front of the class. While most of the other students in the class appeared to be going through the motions, Lil Man was obviously driven. When the teacher interrupted their activities, Lil Man initially seemed annoyed as he reluctantly looked up from his work, but as the teacher began to explain what I was doing there and officially introduced me, his look of annoyance changed to one of interest. The teacher asked who would like to participate and all of the students raised their hands. As I listed the characteristics for which I was looking, the field narrowed. They were all Black males so that part was easy. "You have to be between 18 years old and 21," I said. Moans filled the room as about 5 hands dropped because most of them were under the age of 18. All of the students wanted to participate. When I mentioned that they needed to be from a single parent household one of the remaining hands dropped. Of the remaining 2 candidates,

one was not going to be there long enough. That left Lil Man. Lil Man is about 5 feet, 5 inches tall and of dark complexion. His hair was uncombed. At the time of the interview, he was 18 years old.

Lil Man was from the Riverside area of Jacksonville. As we began to talk, I noticed that he spoke quietly but he was not apprehensive. Lil Man studied me as I explained my project. He agreed to go ahead with the interviews. He spoke with a slight stutter. Although he was short, Lil Man looked at least 25 years old.

## Cat Daddy

Not all of the participants of the Pre-trial Detention Center came from the same classroom. I went to the fourth floor, also. After getting off the elevator I walked to the main control center on the floor. On either side of the passageway leading to the control booth, there was a room that runs the length of the passageway except for the passage to the doors leading to the corridors on either side of the control room. These rooms were for visitors who come to see the inmates. The visitors use phones to communicate with the inmates because there is no physical contact allowed. I explained to the guard on duty what I was doing and that I wanted to go to the classroom on the opposite side of the second control center, which was to the right of the one that was joined by a corridor. After a few questions, a slight buzz went off as he opened the heavy electronic door to the corridor leading to the second control booth. Upon entering the classroom, I met briefly with the instructor and we exchanged pleasantries (I had visited his classroom before). I sat down and looked around the room. This classroom was rectangular shaped, and the only window was directly behind the instructor's desk. The room had computers, and the students were busily working at them. Although the students here were up

walking around and talking, the activities in the classroom seemed somehow more purposeful than the others I had visited. There were posters on the wall and the computers were along the two longest walls. Coach, as the teacher was called, reintroduced me to the class (he had no problem getting their attention). This class contained six young Black males. As with the other classes I visited to solicit volunteers, nearly all the students wanted to participate, but after listing the criteria only *Cat Daddy* qualified.

I called him Cat Daddy because of his exaggerated attempt to be cool. Cat Daddy is a title sometimes given, in jest, to people who try to be suave in their actions and speech. As with most Black youth his age, Cat Daddy seemed to be trying to find his identity. He was from the north side of Jacksonville. He is about 6 feet tall, slender, and has a medium skin tone. Cat Daddy and I went to the designated interview rooms normally used for meeting lawyers and others who come to meet with the inmates on business. He dragged his feet along the floor as we walked to the interview room. This room was about 5 feet by 9 feet with a small steel three-sided table attached to the rear wall. There were three steel stools that surrounded the table. The table and the stools were permanently mounted. I sat on one side and Cat Daddy sat across from me. He had on his green uniform and flip-flops. The ceiling was of normal height. There was a window (about 3 feet by 5 feet) that flanked the door on the left side as I entered. It is an isolated and sterile place— cold and completely uninviting. He sat down and seemed at home and was unaffected by the room. Why should he be? He had already been at the Pre-trial Detention Center for several months. Cat Daddy was able to keep up his cool act for the first interview, but after that he was just like any other young person.

### Lil Bru

*Lil Bru* (the u̱ is pronounced as short u̱) was in the classroom on the fourth floor. He was one of two participants from the class, which was Coach's classroom. There would have been three from this classroom were it not for the fact that after getting started with one other potential participant I discovered that he did not qualify. When I asked for volunteers in the class, I noticed that Lil Bru was one of the last to raise his hand. He stood about 5 feet 10 inches tall with a slender build, and he had a medium complexion. When I looked into his eyes I saw a little brother; thus, I named him Lil Bru. His uniform was wrinkled and his hair was uncombed. He was a handsome young man who sometimes had an innocent and needy look that disguised the fact that he could ever do wrong. At other times, though, he had a definite look of mischief that seemed to say if the opportunity presented itself and the risk of being caught was low, he would take a chance. At times Lil Bru made me feel like he had already given up and that he had no more hope.

### Big Man

On the day that I was to meet *Big Man* I had to go to the sixth floor because he was not enrolled in any classes at the time. His name was given to me by a would-be participant whom I discovered during the interview did not qualify. As I approached the sixth floor control room, there was a continuous opening and closing of an electronic door, the noise of many people milling about, and that irritating hum of the electronic mechanism. That hum was ambient. I explained to the guard (through the glass) what I was doing and whom I had come to see. The guard went to his console and spoke to the guard in the next control room via an intercom system and asked him to get Big Man from his cubical. The guard *buzzed me through* the electronic door leading to the corridor

that connects the control rooms. Then the guard buzzed me through a door immediately to my right as I entered the corridor. This door, as did similar doors on the other floors, led to the interview rooms and the classrooms on that floor. I went to the interview room to wait. Before Malcolm came into the interview room he peered in at me, and I gestured for him to come in because I assumed he was the one that I was to meet. It felt like he was sizing me up as well as making sure that I was the one that he was meeting to do the interview. As I was sitting in the interview room getting my notes together, I heard the electronic door open and through it walked a young Black man, about 5 feet, 11 inches tall. He weighed about 185 pounds. His hair was uncombed, and he dragged his feet. His face was hard, and he was of medium to dark complexion. There were many experiences written on that face and most seemed to be bad. He was only 19, but he seemed much older. He came into the room and I could not help but wonder what would I do if he got violent. Would the guards get there in time? How would they know if I was in trouble because there was no speaker or intercom system in the room? My defense mechanism became active, and I could not help sizing him up. I knew this feeling of apprehension would not go away, nor did I want it to go away, so I had to not let it interfere with the interview. Big Man sat down at the steel table across from me. I introduced myself to him and explained my project. I asked if he still wanted to participate, and he said yes.

<center>Analysis of Dimensions/Constructs</center>

The Dimensions/constructs were generated out of the review of the literature then operationalized in the research question and illustrated through the participants' stories. The following analysis of family, school, community, success, and point of divergence yielded data in the voices of the participants. The four major concepts that emerged from

this first case study were negative peer pressure, negative or absent father figure, lack of control by the parent or guardian, and lack of positive activities. The participants of this case study were from Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center. The picture that comes out the analysis was from the life experiences of the participants as told by them.

<div align="center">Family Experience</div>

Family experiences of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center are negative influences on their decisions. In 1994, 82% of poor Black children lived in single parent families headed by a female and 63.2% of these children were under 18 years old (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996a). It must be stated here that being from a single parent household is not necessarily negative. Many single parents, male and female, do a great job of raising their children. The participants in this case study share similar family experiences even beyond the initial screening factors for their selection to participate in this study.

Several elements make up the construct of family (e.g., parent(s), parental control, relationship with family members, and siblings). In the aggregate, these young men in this study described their family lives as a scene where the role of the mother and father is played by one individual but that individual is ill equipped to take on both roles. One of the biggest reasons that the single parent has difficulty is the fact that, typically, that parent has to work long hours or even two jobs. The relationship with the father was generally strained. The role model at home is the mother, but she works long hours to support her family. Consequently, discipline and control are lacking and the young men take liberties they would not have otherwise.

Expectations for good conduct are very important to resiliency (Benard, 1991).

Gonzales (1996) found that control in the home is one of the more important determinates

to the success in school of youth in the typical inner city. That is, these young men may

not have engaged in disruptive behavior at school, stayed out late at night, or participated

in many of the other problem behaviors that contributed to their predicament had there

been control in the home. Further, the expectation the mothers had for their sons were not

very demanding. In addition, the relationship between these young men and their mothers

is also very important to their success in school (Gonzales, 1996; Mason, 1994).

Unfortunately it seemed as though the mother and son relationship these young men

experienced suffered. Whenever I asked the question of who was the most important

adult or the best leader they knew, these young men all said their mother, with the

exception of Lil Bru, who said it would be his grandmother, his guardian.

Besides the fact that there was not a father present, there were clearly issues to be

resolved. The relationship with father was at least strained in all cases. In Big Man's case,

he did not even want to talk about his father at all (there is clearly more there but I was

not qualified to explore it). When I asked about his father, he got very defensive and the

tone of his voice was very serious. Later in the interview, Big Man told me that he did not

trust men. One could speculate as to why Big Man feels that he could not trust males, but

that topic is beyond the scope of this study. The young men in this study were very

willing to talk (at times it seemed to be therapeutic for them), and they were not bashful

in letting me know where the line was. Lil Bru's grandmother raised him. Lil Bru told me

that his mother was deceased and when I asked about his father he said "he did it." Lil

Bru's father was reportedly in jail for killing his mother, and according to Lil Bru, "he

didn't do no time"— meaning that his father did not do nearly enough time in prison for the crime. Lil Bru does not even want to see his father because, as he said, "I don't want to get in no trouble." Cat Daddy's father did time in jail after he and Cat Daddy's mother got a divorce. Cat Daddy also said that he and his father never talked. Only Lil Man seemed to have some sort of positive image and a semblance of a positive relationship with his father although he saw him only "every blue moon."

The participants' mothers never had control of them, and in some cases, did not even know what they were doing or where they were. For example, Cat Daddy had been in jail for "slanging," a street term for selling drugs, which he had been doing since the 10th grade. Cat Daddy said his mother would ask him, "Where you getting all these clothes from, know what I'm saying, necklaces and stuff like that there?" Cat Daddy informed me,

> I used to have game for that there cause she know I used to talk to a lot of girls, girls always calling to the house. I used to tell her girls buying it for me know what I'm saying. And then, I had me this one girl, she was 29. She had some bread. I used to tell her she used to get it for me. (Cat Daddy interview)

As for Lil Man and Lil Bru, mother and grandmother knew that they were involved in illegal activities but evidently could not do anything about it. Lil man's mom knew what he was doing and tried to talk to him.

> … [M]y momma set me down before I came in here. Told me I'm a become a adult one day then you gone have to stop doing the thangs what you do, it ain't gone get you no where but in here or in the ground. She don't want to see me in here and she don't want to see me gone. (Lil Man interview)

Lil Bru's grandmother offered to by him a car if he would straighten up. I asked Big Man, "What influence did your mom have on you?" He replied, "She wanted me to do the right thangs— stay out of the streets, stay out of trouble. But I choose to do the

opposite. If I woulda listen to my momma I wouldn't he here." All these young men

espouse loving and respectful remarks about their moms. Mom is seen as the most

important person in their life. Mom is also the best leader these young men know.

However, mom has no way of keeping them on the straight and narrow. Big man tells me

why he thinks his mom is the best leader he knows.

> She goin be there; know what I'm saying, she know right from wrong. She done experienced the thangs I done experienced; know what I'm saying. If she can turn her life around; I can turn mine around too. (Big Man interview)

When Cat Daddy and I talked about college, he told me how he wanted to make his mom

proud. It is important to Cat Daddy that his mom sees him in a positive way. Cat Daddy

and his mom had difficulties in their relationship, but their relationship is very important

to him.

> (Sounding determined) I'ma do something man; I gotta make something out of myself cause I wanta make my momma proud of me. I don't want her to feel like her son ain't gone never he nothing. She don't feel like that now I know she, know what I'm saying, see some kind of success in me, I [emphasis his] can see it know what I'm saying. (Cat Daddy interview)

Lil Bru's grandmother wanted him to be a preacher. She was his guardian because his

mother was murdered when he was a baby. As the following excerpt from Lil Bru's

interview transcript illustrates, Lil Bru's grandmother is very important to him but he is

having obvious problems staying on the right road.

> Interviewer: Your grandmother stands behind you huh?

> Lil Bru: Yeah.

> Interviewer: Do you feel like you owe her?

> Lil Bru: I owe her a lot.

> Interviewer: Does she rely on you a lot?

Lil Bru: Mmm, hmmm [yes].

Interviewer: Rely on you for what kind of stuff?

Lil Bru: Going to school.

Interviewer: You feel like you let her down?

Lil Bru: Yep, I let her down (Lil Bru interview).

Parental control of the adolescents is essential if their families are going to survive as a functional unit. As I reported earlier, just because a family was headed by a single parent does not mean that there was a disruptive family process or delinquent behavior (Smith, C., 1995). However, Smith did say that control did have an effect on delinquency of the Black male. Children look for boundaries, and they push until they get to them. These young men have pushed far beyond the boundaries of home, and they rely on the rules of the streets to give them boundaries. Not having a father at home is not the sole contributing factor to the delinquency of these young men, but they carry psychological baggage as it relates to dealing with an absentee father.

The relationship with brothers and sisters of the participants ranged from close to distant. The siblings of these young men ranged in number from one for Lil Bru to "five on his mother's side and seven on his father's side" in the case of Lil Man. The participants showed varied levels of getting along with their brothers and sisters. The negative impact of the participants' family life was very hard to overcome for them, and it certainly damaged their resiliency. Finally, the family life of these young men seemed to be filled with stress and conflict to some degree. Paschall (1996) attributed at least some of the violent behavior of the Black male to stress and conflict in the family. The families in this case study, at the very least, were enabling agents of deviant behavior.

<u>Educational Experience</u>

One of the most important things in any young person's world is school, and for

these participants it represented yet another negative experience. Drug activity, violence,

and crime filled the hours of these young men's lives that would have otherwise been

spent in school. The needs of these young men were not being met at home, and this was

compounded by the lack of nurturing and supportive network at school, which Gonzales

(1996) and Mason (1994) found to be of particular importance to Black youth. Indeed,

much of the educational experience of Black males is lacking in many ways (Irvine,

1990; King, 1997). Cat Daddy provided a story of his typical school day. His story is an

example of all the participants' stories because it embodies all the negative elements of

their young lives.

Cat Daddy offers:

When I used to go to school I used to be smoking, so wake up in the morning, I
used to like to dress—keep ma clothes creased up and everythang. I get fresh
[dress up] whatever; eat ma breakfast; walk outside every morning. Me and a
couple of ma friends walk up to the bus stop; probably smoke befo we go to
school.

Interviewer: Smoke a joint? [Clarifying]

Cat Daddy continuing:

Yep, then we'll go to school, when I get to school I used to like that [smoking];
keep ma mind straight. I used to do my work, know what I'm saying, still doing
ma work in school or whatever, know what I'm saying, probably fall asleep
during a period. Then when we get out of school I come home. I wouldn't do ma
homework till night time. I used to play basketball real good till I got shot. Then
play basketball and stuff, chillin, talking to ma boys or whatever, that was about
it; come in the house and eat dinner get ready for another day. But when I was out
there doing wrong I stopped going to school, I probably wake up in the morning,
like when I got kicked out the house. I got kicked out the house then I started
living at the motel, used to live in motel. I probably wake up in the morning; go
down stairs pay my bill; go back up stairs, brush ma teeth and stuff. Then I
probably go get something to eat— go get some breakfast or something. Come

back, look at TV, flip through the channels (it's obvious he's actually reliving those days) know what I'm saying; smoke another "J" [joint] fall back to sleep. Wake up later on; go get on the scene; know what I'm saying [this is to say later in the day he would go out and become part of what's going on in the streets i.e., selling drugs or whatever], sit out there all day. After I'm through with that it's night time, come back and go get something to eat— go to Quincy's or something; go uh back to ma room get another smoke or something, just chill and talk on the phone. That's about it; that's what I did everyday (Cat Daddy interview).

All, but one of the participants were on free lunch if you include Cat Daddy who used his grandmother's name to get on it. The other two who were on free lunch were Lil Man and Big Man. Only Lil Man was in special education classes at his school, and he was in special education classes in jail. Lil Bru wanted to be in special education classes at the Pre-trial Detention Center because they get to watch TV.

For the participants, school is part of their battle and not a battle for a better life, but rather a battle to figure out how to live. By this, I mean that because the participants chose not to go to school they missed out on the direction and skills normally provided there. On the other hand, their needs were not being met at school and this started early in their educational experience. These young men will not be able to even think about taking advantage of the limited opportunities that will come their way because they have not armed themselves at least with a high school diploma. They did not place an emphasis on school. For these young men, school was a place where they went because they had to, but that changed when they just decided not to go. If asked to speculate based on the sincerity I witnessed when talking about finishing their high school education in some form (e.g., traditional or through alternative schools), I would say that only two will get their education— Lil Man and Cat Daddy. Much of the socialization of a child is done at school, but when they do not go they not only miss out on the

socialization skills, they are relying on the socialization skills they pick up elsewhere to get them by in society.

All of the participants were high school dropouts. Indeed, according to the Digest of Education Statistics (1995), a little over 14% of the Black males of the age of these participants dropped out of high school. In the cases of Lil Man and Lil Bru, they were held back for three years in high school. For Lil Bru being in the ninth grade for three years was the deciding factor for his dropping out of school completely. Big Man and Cat Daddy got to the eleventh grade before they dropped out. School for these young men was a chore to be avoided at the earliest opportunity. The traditional public urban school is not meeting the needs of these young Black males (Irvine, 1990; King, 1997). Some of the blame falls on the individual and the participants all admitted to things like fighting, getting into altercations with faculty, not wanting to get out of bed to go to school, and stealing a teacher's car. These young men told a story of their educational experience that has them taking much, if not most, of the blame for where they are now. Indeed, none of the participants felt like they were totally absolved of any responsibility for the decision they made regarding not going to school.

When I asked what turned the participants off about school or why they stopped going, the reasons varied. I asked Big Man what turned him off about school. He said that nothing turned him off from school. For Big Man, not going to school was a practical matter.

> I loved school. It wasn't nothing that made me hate school, know what I'm
> saying. I just chose not to go; you know what I'm saying. I was running the streets
> while I was in school, but I cain't run the streets and be in school the same time;
> know what I'm saying. So I just chose, instead of messing up my life like that
> there, well, know what I'm saying, uh insteada like I go to school; you know what

I'm saying, then skip school; I might as well stop going to school. That's just how I see it, so I just stop going; know what I'm saying? (Big Man interview)

Cat Daddy's reason for being turned off from school was money. Cat Daddy felt a need to get more money so he started selling drugs. I asked Cat Daddy what did he regret the most. Cat Daddy replied (clearly hating his decisions at this time):

Selling dope and I wish I'da stayed in school man. If I'da stayed in school man, I have so much going for me right now, but (with disappointment in his voice) guess I gotta start over. (Cat Daddy interview)

Some of the blame for the misdirected lives of the participants must be placed on the home and on the influences of peers. If a child is out of control at home, chances are that teachers and other school officials will not be able to control him and he will become disruptive. The pattern seems to be that once he is disrupting the good order and discipline of the school, he must be removed. The peers of a young person exert, sometimes, overwhelming pressure on them to make the wrong choices in life. The influence of peers is made that much more coercive in the absence of parental and school control.

Peers were always involved in the decisions these young men made not to go to school. I asked Big Man what was the main reason he chose not to go to school.

Big Man: Oh, what do you call them… peers.

Interviewer: Peer pressure?

Big Man answered:

Nah, your peers like the people I'm connected with. Cause they do thangs I'll want to do 'em. It's my choice my decision on whether I want to do it or not and I choose to do it. (Big Man interview)

Lil Man said, "Tell you the truth— other friends, females, and lazy."

Lil Bru's main reason for not going to school included another negative theme— drugs.

> Interviewer: You think your biggest problem in school is your friends and...
>
> Lil Bru: Yeah [Interupting].
>
> Interviewer: [Continuing] and marijuana?
>
> Lil Bru: Yeah (Lil Bru interview).

The other part of the blame for the plight of these young men rests with the educational

facilities and their policies and practices. For example, Black males being over

represented in lower track courses (Oakes, 1995). The Black male is also more likely to

experience corporal punishment than White males (Gregory, 1995). When I asked about

what turned him off about school, Lil Man's reply was short but spoke directly to his

plight in his educational career. Lil Man felt neglected.

> That's one of the reasons why I left school; I wasn't getting the right kind of help
> I needed. That was the biggest thang, I was a troublemaker; in trouble a lot with
> the principal and the man, the male teachers. [He was in special education classes
> at the Pre-trial Detention Center] (Lil Man interview).

It was apparent that none of the young men of this study were dumb. In fact, it

was obvious that these young men were very intelligent, and it was also obvious that

these four adolescents needed positive attention. For example, Lil Bru got into trouble,

which resulted in his going to an alternative school for a while, but when he finished with

that he was still placed back in the ninth grade. Being "that old in the ninth grade" was

too much for Lil Bru. I asked Lil Bru about what turned him off from school.

> Nothing really. I just didn't want to be that old in the ninth grade. I went to this
> program one time. I got through with that, I had passed, I went back to Raines,
> they still had me in the ninth grade. (Lil Bru interview)

I am certainly not suggesting that a child be advanced to the next grade if he does not

posseses the skills to do so. I am simply saying that if dealt with early in his education it

may not come down to holding him back a grade. In the case of Lil Bru, his plight was compounded by the fact that he felt that he was too old to be in the ninth grade.

Whoever or whatever is to blame, the consequence is that too many young Black males end up dropping out or getting a GED via an alternative school. Alternative schools such as the Pre-trial Detention Center School # 176 cannot be the primary way a society educates and socializes Black male adolescents. Unfortunately, schools like the one at the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention center have become somehow acceptable ways to educate young African American males. One of the most important aspects about an education is learning socialization skills. The young men in the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center School # 176 are not learning many socialization skills and the same can probably be said of most, if not all, alternative schools. Further, the emphasis in most jails is on punishment and not rehabilitation. One thing is for sure; no matter how long we lock them up, unless it is for life, these young men are going to be reintroduced into society. Without real rehabilitation their reentry into the community will be at the cost of a measure of safety for society at large, and the absence of real rehabilitation will contribute directly to recidivism. All of the young men in this study communicated that they wanted to finish their education and move on with their lives. Without proper social skills and real rehabilitation these young men are destined to repeat their deviant behaviors. As for now they share yet another educational experience— the Pre-trial Detention Center's educational facility.

<u>Community Experiences</u>

One cannot discuss community issues affecting the Black male without discussing peers and peer pressure. Peers played an important and, unfortunately, negative role in

the educational and community experiences of these participants. Many of the participants' peers and friends are even in jail right along with them or have been in jail at one time or another. The crimes of these friends and peers range from murder to stealing cars. However, it is hard to place all the blame on peers. In each of their cases there is evidence that these young men were leaders in the underground world of their communities, however small their leadership role. Lil Man's principal accused him of being a gang leader and this led to conflict between them that ended with Lil Man being expelled from school (see Lil Man interview). When I asked Lil Bru if was he the leader of his group, he responded, "Yeah, I wasn't never a follower" (Lil Bru interview). Lil Bru also said that he influenced his friends. I asked Cat Daddy, "Who did you look up to? He said, "I just, I just find my own way I guess. I ain't trying something like nobody else or be like nobody else; I'm my own leader" (Cat Daddy interview). When I asked Big Man if he was the leader of the guys he ran with his answer was, "Know what I'm saying, we did different thangs but everybody likeded me though, know what I'm saying." I pressed the issue a little more with, "They look up to you?" He said, "You can say that" (Big Man interview).

The communities of all four of these young people were filled with the expected things that permeate the inner city— drugs, negative relationships with the police, negative peer pressure, poor family structure, and the lack of positive activities. These elements are part of the subculture of Black males that Hale-Benson (1986) said exists within the African American community. The subculture of the Black male is misunderstood. All of these young men started out good, but by the time they were in middle school they had fallen into the wrong crowd. Lil Man, Lil Bru, Big Man, and Cat

Daddy lived reckless lives. Lil Man was in jail for burglary. Lil Bru was charged with

auto theft. Cat Daddy was incarcerated for selling drugs. Big Man was in jail because he

was "involved in things I should not have been" (Big Man interview). Big Man

recounted:

> "I had got into some mischievous things when I was on the outs [The outside]. I
> was with one of my friends. I didn't do nothing; know what I'm saying. I was
> with him. That's how I got put in here, in the mix" (Big Man interview).

The battleground here is the community and the objective is not to become

institutionalized.

Big Man provided me with the rationale for the metaphor of institutionalization,

which he coined:

> This system work; know what I'm saying, say like you come here on arm robbery,
> right? Say you serve such and such amount of time. You don't do no prison time;
> they don't give you that much time. They doing that there cause once you get,
> know what I'm saying; they [perpetrator] figure caused they let you off sweet
> [light] that time they goin let you off sweet the next time....

> ...Like when you get out, you be saying man Ga Lee man, they gave me six
> months for this arm robbery charge, know what I'm saying? I should go do
> another one, know what I'm saying? They bout to let me out this time. That's
> how they get ya. It's a master minded thang. I done experienced it, like different
> people... like it happen; know what I'm saying. That's how I see it. I'm trying to
> not get institutionalized cause when you get institutionalized you ain't goin know
> what to do. Like when I get out of here, if all I do is thank bout this here then all
> I'm a want to be in is this here. I don't want to do that cause I got family out there
> that I gotta help support and take care of; know what I'm saying? If I would have
> thought about that before I came in here I would have to go through this;
> know what I'm saying.

> Interviewer: What do you mean— "trying to keep from being institutionalized"?
> You mean being kept here?

> Big Man:
> Nah, It's like; know what I'm saying, you be here so long then you know— you
> go to sleep, doors open, doors close; you know what I'm saying? That's what I
> mean by institutionalized. All you know how to do— get up, eat, sleep, and shit.
> Excuse my language. (Big Man interview)

I am using the metaphor of institutionalization to include those individuals, in this case, the participants, who cannot or will not function as productive members of society. Gest (1995) found that one out of every three Black males in their twenties occupied some place in the prison system. In Hillsborough County, Florida, L. Smith (1994) found that over three quarters of those in prison end up back in there. The participants in this case study came from the urban neighborhoods in Jacksonville, Florida, and the elements that were responsible for their incarceration will be there waiting for them when they get out. Lil Bru felt that all neighborhoods have people stealing cars and "doing whatever." He felt it is just a matter of who gets caught. Money is the driving factor behind the crimes these young men commit. For example, when I asked Lil Bru what he felt was the reason for the drugs in his neighborhood, he said, "I don't know, Kids. I guess they wanted money to buy they own stuff. They wanted to stop asking people for money" (Lil Bru interview).

Lil Man provided me with his typical day, which also serves as an example of the experiences of the other participants.

> When I get up in the morning bout 12:00, get on my bike ride to my cousin house, play little games, we used to smoke.
>
> Interviewer: Smoke cigarette or marijuana?
>
> Lil Man continues: Marijuana. Smoke marijuana, then after that go play basketball, chill and try to catch girls coming back from school. At night go through the same routine go home, watch TV, call a girl, go back to sleep. (Lil Man interview)

As with Cat Daddy earlier, Lil Man described the use of drugs, particularly smoking marijuana, as being a big part of the participants' day. Drugs, being incarcerated, and crime speak directly to the rationale I used to divide this study into two cases. This is not

to say that other young people do not do drugs. What I am saying is that for this group, the negative elements that plague most inner city Black males have become a prominent part of their lives.

With the exception of Cat Daddy all of the participants had children or had one on the way. These young men were 18 and 19 years old and had as many as four children already. The participants were starting a whole new generation to be institutionalized. Only Cat Daddy expressed wanting to wait until he was ready because he wanted his children to know him and he wants to be around them. Looking at the fathers of these young men, it is no wonder that another thing that they have in common is a child or children.

The street life of these Black males has hardened them and made them aware of things at an age when they may not be ready for the responsibility. Cat Daddy viewed his life experiences this way:

> About what I done seen is when I get back in high school I'm like bout, bout 5 steps ahead of everybody else, you know what I'm saying, I used to be round older people; I matured faster than a lot of young guys my age. I'm a get in school make ma grades man, try and get me one of those grants, like you was saying go to college. I'm just trying, you know what I'm saying I gotta be somebody man. I wanta have me a baby and all. (Cat Daddy interview)

I asked Lil Man what affected him most in his community. He said,

> The biggest thang that affect me in my neighborhood was this boy like in '92 I was like 12 years old, around 12 something like that, we had a basketball goal in our yard. We used to play basketball and everybody used to come over there in the neighborhood. So, one day afternoon we got out of school, we was walking; He didn't go to school that day we was walking, he was kinda older than me bout four years. We was in Riverside; police identified him as a suspect; he got scared and ran. Police shot him down and killed him, but he wasn't no suspect. They had the wrong person. (Lil Man interview)

These young men have experienced attempted suicide, the murder of a parent, jail, things they did not want to talk about, drugs and other crimes. The reason I did not explore things like the attempted suicide, whatever it was that Big Man did not want to talk about at the time concerning his father, and the murder of a parent in great detail is that I did not feel comfortable discussing those things in any detail with the participants. Whereas these experiences definitely shaped their lives, I was not qualified nor prepared to deal with the potential consequences that might have resulted from discussing these areas.

The effects of being incarcerated could be motivation for some participants. The fear of being in jail again can provide the motivation to straighten their lives. When I asked Cat Daddy for the thing he regretted the most, his response was "selling dope and I wish I' da stayed in school man [emphasis his]. If I da stayed in school man, I have so much going for me right now, but [with disappointment in his voice] guess I gotta start over" (Cat Daddy interview). He goes on to explain that he does not just want a GED. Cat Daddy wants to graduate with all the pomp and circumstance. Lil Man does not care that he will get a GED. Lil Man wants to get a high school diploma and get on with the rest of his life. Lil Man asked me about being married. In a way, it made me feel uncomfortable to talk about marriage with an 18 year old, but I thought about what I had learned about his life. Marriage may not be the worst thing for him. I can only hope that Lil Bru and Big Man have not already become institutionalized. At the time of the interviews, neither of them had any real direction. In order for the young men of this study to have any chance of righting their ways and making positive decisions they are

going to require some sort of rehabilitation and some mechanism to give them hope (e.g., job placement, certification).

## Success

All of the participants had a different view of success, and none of them felt like it was too late for them. However, without elements of resiliency such as a supportive family and school, the success of the young men in this case study could be forecasted as less than optimistic. As King (1997) reported, the Black male American found it ten times as hard to be financially viable than did White males if they could not do comedy, sing, or dance. According to Assibey-Mensah (1997) chances of success can be enhanced if African American males are exposed to programs that emphasize the value of staying in school, community based programs and role models. It would seem that these young men did not have the benefit of such programs. With the exception of Cat Daddy, the construct of success for these young men only included staying out of trouble, finding a steady job, and raising their children. I asked Big Man when would he consider himself a success and he simply said, "When I get out of here." When I asked him whether he thought that is all it is to being a success, Big Man said, "I know it is cause I know what I'm a do when I get out of here." "What's that?" I asked. He responded, "Get my life like it supposed to be instead running the streets. I want to be a successful father for my children" (Big Man interview).

I asked Lil Man "What does it mean to be a success, to you?" He said, "Success mean what you gone do in your life time. That's a success right? What you want to do in life?" I replied, "O.K., your goal?" He finally said, "Your goal and career" (Lil Man interview). Lil Man wanted me to see if I could help get him a job. Lil Man also wanted to know if he could go into the military. I found out that at this time, if there are any

charges at all on his record he could not go into the military, at least the Navy. Lil Man is determined to get his life together. Whether he actually does would be a good topic for another case study, as would the stories of the rest of these young men's future.

I asked Lil Bru, "What is being a success to you?" He said, "Being a success, achieving your goals that you set." I asked what he wanted to be. Lil Bru's reply was "I haven't really decided what I wanted to be, but I know I'ma get a little job when I get out." He is still aimless, but I have to wonder if the violent loss of his mother and the total hatred for his father does not have something to do with it. Lil Bru sees his brother as a success because he has a steady job at a bakery. I ended up giving Lil Bru a pep talk because he felt that he was a failure because he did not finish high school. I told him that he had not failed and that he is just off track right now. Lil Bru and I agreed that it was not too late for him.

Of the four, Cat Daddy's idea of success was the most ambitious. I asked Cat Daddy what being a success meant to him. His answer was, "Being at the top. I don't want to be a nobody. I want to have money so I can take care of my family and stuff" (Cat Daddy interview). Cat Daddy had specific dreams of going to college and being an accountant with his own business. Tift (1990) found that African American males are less likely to go to college than African American females or Whites— male or female. Even though he seemed to be the most forward thinking of the four, Cat Daddy completely rejected the idea of working in a fast food place for minimum wages, even for a short period of time. Without a high school diploma the chances of any of the four even being employed are not very hopeful. The U.S. Department of Education (1996) reported that of those who would have graduated in 1992 but dropped out, only slightly over 50% had

some sort of income. When talking to these young men about their futures and what

success means to them I am reminded of lyrics by a rapper called DMX (song lyrics by

Simmons, E., Blackman, D., Fields, A., & Taylor, S., Get at Mc Dog, 1998): "These days

getting by is nothing more than an occasional meal and getting high."

<div align="center">Point of Divergence</div>

These young men started out life with the same hopes and dreams as other

children. What went wrong? At what point of their young life did they make a decision

or decisions that would change their lives to ones of deviant behavior that marginalized

them further? These children wanted to play football and basketball. They were not born

to be bad. For whatever reason, these young people went down the wrong road. I will call

this point in their lives a point of divergence. What I originally thought would be one

specific point of divergence turned out to be at least two and one of them was usually

elementary school. If they had been handled in the appropriate manner, which would be

different for each child depending on his need, they may not have ended up where they

did. Dealing with the Black male appropriately includes not judging him according to

White norms (Graybill, 1997). Additionally, the community should have programs such

as mentoring which could help its youth (Novotney, Mertinko, Lange, & Baker, 2000).

Lil Man's first point of divergence was in elementary school. The teachers,

according to Lil Man, were meeting his needs and helping him out where he needed it,

but later in his education the teachers stopped doing their job. The teachers did not give

him the help he felt he needed. In his elementary school years Lil Man was not getting

into trouble. He started hanging with the wrong friends in elementary school and,

simultaneously, he stopped receiving the attention he needed in school. He had been in

special education classes since the seventh grade. Becoming frustrated with school, negative peer pressure, and a negative home life added up to more and more delinquent behavior for Lil Man. By the time Lil Man was in high school it could have been easily predicted that he would end up in jail if he were not rescued from himself and he was not. Before high school he had started stealing cars, fighting, and smoking marijuana. His high school teachers and administrators were the only thing between him and total delinquency, and they failed to interrupt the spiral that led Lil Man to incarceration.

For Cat Daddy one critical point was the ninth grade. Again, peers played a part in the decision he made. Cat Daddy described his critical decision point:

> ...Just be wrong decisions we, I done made; couple wrong decisions know what I'm saying; hanging with the wrong people got me shot and doing what I did got me in here so I just been trying to get back on the road. (Cat Daddy interview)

I asked Cat Daddy about the need for something to occupy his time and he replied:

> Yeah cause I really didn't have no interest, know what I'm saying. I used to play saxophone; lost interest in that. I used to be on computers a lot in school; lost interest in that. Everythang I had got into I lost interest in it, like playing basketball. I thought I was going to the NBA when I was in the ninth grade; lost interest in that. When you lose interest in thangs you ain't got nothing to occupy your time with; you gotta have a interest to occupy your time with. (Cat Daddy interview)

In the tenth grade Cat Daddy decided to start *slanging* (selling drugs), which was what put him in jail. He had a job but wanting money caused him to make the wrong decision. However, it must be said here that Cat Daddy and his family, including his absentee father, had issues that resulted in his seeing a psychiatrist, which may have been another point of divergence for him. I am not making excuses for Cat Daddy, but for him delinquency may have been a reaction to other family issues. Indeed, family issues

probably played a major role in the decisions of all of the participants in this first case study.

For Big Man, his point of divergence occured when he started the sixth grade. He wanted to play football, but he was a disciplinary problem and was not able to play.

> They had... if I could have played football; know what I'm saying, I know I wouldn't be here cause that would be all I wanted to do. That's all I would do— play football. I couldn't never get picked to play football cause I stayed in too much trouble. If I wouldn't stayed in too much trouble I could have been playing football for the pro's somewhere. (Big Man interview)

Big Man also chose the wrong friends and he decided to engage in deviant behavior. By the time he was in high school, Big Man had already begun a pattern of suspension and crime that resulted in being kicked out of school. Big Man, nonetheless, sees a critical point in a young Black male's life as "Maybe like 18. Eighteen, 20, graduated, got a good job, know what I'm saying, dependable; know what I'm saying, working on a better future" (Big Man interview).

When I asked Big Man about what a parent should look for to keep their children on the straight and narrow he said, "You need to look out for rapist, child molestation. You cain't trust anybody. You never know what they might thank to do" (Big Man interview). When he said that, I could not stop thinking about his unwillingness to talk about his father at all.

According to Lil Bru the most important years in school are elementary. When I asked why, Lil Bru replied, "Because if you started off bad in elementary you gone be bad. You already made up your mind. I remember I was in a private school, way back, I think it was the first grade I started getting... I was a problem then" (Lil Bru interview). He felt that it is not too late for him and he wanted to get out of jail and find a steady job.

Lil Bru felt that jail was a critical point for him. He said, "This place right here changed my life" (Lil Bru interview).

As a chorus, the young men of this case study do not necessarily express a single critical or diverging point except perhaps elementary school. Elementary school seems to be the time when their deviant behavior might have been corrected. More importantly, the participants told of a list of critical factors that must be negotiated. These factors are drugs, negative peer pressure, crime, and negative educational experience (including the lack of the appropriate help and unstable home life). The ability for these young men to negotiate these critical factors speaks directly to resiliency. For these young men, they need more resiliency than was required of the young men in the next case study. Without the proper parental control and positive educational experience, the choices that Lil Man, Cat Daddy, Big Man, and Lil Bru made were not necessarily choices at all. In other words, the life experiences of the young men of this study gave them no choice except to play the hand they were dealt.

## Conclusion

The life experiences of the participants in this case study were negative. These negative experiences led to bad decisions. Peer pressure is always present in a young person's life and much of it is a negative influence. Instead of spending the required time at school or at home, the participants in this study chose to spend their time with friends engaged in deviant behavior. There was no adult leadership to channel the energies of these young men into positive activities. The participants had gotten expelled or suspended from school and the parent or guardian at home did not have control of them. Consequently, these young men were basically left to find their own source of social

skills. The results were that they were maladjusted to the norms of society and they ended up in jail.

Although the participants of the next case study experienced many of the same negative stressors, the way they dealt with them was different. The second case study explored the life experience of four young men from the Navy using the same dimensions/constructs as the first. The picture that these young men painted had the same beginning as the picture painted by the participants of the first case study. However, these young men emerged and traveled a different path.

CHAPTER V: CASE STUDY II

U.S. Navy Participants

The participants from the Navy were convenient for me. However, the main

reason for choosing Navy personnel is, as I was told when I first joined, that the Navy is a

representation of society at large. There are people in the Navy who have done things that

were at least as bad as some of those who are now locked up in jail. Some of these things

come out in the interviews with the participants. Many, if not most, of the African

American males whom I have encountered during my years in the Navy were from inner-

city communities and have experienced many of the negative things that go with it,

including poverty and an unsafe environment.

All interviewees were from Naval Air Station (NAS) Cecil Field except one.

Cecil Field was a jet base in Jacksonville, Florida, that has been closed. There was always

the sound of planes overhead. I worked at Aviation Intermediate Maintenance

Department (AIMD). At AIMD we worked on the aircraft parts that were sent over by

technicians who worked on the airplanes as they sat on the flight line. *Baby Boy* and

*Malcolm* worked at AIMD. Malcolm also went on a six-month deployment with me

aboard the USS Enterprise. It should be mentioned here that none of the participants

worked for me. Because I played basketball in the base gym and because of my normal

travels around the Navy base and onboard ship, I had access to Navy volunteers. I had

already established a rapport with a number of Navy personnel who wanted to participate.

The interviews with Baby Boytook place at the galley, a classroom in AIMD and right

outside of the jet shop, a place where personnel work on aircraft engines. The interviews with *Hustler* took place at two sports bars as we also had lunch while we talked. Many young African Americans in the Navy look up to the older ones, such as myself. Their respect, along with my minimal ability to play basketball, helped me to gain the confidence of these young African Americans.

The ship is a world all of its own. There are about 5,000 men and women onboard the Enterprise. There are small gyms and basketball hoops on the hangar-deck. I did not play basketball on the steel decks of the hangar bays because they are sometimes slippery and always unforgiving of a misplaced step. The ship is alive 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. We normally worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off, but many crewmembers work anywhere from 12 to 16 hours a day. Very soon after pushing away from the pier in Norfolk, Virginia, the crew gets into a routine and attentions turn away from home and on to the work at hand— launching and recovering, visiting foreign ports of call, and getting through the deployment safely. The crew now has e-mail access so the ability to communicate with family members has greatly enhanced the morale.

It was very hard to carve out time for myself or to get some needed solitude aboard the ship. I spent a good deal of time walking around the ship, occasionally pausing at the huge hangar bay doors looking out over the water. Sometimes the sea is so tranquil and smooth that it is almost therapeutic. Many other sailors also stop at the hangar bay doors to gaze out over the water and be ministered to by the motion of the waves and the sometimes-gentle splash of the water against the ship as it slices through the water. Every now and then a bird that has probably over estimated its ability to make the trip over the water lands on the hangar bay. The birds are so out of breath that it

seems as though their poor bodies expand to almost twice their normal size as they heave to take in much needed air. The bird is typically much more tired than it is scared. If one were so inclined, one could go over to it and easily pick it up, its eyes are so pitiful and seem to say, "Have mercy on me and let me catch my breath and I will be on my way." There are other times when the weather is very violent and when I go to the doors to look out I realize how insignificant and powerless I actually am. During those times when the water is raging, I stand a little further away from the edge of the ship.

When I began this project, Desert Fox was not an issue. As the bombing became imminent, the attitudes changed to seriousness and the responsibility of performing to the best of our ability. Seeing missiles being launched into the night on their way to their targets, the men suddenly realized that Desert Fox was a real military action. Every one of us knows that part of being in the military is fighting, but one spends so much time training that one becomes numb to that part of the profession. When it inevitably happens that we are engaged in actual military action, we are suddenly faced with life and death and the feeling associated with the very violent part of the job. I waited until after Desert Fox to solicit my last participant because we were all preoccupied with the job at hand and the implications. There was ample opportunity to meet young African American males at sea via my normal interactions and travels around the ship. I saw Malcolm on several occasions and once we talked briefly. He was upset that there was not any Black related material in the ship's library.

The Participants

## Hustler

I first met *Hustler* as I finished playing basketball at the base gym one day at NAS Cecil Field and was headed for the showers. As I was getting ready to go through the gym doors, I noticed him and decided to ask him if he would mind helping me out. I asked Hustler all the perquisite questions and explained what I was doing. I asked him if he would like to participate and he agreed. Hustler was 20 years old at the time of our interviews. He is about 5 feet seven inches tall and has a medium complexion. Hustler has a very friendly demeanor, and he is a very busy young man. He is on the security augmentation force for the base, he is an Air-traffic Controller (AC), Airman (pay grade E-3) in the Navy, he takes college classes, he volunteers for Big Brother and Big Sisters, and he has a girlfriend. Catching up with Hustler was difficult at times because of his hectic schedule. He grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana, and Columbia, South Carolina. Hustler and I met the first time in AIMD support equipment workspaces. He was wearing a camouflage uniform or camies because he had just finished a shift with security. Hustler was not shy at all and enjoyed reliving his youth for the time we talked.

## Blue

*Blue* was a ship's barber. His rate, professional Navy title, was Storekeeper 3rd Class. His pay grade was E-4. Blue worked in the Officer's Barbershop. The ship had two barbershops— one for the enlisted crewmembers and one for the officers. After trying a couple of barbers, I would only let Blue cut my hair. As I was getting my hair cut one day, I decided to talk to Blue about my project. As the planes took off and landed overhead, I thought to ask him how old he was. He was 21. He told me that he was from

a single parent home and lived in an urban setting. I told him about my study and asked him if he would like to participate and he accepted the offer. Blue was from Lake City, Florida, and wanted to be a correctional officer. Although Lake City is a small city, the urban setting there rang familiar and Blue's description of his experiences bore this out. He is about 5 feet 7 inches tall, and has dark skin, and a medium to heavy set build. Blue had conservative ideas. He believed that if the young people were bad in school that they should be kicked out. Blue also believed that parents should put their children out for a while if they cannot abide by the rules. Blue spoke with a fairly deep voice. Blue and I conducted two interviews in the barbershop, which was a room about 6 feet by 20 feet with 4 barber chairs. We did our last interview in my stateroom. My stateroom was about 6 feet by 15 feet with 3 racks (beds), but only two were used. My stateroom was on the 03 level, which is the level right below the flightdeck, so we could hear every take off and every landing quite well.

## Baby Boy

*Baby Boy* worked in the same department that I did— Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD) at Cecil Field. He was an Aviation Electronic Technician, Airman (pay grade E-3). At the time of our interviews, Baby Boy was 18. Mild mannered, but not a push-over by any means, Baby Boy is slender, has a dark complexion, and stands about 6 feet even. He spent a good deal of time on temporarily assigned duty (TAD) at the base galley, which is where sailors and marines can go to eat. We conducted one of our interviews at the galley. The galley is the cafeteria for the military. I met Baby Boy through his division officer and division staff. I asked if anyone had personnel in their division who were 18 to 21-year-old Black males from a single

parent household and from the inner city. Baby Boy's name was given to me. It was hard at first to set up a meeting with Baby Boy because he was always out on some sort of detail. Finally we met. We greeted one another and went to a classroom in my division that is normally used to train personnel on the different pieces of support equipment used on the airfield to support the aircraft. Baby Boy has a deep voice and does not mind talking. It was not long before we were engulfed in our interview. He is 1 of 2 children and he has an older sister. Baby Boy provided some of the more detailed accounts of his life.

## Malcolm

Of all the participants in either group, *Malcolm* was the most interesting. I called him Malcolm simply because he looked like a Malcolm to me. Malcolm would be an interesting case study by himself. He is from Houston, Texas, and stands about 5 feet, 11 inches. Malcolm has a dark complexion and a medium build. Malcolm is also an Aviation Electronics Technician, Airman (E-3). He was deployed on the USS Enterprise with me for the ship's six months cruise. The reason I said that Malcolm was the most interesting of all the participants was that the only difference between him and the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center is that he is not serving jail-time. He has been in an alternative school, sold drugs, been kicked out of home at one point, and has a GED because he did not finish traditional high school. He is very street-wise and knows how to make money hustling. By hustling, I mean making money by any means. Indeed, Malcolm may not be through with the streets. Every time we met I heard in my head some lyrics from a song by a rapper called DMX, "I tried being good, but good ain't too good to me" (song lyrics by Simmons et al., The Convo, 1998). Those lyrics speak

volumes about Malcolm. Malcolm, too, wanted to be a rapper. Good rap music is arguably that which tells a story to which others can relate, has a lesson and is motivating. Malcolm will have a lot to say in his music if he does pursue it.

Analysis of Dimensions/Constructs

The main concepts that emerged from this case study were positive parental control and having some sort of goals. This case study exemplifies the importance of parental control and a positive idea or relationship with a male figure. All of the single parents here laid down the rules and had definite boundaries. However, Malcolm's deviant behavior, despite his mother's firmness, amplified the fact that she could not control him. For whatever reason, Malcolm and his mother did not get along with each other. The participants of this case study had more defined goals than did the participants of the case study involving the Pre-trial Detention Center. Even Malcolm established goals, however late.

Family Experience

In this case study, the familial experiences were positive, with the exception of Malcolm, even though a single parent headed the family units. The family lives of the participants of this case study were positive. Family experiences were more positive because mothers here exercised clear control over these youth and provided structure for them. The parent of these young men, with the exception of Malcolm, expected proper conduct, which began early in their lives and contributed to their resiliency (Benard, 1991). Unacceptable or deviant behavior was not tolerated. In this case study the mothers were successful at keeping control of the youth. The exception here is Malcolm's mother, but even she did not tolerate his deviant activities. She put him out.

These young men, except for Malcolm, had a positive image for a father figure.

Malcolm felt that he never had reason to respect his father. Baby Boy rarely saw his

father and does hold a grudge, but he was determined that the absence of a father figure

would not hinder him. In this way, I call Baby Boy's relationship with his father figure

positive. Hustler's father and mother divorced when he was about 2 years old. I asked

Hustler if he got along with his father and he said:

> Yeah, I don't know, me and him have…. I'ma blame it on my brother; he really
> turnt me against him. My brother came saying like our daddy, you know
> everybody was like, I don't know [searching— it was obviously uncomfortable
> for him]. I guess cause I was like the baby or whatever and I didn't understand;
> everybody else could see all his flaws like he don't do this, he don't do that, but
> me I was like that's our daddy, I mean. (Hustler interview)

Hustler had managed to reconcile any negative feelings he had for his father and speaks

kindly of him. Although his father was not there and he rarely saw him, Hustler

maintained a positive image of his father. Even today they talk to each other on an

infrequent basis, but Hustler does not harbor any grudges against his father.

> I don't know, I mean I know I used to see him during the summer break I go
> down there or whatever then I didn't talk to him, actually talk to him, I say like,
> every 4 months. Sometimes, you know you get two good back-to-back months
> talking to him then you might go a stretch of four or five months you know.
> (Hustler interview)

In fact Hustler felt that his relationship with his father was "decent" and was even

thinking of going into business with him in the future.

I asked Hustler why he did not he get caught up in the gangs and the like. He

answered quickly with "Momma don't play" (Hustler interview). While parental control

is a must, Hustler felt that there has to be a balance:

> Yeah, have control of your kids; cause a lot of people… [cuts himself off]. Just
> have control of 'em. Cause you know how I always say my momma she was
> strong and on us or whatever, you know? Like have control of your kids; don't

let 'em just do whatever, you know? That's not good, but don't…[cuts himself off]. My momma she never, I think something else is bad, like when they just clamp down too hard. I thank that's bad too, I mean, that's just my personal outlook on it cause like, like when you know like I had a friend be in the house, cain't go outside, cain't do this, cain't have no company. When that boy got out, he got out [emphasis his] you know, after he got out he was just like wow!! We like "calm down," you know, just wild. That goes for females too. I think like they momma don't let them out the house, they daddy don't let them out the house— them be the first ones having sex. They like, " this is my only chance" you know. But seriously, I honestly believe that. I saw a lot of 'em like that. (Hustler interview)

Blue felt like his mother was the most important reason that he did not go down the wrong road. However, his mother had help. Blue's grandfather lived in the neighborhood where they had moved after they left their first bad community. Blue's grandfather spent time with him and provided the father figure in his life while his mother worked two jobs. Indeed, Blue felt that if his grandfather had not been around he might have gone down the wrong road. A male role model somewhere around is important in raising a young Black male according to Blue. His mother and father divorced right after he was born and he only saw his father occasionally. He gives his mother all the credit.

My home life? Just for me being in a single parent home, I think my mom did a very good job of raising me and my sister cause she had to act as a mother and father and she did a good job of that. My sister graduate this May right here and she's going to the Air Force to be a officer in the Air Force (Blue interview).

Blue has his own advice for single parents raising young Black men.

Uhmm, that's hard. I tell 'em just stay on top of things like you know my momma didn't give me too much leeway, but as I got older she gave me more leeway. Some parents they give they child too much leeway when they like 14 or 15. They'll start cursing 'em out and stuff like that. (Blue interview)

I asked, "What if the child is bigger than the mom and around the wrong people?" He replied:

That's when she got to put down, put down the rules and tell 'em what she want and she's the mother he's the child and if you cain't abide by the rules you got to go. Let 'em go for a while, they'll learn. That's the way I see it. (Blue interview)

I asked Blue how his mother disciplined him. He said:

My mom. Ok when I was smaller she used to put the belt on us when I as I got older she just… the biggest thing that hurt me she took the phone the telephone from me for two weeks and I couldn't call my girlfriend and she couldn't call me; that hurted me. And I learned by the silly mistakes I made. (Blue interview)

Blue also said:

She pretty much told me like it was. Whenever I started, she say, I wasn't bringing that shit (unacceptable behavior) in her house. She say "you start this (unacceptable behavior), you on your own." I always thought about that and looked at how successful she was and I just say I couldn't mess it up. (Blue interview)

Malcolm did not get along well with his mother, which can be very important to educational success (Gonzales, 1996; Mason, 1994). Malcolm said, "I didn't like, I didn't like staying with my momma" (Malcolm interview). The following epitomized the relationship between Malcom and his mother:

… Cause uh when I was 16 years old I had left home cause I had moved back [he had lived with his friend and aunt off and on] with my momma and I didn't, I didn't like what was going own and she didn't like what was going on so….

I asked, "What do you mean by that?"

Malcolm replied, …Cause I was like I was like skipping school and wasn't going to school at times for like weeks straight and then after awhile they call they call the house and then she'll be fussing at me for this and all of that. I ain't never been one to like getting fussed at so we well really I just said you know I know I'm putting her through all of this so I'ma leave and go do my thang where I'ma do my thang at. I moved in with my best friend and his momma…. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm said later in the interview, "… It was just the thangs she do just get on my nerve and it's still like that to this day. I mean I don't know what it is I just I don't know."

When I asked, " But you give her her respect?" Malcolm replied, "Yeah yeah, I give her

her respect. I love, don't get me wrong; I love ma momma you know I mean we we talk,

but as far as living there I just cain't do it. I cain't do it" (Malcolm interview). Malcolm's

relationship with his mother was key to his decision to join the Navy. This relationship

was clarified in the following sequence from the interview transcript.

> Well, my momma told me by the time I got 18 I was either gone be in college or
> be in the military; I was gonna be somewhere but I was gonna be the hell outa her
> house.
>
> Interviewer: [I laugh a little] Sounds like my daddy.
>
> Malcolm: … And so I had just moved back in with my momma. I was staying
> with my momma close to a year from the first time I left – bad been back almost a
> year and I had finally found a job; I had gotten like my second job and uh that
> wasn't good enough for her. She said she didn't want me living off her. She didn't
> want me, you know what I'm saying, doing nothing in her house so I was like I
> cain't go back and live with Black cause you know what I'm saying, it's only a
> matter of time before something catch up with them. And I didn't have no where
> else to go; my aunt was dead— she died in 90…93. And so she was dead and they
> house was just going to ruins. I didn't have nowhere to go so I joined the Navy.
> Actually I went to go join the Airforce, but they wouldn't accept me cause I had a
> GED and I had to have 15 college credits with a GED to get in the Airforce.
> Really, it's the same thang for the Navy, but my recruiter pulled strong for me.
> (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm did not get along particularly well with his father either. In a strange

way his father provided an example for him of how not to be. The following segment of

transcript explains Malcolm's relationship with his father:

> Malcolm: I think the biggest thing that made me like finally took a look and focus
> on what I was doing cause uh my granddaddy had died, and I wasn't really close
> to my granddaddy on my daddy side, but we was close enough, that that we was
> close enough. When he died my daddy had came down from San Antonio and I
> seen him. That was my first time seeing him probably about a year, a year and a
> half something like that. It been a while.
>
> Interviewer: How old were you then?
>
> Malcolm: I was about 16 or 17. And uh I seen him for the first time in a while. At
> first I was kinda glad to see him, but then I could tell he didn't look the same and
> stuff and then come to find out he was you know what I'm saying, smoking dope

and stuff like that [he was visibly a little bit embarrassed]. I found that out because of this guy I knew, he wasn't nobody that I hung out with— just somebody I seen around the neighborhood, was selling was the one that sold it to him. Like earlier that day before I found that out I was at the park with him you know we went to play basketball so me and my daddy and he got to meet some of my friends around the neighborhood and stuff. But then he got to meet 'em more than I thought he would meet 'em you know what I'm saying [he was buying drugs from Malcolm's associates] and so that's when I was saying "man I gotta try my best not to end up like this." Cause my daddy he was in the Army reserve and all that stuff too. So I was like that was the biggest thang— just not to be like that. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm did not have a great deal of respect for his father. Malcolm's family life was in constant turmoil and very unstable. His mother could not control him and he engaged in some of the same criminal activities as the participants in the first case study; but more importantly, he engaged in it to the same degree. The difference between Malcolm and the participants from the previous case study was that he did not get caught perpetrating crimes as severe, and he did not get caught as many times. Malcolm's mother never communicated to him what she expected of him. It did not seem as though Malcolm and his mother really communicated at all.

Baby Boy's mother exercised absolute control over him and provided structure and an example for him. Baby Boy's mother was a social worker, and she was working on her Ph.D. for much of his teenage years. Baby Boy had two older sisters and they lived in a nice neighborhood when he was young, but moved into a bad community when he got older. When I asked Baby Boy about whether or not his mother disciplined him about his grades, he said, "Mom, uh, she got on me about my grades" (Baby Boy interview). Baby Boy's mother was very important to him even though she spent a lot of time working and getting her Ph.D. His sisters helped to raise him, and they also provided an example for him: both went to college. He babysat for his oldest sister and they all got

along well. There was a positive family atmosphere with the exception of Baby Boy's

mother being gone a lot. Baby Boy's relationship with his father was a different story, as

is illustrated in the following segment of the interview transcript:

> … My dad? Well dad, he wasn't never there, he was, the only time I ever see my dad was like, uh, I think when I went to New York. He lived in New York. I went to New York probably one time. That was when I was real young probably about five or something. But, uh, I don't have no memories of my daddy. It was like they got divorced before I was born or right after. So, my dad, he never been around. I never see him or anything.

> Interviewer: Do you harbor any bad feelings for him?

> Baby Boy: No, not really, I never got hard feelings against him but, uh. He, uh, I mean I talked to him like one time. I was about nine. He called and I talked to him a little bit. But then, uh, after I graduated and joined the Navy and graduated boot camp, my mom sent him a picture or something and told him I was in the Navy and stuff. So then, when I was uh, leaving "A" school, about to come here to Cecil Field, I got a letter from him. But, he was just talking about stuff. I don't know if I really harbor bad feeling against him or not. I don't even think about it too much [laughing a little]. I don't even talk about him. I mean what have that nigga did? I mean, he ain't never did nothing for me. He ain't never been in the picture, so it can't hurt me now. You know what I'm saying? I never really knew the man, so.

> Interviewer: It obviously didn't stop you from doing what you needed to do.

> Baby Boy: No it didn't. (Baby Boy interview)

Baby Boy's mother felt that a male role model, of some kind, was important. I asked,

"Did you have any male role models?" Baby Boy replied,

> Sure didn't. That's why, uh, my mom she tried to get male role models. My mom didn't have many boyfriends. She be off and on sometimes with a couple guys. But, I mean in terms of like my mom's partners, none of them were really. This last guy she was dating, she not really with him now but she use to see him back in the day. He was a pretty cool guy. I mean uh, he encouraged me in school and all that. But, uh, she tried, she got me into the, uh, Big Brother program and, uh, I had me a Big Brother for a while. It was when I was about uh, it was about the time I started at [his school]. It was about that time. He would take me places and stuff. (Baby Boy interview)

The single parent was better able to establish and maintain control over these young men than did the single parents of the first case study. Structure and the quality of family life directly correspond to violent behavior for the Black male (Paschall, 1996). The young men of this case study not only spoke of their mothers as the most important person in their lives, but they also acknowledged the control of their mother by word and deed. Baby Boy, Hustler, and Blue seemed to fear their mother somewhat, at least early in their lives. The fear was later replaced by respect. I heard someone say a long time ago, "Until they learn respect, fear will do just fine." Malcolm did not seem to respect his mother as much as the other participants of this study, but he did recognize her as the head of the family and does not seem to hold a grudge toward his mother for putting him out of the house. It was also obvious that Malcolm and his mother had a long way to go in order to build a good relationship.

All these young men, except for Malcolm, held their father in a respectful regard. However, Baby Boy did not care to see his father at this point or even see a relationship with his father as a necessity. Baby Boy felt that his father was irrelevant to his success in life to this point. Malcolm did not have much respect for his father at all. Malcolm's father lost a good chance to build a healthy relationship with him when Malcolm found out that his father was getting drugs from his friends.

These young men also seemed to have a better support group. Blue had his grandfather, although he did not live with him. Hustler kept in contact with his father and wanted to go into business with him. Hustler also had a good example provided to him by his brother. Baby Boy took his examples from his mother and sister, both of whom pushed education. Indeed, all these young men had a good relationship with their

siblings. Malcolm's situation may be the result of sheer good fortune. After all he had been through, Malcolm was not in jail at this point. However, he looked up to his grandfather although they were not close. Malcolm's situation could have turned out entirely differently than it did, but at the time of the interviews he was on the right track.

## Educational Experience

The school experience was similar for two of the young men in this case study. During middle school, Baby Boy went to a school that was predominately white until they started a program in which Black students from the inner city were bussed in to school. Malcolm's educational experience was more like the participants of the first case study. He got into trouble and even attended an alternative school. Malcolm has a GED. Again, elementary school years proved to be very important to the decisions these participants later made. The biggest difference in the second case study is that the educational experience was not as negative as in the first case study (except for Malcolm). Blue even had a teacher who took special interest in him because he knew Blue's family. However, many of the elements of school were similar for the participants of both case studies.

Baby Boy's educational experience started out very positive for him. When he described the years of school up to his ninth grade, Baby Boy looked back fondly even though his family moved about every 2 years. He told me he would have been better off had he been able to stay in Druid Hill which was predominately White until the Black students were bussed into the school. Baby Boy had been bussed into Druid Hill in a program called "M to M." He described Druid Hill as having a "real curriculum." At least early in his educational program, Baby Boy did not experience many of the negative

stressors that many African American males endure. He did not have to deal with drugs, violence, corporal punishment, or being placed in a special education track. Baby Boy respected his school environment, which in turn helped in controlling his behavior. When he entered the ninth grade he began to have contempt for his school, Therrell. Although Baby Boy did not make the decision to drop out, he viewed his educational experience as somewhat negative from the ninth grade through the twelfth. Baby Boy described his high school years in the following segment of transcript:

> ... OK after, after Druid Hill, uh, my my mom moved. Like during the summer of my eighth grade year so she had moved that year before so I continued to go to Druid Hill that one year. She drove me to school everyday [school was obviously very important to her] like where I took the school bus or the city bus. But way out to Druid Hill, so I moved into the inner city during the eighth grade, but I still went to Druid Hill for that year. But uh, in the ninth grade that's when, uh, I moved into the inner city and started going to, uh, Therrell High School.
> ... Therrell was a different experience for me. Therrell, that's [emphasis his] when we moved to the inner city. Therrell was the first school ever went to that was predominately Black. It was all Black really. It was like one White person and one Mexican (laughing)— all Black. You know I was kinda excited to go to an all Black school and everything you know I had never been to one before.
> ... I did all four of my years at high school at Therrell High School. And uh Therrell, now that was, uh, Therrell didn't have the best reputation either. I don't know if I had stayed in Druid Hill I may have came out a little better. But, uh, I think Therrell was a good experience for me. (Baby Boy interview)

I asked, "Why do you think it was good?" Baby Boy responded with "Uh, it exposed me to a lot of stuff, I mean, I probably wouldn't never knew about if I stayed in Druid" (Baby Boy interview). Baby Boy described himself as being a real good student his first year at Therrell. During the second year his grades fell, but he was not getting into any trouble. Baby Boy's last two years were a little more difficult for him. Fortunately for Baby Boy, his earlier educational experience and his mother's influence helped him overcome the negative situations during his last two years of high school. He

was exposed to gang activity, violence, and what he viewed as negative treatment by

some school officials. I asked Baby Boy to describe his last two years of high school and

he said:

> Eleventh and twelfth year? Eleventh grade was tough. Eleventh grade, that was the toughest year, we had the toughest classes, English and all that stuff. Eleventh grade I started having trouble, trouble at school with the work more, but not in terms of uh... eleventh grade, I was working too then so I had uh, I think I turned sixteen then so I got my little job and everything and started working (Baby Boy interview).

Telling me about gangs in school, Baby Boy said,

> In high school, now uh it was, I remember the first year I went to Therrell. Therrell had some gangs. My first year, I mean like you walk in the lunch room you walk by one table everybody got on red [laughing] the other table everybody got on blue I was like sitting back I was like damn [laughing].

Interviewer: So it was like "Crips" and "Bloods"?

> Baby Boy: Yeah I guess, I don't know, I didn't know too much about them gangs back then. It changed a lot from the ninth grade. 'Cause in the tenth grade it wouldn't no gang members, after tenth grade they cleared it out [laughing]. I don't know when they did it but after tenth grade you didn't see that no more. I mean it was like they write their gang sayings all over the cafeteria, don't sit at this table any table with some writing on it, don't sit at it that's the wrong table, just had to go find you another one. (Baby Boy interview)

Baby Boy experienced a situation in school that could have very well resulted in a

negative trend. I asked him if anything turned him off from school since his grades

slipped during his junior and senior year.

> Nah, not really. Yeah well, my high school man, the administration there, I didn't like it too much. I mean, it was like, if you come late to school one day they'll make you have to sit in like in-school suspension. Like especially, some days you have two hour block classes so you take three classes two hours long, so if you like late they'll make you go sit in in-school suspension. They won't let you go to class. You sit in the gym for like two hours till the next class. I didn't really see the purpose of that. I mean all they going do is make you miss class, you know. What is the purpose of that... for being late? That was stupid.

Interviewer: You ever skip school?

Baby Boy: Sometimes. Not really though. I really didn't skip too much. And another time, like uh, I had to go to the bathroom. Like the bathroom right by my class but one teacher she sent... Like you had to have a hall pass and stuff to go in the halls. She didn't want to write me a hall pass or nothing like that. She was like you can go but I'm not giving you a hall pass. I went out, right, so then I'm going back to class and stuff one of those little security guys patrolling the halls said "hey come here guy, come here." I said, " I'm fina go right back to class, right back." "Nah bru, I need to talk to you. Come here." So then he gone tell me to come down there and tell me I got "in-school" and stuff cause I'm in the hall without no hall pass and stuff. He wouldn't let me go back to class and stuff. So then me and him had got in a big argument and stuff. And then he made me go sit in the uh, uh, what's the name?

Interviewer: The gym?

Baby Boy: Well it was the cafeteria that day. Then I stayed there for like thirty minutes and I got upset and mad and I left and stuff. So he sent the police officer and shit to go find me and shit. He talking bout they going to suspend me from school and shit. (Baby Boy interview)

Fortunately, Baby Boy was not suspended. His experience was somewhat different from other inner city youth in that he started his school career in a very good school. Baby Boy provided me with more detail in his interview than did the other participants of this case study.

Malcolm's educational experience was different from the others in this case study because he experienced things that would be expected of the participants of the first case study. He participated in many of the negative activities. Malcolm's drug and gang activities were described in the following transcript segment:

> ... It was, but I really didn't know about it till I got up in middle school. Like I always knew, knew people was out there selling drugs. Like people my grandmother would say was selling like "stay away from 'em drug dealers; so 'n so out there selling drugs. Stay away from them." But as for as knowing what was going on; I didn't know when I was elementary and stuff. (Malcolm interview)

Interviewer: Did you hang out with 'em when you got older?

Malcolm: Yeah, when I got older, when I got I say in the fifth grade going in maybe the, uh, the fifth grade going in the sixth grade. That's when me and my

cousin, cause my cousin had just came back from Sherman, Texas. He was staying up there with his family on his daddy side and they came back down and I started hanging with him. He was, you know what I'm saying, doing that type of stuff, but that was as far as me hanging around 'em. I used to like watch, watch dice games and stuff like that. They pay me to watch out for dice games and stuff.

Interviewer: Watch out for cops or something?

Malcolm: Yeah. (Malcolm interview)

I asked Malcolm to describe his educational experience. He told me that he started

out as a good student, but when he entered middle school he started down the wrong path.

Malcolm also received some education at an educational program in a juvenile facility.

When asked, "Who did you look to as a positive role model?" Malcolm said, after a short

pause:

> Nobody, the only person the biggest influence as for as positive influence in my life was— my eighth grade uh English teacher and my uh ninth grade English teacher— the second year in the ninth grade. Those were the two biggest cause they was the only ones that would actually sit down and talk to me you know on a real level. Like I go see the principal, all the principals I ever had was male principals and they always be talking bout well you gone do this in my school and you gone do that in my school or you gone get out of my school. So they wasn't really trying to talk to me or help me or try to make me understand what was going on, what was wrong with the thangs I was doing, but those was the only two. My eighth grade teacher was really the only one that ever told me that I could be something someday if I stopped acting a damn, stop acting a fool. (Malcolm interview)

Interviewer: Laughs.

Malcolm: [Continuing] … and uh get my head right; I mean she used to talk to us real. She was like that for the whole class, my eighth grade teacher was. You know she did care. She'll cuss; if you cuss at her she'll cuss at you, you know. (Malcolm interview)

Again and again the elements of control and role models appear as very

important. Malcolm did not respect school officials very much nor did he feel they

treated him with respect. I asked if there was anything that turned him off about school.

Malcolm paused to think and responded in the following segment of transcript:

> I mean, when I think about it the stuff that I hated about school was dumb now that I realize, but it used to always be the security guards. They seemed like they was always harassing me us the students for no reasons; that's the way I always looked at it, but I kinda understand now.
>
> Interviewer: What do you understand about it now?
>
> Malcolm: Well, like just wanting to go to class whenever you want to [emphasis his]. Basically, being in the hallway at the wrong times, you know; you maybe on your way to class and you may be about 2 or 3 minutes late and they'll still harass you, ask you where you going, where you supposed to be, and stuff like that. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm left school in the eleventh grade and ended up getting a GED. He is an old soul, meaning he has a sort of wisdom that goes beyond his years. Malcolm's wisdom is undoubtedly due to his experiences. Malcolm is only 19; but he seemed to be much older, which was the same impression that I got from the participants of the Pre-trial Detention Center case study.

Blue grew up in Lake City, Florida, but in two different communities. He described his high school as "…rough at some points, but I had to do what I had to do to do my work and just make it out of there." When asked, "What do you he mean by rough in some points?" Blue said, "Like you influenced by drugs, alcohol and I had to overlook that peer pressure and do what was right." Blue continued by saying how, at times, there were fights: "Blacks fighting over silly stuff— boyfriend, girlfriend stuff. Stuff that don't make no sense." Every now and then there were even riots at the school, but most of the time it was calm. There were also "a lot of drugs in school" according to Blue. There were 831 people in Blue's graduating class. He enjoyed school, for the most part; but the thing that turned him off about school was in-school suspension. I asked

Blue what he would change about schools to better accommodate the Black male, and he said:

> … Uhmm to me I think they need a dress code cause they let 'em wear they pants all down. A lot of 'em have weapons and stuff. They gotta have dogs and police officer. They got better stuff to be doing like patrolling the streets than patrolling the schools. You should be there for your education not there to start violence and stuff. (Blue interview)

Blue also felt that the teachers did not have control of the learning environment.

> I done seen 'em try everything. I done seen teachers everybody leave they'll keep 'em in class and talk to 'em. They try call and getting the parents up there. That's what a lot of time [will work] get your parents up there get your daddy or something call 'em from work and they have to come down to that school. They gone embarrass you in front of everybody. And that that'll teach a lot of people— get embarrass by your parents in front of everybody. (Blue interview)

Blue felt that the Black males were given too many chances as he elaborated in the following segment of transcripts:

> I say uhmm they give 'em too many warnings. Me, I would give 'em a couple of warnings and then they'll go to a alternative school. You mess up the first time in that [alternative school] you out. Right now it's hard enough to get a job with with just with a diploma and a college degree sometimes won't get you a job. I know people with master degree on the street cause they don't know how to use it.
>  If you ain't got no diploma you're not gone get a job anywhere.

Interviewer: Then you would have a lot of people without diplomas on the streets.

Blue: Yeah.

Interviewer: Sooner or later the jails gone get filled up.

Blue: They building more as it is right now.

Interviewer: So just keep putting 'em in jail?

Blue: If they don't want to make anything out of life that's it, cause when they in school they just making it harder for who in there that want to learn. They don't wanta learn, they gotta go. (Blue interview)

Hustler described his high school experience in detail. Although he described his

high school as "a ghetto school," he also told a story of a talented young man who should

have taken better advantage of his years in school.

> …"It was like a,… well, we was like a ghetto school I guess you could say. We was real good at basketball, real sorry at academics really. I guess it was kinda ghetto school. Like in our school in South Carolina a young man got shot and killed over really nonsense. It was kinda labeled like a bad school but…"
> (Hustler interview)

Hustler described a typical day at his high school:

> [Laughing] A typical day [ I can see him thinking back], I uh to tell the truth, I uh, get off the bus. Then probably go to breakfast cause we used to get that free breakfast. Go to breakfast and they be in there early in the morning playing cards; playing tonk. Tonk, I remember that. Then tonk, then I was in a experimental block class so you was in class for a hour and 30 minutes so we only took four classes a day. Now, I'm talking about my senior year; I was on pm release so I got off after lunch, I was off for the rest of the day. So you go to two classes then I'd be off for the rest of the day to sit on my butt or what ever I wanted to do. But uh, to me it was like a average, I mean I didn't go to no other school; to me it was like a average school; you know, I mean you had people cutting [skipping class or the whole school day] all the time. I always stayed full [a full day] I'll admit that, but to me just a regular school. (Hustler interview)

Hustler continued to describe himself as he went through his educational experience in

the following segment of transcripts:

> … Cause you know I was a mediocre student. I really, was bad and ran around and stuff but I don't know I just, I was like, I could just, I don't know; I was real good like at "getting over" [taking shortcuts and outsmarting people]. You know; in school I was…

> Interviewer: You were a hustler?

> Hustler: Yeah, nah [quickly recanting] I mean just like grade wise; I would be uh, you know, like running around with them or whatever and they making D's and F's and I be making like B's and C's; I didn't know more than the next person or whatever. Cause I was like I really coulda did, I wish I woulda now, but I really could have did a lot better in school. Cause me and my mom, I talk to my mom about it now like man, I wish I would have paid attention. I was like ranked; you know like when you get your transcript? I was ranked like 34th out of like 200 and something seniors. I was like kinda impressed. My grade point average

wasn't even a 3.0; it was like a 2.8. (Hustler interview)

It should be pointed out here that Hustler's "bad" activities were nothing like those of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center or Malcolm's. Hustler is a very intelligent young man. I asked him about his biggest opportunity and it was tied to his educational experience, as he described in the following segment of transcript:

> I'm a say in South Carolina they had a... it's called a uh, government school. Well, in middle school there, I was really good; I took algebra and, (as he thought back) well, you know what; I take that back; it wasn't my fault neither. I took algebra in eighth grade and it was a school called the Government in Mathematics and Science school and I was eligible for it I had college credits, I mean I had high school credits before I went to high school or what ever. So, I was eligible to go to that school after my tenth grade year: if you did such and such with your grades; you know you had to study hard and according to what you did with your grades. And I wanted to go to the school; it was like college— you go off to the school and your mom had to pay and you live in a dorm. So I really wanted to go to that school. When I check into Oclare High School to the administrator's office it was all messed up. They didn't have my, my high school, I mean my...

Interviewer: Transcript? [Finishing for him].

Hustler: Yeah, they did have the algebra that I had and all the credits that I had already put forth so they put me in pre-algebra. So, that messed up my whole.... I couldn't go to the school or whatever cause I didn't have the credits or whatever; pre-algebra, you know, I didn't even need so it just like I was supposed to be in geometry then algebra II. And that was probably the biggest let down cause I really wanted to go to school and I didn't know; I was thinking pre-algebra was what I was supposed to take next, you know, and my mom was upset. Then once she found out or whatever cause I got bout a "A" in pre-algebra cause it was like so easy.

Interviewer: Cause you already been through algebra.

Hustler: Yeah, [continuing] knowing, I'm like it just mess me over [his emphasis]. So then they skip my, they messed me over again, cause since they did that they skipped geometry and took me straight to algebra II. And now I'm like kinda like sluggish [meaning that he was struggling somewhat] cause I'm like you know coming off of this you know, 95 you know + (-5) = you know, to you know 5a + you know over, you know fraction; I'm like uh ohhhh (we laugh). That was probably my biggest disappointment: I didn't get to go school; I didn't have uh, I didn't have the uh classes to even submit. (Hustler interview)

I asked Hustler what he would change about his high school and the following

segment of transcript provided Hustler's answer:

> Oh, my goodness, my high school. I swear I wish I could go back and [jokingly] shoot all of 'em now. My high school was way too laid back.

> Interviewer: What do you mean?

> Hustler: I would actually go use the bathroom and come back with McDonalds. [we laugh] Seriously, it was way too laid back. And you know they, they really didn't have a good hold on all of us. Now, they starting to clamp down cause, you know, they got the lowest scores in school, you know, state, the lowest this, you know, the lowest that, but can play basketball like hell [laughing] you know. So, starting to clamp down now but I really wish I could've... cause I missed a <u>lot</u> [emphasis his] in school cause teachers not caring. I really think that was a big problem, seriously. (Hustler interview)

Although Hustler succeeded in his high school, it should be pointed out that

schools could increase the chances of success if they have high expectations and a

supportive network for students (Benard, 1991). Of all the participants only Baby Boy

and Hustler were actively pursuing college although Blue has plans to go to college. By

our last meeting, Blue had decided to stay in the Navy, for now, and was letting his

girlfriend go to college. Malcolm was not sure what direction he will take.

The educational experiences of these young men were filled with many of the

same pitfalls that described the educational experience of the participants of the first

case-study. The participants here managed not to fall into those pits. In many instances,

the young men in this case study did not experience an educational environment that they

recognized as having much control over them. However, these young men were able to

rely on their own judgment. The young men of this case study were exposed to drugs.

Some tried drugs, some even skipped classes, but they did not get involved in these

things to the point that it cost them their education. Only Malcolm did not complete high school, but he completed his GED and joined the Navy.

<u>Community Experience</u>

The community experiences of these young men were similar to the other participants in the first-case study, which is to be expected. Peer pressure, drugs, violence, and many opportunities to go down the wrong path were all part of this case study. Although all of these stressors were present here, none of the young men in the second case study was institutionalized. Even though these young men were part of the same subculture that Hale-Benson (1986) said existed in the Black community, they were able to experience it without being imprisoned by it. Even Malcolm did not become institutionalized. The ability not to become institutionalized speaks directly to resiliency and all of the things affecting the resiliency of the participants of this case study. Resiliency is of particular importance to Black youth because, as pointed out by Handy (1993), one out of three poor Blacks live in poor urban communities. At some point, all of the young men in both case studies were faced with similar options. The community plays an important part in building resiliency for at risk youth. As Benard (1991) pointed out, the community should be part of a support network and it must support its families and school. Thus, activities and programs in the community are important.

Despite the added negative factor of having communities that were not particularly supportive (e.g., relatively safe and drug free), the young men of this case study had enough elements of resiliency to overcome the lack of community support. The participants of the second case study recognized the error of their ways and changed— even Malcolm. The community encompasses all that makes up these young men's world

including all the negative elements described in the literature. When these young men were not in school, they were directly exposed to poverty and limited supervision. All of the young men of both case studies had to make decisions that could have tremendous consequences on their paths in life. In the second case study, the young men made the right decisions despite all the negative stressors.

I talked to Baby Boy about his community. Many things that may seem terrifying to people who did not have to experience them seem comical to him, at least at this point. Baby Boy and his family moved often— every two years according to him. I asked Baby Boy about his communities.

> ...Yeah, you know. And the new community we moved into it was uh, it was inner city. It was tough. It was definitely drugs there, definitely drugs, prostitutes. I mean I don't know if my mom knew it was this rough when she moved into it, but she wanted to get a house, she wanted to move into a house. We got into a nice house, but it definitely wasn't a nice community though. We moved there and uh I was in the eighth grade and that's where I stayed until I came into the Navy. (Baby Boy interview)

I went on to ask Baby Boy about his activities in his community and whether or not he was in a clique or gang. As early as the fifth grade he was exposed to the notion of a gang.

> I remember when I was real young we had us a little gang. Back in Lithonia I was in this little.... Me and my boy made up, we had about 20 members in it. Me and my boy we said one day we going to make us a little gang or something. ...We were called the "Bad Boys" they called "GK" or "GC" or something like that "Gangster Klan" or something. And uh you know we were just little fifth grade boys. We had our little rumbles some days you know [he says laughing] little fifth grade fights. (Baby Boy interview)

This experience could have put Baby boy on the start of the wrong path, but it did not. Somehow, Baby Boy was able to maintain the teachings from early in his life. Baby Boy's staying on the straight and narrow here was due no doubt to his lack of exposure to

real pitfalls early in his life and to the positive effects of his mother's teachings. His

mother was very strict and, more importantly, Baby Boy recognized his mother's

authority. The control that his mother had over him countered the influences of peers and

the community. In addition, Baby Boy's sisters were trying to go to college and they

provided a positive example for him, despite one having an out-of-wedlock child at an

early age.

Although he experimented with the idea of being in a gang, Baby Boy never saw

gang life or crime as viable choices. His peers did drugs and were involved in destructive

behavior, but he was not affected by it to the point that he participated. Baby Boy seemed

to be aware of the long-lasting problems that could result from the road his peers were

taking. Baby Boy continued to make positive decisions while being in a community that

offered him the opportunities to go down the wrong path. The reason that he did not

follow his peers may be the resiliency that his family provided him. His mother and sister

provided Baby Boy with the hope of a better future because they were in college. He was

able to look at and exist in a community fraught with negativity without allowing it to

influence his life's path. He seemed to view his community as temporary, maybe because

his mother instilled in him the idea of having their own house. He also seemed to view

the risky activity in which he was engaged as simply a fun past-time. Although he did not

engage in any of the major criminal activities of his surroundings, his experimenting with

gangs could have proven harmful to his making positive decisions. The following

segment of transcript is lengthy, but it illustrates some of the surroundings and activities

of the young inner city African American male.

> … I can tell you a lot of stuff about the community. O.K. you want to know about
> the community. It uh, the community I stay in its uh, Southwest Atlanta called

"Swats." That's what they called it because it was Southwest Atlanta. I use to stay off uh, Steward Avenue. Steward Avenue, all that's down there is strip clubs and car dealerships [laughing]. That's was all down Steward Avenue and uh where all the prostitute hang out, drug dealers. It was a rough community, it was a rough community. All the dudes on the streets smoked weed, and uh....

... O.K. when I first moved over there [into the community where he spent his high school years] uh, I use to just go to the park and stuff, play basketball, till they stole my basketball [laughing]. Stole my basketball one day. I was shooting with some other dudes, I had put my other basketball down cause I was shooting with some dudes. They said " can we play with it" I said yeah, go ahead. When I finished playing like hey, where they at, they were gone. So they had done stole my basketball. At first I was like damn this place not too nice [laughing]. That was the first signal I got. And uh, my mom she didn't know no different. She was just like me. She would put her cute, nice little plants out on the porch, crackheads come up on the porch stealing your plants and everything. Mom come out, be like "what the hell!" [He says laughing]. (Baby Boy interview)

Baby Boy continued to tell how the crackheads stole other things off of their porch and even how one confused crackhead tried to break into their house when Baby Boy was babysitting his 3-year-old nephew. He was also exposed to drugs and all of the other negative elements in his community. All of the negative social factors were in full force in his life before he came into the Navy. However, he did not submit to the negative elements. The critical elements in the community, as identified in the literature (Hale-Benson, 1996), included poverty, crime, and negative peer pressure. Baby Boy's view of these elements was common to the participants of this case study (except for Malcolm).

Malcolm's situation was a perfect illustration of how the community and school combined to form a setting that could have launched him down the wrong path for the rest of his life. Malcolm enjoyed his community and wants to go back there after he gets out of the Navy. His socialization consisted of how to survive and thrive in a world of criminal elements. One of Malcolm's friends sold drugs and had been in jail. He even had a friend who was facing a murder charge at the time of the interviews. Malcolm himself started selling drugs when he was about 16 years old during his second year in the ninth

grade. He also started a life of crime at an early age. Malcolm began as a look out; he watched for police while the older youth would conduct their dice games. Malcolm's world at this time revolved around the street life. There was no male that Malcolm looked up to enough to want to emulate. Malcolm was the closest of all of the participants to becoming institutionalized without actually doing so. Malcolm recognized his path as negative and self destructive in time to make corrections and better decisions. Malcolm told me about his community in the following excerpts from his interview transcript:

> I grew grew up in the Fifth Ward (in Houston Texas) and Kelly Court was the name of the apartments that we stayed in which is right on uh, right at where 59 and I-10 come together in Houston. We stayed right there— our front door was like right on the freeway. I mean it all depends on what you want to know about it. I, I still say to this day it was fun, I mean we had bad times, but you always have bad times. I moved in with my best friend and his momma and uh while I was staying out there cause he was like big; his brother was real big as far as drugs and stuff. Like a lot of people in a lot of neighborhoods like all throughout South Park and Sunny Side and all over there a lot of people knew him— he was known all over. And so his brother, his little brother, was my best friend and he got a name cause of his brother and then I kinda got a name cause I hung with them. And so when I was out there that was when I that was really the first time I seen what was really going own as far as with the drug aspect. Cause I never really been, I had been around it but that just wasn't never my thang. I was always trying to be the silly one out of the group instead of being the money maker out of the group. (Malcolm interview)

Basically left to find his own way, Malcolm succumbed to the lure of fast money and the instant gratification of it. He did not get along with his mother, and he spent many formative years without her direct supervision. Malcolm's mother was unable to control him or set boundaries he would respect so he left home at an early age. While he takes responsibility for his actions, Malcolm was not remorseful for his illegal activities. However, he does see his actions as mistakes, and he now sees that the people he saw as friends were not really his friends.

When he spoke, he expressed some of the same insights as the participants in the first case study. These insights came from Malcolm's experiences in the community and his having to learn many of life's lessons on his own. He learned from his experiences, and now he is reflective and honest about his life's lessons and the decisions he made. As with the participants in the first case study, Malcolm seemed to feel that he had no choice— he needed to get money and the best way to do this was to hustle as he explained in the following segment of transcript:

> We called him "Black." Me and Black, we started hustling. You know he used to always talk to me and be like 'man' [he says as he thinks back] I mean he, and see that's that's I guess that's another reason he wasn't my best friend. Cause I could see the money that he was making and when I told him that that you know what I'm saying, I'm ready to gone ahead and handle up [he was ready to get started and that he felt he could handle it] he be like, 'nah man you don't wanta do this you don't wanta' you know what I'm saying. He always be talking down against it, but you know he still he still put me on [got him started slanging— selling dope]. And so that's what I start doing cause I stopped playing basketball my second my second year in the ninth grade. Uh, I was 16 (Malcolm interview).

The fact that Malcolm was not institutionalized had a lot to do with the fact that he did not get caught as many times as he could have or even as many times as the participants of the first case study. Malcolm seemed as though, at some points in his life, he just did not care whether he got caught or even whether he was killed. While he does not give himself enough credit, Malcolm is very intelligent; but he did not seem to be very happy at all. He could not look up to his father because his father was a drug addict and was not around when he was needed. Malcolm took advantage of the opportunities as he saw them. The opportunities that Malcolm had were usually to do things that were illegal but gave him the money that he needed. Further, when he weighed the chances of being caught, he felt that the money he could get outweighed the chances of getting caught. The lack of control by his mother combined with an absentee father, no role

model, an educational system that was not nurturing, and a community filled with all of the typical negative elements many Black youth experience, severely limited his choices. Malcolm was not able to see the world that existed outside of his community or the opportunities there until he finally decided to get his GED and go into the Navy. The following segment of transcripts provide evidence of the world as Malcolm saw it and the choices that he had:

> I had a lot of opportunities to do bad. I don't know which one was the biggest though. Cause I never really weighed 'em; I never weighed 'em. I know there was supposed to been a couple of times when we was supposed to ride out and go on robbing sprees and stuff like that, me and a couple of partners from Kelly Courts— the name of the apartments I used to stay in once my anty had died. That was about it, well other than going and scoring some dope, but I ain't really see that as being a big opportunity to do bad cause that was… I always felt like that chance of getting caught doing that was minimal. (Malcolm interview)

Unlike Malcolm, Hustler's community experience was not as violent nor did he engage in nearly the risky activity that Malcolm did. Hustler's community experience was similar to Blue's except that Hustler moved around more than Blue. Hustler was an Army brat. Before his father and mother divorced, he and his family moved many times. His community experience brought out some of the fun or normal kid activities that Black males may experience. Not every minute of the Black male's existence in the urban setting is spent dodging bullets and drug dealers. Hustler's community experience served as an example of some of the good times experienced in the urban community; but without a doubt, it is laced with the same sort of elements experienced by all the participants. Hustler begins to describe his community in the following segment of transcript:

> Oooow, I lived in like two different neighborhoods; like my ninth to tenth grade, I lived in like the apartment complex and it was like no <u>nice</u> [his emphasis] one but

it wasn't no dirt [his emphasis] cheap one neither. It was like mediocre apartment complex; just everybody in the neighborhood knew each other. (Hustler interview)

While Hustler was growing up, he was usually the youngest among his friends. When I asked if his friends were older than he, Hustler said, "Yeah, like a year or two older than me so it was like, I was always like the late one." He saw his older friends smoke marijuana. As is too common in urban neighborhoods, when Hustler goes home he finds those same friends doing the same things that they were doing before he left his neighborhood— congregating on the favorite neighborhood corner and smoking weed. Unfortunately, the urban community perpetuates the negative activities, and it is common to find the same people going in and out of jail, hanging around on the same street corners, and perpetrating the same crimes. These negative activities go on until the players are incarcerated for life or dead and then they are replaced with new players. Some of Hustler friends even sold drugs, yet he steered clear of the decisions that would have him go down the same paths as they did.

I was curious about what Hustler's friends thought of him and how they treat him when he goes home to visit. He told me:

Put it like this they know me, they know me you know, I was the same Hustler when I came back you know I didn't go back like "attention on deck!" [laughing]. I came back, you know, the same person. (Hustler interview)

Going back to visit one's community can be problematic for Black males. The Black male has to guard against acquiring the label of sell-out or trying to be White. It was important that these young men were respected in their community. The interview with Hustler also brought out that the Black male has to be concerned about his gaining reentry into the community after he has been gone for a period of time, especially if the

Black male experiences some measure of success outside the community. All of the young men in both case studies, with the exception of Baby Boy, felt he had to establish his fighting prowess with his peers. The ability to fight along with not losing touch with the community and being able to communicate with one's peers in the community is very important because a Black male must feel like he belongs somewhere. I asked Hustler about fighting. He said, "That's all we did; that's all we did." Too often though, violence turned extreme as Hustler elaborated in the following segment of transcript:

> I just know this dude was beating this crackhead up and we was just over there looking and him watching him getting beat up and the dude was hollering. I remember he turned around and he started shooting for no reason, I remember that. (Hustler interview)

Unfortunately drugs were abundant in Hustler's neighborhood. He said, "I mean you can get weed in the morning, in the afternoon, it was like the <u>biggest</u> thang there." However, Hustler did not indulge in any drug activity. Hustler felt that smoking weed was a major problem in his community. He said, "That's all they do [his peers in the community]. They just live to chill and smoke weed." Hustler also told me that a lot of his friends are now in jail. When he goes home his friends are still hanging on the same corners and doing the same things they did when they were young. Hustler simply chooses not to get involved in all of the deviant behavior, but admits he likes hanging with them.

Hustler's neighborhood was also drug riddled and most of his friends smoked marijuana. Crack was also common in Hustler's neighborhood. When I asked what he would change about his community if be could, Hustler responded with:

> Oh, uh, I guess I would say to get involved. Cause most everybody I know say 'get outside' [this is what the parents say to their kids] cause you ain't never see no dad and no son out there throwing a football or nothing like that or somebody

teach you to ride a bicycle or what ever. You know, I would say 'parents get
involved with the kids.' It's like everybody, we all was just out there you know.
(Hustler interview)

The above statement sums up too many Black communities. Youth being left to their own

devices often make the wrong decisions. When African American males go back to their

communities, they should provide an example to the young men there. The Black fathers

in the community should also take more time with their own children.

Blue had a very practical and conservative view of his life experiences. When

Blue talked about his community experiences, he expressed a different perspective than

did any of the other participants. When Blue was about 15 or 16, he lived in a community

that was much more violent than the one he was in just prior to his going into the Navy.

He described his first community experience in the following segment of transcript:

Get up; couple of people probably with a barbecue grill; couple of drug boys
come by make they little pick up, they little sell. And probably by nightfall you
gone here gun shots, might see a couple of fights, somebody car get stole. That's
bout a average day. (Blue interview)

Blue spent the last couple of years in a better neighborhood. He described his community

as a good community. Blue said, "It was nothing like breaking in people houses; I lived

in a pretty good community." He did not seem to like talking about his old

neighborhood. Blue seemed embarrassed about living in his first community. His last

community also had violence, drugs, and peers that engaged in illegal activity. As with

the other participants in this case study, Blue's peers did not influence him to participate

in their illegal activities. Although his mother did not want him to keep the company of

the wayward young men in his community, Blue enjoyed being with them and called

them friends. According to Blue, some of his friends were addicted to drugs and some

have been in and out of jail. Even though his mother did not want him to be around his

friends, Blue had his own philosophy about it. When I asked if he kept the company of his peers despite his mother's urging he said, "A little bit, but I knew right from wrong; you know, when to leave 'em alone." Blue witnessed a young lady being shot in a neighborhood club. He was 20 when the shooting happened and was only about 17 when he started going to the club.

Like most of the young men in both case studies Blue has a child. He was concerned that his son is living with the mother who has fallen into the rut of an inner city life. According Blue, when talking about his son's mother, "She she's 21 she, I just got mixed up in a bad situation really cause, uh she don't want to work she don't want to do anything. She got, she just got pregnant again and that's why me and her not together anymore." Blue said that his son's mother does not have any drive and only wants to stay in her neighborhood and depend on the government to provide for her and her children. Blue was very concerned about how his son was growing up. I asked him how he intended to keep his son from perpetuating the cycle that too many Black males find themselves in at an early stage in life. Blue said,

> I'ma pretty much I'ma I'ma have to get him cause his mom she she just lazy. She don't want to do nothing— having… see, all her brothers all them been locked up in prison, I don't want him around that stuff. I'ma get him when I get out— the Navy. (Blue interview)

Blue said that his son's mother also has two other children and felt that this will help his case to get his son.

Blue was around the same bad elements as the rest of the participants, but he considered himself as having a strong mind and that is one of the reasons for his success until now. He knew drug dealers and the like, but he was on the right road. When I asked Blue about peer pressure he said, "I didn't give in to it." Although some of Blue's peers

attempted to place pressure on him, his mother's influence weighed heavier on him. I asked him whether it was his upbringing that kept him from engaging in the destructive behavior and he said, "Yeah, I knew I get my ass beat." Blue also felt that parents should scrutinize their children's music. I asked if he felt that rap music caused violence, and Blue said, "If you let it soak into your head like that if you weak minded it'll cause you to do violent things. I can listen to it all day and it don't affect me."

Although the communities in both case studies were similar, the attitude of the second group of participants about their community was different. Baby Boy, Blue, and Hustler seemed to have a more positive outlook on the future. These young men did not choose their communities but were faced with growing up in the midst of potentially harmful surroundings. Baby Boy, Blue, and Hustler seemed to realize that they had to find ways to have fun and experience being children and at the same time they recognized that to have a better future they could not go down the road that was most apparent to them. This apparent road was the path that would perpetuate the situation of too many African American youth— being institutionalized.

The second group of participants, except for Malcolm, seemed to view their communities much as I did when I was growing up. My band teacher had a saying whenever we were to practice in the rain. "It may rain on the band; it don't rain in the band." This saying sums up my feelings about my community and seems to apply to most of the young men of this project. The community is something you can not do anything about but you cannot let anything define you except you.

Success

The young men in this case study seemed to have more to look forward to than the participants of the first case study. The future for Blue, Hustler, Baby Boy and even Malcolm looms bright, at least in their thinking. All of the participants had a job. They were in the Navy, and they have conquered the negative elements in their lives to this point. Tragically, success for inner city youth has to include successfully negotiating those negative elements in their neighborhoods. Whereas the young men of the first case study were not prepared for the future, the young men of this case study were prepared. Indeed, an investigation of where these eight young Black men go from here would make an important follow-up study.

The participants in this case study described their futures and successes more in terms that showed that they felt less limitation on what they can be than did the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center. The young men of this case study were not institutionalized and they saw their world as being larger than just their community. Although Malcolm may go back to his community, he has his eye on a future not limited by the surroundings of his community.

Hustler was one of three in his family who had made it out of their surroundings. His older brother was in the Army and provided a good example, a role model, for him. Many of Hustler's relatives provided bad examples for him and are now institutionalized. Hustler discussed what his relatives are doing:

> My brother? In the Army. We the only two that made it out, to tell the truth. Out of all our cousins, like all my momma's sister's sons? We the only two. Well, I take that back, now my aunt had one that went in the military, but he got out and he ain't doing nothing right now really, he's like...but like I got four cousins, they in jail. Well one of my cousin just got out, he got out. It was sad because like them two used to watch out for each other cause both of 'em selling drugs; they

was big time so uh. (Hustler interview)

Hustler was not satisfied with merely staying out of jail. He was an Air-traffic Controller for the Navy, he was in college; and he is planning to start a business of his own. I asked him what he considered success to be for him. He said,

> For me, at least my bachelor's degree in business administration and at least a good [emphasis his] attempt at my dream of becoming my own boss, being a entrepreneur, I mean, cause I done talked to people who done washed out, but at least a heck of a try. (Hustler interview)

Hustler did not see himself as ever having failed at anything he has tried. He was even accepted into a college but was coerced by a recruiter to go into the Navy, which is not uncommon because many recruiters are only concerned with getting their quotas. I asked him what his recipe would be for raising a successful African American male. The element of parental control came out in his discussion. Hustler said, "Coming from the parents, you know, be firm but fair." He also emphasized the point of the parent's stressing the importance of education and youth taking education seriously

Blue is not as ambitious as Hustler. Strangely the element of not being caught and staying out of trouble comes into Blue's discussion of success. He said,

> Success for me, successfully complete my enlistment in the Navy with no uh, NJP (Non Judicial Punishment or Captain's Mast) nothing like that and I'ma move on with my life in June. (Blue interview)

The only thing that Blue considered as a failure in his life occurred when their house burned down. Blue's mother provided him with a good work ethic and an example of a successful person. She worked as a correctional officer and at an area Wal-Mart. Blue had clear goals. When asked when he would consider himself a success he said,

> Uhmmm I always wanted to have my own house by the time I'm 25 and I'm striving toward that right now. I don't want to be renting like some people be renting when they like 30, 35. I don't want to do that. (Blue interview)

By the time of our second interview, Blue had decided to stay in Navy for another enlistment so that he can go to shore duty and go to school. He was planning on moving his girlfriend to Norfolk (where the USS Enterprise is based) and getting married. Blue still wanted ultimately to become a correctional officer.

Malcolm's idea of success seemed less direct and clear. Malcolm's notion of success seemed more like that of the participants from the first case study than like that of his Navy peers. When asked what success meant to him, Malcolm said, "Money, making more money, living comfortable." Malcolm wanted to go into the music business and saw the Navy as a temporary occupation. If the music career does work out, Malcolm felt like he could always be a postman. He said,

> Yeah, I mean if push come to shove, that's why I like the position that I'm in now to where if thangs don't go right with any other option I may explore I always got that to fall back on. I mean I don't know too many people that ever got turned down. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm was successful in his street life. While he did get expelled from school and did time in a detention center for an incident involving a pistol and fighting in school, Malcolm did not end up in jail. This was more due to his not being caught on more serious charges. Malcolm was so successful at hustling (i.e., playing basketball for money, selling drugs and taking money from people) that when he was living with a friend the money they made was enough to allow them to move out of their old neighborhood. The street life is still a very viable option to Malcolm. He felt that he could fall back on his knowledge of hustling if he had to in order to make a living. As with all the participants, Malcolm is very intelligent and quite capable. Malcolm received his GED and has learned a trade in the Navy— Aviation Electronic Technician.

Baby Boy was only 18 and it showed when we discussed his future. He does not

know exactly what he wants to be, "Maybe a lawyer or something in the computer field."

I ask him about his future and when he would consider himself a success. Baby boy said,

> When I got a job I want [laughing] making good money [we both laugh]. Yeah, I
> mean, it could be further in the Navy. For me at this point now, I'm not sure
> which way it's going to go— whether it's going to be Navy or whether I'm going
> to get out and pursue a job like in computer technology, but at this point I don't
> know, it could go either way I guess. I'm still contemplating that now. (Baby Boy
> interview)

Baby Boy had successfully overcome the negative influences of an absent father

figure, constantly moving, and bad neighborhoods to become an Aviation Electronic

Technician in the Navy. He is also taking college classes. While his mother has been a

big part of his success thus far, Baby Boy does not view her as a model of success or

necessarily a role model. He said,

> Well it's not that, I mean she could be, I mean I can't say my mom is what I said
> my definition of success is (having the job you want to have and financially and
> all that). I can't say that she was that when I was growing up, I mean now she
> doing O.K. but I wouldn't say that she is too successful or nothing. (Baby Boy
> interview)

Baby boy did not want to emulate his mother's example while he was growing up. He

wanted to be better than she was.

Success for the young men of this case study could also be measured by their

ability not to become institutionalized. The role models, examples they chose, and

activities of the young men of this case study helped their resiliency. I said, "helped their

resiliency" because at some point resiliency is also about choices. These young men

chose more correctly than the participants of the first case study. Most of the young men

in this case study had attended college or have plans to attend. As pointed out earlier, Tift

(1990) found that Black males were less likely to seek higher education than Black

females or both genders of Whites. Certainly, the young men of this case study were more likely to go to college than those of the first.

<div align="center">Point of Divergence</div>

For the young men of this case study points of divergence refer to opportunities to go down the wrong road that they did not take and why they did not become institutionalized. As with the participants of the first case study, it was not so much a particular point as much as it was divergent junctures and elements of resiliency. The road that these young men took depended on elements that contributed to or took away from their resiliency and their reaction to those elements. For the participants from the Navy, the elements were only those typically encountered in an inner-city life. Those elements include single parent household, poverty, exposure to violence, drugs, and other negative influences.

I asked Blue if there was a point that he thought was most important in a young Black male's life to catch him and keep him from going down the wrong path. His answer was, "It's a lot of little things." One of the things that Blue saw as important was parent involvement, as the following segment of transcript illustrated:

> You know like it got to do with your upbringing, and your parents showing you the right way— like your parents spending time with you. Like some people's parents when they grow up they didn't even have time for they kids— they work, they sleep, they go to work, and they didn't never take 'em nowhere— show 'em things. That'll lead a kid down the wrong path quick— when you don't spend no time with 'em. (Blue interview)

Too many inner city youth do not enjoy parents who take time with them. Blue's mother was not able to take much time with him, but his grandfather provided an example for him. Blue had a support network in place that helped him not to go down the wrong path.

Blue also felt that peer pressure played a key role in the choices youth make. According to Blue, youth are especially prone to the influence of their peers when they are in a poverty situation. The lure of money causes some youth to take a chance on a decision that may result in their becoming institutionalized. If youth are not armed with resilient factors, such as support and parental control, they may be inclined not to resist the pressure of their peers. Peers are more successful at selling a risky decision when the youth do not see any hope or any way out of their present circumstances except through crime.

Blue felt a male role model is one of the most important elements in guiding the Black male down the right path. When I asked him whether having a male role model is more important than activities, Blue said, "Yeah, especially one who that that learn from his mistakes already and try to keep you from doing the same thang."

Blue and Baby Boy shared the view that high school is also a critical point. Baby Boy felt the eleventh grade specifically is a critical point. According to Baby Boy, during the eleventh grade students take the most difficult classes. That is, eleventh grade students take a greater number of courses, compared to twelfth grade students, and they make decisions about the future. He said, "Once you get through the eleventh grade year, the twelfth grade year you pretty much home free there." Baby Boy's view may very well have merit when all of the other stressors are added to the lives of the Black male youth. In fact, Baby Boy felt that graduating from high school is the most critical point in an African American male's life.

However, Baby Boy was equipped to handle the negative things that he encountered. As with the other participants of this case study, Baby Boy had enough

elements of resiliency to overcome the negative stressors in his life. When Baby Boy was asked to what did he attribute his success, he said:

> [After a long pause]. Well uh, think it uh, a lot of it's my background cause uh, I was like into a, before I moved into the inner city I was in a lot of different communities, so when I moved into the inner city I was pretty much out of my real impressionable stage. So, when I came to the inner city I was looking at it from a third person point of view. I could see these other people. I just look at them like what are they doing. Something like that, you know. So, I mean, even though of course they had I stayed there for four years from ninth grade to twelfth grade. Of course they had an impression on me but I mean, I knew I had come from and I knew uh what I wanted out of life. I knew that uh, I knew to stay out of trouble. (Baby Boy interview)

Although he said that high school was the most important point, Baby Boy had already learned the tools to deal with the negativity in his community, thanks to his mother. When asked what was the most important reason that he made the right decisions in his life, Baby Boy said,

> Uh, the main reasons for the choices I made in my life, uh that's a tough question. The main reason, I guess you can say it was my mom, cause, you know, the values she instilled in me, the way she raised me I guess. She was probably the greatest influence on the decisions I made in my life time. That was probably the main impact I guess I could say. If I had to say specifically one main impact, that would probably be it. (Baby Boy interview)

Baby Boy had many important values instilled in him early in his life; and if he had not, his story, as with the other participants, could have been different.

Malcolm seemed to be still going through one of his divergent junctures. Because he was successful with regards to making money illegally and because he has a poor relationship with his mother, the street life is still an option to Malcolm. I asked Malcolm if he would ever go back to his life in the streets. He said,

> [Without much hesitation at all] If push came to shove, I mean like if I did something real stupid and got kicked out before my time [meaning being put out of the Navy prematurely]. I know I cain't go back and live with my momma so I wouldn't have nothing else to do. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm did not enjoy the same level of family support as the other participants of this case study. Malcolm seemed to feel that the only person he could rely on was Malcolm. Even at school, there was no one to give Malcolm the support and guidance that he needed. The following segment illustrates the plight of young African American males growing up in a community filled with negative stressors and a school that was either unable or unwilling to give them the help they needed. I asked Malcolm about the importance of after-school activities like the Boys' and Girls' Clubs, a mentor, and Boy Scouts. Malcolm said,

> I think that I think that's real important cause a lot of times I know me, it used to be times I want to just sit down and just talk to somebody like during middle school you know. You just want to sit down and talk or maybe you had a messed up day you just wasn't feeling right all day. And instead of having somebody to sit down and talk to about that you'll go out and stand on the block and you just be real irritable. And and when you out there and you trying to hustle you got this you already got this anger in your mind then that's just like it can push you to do some crazy stuff. Like I know it was times when I hit one of the little young dudes up for they little pocket money [he would take their money] or whatever they had just cause I be mad and they cross me the wrong way, so I feel like I got to show 'em. And then it be times when I feel like I be on top of the world and don't I don't need to mess with nobody. (Malcolm interview)

Malcolm was on the verge of becoming institutionalized at this point. In the above segment, Malcolm illustrated the circle of hopelessness and neglect that often results in deviant behavior. The above segment may also represent the time that was the most important point of divergence in Malcolm's life.

When discussing possible points of divergence, peer-pressure must be considered. Baby Boy, Hustler, and Blue did not give in to peer pressure to the point that it put them at-risk of becoming institutionalized. However, Hustler admitted that some of his misbehavior was due to peer-pressure. I asked him if it was peer pressure that caused him to engaged in mischief. He said, "Yeah.... Peer pressure. Whenever you talk to anybody,

they gone always say peer pressure and friends, going along with the crowd." Hustler did not go down the wrong path because he had a plan for his future. According to Hustler, only one of his cousins on his mother's side graduated from high school, and his mother had talked to him about going to college and making something of himself. Thus, Hustler was motivated not to become a statistic regardless of peer pressure. He told me that he was his own man. Peer-pressure, as an element that influences choices, is very important especially when coupled with the lack of boundaries. With the exception of Malcolm's situation, there were recognized boundaries and parental control with this group which may have lessoned the affects of peer pressure in their cases. Malcolm had no recognized boundaries or parental control and very little support from school.

Again, there was no single point of divergence. The participants communicated experiences that involved a series of decisions, choices, and influences that amounted to the right or wrong path. The decisions of participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center were based on rules of the streets. That is, for whatever reason, Cat Daddy, Little Man, Lil Bru, and Big Man did not follow the rules of home nor did they recognize any boundaries set by their guardian. These young men made decisions that affected their life based on their street life, which amounted to deviant behavior and culminated, at least at this point, in their incarceration. Conversely, the decisions made by Blue, Hustler, and Baby Boy were based on very definite boundaries and rules set by their parent. Malcolm decided, on numerous occasions, not to abide by the rules or boundaries of his mother. The decisions of the participants to take drugs, skip school or engage in any deviant behavior were directly related to the set of opportunities, rules, and boundaries they chose to recognize.

The choices made by all of the participants amount to decisions based on recognized opportunities, rules, and boundaries. Indeed, the decisions and choices of these young men were directly related. Choices here refer to options and opportunities available to youth from the inner city. The choices made by the participants of this study were dependent on their perspective. The participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center expressed decisions based on the feeling of limited options or opportunities. For example, Big Man and Lil Man felt as though educators were not meeting their needs or were even callous toward them. As a result, going to school became less and less of an option for them. Baby Boy, Hustler, and Blue viewed school as a very important option and one not to squander. Even Malcolm grew to feel that getting an education of some sort was important. Whereas drugs and other deviant behavior were options for the participants from the Navy, they did not chose that way of life (with the exception of Malcolm). It is likely that the participants from the Navy did not go down the wrong road because of parental involvement and a sense of hope for the future which combined to give them resiliency.

In all fairness, the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center had other extenuating circumstances affecting their options. Influences on the participants stemmed directly from the stressors of their surroundings. These influences amounted to peer-pressure, drugs, and violence. The difference in the two groups lay in the effects of these influences on their life-choices. The way the influences affected the participants depended on their resiliency. The participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center lacked certain parts of resiliency that the participants from the Navy enjoyed. The young men in the second case-study, with the exception of Malcolm, had parental control, support, and

recognized boundaries; whereas the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center and Malcolm did not. It is almost a given that Black males from urban surroundings will at least be exposed to negative influences or stressors. The issue is how they respond to them; and their responses are dependent on the amount of resiliency they possess. Resiliency again is the key. Because of their resiliency the young men from the Navy did not surrender to their negative surroundings to the point that it led them to become institutionalized. The young men from the Navy responded to their negative surroundings with the knowledge that the world is bigger than their community. With the exception of Malcolm, the participants from the Navy recognized some of the temptations of their communities and chose not to engage in them to the point that they were led to them going down the wrong path. The young men from the Navy knew that to be successful they must survive and escape their surroundings.

Responsibility was a common theme that emerged from the research. All of the young men took responsibility for their decisions – right or wrong. In the following segment of transcript Hustler echoed a common theme throughout this work for participants in both cases studies:

> Yeah, I always been my own person. Nobody on this earth can say like, you know; "oh he trying to be like him." I always been Hustler [emphasis his]. I always did what I wanted to do. Now, I'll admit sometime it was wrong , but hey, that's what I wanted to do. (Hustler interview)

When I asked Lil Man if he took responsibility for what he had done, his reply was, "Yes sir." There is a common view in our society at-large that says that the Black male blames everyone but himself for his plight, and the literature that was reviewed for this work also suggested it. On the other hand, all eight young men in this study took responsibility for their part in their plight and the decisions they made. However, there

was no mistaking that society has to take responsibility for its unethical practices that mitigate against full participation by the Black male in the opportunities of this country. Family life also has an influence on the life-choices of the Black male and, specifically, the participants of this study. The element of control, or lack of it, in the family was a major component in the influence the family had on the participants. Hustler felt that intervening in the lives of young Black males early with parental involvement and positive activities is crucial for them to make the right decisions. He also felt that elementary school years are a critical point-in-time for the Black male growing up in the inner city. Although Malcolm, Baby Boy, and Blue did not specifically articulate elementary as the would-be divergent point, they did say that the teachings should start early.

## Conclusion

This case study is testimony to the fact that African American males who experience negative stressors do not have to take the wrong path in life. The participants in this case study emerged from the same sort of environment and educational experience as did those of the first case study. However, the decisions that Baby Boy, Blue, Hustler and even Malcolm made were better than those of the participants of the previous case study.

The advantages that these young men had, with the exception of Malcolm, were a more stable home life and the ability to make more positive decisions. The two case studies will be synthesized in the next chapter and the dimensions/constructs will be explored so as to reveal similarities and highlight differences. In the next chapter the research question and the objectives are tied together and explained further.

CHAPTER VI: SYNTHESIS: TOWARD DEFINING A MODEL FOR PROPER

SOCIALIZATION OR RE-SOCIALIZATION

In answering the research question, "How do some African American males from

Jacksonville's Pre-trial Detention Center ant the U.S. Navy describe their life experiences

and the influences of these experiences on their choices," I used the experiences of the

participants as told by them as they discussed their community, educational experiences,

family life, and ideas of success. The objectives of this study were also addressed during

the course of the interviews and analyses. Elements that contributed to the participants'

positive life-choices included a strong and respectful relationship with their mothers;

resiliency, which was enhanced by the relationship with mother; and a respect for a male

figure of some sort. Among the things that affect negative life course choices of African

American males were a lack of control at home, which included a bad relationship with

their mother; no respect for structure; the failure of educators to recognize and address

the needs of the Black male; and a lack of resiliency that led them to succumb to the

stressors in the communities of the Black males of this study. This research project also

uncovered possible reasons that some African American males (given similar stressors)

chose a path that led to their taking and sustaining a positive place in the workforce and

society, whereas others chose a path that led to continued self destructive and anti-social

behavior, including incarceration and a life of crime.

There were more similarities than differences in the educational experiences and

community stressors of the two groups in the study's population. All of the participants

had ample opportunities to engage in deviant behavior and, indeed, in many cases, did engage in some of the same activities. One of the differences, it should be pointed out, was simply that some of the participants did not get caught. The other main difference is in the recognition of boundaries. The participants from Pre-trial Detention Center mainly recognized only the rules of the streets. On the other hand, the participants from the Navy recognized the structure and boundaries at home. Most important, the educational experiences of the participants from the Navy seemed better to accommodate their needs than did the educational experiences of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center. This difference may have been because of the extenuating circumstances in the lives of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center (e.g., possible learning impediments and tragedy in the family). At any rate, African American males cannot and should not have to depend on an alternative school such as those found in jails or detention centers to prepare them for the workforce.

The two groups of participants explained success differently. The participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center simply described success in terms of not getting caught anymore and maintaining a steady job. The participants from the Navy had more of a mainstream idea of success. That is, the Navy participants wanted to have their own businesses, go to college, and have a nice home. Cat Daddy also wanted to go to college and have a business, but other forces were more powerful in his life. More research should be done in the area of the idea of success as it relates to the African American male.

As to the question of a point of divergence, there was no single instance that could be singled out to be the most important point in the participants' lives. Divergence is

another area that is deserving of more research. There were several junctures, which were important in deciding the path of the young men of this study. These junctures include elementary school. Although most of the participants identified high school as the most important point, elementary school years were probably the most important because the special needs of the participants, if there were any, should have been recognized and addressed at this time, particularly counseling needs or proper identification of learning needs. The elementary school years appear to be an optimum time to instill more respect for structure and to prevent alienation. Elementary school is also a time when the effects of negative peer pressure can be countered with positive activities and mentoring programs. Addressing learning needs and providing the proper support mechanisms early in the educational experiences of Black males enhance their resiliency and enables them to deal better with the increased pressures that come in the high school years.

The two groups of young men who were the subjects of this study present contrasting profiles of societal success. The participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center have, to this point, failed to be productive members of society, "but it not too late," as Lil Bru would say. The young men I interviewed from the Navy have experienced some measure of success and seem prepared to continue to succeed. Only Malcolm's future success seems uncertain. The young men in the Pre-trial Detention Center see the major part of success as not getting into trouble; whereas those in the Navy take not getting into trouble as a given. The findings of this study provide sufficient starting points for developing a model for proper socialization of the young Black male. The important considerations include (1) promoting parental control and proper relationships in the home, (2) enhancing resiliency and hope, (3) negating the effects of

problematic peer pressure and community stressors, (4) and providing positive

educational experiences. Each of these considerations will be discussed in more detail in

this final chapter. Focus on these considerations along with a new discourse may help

families, educators, and political and community leaders prevent the growing of a third

world in the United States, a third world which is made up of those who are not ready to

contribute or participate in the new increasingly technology-driven economy and work

force. The Black male is over represented in this growing third world in the United

States, a situation that is compounded by the fact that Black males are constantly and

consistently disenfranchised, marginalized, and failed by the educational system. As the

literature I reviewed for this study illustrates, the pool that makes up the new third world

in the United States continues to grow.

Promoting Parental Control and Positive Relationships in the Home

Parental control must be increased and we must somehow give single parents or

guardians support in controlling their children because of the problems children

experience and how they react to them are largely dependant on the boundaries set at

home. Parental control is one of the most important elements in the proper socialization

of any youth, specifically the Black male. Control and expectation for proper conduct are

important to the resiliency of youth (Benard, 1991). Black males who experience an

adequate amount of parental control tend to be less likely to get involved in deviant

behavior, and they also have a more positive educational experience. Indeed, Gonzales

(1996) found that in high-risk neighborhoods, such as the neighborhoods of the

participants of this study, restrictive control might be a positive influence on their

educational success. The participants in this project bore out the importance of parental

control as they described their family life and their educational experience. As many of the single parents are very young, they may very well experience less success at controlling their children, if for no other reason than the lack of life experience on their part. There is a definite need for community programs such as day care and parenting classes. Benard (1991) found that supportive and nurturing families can only exist in communities that are supportive and nurturing.

The relationship between the Black male and his parent(s) or guardian(s) is very important to the path that he may take in life. Positive maternal relationships can be a positive influence on educational success (Gonzales, 1996; Mason, 1994). This premise would suggest that programs are needed to assist single mothers in nurturing positive relationships with their children. Further, a positive relationship with a guardian can enhance resiliency (McMillan, 1994). For example, Malcolm did not have a positive relationship with his mother or father; and as we saw in his story. He did not recognize his mother's control over him and did not want to abide by her rules.

Malcolm's family experiences were similar to those of the participants in the first case study. As a result Malcolm was left to his own devices and barely eluded being institutionalized. Malcolm made decisions without the resiliency factors of the other participants in the second case study. He responded to the influences of his community in much the same way as those in the first case study. Malcolm's situation was supported by the research in this project as well as the literature. That is, Malcolm's lack of resiliency, just as in the cases of those in the first case study, contributed to the destructive decisions he made. The family units of Hustler, Blue, and Baby Boy allowed for resiliency that

armed them with the ability to make better decisions when faced with the same influences as those in the first case study.

The family unit, however it may be made up, is the starting point to the decisions and the degree to which the Black male succumbs to the pressures and stressors he will experience as he travels through life. For example, when I asked Lil Bru what he thought was the key to the decisions he has made thus far, he said, "I think it was frustration at somebody— my daddy. My brother used to not let it bother him though." Although all participants in this project had issues with their fathers, the young men in the second case study were able to reconcile them. The participants of the first case study found the issues they had with their fathers at least contributory to their plight.

<div align="center">Enhancing Resiliency and Hope</div>

Resiliency was a common theme in the success enjoyed by the participants of the second case study. The lack of resiliency contributed to the negative decisions that were made by the participants of the first case study. Resiliency is the result of having support mechanisms in place. There must be a supportive community and home life of some fashion. Additionally, the school environment must be able to meet the needs of the youth. One cannot discuss resiliency without discussing the issue of hope. A resilient youth is one who has the ability to resist and overcome negative stressors and who has some level of hope for success and a chance at opportunities. Providing a feeling of hope for the young Black male is at least as important as any other element of this model. Instilling and maintaining a sense of hope starts at home and is not that complicated. According to the study of Enger (1994), Black males tend to feel better about themselves as they experience positive verbal interaction with parents.

We should institute mechanisms to build resiliency in young men very early, elementary school at the latest, and carry it throughout their educational experience. That is, programs like, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, mentors, Boy Scouts, and sports activities are very important. Again, participation in these programs should be continuous. These programs can also provide a positive male figure for young Black males and provide exposure to positive peer pressure. By positive peer pressure I mean influence exerted on a youth by his contemporaries which is constructive and in line with being a good citizen.

When combined, the negative forces of a typical inner city community limit choices and limit opportunities for the Black male. These combined negative forces test the resiliency of the youth in that community. Most youth who are considered at risk become adults who function very well in society (Benard, 1991). However, for too many Black youth, exposure to the negative elements in their community results in their becoming institutionalized. Further, when faced with a school that does not meet their needs, youth may see no use for school and may begin to not go to school at all.

The elements that combine to result in positive outcomes and choices made by young men despite the negative influences are not complicated. For the young men of the second case study, with the exception of Malcolm, the positive influences were a supportive guardian, recognized control at home and at school, positive examples, and the courage to make their own decisions.

Negating the Effects of Problem Peer Pressure and Community Stressors

Peer pressure is a powerful element in the life of the Black male. The way a young Black man deals with peer pressure is of particular importance because, as Hale-Benson (1986) explained, the Black males have their own subculture within the Black

community. Young Black inner-city males seek the acceptance within their so-called subculture. Youth commonly succumb to peer pressure, so the challenge is to have young Black men around others who are positive in their attitudes and actions that are related to acceptable behavior. While Gonzales (1996) found that peers might not necessarily affect academic success of Blacks from a high-risk neighborhood, Mason (1994) suggested that negative or deviant peer pressure mitigates against proper behavior. However, Mason (1994) also found that a positive relationship with a mother or father figure of some sort at home offsets the effects of negative peer pressure.

Whereas their peers were a factor in the decisions they made, none of the young men in this project blamed their peers for their choices. When asked about the influence of peers in his decisions Big Man replied,

> Nah, your peers like the people I'm connected with. Cause they do thangs I'll want to do 'em. It's my choice, my decision on whether I want to do it or not and I choose to do it. (Big Man interview)

Throughout this study the participants took responsibility for their actions and decisions regardless of the influence.

The surroundings that many Black males find themselves in negatively impact many of their decisions. The community has an effect on the way Black males view school and their involvement in problem behavior (Gadsden, 1994). Thus, if the surroundings are negative (i.e., violent, drug infested, accepting of deviant behavior) it is likely that Black males in these communities will engage in problem behavior in school as well as the community. At this juncture, exposure to success and positive elements can be helpful. What I mean is that engaging the youth in programs that expose them to peers who may serve as good examples of productive citizens and positive male role models will at the

very least make it easier for them to choose the right road without fear of not being accepted.

<div align="center">Providing Positive Educational Experiences</div>

Educators must become more adept at recognizing the special needs of Black male students early and continue the support throughout their educational experience. Teachers should not assume or expect that a student will fail just because he is Black (Floyd, 1996). In the following excerpt from his transcript Lil Man gave an example of how it was assumed that he could not succeed in driver's education class at school simply because he was Black:

> When they used to take driver's ed at school, you don't get too many Black people at class. We just stood up there, we already know how to drive anyway. They just judge us before we take the class. Just like that saying say; you cain't judge us by the color of the book. Cain't just judge us by how we look. (Lil Man interview)

Educators should provide opportunities and expectations for learning and achieving (Floyd, 1996).

The participants gave example after example of the positive and negative roles of educators in their school experience. Under-representation of Black teachers in the classroom did not surface in the study as an important factor in the participants' education although researchers like Buxton (2000) called for more Black teachers in the classroom of predominately Black schools. All eight participants found their educational experience lacking in one facet or another. Unfortunately, the participants in the first case study seemed to have had less support in the educational experience than those in the second case study. As McMillan (1994) pointed out, support in the educational environment contributes to resiliency for at-risk youth. The educational experiences of

youth shape their feeling of hope with regards to the school's meeting their needs and, thus, affecting their success. I asked Lil Bru what he thought was the most important year in his school experience and why. He said,

> Probably elementary. Other than that I don't know, but I think it's elementary though. Because if you start out bad in elementary you goin be bad. You already made up your mind. I remember I was in a private school, way back. I think I was in the first grade, I started getting, I was a problem then. (Lil Bru interview)

A child's educational needs must be recognized and accommodated as early as possible. None of the participants of the first case study had their needs met early and, by the time they were in high school, it was too late. Lil Man said,

> That's one of the reasons why I left school – I wasn't getting the right kind of help I needed. That was the biggest thang. I was a trouble maker, in trouble a lot with the principal and the man, the male teachers. (Lil Man interview)

Unfortunately, schools in general are failing to even provide fair treatment of the Black male. In a study conducted by Slaughter-Defoe (1996), it was discovered that Black youth found nurturing and supportive relationships with teachers significant to their growth and evolution, especially in the early years of education. The participants of the first case study did not have a nurturing or supportive system in place in their early educational development. Big Man, Lil Bru, Lil Man, and Cat Daddy of the first case study had bad relationships with teachers and school officials. Similar poor school relationships were described by Malcolm, one of the subjects of the second case study. Their subsequent misbehavior in school suggests that their experience was consistent with the literature in this study. That is, that not having a nurturing and supportive system at school negatively impacted their positive social development. Gadsden (1994) suggested that the plight of African American males in school may be part of a plot against them. Whether there is a conspiracy against Black males or not may be debatable,

but the treatment they receive in the classroom is irrefutable. As an example, Black males

are least likely to receive favorable treatment in the classroom as compared to White

males, White females, and Black females (Casteel, 1998). Black males may be more apt

to give in to peer pressure and try to be accepted rather than try to succeed in the

classroom (Gadsden, 1994; Mason, 1994).

Educators must be trained to be sensitive to the very real problem facing the African American male in the classroom. The challenge is to find practices and policies that assist rather than hinder the development of the Black male to be a productive citizen. For example, color blindness perpetuates a less than ideal educational environment for minorities. Treating everyone as if they were of the same race or culture dismisses the obvious differences in learning and communication style of people. A color blind education is a covert attempt at further racism because it says that cultures other than the European American culture are not worthy of consideration. Obviously, no one is going to be able to learn about all cultures. At the very least, there should be training on how to gain knowledge about students and their families over the course of contact time (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). Teachers of today will experience myriad cultures from the beginning of their career. It is important that educators learn from these experiences efficiently and expeditiously so that they can provide the best possible service to all of their students.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This research project centered on the life choices and the reasons for those choices made by some young Black males. The data for this project came from the perspectives of the participants as obtained through personal interviews. The participants were from the Jacksonville Pre-trial Detention Center and the Navy— four from each site.

The results of the study were interesting. None of the participants blamed anyone other than themselves for the choices they made. That is, the eight young men of this study understood that they were responsible for their actions. They did not deflect the responsibility for their actions on to anyone or anything else and thus did not see themselves as victims, as much of the liberal literature suggests. Their perspectives most nearly match the conservative view. This has implication for young Black males receiving training in personal leadership and responsibility.

Parental control emerged as a very important element contributing to the decisions of the participants. Despite the fact that all of the young men came from a single guardian household, the four young men from the Navy (with the exception of Malcolm) enjoyed a household in which they recognized and respected the control of that parent. A supportive network in the school and community also emerged as an important element directly affecting the decision made by the young African American males of this study.

This study has implications for further research and education leadership. A longitudinal study would yield answers brought up by this work. For example, how many of the participants from the Pre-trial Detention Center actually made it out of the cycle of

recidivism? Another question to be answered is which path did Malcolm ultimately take? Also, Educational leaders must accept that their roles encompass more than instruction and referrals. The leadership in education must constantly and consistently assess the educational environment, policies and practices to ensure that the education experience of the Black male is part of positive socialization. Further educational leaders must work with parents and communities to establish a strong support network to ensure that no child is left behind. Too many administrators and teachers do not take their roles as leaders and molders of young men seriously enough. Much of the life of a young Black male is spent in school and the potential for positive leadership and direction is enormous.

There are also implications in this study for the family, school, and community. Single parents may need training to address the needs of their sons. Parents also need to work with schools to form a supportive network for the Black male. Schools have to be attentive to the needs of the Black male. Educational institutions must be equipped to recognize, identify, and address the needs of the Black male early in his education career. Teachers and administrators need to be proactive and not reactive to potential problems. To this end, educators must be trained to deal with the culture of the Black male. The participants did not describe the culture of their teachers as key to their educational experience. However, cultural writers in education present research that shows it is very important that teachers be trained to accommodate cultures not their own. Educational leaders must take culture and stressors of the Black male into account when making and applying policies. Leaders in education must be constantly assessing the efficacy of their policies and practices as they relate to the Black male.

Community programs should be set up to help with child-care and activities. Community programs should also be diligent in promulgating information about the programs that are available. A supportive network at home and at school would help furnish young African American males with resiliency. Resiliency would enhance the proper decision making of the young African American male. The point of divergence amounted to an combination of a lack of parental control; little or no resiliency to combat the effects of a community filled with negative stressors, including peer pressure; and a lack of a supportive network at home and at school. These elements combined to yield decisions that led the young men of the Pre-trial Detention Center down the wrong path.

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# APPENDIX

## Participant Consent Agreement

This study involves research using tape recordings of interviews with participants— individual being asked questions. There will be 8 participants. There will be 2 to 3 interviews per participant, lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes each.

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational experience and environmental stressors— poverty, violence, drugs, etc.— encountered by Black males. This study will also seek to discover possible critical decision making points in the lives of some Black males who are faced with similar types of educational experience and environmental stressors. Further, this report will add to the body of knowledge needed to change policies and practices educational leaders use in educating young Black males and preparing them for citizenship.

Participation in this study is purely voluntary. Your identity will remain confidential. Your name will not appear in the final report. There is no penalty or loss of benefit if you choose not to participate. There will be no money for participating in this study. You may stop the interviews or withdraw from this project at any time. The findings of the study will be made available to you if you desire. The information gathered in this study will be used to help improve the education of African Americans. If you have any questions contact Patrick O. Arnwine at (904) 269-6989.

I, _____ have read and understand the procedures described above. I agree to participate in this project and I have received a copy of this description.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Participant | Date | Witness | Date |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Relationship if other than participant | Date | Principal Investigator's Name | Date |

# PERSONAL VITAE

## PATRICK O. ARNWINE

2624 Sharpsburg Ct. Middleburg, Fl. 904-541-0064 (home) 386-312-4136 (office).

## EXPERIENCE

| | |
|---|---|
| **DIRECTOR COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS** | PRESENTLY |
| *St. Johns River Community College* | *5001 St. Johns Ave Palatka, Fl. 32177* |

Responsibilities include: Administration of the Dual Enrollment Program, facilitating K-12 articulation plans, facilitating the Tri-County (Putnam, Clay and St. Johns)Remediation Plan, establishment of special summer programs for high school students; establishment and coordination of special summer programs targeting minorities to assist in recruitment and retention, and facilitating In-service Training for Public School Teachers.

| | |
|---|---|
| **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPER/FACILITATOR** | 1/01 - 6/01 |
| *Area Center for Educational Enhancement* | *Department of Natural Sciences 4567 St. Johns Bluff Road, South Jacksonville, Fl. 32224* |

Responsibilities included: Professional development for K-20 educators in the areas of Diversity, Multicultural Education, and Curriculum development; assisted in developing programs for the recruitment, retention and professional development of women and minority teachers.

| | |
|---|---|
| Aviation maintenance/ Management | 8/80 - 9/00 |
| *Navy* | |

Responsibilities included: Training, Administration, Aviation maintenance Management and Aviation electronic technician; Directed efforts of up to 250 maintenance personnel; Coordinated aircraft usage.

## EDUCATION

| | |
|---|---|
| **ED. D. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP** | 8/ 01 (1995 -2001) |
| *University of North Florida* | *Jacksonville, Fl.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ADMINISTRATION** | (1989 - 94) |
| *University of Central Michigan* | *Mt. Pleasant, MI* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bachelors of Science in Vocational Education | (1985-88) |
| *Southern Illinois University* | *Carbondale, IL* |

## SKILLS

- Training and Development/Workforce Development
- Diversity
- Multicultural Education
- Master Trainer
- Paideia facilitating
- Total Quality Leadership Facilitator

## AWARDS

- Nominated for Outstanding Young American, 1998
- Outstanding Volunteer 1997

## MEMBERSHIP

- Board of Directors for Parents Working for Community Development and Involvement
- Retired Officers Association
- American Society for Training and Development
- Pi Lambda Theta