THE CRISIS OF THE YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE IN THE INNER CITIES

A Consultation of the United States Commission on Civil Rights

April 15–16, 1999
Washington, D.C.

Volume 1: Topic Papers Submitted to the Commission

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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Preface

The United States Commission on Civil Rights held a 2-day consultation on *The Crisis of the Young African American Male in the Inner Cities* in Washington, D.C., on April 15–16, 1999. The central purpose of the consultation was to examine the broad range of civil rights issues growing out of the crisis confronting young African American men in the nation's inner cities. The consultation spotlighted those factors that directly contribute to the disproportionate numbers of these young men who struggle to survive at home, in school, in the marketplace, and in "the streets." This struggle is inherently demonstrated by their rates of morbidity, unemployment, underemployment, incarceration, and last-place ranking on many measures of educational performance and attainment. The consultation offered the Commission an opportunity to hear from selected experts about the papers they submitted to the Commission on the causes and consequences of this crisis with a specific focus on criminal justice, education, employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, and health care issues. The consultation also featured a prominent array of knowledgeable federal and local officials, recognized leaders in the civil rights, human rights, religious, and law enforcement communities, and a number of young African American men and their local community advocates. The Commission plans to build upon this consultation by considering sound solutions to address the lingering problems described by the consultation participants.

This publication compiles all papers submitted by the selected experts. A transcript of the consultation proceedings is published as a second volume. It contains a rich record of thorough analyses and insightful recommendations to address this compelling crisis.

PANEL

Criminal Justice

The Need for Innovative Approaches to Meet the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Needs of Inner-City African American Male Youth Involved with the Juvenile Justice System*

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Introduction

There is a poignant need to develop innovative ways to address the substance abuse and mental health needs of inner-city African American male youth involved in the juvenile justice system. For a variety of reasons discussed in this paper, there are formidable challenges facing these youths' healthy development in the communities in which they live; and, for many youth lead to substance abuse and mental health problems for which there are few services. These experiences, coupled with the differential impact of the implementation of various laws, increase the likelihood of their initial involvement with the juvenile justice system. Once in the juvenile justice system, a number of organizational and institutional policies, practices, and procedures, and limited treatment and after-care resources, foster these youths' overrepresentation in the various components of the system. These complex set of factors have led to a tragic cycle of recidivism, with profound personal, family, community and societal costs. The issues raised by these dynamics touch on fundamental values of our society, and require creative strategies to reduce the tragic loss of a generation of youth

from a meaningful participation in U.S. society. Drawing upon a broad range of existing data, this paper: (1) reviews these experiences and (2) recommends policies and intervention strategies to engage and remediate the substance abuse and mental health problems presented by these youth.

Socio-Environmental Challenges Facing These Youth and Their Families

In order to understand the prevalence and nature of substance abuse and mental health needs of African American male youth involved in the justice system, it is necessary to gain insight into the generating conditions for these problems; in particular, the socio-environmental circumstances in which many of these youth and their families live. A review of the extensive literature on this topic reveals a situation of social and economic stress, weak community infrastructures, and limited support services— aggravated by the little influence community residents often have on the political process and public policy.

About 20 percent of children in the U.S. live below the poverty level; and, among the chronically poor, 48 percent are under the age of 18 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1995a). African American youth are overrepresented in this group (42 percent) (Lewit, 1993). Poverty is particularly acute in the inner city and is associated with other risk factors, such as low rates of academic achievement, and high rates of school dropout, teen pregnancy, poor health, hunger, substance abuse and delinquency (Gibbs, 1988; Dreyfoos, 1990; Huston, 1991; Knitzer & Aber, 1995; also see: Buckner and Bassuk, 1997). These conditions of life produce impediments to the devel-

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opment of a sense of community, making large numbers of youngsters witness to and victimized by various aspects of their environment. For example, Earls and his associates (1998) found among the 800, 9-, 12-, and 15-year-old children they interviewed in 80 neighborhoods in Chicago, that these youths' exposure to violence was sizable and increased with their age (heard gunfire: 64 percent, 76 percent, and 85 percent; saw someone attacked with a knife: 8 percent, 14 percent, and 24 percent; saw someone shot: 8 percent, 11 percent and 21 percent).

Not surprisingly, African Americans living in urban areas are more likely than whites to feel crime is a major problem in their neighborhoods and want to move (DeFrances & Smith, 1998). These perceptions are related to the higher rates of victimization, particularly from crimes of violence, youth and adults experience in these areas. Youth are particularly vulnerable to victimization. It is by now well established that the vulnerability to violent crime victimization varies across the age range, with young people being overrepresented in these figures. Overall, while persons 12 to 24 years of age account for 22 percent of the U.S. population, they represent 35 percent of the murder victims and 49 percent of the victims of violent crime. These violent victimization rates are highest among African American youth (Perkins, 1997) and remain a significant public health problem. Between 1973 and 1992 the rate of violent victimizations among young African American males grew some 25 percent; and in 1992 showed an increased prevalence for African American males aged 12 to 15 (1 violent crime per 14 persons), 16 to 19 (1 per 6 persons), and 20 to 24 (1 per 8 persons) (Bastian & Taylor, 1994). The picture for homicides was even more grim, with African American males aged 12 to 24 being nearly 14 times more likely to be homicide victims (67.5 per 100,000) than members of the general population.

The pressures of life in the inner city lead to a reduced sense of investment in, and a high sense of alienation from, mainstream society. Not surprisingly, there is a higher rate of prevalence and acceptance of (not necessarily approval for) drug taking and other delinquent/criminal behavior. A number of illicit economies develop in these areas and serve as a source of income (Dembo, Hughes et al., 1993; Dembo et al., 1994; Inciardi, Horowitz & Pot-

tieger, 1993). For all too many youth, drug dealing is a response to the financial pressures they and their families are experiencing (Whitehead et al., 1994). For many youths it provides a sense of self-esteem and a feeling of achievement involved in having an occupation or career (Brunswick & Rier, 1995). At the same time, involvement in the drug trade brings considerable risks (Stanton & Galbraith, 1994): exposure to violence (Goldstein, 1985)—particularly gun violence (Blumstein, 1996), personal involvement in drug use (Dembo, Williams, Wothke et al., 1990), and "economic addiction" to the comparatively high income derived from drug trafficking (Dembo, Hughes et al., 1993). Further, the implementation of various drug laws, particularly those relating to crack cocaine, result in an increased risk of arrest, incarceration and deeper involvement in the justice system (Mauer & Huling, 1995). It is also important to note that many African American male youth at risk of drug involvement and delinquency/crime in various urban settings possess personal or social characteristics which provide them with resilience to involvement in these behaviors (see, for example, Werner & Smith, 1982). However, many youth succumb to the pressures to become involved in these "deviant" behaviors and reduce their options for a socially productive role in mainstream U.S. society as a consequence of involvement with the justice system, failure in school, and limited work skills. Tragically, their families, which tend to be mother headed, of low income, and often beset by serious problems of their own, often lack the resources to have these youths' problems addressed effectively and sufficiently early to reduce their deepening involvement in the legal system.

Problems among Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Many youths entering the juvenile justice system are experiencing multiple personal, educational, and family problems (Dembo, Turner, Schmeidler, Chin Sue, Borden & Manning, 1996). Among the problems most consistently reported by researchers are: *physical abuse* (Dembo, Williams, Berry, Getreu, Washburn, Wish, Schmeidler & Dertke, 1988), *sexual victimization* (Mouzakitis, 1981; Dembo, Williams, La Voie, Berry, Getreu, Wish, Schmeidler &

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Washburn, 1989), *poor emotional/psychological functioning* (Teplin & Swartz, 1989; Dembo, Williams, Berry, Getreu, Washburn, Wish, & Schmeidler, 1990), *poor educational functioning* (Dembo, Williams, Schmeidler & Howitt, 1991) and *alcohol and other drug use* (U.S. Department of Justice, 1983a,b; Dembo, Williams, Wish & Schmeidler, 1990). Many of these youths' difficulties can be traced to family alcohol/other drug use, mental health, or crime problems which began when they were young (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980; Dembo, Williams, Wothke, Schmeidler & Brown, 1992). Further, it is increasingly being realized that these youths, particularly minority and inner city youths, are at high risk of being infected by or transmitting the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) via injecting drugs or crack cocaine-driven sexual activity involving multiple partners (Inciardi & Pottieger, 1991). Wish et al. (1992) have identified persons having contact with the justice system as an important HIV/AIDS risk-reduction target group.

For many of the reasons discussed earlier, these problems are aggravated by the psychosocial strain experienced by many inner-city African American male youth and increase their risk for future health problems, drug use, and delinquency/crime.

Table 1
Percent of White and African American Male Youth Found to be Hair Test Positive for Marijuana and Cocaine and Claiming to Have Received Drug Treatment

	White males	African American males
Positive on marijuana	37.7% (26/69)	31.0% (9/29)
Marijuana positive youths claiming to have had any drug treatment	7.7% (2/26)	0% (0/9)
Positive on cocaine	14.5% (11/76)	43.2% (16/37)
Cocaine positive youths claiming to have had any drug treatment	36.4% (4/11)	6.3% (1/16)

Particularly troubling are the African American male youths' involvement in drug use coupled with their limited involvement in treatment/intervention services. Telling data documenting this point are presented in table 1, which presents selected information on white and African American male youths processed at the Hillsborough County Juvenile Assessment Center in Tampa, Florida, who enrolled in a NIDA-funded Youth Support Project (discussed later) between September 1, 1994, and December 31, 1996.

As the data dramatically document, the African American males report much less involvement in drug treatment, than their white counterparts—even though their drug positive rate for cocaine is 3 times higher and they have a similar one-third positive rate for marijuana. The situation for mental health services is not much better. Although the emotional/psychological functioning of the African American and white male youths was not significantly different, the African American youths were again less likely (but not dramatically so) to report having received any mental health services in the past (17 percent vs. 12 percent, respectively).

Additional information on the substance use and mental health problems experienced by African American male youths is available from Dr. Linda A. Teplin's important study of youths entering the Cook County, Illinois, detention center. Preliminary data from this study, made available to the authors to present in this report, indicate that African American male youths had the highest urine test positive rate for any drug (70 percent), compared to Hispanic males (65 percent) and non-Hispanic white males (62 percent). African American male youth also had higher rates of DSM-IIIR diagnoses for affective disorders (e.g., major depression, mania) and anxiety disorders (e.g., separation anxiety disorder), than non-Hispanic males (18 percent vs. 15 percent and 20 percent vs. 15 percent, respectively).

African American juveniles are overrepresented (compared to their share of the juvenile population) at every decision point of the juvenile justice system process (e.g., arrest, secure detention, secure corrections, transfer to adult court) in most of the states participating in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's recent study of disproportionate con-

finement of minority juveniles (Community Research Associates, 1997). Further, the overrepresentation of these youth increases from decision point to decision point in the juvenile justice system. The Sentencing Project estimated that in 1995, 32 percent of African American males between 20 and 29 years of age were under criminal justice control (in prison, jail, on probation or parole) (Mauer & Huling, 1995). These figures are to some degree related to their higher risk of involvement in drug use and delinquency/crime, but also to a sizable extent consequent to the operation of various components of the juvenile justice system. Troubling as this situation is now, the future challenges are even more unsettling.

What We Are Likely to Face in the Future

Even though these issues are challenging enough, the portent for the future is more troubling. Although evidence indicates juvenile violent crime has declined in recent years, overall juvenile crime continues to grow (Butts & Harrell, 1998). This increase, together with a higher rate of law violation referrals to juvenile court (a 57 percent increase between 1980 and 1995), has resulted in an increasingly clogged and backlogged juvenile court system and less involvement in case deliberation. Relatedly, there is indication that younger offenders are entering the juvenile system in increasing numbers and bringing with them a number of serious, interrelated problems (Dembo, Schmeidler et al., in press). These issues, together with demographic projections indicating a substantial increase in the U.S. youth population in the next 10 to 20 years, threaten to create an increasingly overburdened justice system and a growing juvenile crime problem. Further, not only will the juvenile population increase, it will become more racially and ethnically diverse (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995).

In addition, the rate of juvenile transfers to adult court will continue to grow, and there is legislative momentum in many states to merge the juvenile and adult criminal courts (Butts & Harrell, 1998). However, we believe that these efforts will not respond effectively to the challenges presented by a younger and more troubled offender population—challenges which will be made more poignant by policy, behavioral, and socioeconomic changes that will continue to occur in the U.S.

A recent study by Butts & Snyder (1997), using data from Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Juvenile Court data, documents several disturbing trends. In comparing data on juvenile arrests in 1980 to 1995, the authors found violent crime arrests grew by 94 percent for youth under the age of 15, compared to 47 percent for older youth. Further, between 1985 and 1994, juvenile court cases involving offenders 12 years of age or younger increased by 32 percent. Butts & Snyder (1997:1) assert that "offenders under age 15 represent the leading edge of the juvenile crime problem, and their numbers have been growing."

Who are these troubled youngsters? What kinds of problems do they present? What are the implications of these youths' problems for law enforcement, the courts, juvenile justice, and service delivery? Centralized intake facilities for arrested youths, such as the Hillsborough County Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), are strategically poised to illuminate these concerns. In addition to demographic and offense information, the JAC completes a preliminary screening on processed youths, which, among other things, identifies potential problems they may be experiencing (Dembo & Brown, 1994). A recent study completed by Dembo, Schmeidler et al. (in press) compared the sociodemographic, abuse, offense history and psychosocial functioning characteristics of 856 8- to 12-year-olds, 2,512 13- and 14-year-olds and 6,215 15- to 20-year-old youths at their first admission to the JAC between May 5, 1993, and December 31, 1995. These 9,583 youths represented 99 percent of the total 9,596 youths processed, and they accounted for about 20,000 total JAC admissions during this period. Most of the 9,583 youths processed at the assessment center were male (75 percent) and averaged 15 years of age. Although African American youths constitute 13 percent of the Hillsborough County juvenile population, they accounted for 44 percent of the arrested youths processed at JAC. Fourteen percent of the youths were Hispanic (mainly Mexican, Colombian, and Puerto Rican). Only 18 percent of the youths reported they lived with both their biological parents; and an additional 40 percent indicated they resided with their mother only or their mother and another adult (13 percent). Despite high rates of substance abuse and mental health problems indicated by administrating the Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenag-

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ers (POSIT) (Rahdert, 1991), only 2 percent of the youth indicated they were currently receiving, and 15 percent claimed they previously received, mental health care. Further, only 4 percent of the 9,583 youths reported receiving substance abuse treatment in the past; and less than 1 percent indicated they were currently receiving such services.

Additional analyses identified the 8- to 12-year-olds as a particularly troubled group who will present increasing demands on the public service and justice systems as they grow older. After controlling for the effects of age, analyses of covariance showed that: (1) younger aged youths (8 to 12 years) had a relatively severe lag between their actual age and school grade (indicating serious educational problems), and (2) younger aged youths were more often African American, living with their mother only, and from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds than older aged youths. In contrast, younger aged youths had relatively mild problems and older aged youths relatively more severe problems in self-reported lifetime frequency of alcohol and marijuana use; delinquency referral history for violence, property, and public disorder offenses; arrest charges for property felonies or misdemeanors at JAC entry; and substance abuse treatment history. Younger aged youths, who have had less time to develop and establish delinquent behaviors, are less likely to have these characteristics. In contrast, older aged youths, who typically exhibit delinquent behaviors, do not appear to have these other, nondelinquency characteristics. These findings, together with the experience that these youths and their families are less likely to access mental health (Cocozza, 1992), substance abuse, and other services than other youths (Cunningham & Freiman, 1996), raise poignant issues for our society.

What Shall We Do?

As we have discussed, all indications are that more youths, who have high needs for various services, will be entering the justice system in the next decade. They will bring with them significant dependency and delinquency histories. The pressures that will be placed on juvenile justice agencies will be enormous. More public resources will be needed to deal with these troubled youths as they grow older. Many of these youths will be at a crisis point in their lives and at considerable risk of continuing their involvement in crime and entering the adult criminal justice system.

Innovative Approaches Needed for African American Youth

There is a critical need to develop and rigorously test innovative strategies to improve the availability, accessibility, service linkage, and delivery of services to high-risk youths and their families. There is a serious lack of screening/assessment and treatment services in most communities, and large percentages of referred youths do not connect with existing services. All too often they fall through the cracks of the service delivery system. Tragically, many of these youths are only able to obtain services as a result of their involvement in the justice system, which in most jurisdictions is overburdened and underresourced. However, none of the expected benefits of treatment can occur unless youths participate and become involved in care for a sufficient period of time.

Youths entering the juvenile justice system are a particularly difficult group to work with as a result of their exposure to the personal, socioeconomic, environmental, and institutional factors we have reviewed. Additional difficulties they present are a result of the failure of juvenile justice and community-based services to respond to their needs, and those of their families, in a sensitive, timely, and effective manner. Many African American youth and their families have developed an experienced-based cynicism regarding claims by various community-based service providers, including juvenile justice personnel, promising to involve them in quality services:

- Too often do these youths and their families lack the resources to pay for the services they may need.
- In far too many cases, the waiting list for services is months long.
- Too often they are made promises by workers with huge caseloads, who are unable to fulfill them in a timely manner.
- Too often multiple service providers work with the youth and his family, making it difficult to provide effective interventions.

- Too often they are involved in services which are of inferior quality.
- Too often the services they are referred to are at a considerable distance from their neighborhoods, limiting the ability of families with limited resources to access them.
- Too often are these youth placed in costly, juvenile justice residential facilities that are geographically distant from their families seriously limiting their family members' ability to visit the youth or to participate in the treatment process. In the case of community-based services, many services do not include family members in the intake process, diagnostic sessions, and in treatment.
- Too often is the intervention programming at these residential facilities dominated by security interests, and has limited resources.
- Too often the service personnel they are referred to do not have sufficient cultural sensitivity to effectively engage these youths and their families in treatment.
- Too often are limited, if any, after-care services provided to these youth.

As a result of these experience, African American families have traditionally had lower substance abuse and mental health treatment service utilization rates (program entry, engagement, and duration), than Anglo families (Espada, 1979; Tolan et al., 1988; Sirles, 1990).

We recommend improving each of the above listed areas of deficiencies. More resources need to be provided to community-based and juvenile justice treatment programs. Greater cultural diversity among program staff is needed, which can be achieved through continual training and education in cultural competency. In addition, residential programs need to be less dominated by security concerns, and more focused on treatment—both during incarceration and upon release to the community. Further, we urge that a large-scale effort be launched to identify the substance abuse, mental health, and related problems of African American male youth at the earliest decision point in the juvenile justice process, and to respond to them as soon as possible by involving them and their families in effective community-based intervention services. And, we recommend an alignment of the juvenile justice system to make it possible for African American male youth to be more effectively served. To this end, we urge the increased avail-

ability of Juvenile Assessment Centers (Dembo & Brown, 1994) and of quality diversion programs. Such an initiative will reduce the flow of these youths further into the juvenile justice system and help reduce the enormous cost to our society of crime, drug abuse and mental illness (Dembo, Williams et al., 1993; Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1997).

Public Policy—Juvenile Justice Agency Recommendations:

Because juvenile justice system services, whether community-based or institutional, take place within a public policy-organizational context, any recommendations for innovative services need to reflect an appreciation of the multilevel factors that relate to them. Hence on a public policy-organizational level, for African American male youth entering the juvenile justice system, we urge: (1) the development of community-based alternatives to secure detention and residential program placement; (2) a more creative consideration of dispositional alternatives for these youth; and (3) a review of juvenile justice statutes, policies, and procedures in various jurisdictions with a view to making needed revisions to reduce racial and ethnic disparity in the system. Serious consideration should be given to developing a special unit within various public defender's offices to focus on African American male youth as they are processed in juvenile court. Each state receiving block grant funds for juvenile justice services should have a culturally diverse oversight committee to review policies, practices, procedures, resource issues, infrastructure problems, and interagency collaboration difficulties in various communities as they pertain to minority youth, and be empowered to make binding recommendations to justice system agencies to make needed changes to create equity within the system. Funding for maintaining or enhancing various juvenile justice services should be linked to these changes. An ongoing, national commitment to help African American and other troubled youths is needed to prevent and/or reduce their substance use, consequences of use, mental health, and related problems, including involvement in delinquent/criminal behavior. OJJDP is to be applauded for its current efforts in this area.

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Service Delivery Recommendations:

We also urge that the above discussed improvements be embedded within an **integrated service delivery system** consisting of at least five interrelated activities.

Preliminary Screening: To identify potential alcohol/other drug use, mental health, and related problems among youths having contact with the justice system.

In-depth and Broad Assessment: To document the nature and seriousness of alcohol, other drug, mental health, and related problems; and, if indicated, develop an intervention or treatment plan. Unfortunately, quality assessments of youths entering in the juvenile justice system remain the exception rather than the rule.

As noted earlier, we recommend that, wherever possible, communities should establish centralized receiving facilities. Such units can serve as focal points for processing and assessing troubled youths, providing intervention, and linking them and their families with needed services. Centralized intake facilities, such as Juvenile Assessment Centers, can improve the availability, accessibility, and delivery of services to "high-risk" youths and their families. These centers can improve the linkages and coordination among various community agencies serving these youth—including law enforcement, the courts, schools, human service agencies, and treatment programs. Such an effort can help reduce duplication of services and barriers to treatment and respond to these youths in a more comprehensive manner.

Intervention/Treatment: Treatment for drug dependence and related psychosocial difficulties has been found effective in reducing criminality and improving psychosocial functioning among juveniles and adults, although much more is currently known about effective interventions with adults (Wexler, Falkin et al., 1988; Hubbard, Marston et al., 1989; Gerstein & Harwood, 1990; Gerstein, Johnson et al., 1994; Inciardi, Martin et al., 1997). A survey of the youth alcohol/other drug abuse treatment literature, completed by Catalano, Hawkins et al. (1990–91) indicated that: (1) some treatment is better than no treatment, (2) post-treatment relapse rates are high (35 percent to 85 percent—depending on the definition of relapse), and (3) comparisons of treatment methods have not consistently demonstrated the superiority of one

method over another. Positive effects of treatment have also been found in the meta-analyses completed by Weisz, Weiss et al. (1995) and Lipsey & Wilson (1998). For example, Lipsey & Wilson (1998) completed a meta-analysis of over 200 studies of interventions involving serious delinquents. Although the limited number of studies of each treatment type lead the authors to urge caution in interpreting the relative effectiveness of the various treatment types, several general observations can be drawn from their analyses. Treatment effects were somewhat higher for noninstitutionalized offenders, compared to institutionalized offenders. For both noninstitutionalized and institutionalized offenders impressive overall effects were found for the following programs: interpersonal skill development, behavioral programs, community residential programs, and multiple services. Further, the magnitude of effects on recidivism for the best treatments was appreciable.

Multisystemic therapy (Henggler, Bourdin et al., 1991; Henggeler et al., 1994; Henggeler, Pickrel et al., 1996; Henggeler, 1997) has been found to be effective with noninstitutionalized drug-using offenders and youth with mental health problems. At the same time, programs that are based on social learning theories, like Therapeutic Communities (TCs), seem more effective among drug-involved persons who have developed their drug use lifestyle over a period of years (Wexler & Williams, 1986; DeLeon & Ziegenfuss, 1986). TCs seem particularly effective for youths and young adults of the urban underclass (Wexler & Williams, 1986), who have been overrepresented in the recent, dramatic growth in the number of persons in the justice system.

In regard to substance abuse intervention services, repeated interventions over a protracted period may be needed to produce successful outcomes (Pickens, Leukefeld et al., 1991). These programs need to reflect the following distinguishing characteristics of adolescent substance abusers: (1) being more fascinated with the drug-related lifestyle and less fatigued with failure and the negative social consequences of their drug use, (2) having an unrealistic sense of their invulnerability and (3) requiring a greater emphasis on addressing educational needs and parental/family support in the treatment process (DeLeon & Deitch, 1987). Improvements in African American male youths'

vocational and educational skills may be especially indicated, as their involvement in drug trafficking and later drug use is often a result of environmental-social, rather than disturbed personality, factors (Dembo & Shern, 1982).

Hence, the services delivered to African American male youth need to be holistic, treating their drug use or mental health issues as symptomatic of the often multiple problems they are experiencing; and to the maximum degree possible, these services should be community based and in-home. The Youth Support Project in Tampa, Florida, a service delivery study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, is an innovative service of this kind. The Youth Support Project is using a systems and structural approach called the Family Empowerment Intervention to improve the functioning of families of youth who were arrested on misdemeanor or felony charges and processed at the Hillsborough County Juvenile Assessment Center. To our knowledge, the Youth Support Project is the largest clinical trial of its type ever undertaken involving this target group. Interim evaluations of the intervention in regard to recidivism and psychosocial functioning over time have been promising (Dembo, Shemwell et al., 1998; Dembo, Ramirez-Garnica et al., in press; Dembo, Shemwell, Pacheco et al., in press).

Intervention services are delivered by field consultants, who visit families to work on the following goals: (1) restore the family hierarchy (parents, children, etc.); (2) restructure boundaries between parents and children; (3) encourage parents to take greater responsibility for family functioning; (4) increase family structure through implementation of rules and consequences; (5) enhance parenting skills; (6) have parents set limits, expectations and rules that increase the likelihood the target youth's behavior will improve; (7) improve communication skills among all family members; (8) improve problem-solving skills, particularly in the target youth; and (9) where needed, connect the family to other systems (e.g., school, church, community activities).

A distinctive feature of this intervention is that the families are served by personnel who are not trained therapists—although they are trained by, and perform their work under the direction of, licensed clinicians. The choice of paraprofessionals is based on a cost-effectiveness argument, and is supported by experimental research indicating that, at least for some treatments, paraprofessionals produce outcomes that are better than those under control conditions, and similar to those involving professional therapists (Christensen & Jacobson, 1994; Weisz, Weiss, Han, Granger & Morton, 1995). Further, by requiring less previous therapy training, the Family Empowerment Intervention, if final outcome analyses document its effectiveness, is expected to be highly attractive to agencies providing services to juvenile offenders, which often operate with financial constraints.

After care: After-care services are a vital link in the service continuum. While seriously needed, these services are infrequent, underdeveloped, and tend to be narrowly focused on single problem areas. Yet, they serve all-too-often heterogeneous, multiproblem populations. For example, it is counterproductive to treat youths in residential settings, only to return them to environments which supported their problem behavior in the past, without a support system to assist them in maintaining their treatment gains.

In recent years, public responses to "high-risk" youths' troubled behavior in the community have been increasingly punitive, emphasizing placement in large and frequently crowded residential facilities. However, evidence has been accumulating that these expensive "control" programs serve primarily to isolate youths from the general society, stigmatize them, are ineffective, and have no significant impact on recidivism. Establishing effective community-based service systems should remain a top priority.

Long-term Continuity of Service: Juvenile justice agencies tend to have an interest in troubled youth that is episodic. Interest centers around the behavioral reason for the youth's contact with the system and the judicially imposed consequences of that behavior. Once the period of involvement in a program or being under supervision ends, agency interest in the youth's case ceases—unless he comes to the attention of a juvenile justice agency again.

In contrast to this public policy, as noted earlier, the troubled behavior of many youths can be traced to their early years; and their problems become more serious as they proceed through adolescence. The delinquent behavior of these youths reflects a chronic involvement in personally and socially damaging activities. Our policies and service implementation need to reflect a

developmental perspective on these issues. Serious consideration needs to be given to providing long-term assistance to troubled youths. Service delivery systems in the United States, and associated support services, need to accommodate themselves to the often prolonged nature or processes of many of these youths' difficulties.

Conclusion

Summarizing the highlights of our discussion: (1) there is a need to develop effective and cost-efficient community-based strategies to assist African American male youth with substance abuse or mental health and related problems, and their families; (2) these services need to be socio-culturally informed (with services being brought to families in-home whenever possible), multipurpose, and holistic (e.g., not focused on one problem at a time), and with sufficient duration and intensity to produce effective results; (3) there is a need to identify and to develop strategies and procedures to overcome the service utilization barriers that prevent their involvement in needed care in the communities in which they live; (4) additional, and long-term commitment of, resources are needed to strengthen service delivery infrastructures to provide services of sufficient quality to make a constructive difference in the lives of the families who use these services; (5) political and policymaker support are needed to maintain consistency of legislative backing in building and funding these infrastructures. The issues at stake are vital to the quality of life in society and require long-term political reinforcement. They provide continuing challenges to efforts to meet effectively the needs of African American male youth and families who are experiencing substance abuse, mental health and related problems. They also present a wonderful opportunity to reduce their suffering and contribute to their individual and social betterment.

These service delivery and policy issues belong on the national agenda. Policymakers have not always been informed regarding the service needs of high-risk families, the difficulties involved in providing quality services to them, and the existence of effective services to meet their needs. Service providers have experienced funding cuts in recent years, reducing their ability to respond to community service needs. Finally, educational institutions need to incorporate these experiences and knowledge into curricula, training new educators, trainers, and professional and nonprofessional service providers so the field of service delivery can mature. The issues are clear. Hopefully, we have the political will to resolve them in a manner that will do honor to the highest ideals of our nation and to improve the quality of its life by creating a more effective and restorative justice system (Bazemore & Terry, 1997). Much work remains to be done.

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Prisons as a Growth Industry in Rural America: An Exploratory Discussion of the Effects on Young African American Men in the Inner Cities

Tracy L. Huling

Introduction

In 1995, The Sentencing Project released a report with a central finding that made headlines across our nation: On any given day in the United States, one out of every three young black men 20 to 29 years old is under the control of the criminal justice system—in prison, or jail, or on probation or parole.[1] In 1997, the Bureau of Justice Statistics published a study telling us that at current levels of imprisonment, a black boy born today has a 28 percent chance of serving a federal or state prison term at some point in his lifetime.[2]

The dimensions of this American crisis are broad and still unfolding. Most recently, our attention has been drawn by reform groups and the media to two profoundly disturbing facts: 1) There are more African American males in our prisons and jails than in our universities,[3] and 2) Three in 10 of the next generation of black men will lose the right to vote at some point in their lifetime if current rates of incarceration continue.[4]

My purpose in this paper is to explore the potential intersections between this crisis of young African American males under criminal justice control and another major trend that has been the subject of less national media attention and little reliable research: the use of prisons as a conscious economic development strategy for depressed communities. This is taking place first and foremost in "non-metro" rural communities and small towns in the United States, forging a fateful, symbiotic bond between depressed communities in urban and rural America.

In 1996, I began research for a documentary film, *Yes, In My Backyard,* profiling one farming-community-turned-prison-town in upstate New York.[5] This first documentary portrait of a prison town examines the small town of Coxsackie, New York, in rural Greene County. Once a thriving farm community with a solid base of small manufacturing and a busy main street on the banks of the Hudson River, today, the community of Coxsackie and Greene County in general are struggling to recover from the effects of the economic restructuring that devastated rural America in the 1980s. Coxsackie is now host to state prisons which are the largest employers in the county.

Coxsackie Correctional Facility, built on part of the old Bronck farm during the Depression, opened up in 1935 as the New York State Vocational Institution—a reform school for wayward youth. Now a maximum security prison, Coxsackie Correctional Facility houses over 1,000 mostly black and Hispanic males under the age of 21 from New York City. Coxsackie Correctional Facility employs almost 600 people, the majority of whom are drawn from Greene and surrounding counties. Nearly 400 of Coxsackie's employees are security staff, including approximately 340 correctional officers. The vast majority are white.

In 1983, a second medium-security state prison was built in the community of Coxsackie—Greene Correctional Facility—on land adjacent to the first prison. The first of the new "campus-style" prisons with "dormitories" in New York, Greene Correctional Facility was originally built for 500 inmates. While it was being built, it was decided to add 250 more beds. About 4 years later, a second compound was opened, which brought capacity up to 1,630. Close to 1,000 of the 1,630 male inmates are under 21. In 1997, a 200-bed special housing unit

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was added. Today, the two prisons employ about 1,200 people and house approximately 3,000 mostly young, mostly minority, men from New York City. These young men make up nearly half of the population (approximately 7,000) of the town and village of Coxsackie.

Making *Yes, In My Backyard* provided me with an in-depth and unusually personal introduction to a national and underexamined phenomenon with potentially far-reaching consequences for young African American men, for inner-city and rural communities, and for our nation. In this paper I will review existing information documenting the increasing use of prisons as economic development for depressed rural communities across the United States. I will discuss the nature and evolution of problems in rural America which I believe are fueling the transformation of heartland communities into penal colonies, and I will consider the potential consequences of this for young African American men in the inner city and their communities.

Prisons: A Rural Growth Industry

"Before I even started the job, they was always telling me, the worse things get out in the world, the better things get in jail. You'll always have a job."

> Ted Flegel, farmer and retired prison guard, in *Yes, In My Backyard*

For many years, prison officials faced the NIMBY problem: when communities heard about plans for a new prison, the outcry was "Not In My Backyard!" Times have changed. Communities suffering from declines in farming, mining, timber-work, and manufacturing are now begging for prisons to be built in their backyards. The acquisition of prisons as a conscious economic development strategy for depressed rural communities and small towns has become widespread.

Since 1980, the majority of new prisons built to accommodate the expanding U.S. prison population have been placed in non-metro areas with the result that the majority of federal and state inmates are now housed in rural America.[6] By contrast, prior to 1980, only 38 percent of prisoners were in prisons in rural communities and small towns.[7] Between 1990 and 1997, 203 correctional facilities (20 federal) were built in rural and small town communities. The leading

states for new non-metro prisons—public and private—are Texas (41), Georgia (20), Florida (17), and North Carolina (15). There are about 177,000 inmates in these new facilities, and according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in at least 60 rural U.S. counties the shift from population loss in the 1980s to population gain in the 1990s can be fully or partly explained by increases in prisoner populations. The new non-metro prisons have about 55,000 employees, a major addition to the overall rural economy. The commuting field for employees typically extends to several surrounding counties. Thus, there may be as many as a third of all non-metro counties sharing in the direct job growth just from the facilities built during this decade.[8] Non-metro prisons have about 275 employees on average, or 31 for each 100 new inmates. These ratios vary considerably by state and type of prison. For example, New York's post-1980 non-metro prisons average 49 employees per 100 inmates, whereas California's average only 29 per 100. Minimum-security facilities tend to be more lightly staffed.[9]

Calvin Beale, a senior demographer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, describes rural prisons as a "classic export industry," providing a service for the outside community. Unlike some other rural services, such as recreation, the employment is year-round. The salaries vary but are at minimum adequate, and employee insurance and other benefits are typically good compared to other rural and small town work.[10]

Rural Decline as the Context for Prison Industries

Many rural and small town communities actively bid for prisons, but not all are eager to acquire them or to add to them. The primary reason for acceptance is economic need.[11] To understand the context of prison development in rural America it is useful to go back in time. In the mid-'80s, the farm crisis rose to the forefront of national attention, featured in the nightly news, television documentaries, commercial films, and print journalism. It was a gripping story, with homicides in the heartland and grim prophecies of "death of the family farm." In fact, the deep and pervasive impact of the decade of the 1980s on rural America goes far beyond the farm crisis and is not well understood by most Americans. The impact of the farm crisis was financially devastating to some communities in the Midwest and broadly assaulted rural identity and self-

image because of the importance of farming to the culture and social life of rural America. The loss of factories, however, had a much more pervasive and deeper impact on the economies of rural communities in the 1980s than the loss of farms.[12]

The downsizing and loss of rural manufacturing facilities was responsible for much greater losses in employment, retail trade, and real estate values and produced a much greater strain on community service capacities. Unlike the farm situation, where the demise of a few farms may be balanced by the expansion of those remaining, when a rural factory cuts back or closes down, other plants in the community, subject to the same forces of international competition and external ownership, may not be in a position to expand, even though extra trained labor may be available. Even where a factory closing was followed by an opening of another manufacturing firm, laid-off workers who found new factory jobs suffered a substantial cut in pay not only because they were starting over, shorn of the seniority and raises they'd earned over the years and with little bargaining power in an employer's market, but also because the entire pay scale in the new manufacturing jobs may be significantly lower than in the old firms. From management's point of view, cutting labor costs has been the essential strategy for meeting foreign competition. The high wages that rural factories had been paying were what they sought to escape in moving overseas. The few plants that now move into rural areas from, or instead of, urban locations, have done so because they anticipate lower operating costs, particularly labor costs. Displaced rural workers have thus been over a barrel in that they have had to accept— indeed to entice—new smaller manufacturing firms with reduced wage rates and inadequate benefit packages because, for both the worker and the rural community, there was nothing else available.[13]

Retaining or attracting the better paying, stable manufacturing firms is, for many rural communities, no longer an option. The great transformation in manufacturing employment in rural communities was hardly different in nature than what was happening in major urban areas of the nation, but its consequences were often different because many rural areas were more dependent on manufacturing than were urban communities and were less able to com-

pensate for manufacturing losses by moving into the service sector. Also, the consequences are more serious in rural areas because of the scale factor: The loss of a few mid-sized plants in a county of 50,000 people, or just one plant in a community of 1,500, is far more devastating on workers and a community than the same closures would have in a metropolitan area.[14]

While many new jobs have been created in rural areas, the numbers of these jobs are not nearly important as the types of jobs. Of the new jobs created, a large fraction are low-paying, part time, provide no health benefits, and are temporary or insecure. Pick up a local paper in a rural community: the ads are mostly for part-time jobs or for jobs with wages that are inadequate. Even if a worker were to take two half-time service sector jobs, such as those at local fast-food restaurants or supermarkets, both together do not equal a single, full-time job that was lost from the local manufacturing plant, as each of the part-time jobs offers lower hourly wages than the full-time job, neither offers benefits, and both may be temporary or insecure. This shortfall in wages, benefits, and security between "old employment" and "new employment" is not of course a uniquely rural phenomenon. However, as with plant closings, it hits rural people harder because the differential between the jobs they have lost and the substitutes they can find is particularly large and because there is a restricted pool of jobs for rural workers.[15] The consequences are such that in rural areas, even families with one or more members in the work force are more likely than urban families to fall below the poverty line, and the poverty rate among rural families who work increased in the 1980s.[16]

Another important effect on rural communities of economic downturn is the loss of young people though out-migration. This is a serious concern of rural communities across the country. In 1988, the *Wall Street Journal* published a story on the out-migration problem, covering rural America from Maine to Montana.[17]

The cumulative impact of the changes that hit rural America in the 1980s left deep economic, social, and psychic wounds. This impact was summed up by former Secretary of Agriculture, Bob Bergland, as follows: "At the end of the decade, it is clear that the troubles of rural America have deeper roots than comparatively short-term crises such as drought and farm fore-

closures. The economic restructuring occurring in rural America in the 1980s has had dramatic social and economic consequences that are contributing to the decline of the quality of family and community life in rural areas."[18]

Prisons and Their "Host" Communities

Most of the research assessing prison impacts on communities is exploratory.[19] As well, existing studies examining prison impacts on communities have been criticized for lack of methodological rigor.[20] Nevertheless, review of those included in a 1992 volume of the journal *Crime & Delinquency*[21] suggests agreement on some issues important to this paper.

Community opposition to prison sitings used to be more widespread than it is today and based on three factors: fear, concerns over economic consequences, and "civic pride." The fear factor, revolving around potential escapees, higher community crime rates as a result of releasing prisoners into the host community, the migration of prisoner families into the host communities, and, more recently, the spread of diseases like HIV-AIDS beyond prison walls, has been shown to be grossly exaggerated. An occurrence of any one of these phenomena is rare, although disproportionate media coverage of such unusual occurrences has contributed to community misperceptions. The economic consequences raised by some citizens opposing prison sitings typically include: decline in property values; an increase in the community's tax burden as prisons do not pay property taxes; and inadequate reimbursement levels for locally provided services such as water, garbage disposal, sewage disposal, education, and law enforcement and court services. Research findings on such economic impacts is mixed, and many prison systems have now instituted ongoing reimbursement programs for locally provided services or one-time "impact funds" for prison expansion. "Civic pride" concerns include a variety of quality-of-life issues that reflect a community's conception of what an ideal community is or should be. Rural citizens have voiced a variety of doubts about the compatibility of "prison industries" with the rustic character, quiet lifestyle, and pristine landscape of many rural communities.[22] As well, "status and prestige" issues are often raised by people afraid that prisons or other industries identified as LULUs (locally unwanted land uses) such as toxic waste dumps, garbage incinerators, power plants, and airports will stigmatize a community, negatively affecting a community's identity in the eyes of the rest of the world as well as a community's perceptions of itself.[23]

"I'm advocating right now another prison, or at least additions to the existing prison . . . Because the more beds we have over there, the more inmate population, the more water they're going to use, and the more of our sewer services they're going to use and the more jobs are going to be needed . . . you politic for it—that's what you do."

Henry Rausch, mayor, Village of Coxsackie, New York, in *Yes, In My Backyard*

In the past, citizen opposition to prisons based on concerns sometimes referred to collectively as NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) was sufficient to block many proposed sitings, often after bitter conflicts expensive to both sides. However, public resistance is no longer so predictable, and it is now common for rural communities to compete for new prisons. Two major reasons for this change have been discussed in the existing research literature. First, as previously discussed, declining prosperity in rural communities and small towns has been such that many local officials now lobby state and federal officials for prisons. Second, prison officials have changed their siting practices in significant ways. Many prison systems now rely on a competitive bidding process for identifying potential prison locales.[24] For example, in 1996, 16 rural communities in upstate New York appeared on a list of towns asking for prisons maintained by the NYS Department of Corrections. In a statement which typifies those coming from local rural leadership across America, Robert Van Slyke, president of the Rome (New York) Area Chamber of Commerce, said, "We've had a substantial loss of various kinds of jobs. When we heard the governor had proposed three new maximum-security prisons, we asked whether Rome could be considered. With the current state of the economy, you have to look very seriously at something like this. I think we have a compelling economic case to make."[25]

In order to be considered "competitive" in the bidding wars for prisons, rural communities and small towns often offer financial assistance and concessions such as donated land, upgraded sewer and water systems, and housing subsidies.

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For example, in the all-out contest spurred by New York Governor George Pataki's 1996 proposal to build three new maximum-security prisons, Altamont, a small Adirondack town, set aside 100 acres of land to entice the state to put a prison there.[26] Antwerp, another small community in northern New York, applied for a $600,000 federal grant to rebuild their water-supply system to increase their chances of winning a state prison.[27]

With the rapid privatization of prisons, some local communities are getting into the prison business themselves, seeking private financing to build "spec" prisons in their backyards. Appleton, Minnesota, and Hinton, Oklahoma, were among the first towns taking matters into their own hands by building and operating prisons as economic development in the early '90s.[28] Others have followed. Jack Barrett, the mayor of Holdenville, a small town in Oklahoma which had lost both population and jobs as a result of the oil-bust in the 1980s, made the Oklahoma Department of Corrections an offer: We'll build you a prison, Barrett said. You give us the prisoners. True to his word, Barrett hooked up with Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison company in America, to manage his proposed prison, and investors forked over the $34 million the town needed for construction. In 1996, Holdenville opened a new 960-bed private prison and not only is it chock full of Oklahoma inmates but Steve Kaiser—the Oklahoma Department of Correction's chief of operations at the time of Barrett's original offer—is its warden.[29]

Despite a lack of research documenting long-term economic impacts of prisons on communities, residents representing business interests are most likely to give positive assessments of prison effects, and rural officials often rely on business leadership for guidance on prison development. In the upstate New York town of Romulus, Glen Cooke, the county's economic development director, was quoted as saying that economic development experts throughout the state consider correctional facilities to be positive contributors to local economies, providing good-paying jobs and benefits in communities where employment is scarce.[30]

Ordinary citizens however often take a different view. They are the most likely to view prisons and their community effects as more negative or neutral than positive.[31] Recognizing this,

prison officials repeatedly take steps to alter these views through a wide variety of public information and community relations efforts. It is common for local officials to sponsor town meetings where prison officials and their supporters are invited to extol the benefits of prisons to communities. When proposed prisons are on the table, local newspapers are filled with articles reporting grand claims for economic salvation and flyers flood into local coffeeshops, general stores, and mini-marts. The following statement by Tip Kindel, a spokesperson for the California Department of Corrections, is typical of a now widespread tendency among prison officials to defend prison expansion as an economic boon. "Prisons not only stabilize a local economy but can in fact rejuvenate it," he said. "There are no seasonal fluctuations, it is a nonpolluting industry, and in many circumstances it is virtually invisible . . . You've got people that are working there and spending their money there, so now these communities are able to have a Little League and all the kinds of activities that people want."[32]

Some recent accounts of prison-siting efforts suggest that prison "public relations" may be moving into a whole new arena. After losing a protracted battle in 1997 to locate a prison in the Adirondack Park, the New York State Department of Correctional Services (NYSDOCS) had to look elsewhere for a place to build a new 750-cell, double occupancy, maximum-security prison. Malone, a small town in Franklin County, took it and $10.8 million from NYSDOCS to expand and extend the local water and sewer system. Additional negotiations are ongoing regarding more monies for the town for other infrastructure improvements.[33] In Southeast, Washington, D.C., where a new federal prison has been proposed and met with both strong support and strong opposition, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the private prison company vying for the contract has reportedly offered to underwrite a $1 million loan fund for local minority business and make contributions to local youth programs. An offer by CCA to pay for the costs of keeping a now-closed Safeway grocery store open in the community was declined by Safeway. It is also reported that the prison company has offered contracts to several local entrepreneurs to supply prison-related goods and services. The list of other amenities offered to the community in exchange for its support of the prison includes the

opening of a vocational training institute next to the prison; home price guarantees (should the price of surrounding homes be deflated because of the prison); and criminal justice scholarships to the University of the District of Columbia.[34] CCA's reported offers in Washington echo reports of CCA tactics in other places: Judith Greene notes in a 1999 paper on the privatization of correctional services that in seeking a contract with the U.S. Virgin Islands, CCA offered the governor a $1 million revolving line of credit to assist local businesses and entrepreneurs in establishing contract opportunities with the company.[35]

Prisons as Economic Development: Consequences for Young African American Men in the Inner Cities

Prisons as a growth industry are dependent upon ever-increasing numbers of prisoners, and the United States provides ideal market conditions. Our nation spends more on prisons and incarcerates more people than any other industrialized country in the world. In the early 1970s, there were about 200,000 people locked up in correctional facilities in the United States. Now, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there are almost 2 million. Well over half of these people—1,158,956—are in state prisons. California, Texas, New York, and Florida have the largest state prisoner populations and Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and South Carolina have the highest rates of incarceration.[36]

Despite a decrease in crime rates, criminal justice spending has nearly doubled in real terms since the mid-1980s and today well over a third of that spending—$35.9 billion in 1995—is for the funding and administering of correctional facilities. Most of these costs are borne by state governments and go to build and maintain state prisons. Looking at criminal justice spending relative to the U.S. population, national per capita spending was $366 in 1995, a 69 percent real increase over 1983 per capita spending of $217. Texas had the largest per capita growth— 112 percent—during this period. The top 15 state spenders on a per capita basis were the District of Columbia, Alaska, New York, California, Nevada, New Jersey, Florida, Delaware, Maryland, Connecticut, Arizona, Hawaii, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Texas. State forecasts of

prison spending remain high into the new millennium as the numbers of prisoners continue to grow.[37]

Unprecedented increases in the U.S. adult prison population have also spurred explosive growth in the number of beds contracted from the private sector. While the total number of sentenced prisoners has doubled in 10 years, the number of private beds under contract grew by over 700 percent. With many states worried that increasing prison populations will result in runaway costs, the private sector is viewed as a viable option to help provide correctional services. Also, since well-capitalized private corrections companies are able to form mutually advantageous partnerships with community officials interested in the expanded employment and commercial opportunities that prison facilities promise, it is likely that such partnerships are proliferating and will continue to proliferate in rural communities.[38]

Private prisons in the United States accepted their first inmates in the mid-1980s. As of December 1998, at least 27 states make use of private prisons, and approximately 90,000 inmates are being held in prisons run for profit. The Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the largest U.S. private prison company, was founded in 1983 and began accepting its first Texas inmates before it had completed a facility in that state. The inmates were housed in rented motel rooms. A year later CCA approached the State of Tennessee with an astounding offer: CCA would buy the state's entire prison system for $250 million. Though the governor of Tennessee (whose wife was an early investor in CCA) was supportive, the plan was blocked by the Democratic majority in the state's legislature. Wackenhut Corrections Corporation (WCC) is the second largest U.S. prison company and its parent company, the Wackenhut Corporation, has for many years worked closely with the federal government guarding nuclear weapons facilities and overseas embassies. In the December 1998 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Eric Schlosser wrote that the company has long been accused of being a CIA front, an accusation that George Wackenhut, a former FBI employee, denies. Schlosser also says that Wackenhut Corporation provides strikebreaking and antiterrorism services, and when it decided to enter the private business it hired Norman Carlson, the former head of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In 1997, Wackenhut became

the first private prison company ever hired by the Federal Bureau of Prisons to manage a large correctional facility.[39]

UC-Davis professor Angela Davis wrote in the November 1998 issue of *ColorLines Magazine* that the stocks of both CCA and WCC were recently doing well: Between 1996 and 1997, CCA's revenues increased by 58 percent, from 293 million to $462 million. Its net profit grew from $30.9 million to $53.9 million. WCC raised its revenues from $138 million in 1996 to $210 million in 1997.[40] Greene, in a 1999 paper delivered to the RAND Corporation on prison privatization in the U.S., states that financial analysts who closely track the private prison industry anticipate continued robust growth. The revenue-generating potential of the industry has been projected to triple by 2002.[41]

"Race-ing" Justice

African American, Latino, and Native peoples are incarcerated in numbers vastly disproportionate to their numbers in our overall population. Today, nearly 70 percent of the prison and jail population in the U.S. are people of color. Nearly all are poor. In 1995, 47 percent of federal and state inmates were black, the largest group behind bars. Latinos are the fastest growing group behind bars. Between 1985 and 1995, Latinos jumped from 10 percent to 18 percent of all state and federal inmates. In 1995, 45 percent of state prison inmates were unemployed at the time of their arrest. The rest reported an income of less than $10,000.[42] Evidence from one state—New York—suggests the possibility that a majority of all state prisoners may come from a relatively small number of communities in the nation's inner cities. Data published in the early '90s showed that 75 percent of all New York's state prisoners came from seven predominantly African American and Latino communities in New York City.[43]

The so-called war on drugs is primarily responsible for the tremendous increase in the number of people going to prison and for the increasing racial disparities in prison populations. Since 1980, the number of drug offenders behind bars has gone from approximately 50,000 to about 400,000—representing more people than are in prison for all crimes in England, France, Germany, and Japan combined.[44] Between 1985 and 1994, drug offenders constituted more than a third (36 percent) of the increase in the state

prison population and more than two-thirds (71 percent) of the increase in the federal prison population.[45] Many people point to the drug war as the single most important reason for the increasing rates of imprisonment for young black men. In 1992, blacks made up about 12 percent of the U.S. population and, according to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, about 13 percent of those reporting using any illicit drug on a monthly basis. Yet more than a third of all drug possession arrests, more than half of all possession convictions, and three-quarters of state prison sentences for possession involved blacks. In 1996, black inmates were nearly twice as likely as white inmates to be admitted to state prison for a drug offense. Nearly 40 percent of all black state prison admissions were drug offenders.[46]

Recent data on these offenders suggest that few convicted drug offenders are dangerous criminals. In New York, for example, nearly 80 percent of the drug offenders who received prison sentences in 1997 had never been convicted of a violent felony. One in four drug offenders in prison in New York was convicted of simple possession, primarily of minute quantities.[47] While 74 percent of the drug-using population in New York is white, African Americans and Latinos comprised 94 percent of the drug offenders in New York State prisons at the end of 1997.[48] In the words of Professor David Courtwright, the drug war has functioned "as a kind of giant vacuum cleaner, hovering over the nation's inner cities, sucking young black men off the street and into prison."[49]

Impacts of High Incarceration Rates of African American Males on Inner-City Communities: Transferring "Wealth" from Inner Cities to Rural Communities

If one accepts the assumptions and claims that prisons bring to their host communities a panoply of "benefits," it makes sense to explore the following question: If rural communities experience a net gain in becoming prison hosts, do inner-city communities experience a net loss as a result of providing a disproportionate share of the "raw material" which makes the gains claimed for rural prison host communities possible? In exploring this question, I will borrow and add to a phrase and concept—the transfer of wealth—from Dina Rose and Todd Clear of the University of Florida.[50]

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According to Rose and Clear (1998), while there is little direct empirical evidence of the social impacts of high incarceration rates, there is a substantial body of indirect evidence that high incarceration rates of African American males in the U.S. have profound impacts on inner-city communities. Rose and Clear challenge the assumption that arresting and removing large numbers of offenders from their communities will always make these communities safer or stronger. Citing research indicating that offenders represent assets as well as liabilities to their communities, Rose and Clear posit that the removal of large numbers of young men from inner-city neighborhoods may negatively affect their socioeconomic composition. For example, while studies of inner-city youth gangs document the violent criminal lifestyles of gang members, they also document the connections of these young men to children, families, and others in their neighborhoods. In one study, a majority of active gang members were fathers, and a minority were employed in legitimate jobs though most worked sporadically.[51]

In addition, because the growth in imprisonment in recent years has been increasingly made up of *nonviolent* drug offenders, Rose and Clear suggest that the removal of potential assets may be increasing. That is these men may be offenders who leave their communities for prisons and take with them the support they have been providing to networks that sustain family and community structures. Several studies point to the conclusion that some active offenders whose crimes make them eligible for incarceration are financial assets to their families and communities. They contribute directly to the welfare of their families and other intimates in the same way noncriminal males do, although perhaps they provide fewer total dollars.[52]

Rose and Clear (1998) also cite evidence suggesting that incarceration of criminally active fathers does not necessarily improve the environment for remaining sons. One study[53] of a male jail intake sample finds preliminary evidence for the existence of substantial positive parenting prior to incarceration. After the male's imprisonment, the responses of the jailed inmate's family to his incarceration includes address changes because the remaining family moved into more cramped quarters and new school districts; family disruption, including the arrival of new male roles into the family replacing the inmate; reduced time for maternal parenting due to taking secondary employment; and so on. All of these factors are potentially disrupting forces for the family, and each tends to disturb family cohesiveness, which studies show would predict serious delinquency.[54]

Rose and Clear state that research shows that many, if not most, criminals also have legal employment so that their removal from the neighborhood removes a worker from the local economy. While removal of a single offender may free a legitimate job for a noncriminal worker, in local areas where a high proportion of residents engage in both legal and nonlegal work, removing many individuals may devastate the local economy. Family members earning money contribute to the welfare of their families and this is true regardless of whether those earnings are from legal or nonlegal activities. In an effort to sustain their families, mothers rely upon regular, substantial financial help from people in their personal networks because neither welfare nor low-paying jobs provide sufficient income to cover expenses. Incarceration removes from the neighborhood many of the men who provide some type of support to these women.

Rose and Clear (1998) clearly suggest that prior to incarceration, most prisoners are an economic resource to their neighborhoods and immediate families. They also argue that once arrested and incarcerated, this economic value is transformed and transferred. It is transformed into penal capital—the demand for salaried correctional employees to provide security. It is also transferred to the locality of the prison where the penal system's employees reside and live.

Prisoner Labor

"Today we're just clearing some brush along the property lines for the water treatment plant. We've done a lot of painting this year, painting a community center building in Athens, painted the inside of a church parish hall, put a roof on the town of New Baltimore town hall, had them sealing blacktop . . . just about everything. They get an industrial rate which amounts to 42 cents an hour."

Prison guard coordinator of inmate work crew, Greene Correctional Facility, in *Yes, In My Backyard*

"We try to accommodate whatever we can . . . schools are another area where we get involved. Like basic tasks: reupholstering, furniture, examination tables that may in the school. We have the wherewithal to do that . . . I don't recall any school in the local area, any church, any nonprofit organization that's come to us with a project that we can't handle inside the facility where we've turned them away."

Dominic Mantello, warden, Coxsackie Correctional Facility[55]

In addition to the transformation of a young black man's economic value into the demand for salaried prison employees through his incarceration, it is also important to consider the benefits that accrue to rural communities as a result of the exploitation of his labor once he is imprisoned. In her article assessing the impacts of prisons on host communities, Carlson (1991) states: "Overall the findings on prison impacts show that prisons provide considerable economic benefits to their host communities and surrounding areas through direct employment, local purchasing, and *inmate labor*" (emphasis added). She goes on to say that while in small towns prisons operate much like any other industry in terms of their potential benefits, "Prisons as industries do have the added plus of a captive workforce available for community projects."[56]

Community work projects performed by prisoners are very common in prisons located in rural communities and small towns, and prison officials see them as good "community relations." There can be a lot of competition within the community for the services of inmates working both inside and outside the prison. While maximum-security inmates may not participate in outdoor crews in some areas of the country, it is common for all prisoners to work on projects benefiting the host community as part of their indoor programming.

Concern over the exploitation of prisoner labor by public and private prisons is growing. Since 1990, 30 states have made it legal to contract out prison labor to private companies where the workers have virtually no rights and get paid a fraction of outside wages—much of which they often don't get to keep. Private prison companies using inmate labor pay no overtime, no vacation, no sick pay, no unem-

ployment insurance, and no workers' compensation. Prison workers don't have the right to organize, strike, file a grievance, or talk to the press. They can be "hired," "fired," and replaced at will. A recent report from the Washington office of the United Auto Workers provides the following examples:

- Spaulding golf balls are packed by prisoners in Hawaii. Inmates test blood for medical firms and raise hogs in Arizona. New Mexico prisoners take hotel reservations.
- Konica has its copiers repaired by prisoners who get between 35 to 47 cents per hour.
- TWA reservations clerks make up to $18/hour in the union. The company pays the prison $5/hour for the same work. The prisoners themselves get less than 50 cents/hour out of this.
- Oregon inmates are "leased" to outside employers for $3 per day.
- In Texas, Lockhart Technologies closed its plant in Austin, where it assembled and repaired circuit boards for corporations like IBM and Texas Instruments. The work is now done by inmates in a private prison run by Wackenhut which expropriates 80 percent of the minimum wage paid.
- The California Department of Corrections has been seeking a market niche in Japan's jeans market for its convict-made "Gangsta Blues."[57]

Population Impacts and Implications: Are Inner-City Communities Losing Dollars and Political Power to Rural Communities?

"When the U.S. census counts people every ten years, they count prisoners as well. They're considered residents. And, what ends up happening is the population is skewed, is increased by the number of people who are residing in the prisons. So, race, age, ethnicity, income—basically any factor you could put your finger on that describes a community is skewed in the case of Coxsackie, town and village of Coxsackie, and the county in general . . . There are federal programs and state programs that base their assistance to the community on population, so that gets altered . . ."

Ronald Roth, director, Greene County Planning Department, New York[58]

Another item of potential wealth that is transferred out of inner cities along with inmate labor is that prisoner's residential status as recorded in the census. Inmates of prison facilities are counted for census purposes in the communities where the institutions are located. In contrast, inmates of local jails are allocated to their home addresses—unless they have no fixed address—on the premise that they are short-term residents of the jail compared with the longer confinement of prison inmates. This policy has many implications. Beale (1998) reports that in at least 60 rural U.S. counties the shift from population loss in the 1980s to population gain in the 1990s can be fully or partly explained by increases in prisoner populations.

Non-metro counties that obtained new prisons during 1980–1989 had an overall population increase of 8.8 percent from 1980 to 1990, well above the 4.2 percent average and amounting to nearly half of all 1980–1990 population growth in those counties.[59] Some states and the federal government put multiple prisons in the same county or are building large prisons (especially in California). As a result, a number of non-metro counties now have very substantial prison populations. In 1994, there were 28 counties in which at least 3,000 inmates were being held. Walker and Anderson Counties in Texas and Kings County in California, housed a total of 36,000 prisoners, with 10,000 inmates or more in each county.[60] In the North, where the rural population is heavily white, the large increase in rural prison inmates of primarily urban origin explains many cases of unusually high growth of non-metro black and Hispanic population counts. In upstate New York, three counties that acquired prisons saw their total black population rise from 529 in 1980 to 4,413 in 1990. Most of this increase was prison related. The most extreme example is that of Browne County, Illinois, a small Corn Belt farm county where the black population rose in between 1980 and 1990 from 1 person to 547 after a prison opened.[61]

Because a variety of federal and state funding allocations are based, in some fashion, on the census, it may be that rural communities hosting prisons are gaining government funding as a result of high incarceration rates while inner-city communities are losing funding. To my knowledge, such prisoner-related transfers of wealth as a result of census policies have not been the subject of published research or public

discussion. However, in states where a significant percentage of the prisoner population is drawn from a relatively small number of inner-city communities (e.g., New York) or where prisons are particularly large (e.g., California) or clustered in one region (e.g., New York and Michigan), one can posit that census-driven economic impacts may be profound. Additionally, and in particular in the North, where predominantly minority prisoner populations are counted in the census of predominantly white communities, there may be additional implications in terms of funding formulas which weigh race and ethnicity as factors.

In states like New York where several of these situations exist, one could conceivably track the flow of dollars directly out of a few identifiable inner-city communities and into a few rural counties. According to analyses published in the early '90s, the vast majority of New York's state prisoners (75 percent) come from seven predominantly African American and Latino neighborhoods in New York City,[62] while an even greater percentage (89 percent) are housed in correctional facilities in rural areas.[63]

Another potential consequence for communities of prisoner-related population shifts are changes in political representation and power. Political districts are based on population size and determine the number of congressional, state, and local representatives. Population groups may "win" or "lose" based on demographic shifts. From census to census, shifts within and without states may result in the gain or loss of representatives for communities. Again, in the case of prisoner-driven population gain or loss, the implications for resulting gain or loss in political representation and power are likely to be most significant for communities losing a large percentage of their populations to prisons and for communities and counties experiencing significant population growth as a result of their roles as prison hosts.

Finally, as prison privatization adds fuel to an already increasing tendency for states to house their prisoners out-of-state, the potential for *interstate* as well as *intrastate* consequences of prisoner-driven population shifts also grows.

Prisons Versus Social Programs

As prison development has surged over the last two decades, social programs benefiting the poor in rural and urban America have receded

dramatically. As recently as 1993, the states collectively spent more on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) than they did on corrections. By 1996, these priorities were reversed. Government expenditures on corrections grew by nearly $8 billion nationwide while AFDC outlays were cut by almost 2 billion. As a result, states began channeling 42 percent more of their resources toward imprisonment than income support for poor families. Federal welfare reform has led to even further cuts.[64]

Beginning in the '80s, the shift in government funding priorities toward penal institutions providing jobs and other economic supports to rural communities and away from programs benefiting inner-city communities is perhaps nowhere so starkly illustrated as in the case of the use of low-income housing funds by New York's former governor, Mario Cuomo, to build prisons. In 1981, New York's voters defeated a $500 million bond issue for new prison construction. Cuomo decided to use the state's Urban Development Corporation (UDC) as an alternative means of financing prisons. Created in 1968 to build housing for the inner-city poor, the UDC was legislatively birthed on the day of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, funeral, to honor his legacy. Using the UDC's authority to issue state bonds without voter approval, Cuomo added more prison beds than all the previous governors in the state's history combined. The total cost to New York taxpayers including interest eventually reached about $7 billion.[65]

Though the UDC strategy failed to stem the tide of prison overcrowding in New York, it did manage to turn the Urban Development Corporation into a rural development corporation that invested billions of dollars in rural upstate New York. While thousands of young black men (and black women) were swept from the streets of inner cities in police "drug sweeps" and into the state's prison system by New York's Rockefeller drug laws, 28 of the 29 correctional facilities built during the Cuomo years were built in rural upstate New York.[66]

"It is now clear, throughout the country, not just New York, that the only pot of state dollars big enough and discretionary enough to support or to be stolen to pay for more prisons is higher education . . . The higher education community gets fooled, in a way, every year because they're told, "Don't worry, this prison expansion comes out of

capital money, it's just borrowed money so it doesn't affect your annual support." But of course that's foolish, because once the prison is built, each inmate costs $30,000 a year. You're now hitting operating money. And we now say to the higher education people, "Gee folks, we're giving you every dollar we possibly can but we just don't have that money any more. Fixed costs are eating it up." What are these fixed costs? The fixed costs result from the prison expansion!"

Daniel Feldman, former chair, Corrections Committee, New York State Assembly, in *Yes, In My Backyard*

Another stark illustration of the trade-offs for young minorities in government policies that prioritize funding for incarceration is the stealing of higher education dollars for the building of prisons. Public concern over this has recently surfaced in many states. In California, the state prison budget has already surpassed that of the state's once stellar university system. In Michigan, Governor John Engler proposed a 1999–2000 budget with an $80.4 million increase in spending for prisons and an overall increase for corrections that was double the proposed percentage increase for higher education.[67] In New York, despite a $2 billion state surplus, Governor George Pataki proposed deep cuts in education, including a sharp reduction in tuition aid to poor college students, for the millennium year. Combined with his veto last year of $500 million in school construction, Pataki's proposals to spend $180 million for construction of a new maximum security prison, another $180 million already appropriated for a maximum security prison to be built in rural Seneca county by the summer of 2000, and $21 million to operate a third maximum-security prison nearly completed in the small town of Malone in northern New York,[68] met with unusually strong criticism. Noting that crime rates have decreased in New York by 29 percent since 1995, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, testifying at a state budget hearing, said that New York's Republican governor was "using our children as political trade-offs," by underfinancing schools while building prisons in depressed upstate communities to mollify voters who need jobs. "These poor schools serve as feeder systems for the prison-industrial complex," he said to reporters after the hearing.[69]

Since fiscal year 1988, New York's public universities have seen their state's support for their operating budgets plummet by 29 percent while funding for prisons has increased by 76 percent. In actual dollars, there has been a nearly equal trade-off, with the NYS Department of Correctional Services receiving a $761 million increase during that time while state funding for New York's city and state university systems has declined by $615 million. Young people of color have been hit the hardest by these shifts in funding priorities. There are now more blacks and Hispanics locked up in prison than there are attending the state universities. And since 1989, there have been more blacks entering the state prison system for drug offenses each year than there were graduating from the state university system with undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees combined. In 1988, SUNY administrators estimated "total undergraduate student cost" (including tuition and incidental fees, room, board, books, transportation, and other costs) to be $6,303. At that time, those costs represented 13.5 percent of the national white median family income, 20 percent of the Latino family income and 24 percent of the African American family income. The disproportionate burden experienced by families of color has since intensified, as the total cost of attending SUNY rose to $11,478 by 1997. Today, these costs represent 25 percent of the white median family income and 42 percent of the national median income for both blacks and Hispanics.[70]

The education vs. prisons trade-offs are particularly tragic for young people and for the society at large because research shows that quality education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention.[71]

Losing Family and Community Ties

On January 17, 1996, the American Correctional Association's Delegate Assembly unanimously ratified a new Public Correctional Policy statement regarding crime prevention. A section of this policy statement reads: "Correctional practitioners should become involved in the search for and development of policies and programs that will be effective in both the prevention of crime and the lowering of recidivism rates. Correctional agencies and organizations should . . . consider the offender's family as an integral partner in the offender's treatment program, and as an essential element in crime pre-

vention among families at risk. Using this approach, we assist not only the offender, but another high-risk group: the children of offenders."[72]

This statement recognizes that persons under criminal justice control, their families, and society at large benefit when prisoners are able to maintain or establish positive relationships with their families. Studies examining the impact of the family on recidivism have consistently found that prisoners who are able to maintain strong family ties while in prison have significantly greater success on parole.[73] The most extensive and often-quoted study on family impacts on prisoner recidivism points to the significance of visitation as the crucial mechanism whereby families maintain strong ties. In their study, Holt and Miller[74] show a significant difference in the recidivism rate of prisoners who have had regular, continuing visits from family members as compared to those who did not have visitors or had sporadic visits. The recidivism rate among those prisoners with regular family visitors was *significantly* lower than that of any other group. Another important finding of this study is that even the most highly regarded parole success indicators (e.g., "having a job waiting") were not found to affect parole success as much as having a family to go home to.

Similarly, there is wide agreement in child welfare literature concerning the importance to children of parent-child visitation following a separation, and particularly for children who suffer a forced separation from a parent as in the case of fathers who are incarcerated. Visitation dispels common fears about their parent's well-being and common feelings of rejection and guilt. In addition, according to Denise Johnston, M.D., director of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, "visitation is the first and perhaps most important step toward family reunification." While some adults who work with children of incarcerated parents and some family members express concerns about the "appropriateness" of children visiting prisons or jails, there is no evidence in the literature, either from empirical studies or statements of expert opinion, that parent-child visitation in a jail or prison setting has any significant or long-term negative consequences for participating children.[75]

While there has been little study of the impact of incarceration on wives and other prisoner

intimates, existing studies find that prisoners' wives report that such hardships as increased parenting responsibilities, providing their incarcerated husbands with material goods, the financial costs of communicating with their incarcerated husbands, and loneliness created a socioemotional impoverishment directly related to familial structural change that occurred after their husbands' imprisonment. While prison visiting can be a grim experience insofar as the constraints placed upon visiting can undermine emotionally satisfying interactions, the extent of visitation by the women in spite of such constraints speaks to the importance placed by women on visiting. In a recent ethnographic study of 30 prisoners' wives (defined to include women living consensually with prisoners for at least 6 months prior to their arrest), Laura Fishman comments, "Given the constraints upon visiting, the extent to which the women in the study population visited their husbands was startling. Twenty wives averaged two visits every week when the prison was within easy commuting distance from their homes . . . Many of them believed it was absolutely necessary to visit their husbands although it was very difficult at times to make the trip. However, when the prison was located at considerable distance from wives' homes, the frequency of visits decreased."[76]

As prisoner populations are increasingly made up of inner-city men placed in rural prisons, opportunities for visitation important to maintaining family ties are dramatically diminished. Moreover, the practice by states of shipping their prisoners out-of-state, a practice fueled and likely to be increased by prison privatization, may significantly increase the incidence and speed of prisoner family breakdown. For example, almost 3,000 Wisconsin prisoners are now housed outside the state, primarily in private prison facilities, and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections has requested money for 4,500 new rental beds.[77] While it is true that some prisoner families are already "broken" prior to incarceration by other forces, including the prisoner's lifestyle and lack of material and emotional resources to invest in families, it is also true that families and children are often cited by male prisoners as a major source of motivation and support. It is indeed ironic that for some men in some prisons, incarceration affords the first opportunity they have had to begin the process of gaining the human capital (e.g., education, occupational skills, and good physical and mental health) necessary to view themselves as having something important to give to others.[78]

Implications and Suggestions for the Future

Despite decreasing crime rates, an overall drop in admissions to state prisons, and a decrease in new court commitments for drug offenders, between 1990 and 1997 the number of people in state prisons increased 7 percent annually. Truth in Sentencing Laws and tightening of parole are expected to increase the state prison population in coming years through the incarceration of more people for longer periods of time.[79] In addition, population trends are likely to spur even greater growth among young adults.

From 1995 to 2010, the Census Bureau projects that the population aged 18–24 years—ages at which incarceration starts to accelerate—will grow by 21 percent. Growing prison populations and rising health care costs for prisoners will continue to put pressure on state budgets. As a result, more prison capacity will be built and more jobs in those prisons will be created at rates unlikely to be drastically lower than current ones. A combination of states' concerns over out-of-control corrections spending and the political strength of the private prison sector is likely to significantly increase the private share of state corrections well into the new millennium. It should not come as a surprise that financial analysts forecast astounding growth in revenues for the private prison industry into the foreseeable future.

I can find no evidence in these trends to indicate that the grossly disproportionate incarceration of young black men will lessen in the near future. Indeed, the recent and continuing public hysteria over "super-predator" youth combined with these trends suggest the opposite. For the coming decade, I do not foresee a change major enough in the fortunes of either inner cities or depressed rural communities to significantly alter the symbiotic dynamic that has developed between them over the past two decades: Inner cities will continue to lose vast numbers of their young men—and much of their "wealth" as I have discussed—to the penal system and to communities which are far away from their own. And, given the predicted growth in the share of

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the "prison market" that will become privatized in the near future, I predict a concomitant growth in the share of young black men who will be serving time in rural communities in states other than their own. In fact, at this point I believe we can only hope that prisons for profit will be constrained from shipping prisoners out of the country where labor costs are cheaper and accountability even less of a problem than it is here. The impact of this on prisoner families and on recidivism rates can only be negative from all points of view excepting those that support the further destabilization of inner-city families and communities and criminalization of blacks to support the prison-industrial complex.

While there is some anecdotal evidence (in the form of newspaper accounts, postings on the Internet from local antiprison citizen groups, and the like) to suggest that, among average citizens, rural and small town community opposition to the siting of prisons—and in particular to the siting of private prisons—may be growing, there is, to my knowledge, no research confirming this. Also, the same anecdotal reports indicate no change in the publicly expressed support for prison development among local, county, and state officials as well as community business interests.

The recent attempt to site a privately managed federal prison in Southeast, Washington, D.C., is an interesting deviation in the pattern of rural prison sitings. Community reactions to the proposal are mixed with proponents predicting the usual economic benefits and opponents—particularly in the surrounding suburbs—expressing NIMBY-like concerns. However, there are additional features in this local battle that are largely absent from rural debates. Proponents are making the argument that an inner-city prison would keep prisoners close to their families. Dissenters are expressing opposition to the prison as a symbol of a racist criminal justice system and an unsatisfactory response to the needs of the community for *sustainable* economic development support. Because inner-city communities fit the economic profile of an attractive prison locale as defined by public and private prison officials (e.g., economic need is great enough to overcome other community concerns about having a prison in their backyard) and inner-city prisons would have the added advantage of keeping prisoners close to home it may be

that other such sitings will be attempted and successful in the future.

In sum, I believe that over the last two decades a prison-industrial complex has indeed been created which, at this point and into the near future, is dependent on the continuing economic decline of communities in rural and inner-city America.

I am pessimistic both about the potential for any major reversals in the trends I have discussed and the development of sufficient will among this country's political and business leadership to instigate major change "from the top." If major change is to occur, I believe it will begin "at the bottom" among concerned, ordinary citizens of all races and ethnic backgrounds. That said, I do believe there are actions that concerned leadership could take to help facilitate citizen efforts toward changing these trends over the long-run and mitigating their impact on young African American men, their families, and communities in the near future. These actions include:

1. Use the mechanisms and forums available to concerned leadership to extend the framework for public, policymaker, and professional discussion of sentencing and corrections policies and practices to include a significant new emphasis on community impacts.

2. Fund applied research to determine the actual economic effects on inner-city and rural communities of prisoner-driven population shifts and census policies; exploitation of prisoner labor; and increased state spending for corrections.

3. Fund research to determine the extent to which prisoner-family ties and recidivism have been affected by prison-siting practices over the past two decades.

4. Fund interdisciplinary and longitudinal research examining the economic, social, political, and cultural impacts on communities—particularly inner-city and rural communities—of prison expansion and siting trends.

5. Make existing and new research findings on prison/community impacts widely available

to the public in formats that are accessible to average citizens.

6. Provide opportunities for citizen leaders in inner-city and rural communities to come together to discuss the relationship that has been forged between their communities by criminal justice policy and practice.

7. Provide opportunities for "experts" in a variety of fields, including criminal justice, rural policy, economic development, racial justice, social welfare, labor, business, and so on, to share knowledge and perspectives on the prison-industrial complex across discipline, geography, and practice.

8. Fund efforts by organizations outside government to research and mount legal challenges to prison-siting practices that make it impossible to maintain or nurture prisoner-family ties; exploitative prison labor practices; and other government and corporate practices discussed in this paper that can be shown to disproportionately damage communities and people of color.

9. Fund efforts by *independent* media organizations, journalists, and producers to document and disseminate media examinations of the problems discussed.

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Additional Statement to Supplement the Record

TRACY HULING

June 14, 1999

At the time I prepared and delivered a summary of my paper, "Prisons as a Growth Industry in Rural America: An Exploratory Discussion of the Effects on Young African American Men in the Inner Cities" to the Commission, I was not aware of any research or public discussion on prisoner-driven population impacts as a result of census policy, which counts prisoners in the populations of prison host communities.

Since that time, I have been searching for evidence of the potential economic and political impacts I discuss in the paper, and would like to enter the following information, which confirms these impacts, into the record.

First, according to a recent newspaper account, a bill was signed into Arizona state law in mid-May by Governor Jane Hull, which allows a municipality, until February 28, 2001, to annex a state prison within 15 miles of its borders. The reason for the bill, according to the newspaper account, is to allow cities and towns to "increase their population with the added inmates and receive a greater portion of state shared revenue." It is reported that the town of Buckeye plans to annex both the Lewis state prison facility and its neighbor, the Southwest Regional Prison Complex and the Juvenile Corrections Facility. Together, the facilities house 976 inmates, all of whom will be included in the town's population if the annexations are completed before April 1, 2000, the deadline for the 2000 census. In addition, the Lewis prison population is expected to jump to nearly 2,400 by December 1999. The newspaper account states:

Buckeye receives about $1.3 million in state revenue from sales, income, highway-user and vehicle taxes, and local transit funds. That portion could jump by $726,465 after the town annexes the prison complexes. City officials expect to receive $285 per inmate. By 2006, if a mid-decade census is conducted,

the town's inmate population could bring more than $2 million in additional tax revenue, said Town Manager Joe Blanton. (Yoji Cole, "Doors Open for Buckeye to Annex State Prison," *Arizona Republic*, May 21, 1999).

Second, in April of this year, a bill was introduced into Congress that would allow states and the District of Columbia to count for census purposes the state and federal prisoners they export to other states for incarceration. The bill was sponsored by Congressman Mark Green from Wisconsin, which now sends 3,751 of its 18,717 prisoners to Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Minnesota. That figure is expected to grow to 10,000 in the next 2 years, according to Green. In one newspaper account describing testimony on the bill at a June 9 hearing in Washington, Green said,

Does all this really matter? I believe it does. Why? First, because at least $185 billion a year is doled out in federal aid based on population. Second, because the number of House seats each state gets also is based on the census, and Wisconsin is in serious danger of losing one of its nine (seats) after the 2000 count (Craig Gilbert, "Lawmaker takes his case for counting out-of-state inmates to House panel," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, June 10, 1999).

Using rough estimates, Green's office estimates that the practice of counting them (prisoners) where they are imprisoned could ultimately cost the state between $5 million and $8 million a year (Ibid.).

These accounts and the situations and events they describe, should leave no doubt that prisoner-related census population impacts are significant economically and politically, and that some local officials are aware of, and acting to take advantage of, these impacts.

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The Juvenile Justice Reform Act and the Crisis of the Young African American Male

JANICE JOSEPH, PH.D.*

Juvenile Justice Reform Legislation

There is no doubt that juvenile delinquency is increasing and is becoming more violent. Greater access to firearms, involvement in gangs, and loss of society's control over some juveniles all contribute to this epidemic of violent behavior among juveniles. In an attempt to deal with the increase in delinquency, the federal government and state government have passed "get tough" legislation. This paper will examine the federal legislative reforms and how they will affect African American males.

Brief History of Juvenile Justice

Juvenile justice has developed from the doctrine of *parens patriae*, "parent of the country" or "common guardian of the community." Under this doctrine, the right of the state superseded parental rights if the parents were seen as unfit or not up to the task of the education, training, and moral development of their child.

The philosophy of youth conduct as distinct from that of adults evolved to the extent that the first separate juvenile court was established in the United States in Illinois in 1899. The current juvenile justice system was developed after World. War II and was characterized by a centralized administration of juvenile facilities with training and treatment as its goals rather than retribution. The juvenile justice system is intended to be a civil procedure, not a criminal procedure.

Juvenile justice has traditionally been a local and state concern but was raised to the national level when Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) of

1974.[1] The purpose of the law is to assist state and local governments in their efforts to reduce juvenile crime through prevention programs and activities which hold juveniles accountable for their actions. The goals also include (1) the deinstitutionalization of status offenders; (2) the separation of juveniles and adults in jails and lockups; (3) the removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups; and (4) identification, assessment, and planning to confront the problem of disproportionate minority confinement. This act also authorized the establishment of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). The role of the OJJDP was to develop and implement worthwhile programs that prevent and reduce juvenile crimes. Since 1974, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act has had a significant impact on juvenile justice policy, and the OJJDP has been extremely influential in matters of disseminating information about juvenile offenders and prevention.[2]

The juvenile justice system was originally built upon a simple philosophy: The fundamental purpose of all agencies charged with the care and handling of adjudicated juveniles should be to act in the best interests of the child. For the past 100 years this principle, which grew out of the 19th century juvenile court movement, has provided the one major distinguishing feature between the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system.

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[1] 18 U.S.C. 4351–5042 (1998); 42 U.S.C. §§ 3701, 3723, 3733, 3758, 3772–3774, 3811, 3814, 3821, 3882, 3883, 3888, 5601–5785 (1998).

[2] Preston Elrod and R. Scott, *Juvenile Justice: A Social, Historical, and Legal Perspective* (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, 1999).

Over time, however, an increasing number of policy makers and politicians have identified a group of juveniles who they believe should be treated punitively. The view is that the juvenile court lacks the resources and capacity to effectively deal with these juveniles who instead should be transferred to criminal court.

In response to a national concern about growing juvenile delinquency and youth crime, the federal government has passed several pieces of legislation that are designed to amend the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

Federal Legislation

Senate leaders and President Clinton have introduced legislation to expand the role of the federal government in combating delinquency and violence. Federal legislative initiatives include the Violent and Hard Core Juvenile Offender Reform Act of 1996, the Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act, and the Juvenile Crime Control and Prevention Act of 1997. These were passed to amend the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.

The Violent and Hard Core Juvenile Offender Reform Act amends the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 to identify violent and hard-core juvenile offenders 14 years and older and to prosecute them in criminal court for violent crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and any serious drug offense. It allows for repeat juvenile offenders 14 years and older to be tried in criminal court if they commit three offenses that would carry at least a 1-year sentence if committed by an adult. The law also stipulates that criminal records should be maintained for the juvenile felons and that their fingerprints and photographs be forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a national data bank. It also makes juveniles' criminal records more accessible to school officials. The statute also amends the Federal Delinquency Act to direct the U.S. Sentencing Commission to have juveniles' felony offenses considered in their sentencing as adult offenders.[3]

The Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act of 1997 consists of various provisions. It allows states to make juvenile records available to elementary and high schools, and colleges to which juveniles may later apply. It also allows juveniles to be prosecuted in criminal court for federal crimes at the age of 14; requires that juveniles in the federal court system being tried as adults be subject to detention in the same manner and to the same extent as adults; and eliminates various "protections" now available to juveniles under federal law. This bill also provides $500 million per year as an incentive grant program to help states address their juvenile crime problems; 60 percent of these funds are designated for the construction of juvenile detention centers and drug testing.[4]

The Juvenile Crime Control and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1997 is the counterpart to the Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act. It proposes establishing a federal model for holding juveniles accountable for their crimes, loosening restrictions on juvenile records, broadens the possibility of punishment as a judicial alternative, and provides $1.5 billion in incentive grants to states to strengthen their juvenile justice systems. Under the bill, states would be required to prosecute juveniles as adults, and states have to maintain records of repeat offenders that commit felonies. The primary funding in this bill is targeted toward intervention only after the juveniles have committed a crime.[5]

Under current federal law, juveniles who commit misdemeanors, nonviolent felonies, or drug-related offenses may only be prosecuted in federal court if the Attorney General certifies that the state does not want or have jurisdiction over the juvenile. As a result, most misdemeanor and minor felony cases against juveniles are handled in state courts, even if the federal court also exercises jurisdiction. The above legislation changed that by removing the requirement that the federal courts may only get involved if the state cannot or declines to prosecute the juvenile.

In addition to the legislation, the Clinton administration has vowed to make addressing youth crime a top priority. The administration has proposed to crack down on gangs and youth violence, ban handgun ownership, impose life sentences for juvenile violent offenders, and give federal prosecutors the power to transfer juve-

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[3] Violent and Hard Core Juvenile Offender Act, S. 1245, 1995.

[4] Frank Schmalleger, *Criminal Justice Today* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999).

[5] Juvenile Crime Control Act, 1997.

niles to adult court. The President also plans to spend $500 million for state and local antigang prosecution; $170 million to assist states in building more facilities for juveniles; $75 million to fight truancy and school violence; $60 million for after-school programs to keep youths off the street; and $50 million for enhanced juvenile court and probation systems. The money would be available only to states that allow more juveniles to be treated as adults, punish juveniles for every offense, and keep adult-type records on them.[6]

Impact of Juvenile Legislative Reforms on African American Males

According to the Uniform Crime Reports, African American youths are overrepresented in the numbers of individuals arrested and incarcerated for violent crimes. For example, in 1996 African American juveniles accounted for 47 percent of all juveniles arrested for violent crimes.[7] Consequently, the legislation passed by the federal government allowing juveniles to be tried as adults will have a tremendous impact on African American males.

In fact, history demonstrates that minority youth, primarily African Americans, are disproportionately transferred to adult courts. Data from 1985 indicate that males comprised the majority of juvenile cases transferred to adult court. Of the juveniles transferred to adult court, 57 percent were white, 42 percent black, and 2 percent of other ethnic groups. By 1994, the percentage of white and black juvenile offenders transferred to adult court were similar (49 percent and 48 percent, respectively). The number of 15- to 19-year-old males, the group that commits the most crime, is likely to grow to 30 percent by the year 2015. Many of these males will be minorities, especially African Americans. If the population growth materializes, there is a good chance that the rate of juvenile violence, including homicide, will double by the year 2015.[8]

Once juveniles are transferred to adult courts, they are treated as adults and subjected to similar sanctions as adults. Under the legislation, not only would more African American males be transferred to criminal court, but their numbers in adult prisons would increase as well. Placing juveniles, especially African Americans, in adult jails and prisons will increase the probability that they will be victimized in the adult system. In addition, the adult correctional system is not equipped to meet the needs of these juveniles. The likelihood that they will be rehabilitated is unlikely. More importantly, transferring juveniles to criminal court means that they can be subjected to the death penalty.

Once transferred to the criminal court, a young African American male would be treated as an adult, at any age, for subsequent offenses, even if he was not convicted. Once transferred, the youth would remain in the exclusive jurisdiction of the criminal court.[9]

The transferring of young African American males to adult courts would undoubtedly contribute to the social deterioration of African American communities. Given the high number of African Americans, especially males, already incarcerated, the social and financial impact on the black community is tremendous. Donzier argues that "we are on the verge of a social catastrophe because of the sheer number of African Americans behind bars."[10] Black males are 7 times more likely than white males to be incarcerated. In some cities, more than half of young black males are under correctional supervision. In the nation as a whole, one in four black males between the ages of 20 and 29 is under the control of the nation's prison system.[11] Moreover, imprisonment for African American males at a young age may make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to return to society for a productive conventional life.

According to Marc Mauer of The Sentencing Commission, the number of African American males in prisons and jails in the United States is

[6] Frank Schmalleger, *Criminal Justice Today* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999).

[7] Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports for United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

[8] Howard Snyder and Melissa Sickmund, *Juvenile Offenders and Their Victims: A Focus on Violence* (Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1995).

[9] Shay Bilchik, *State Responses to Serious and Violent Juvenile Crime* (Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1996).

[10] S. R. Donzier, *The Real War on Crime: The Report of the National Criminal Justice Commission* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), p. 99.

[11] M. Mauer and T. Huling, *Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later* (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 1995).

greater than the number of African American males enrolled in higher education institutions.[12] The process of transferring juveniles to adult courts would put more African Americans in prison rather than college. Traditionally education has been an investment in the future of society, and the fact that more young African American males will be transferred to adult court represents a "disinvestment" in the future of African American males. This will continue to erode the social fabric of the African American communities.

Transferring African American male juveniles to criminal court will not deter criminal behavior among these youths. Two well-designed studies found that transfer laws have no deterrent effect on juvenile crime in the relative short term (up to 8 years after these laws have been enacted). Jensen and Metsger conducted a time-series analysis (that is, an analysis plotting effects over a period of time) after the 1981 Idaho automatic transfer statute was passed, and found a 13 percent increase in arrest rates for violent juvenile crime.[13] Singer and McDowall also found no deterrent effect of the New York law automatically sending violent juvenile offenders to adult court, in the 6-year period after the law was passed. This was true even though the law was widely used and although the state had made significant efforts through the news media to inform juveniles of the new law.[14] Thus, the practice of transferring juvenile offenders to criminal court does not appear to deter juvenile crimes. Consequently, the legislation will serve to label young African American males as criminals, but may have very little impact on their antisocial behavior.

Transferring juveniles to adult court is, therefore, not the answer to the crime situation among African American males. At best, transfers are a short-term solution to a complex social condition that will not be simplified by transferring juveniles to the jurisdiction of the criminal court; they merely serve to appease the public's desire for retribution. After all, the majority of these African American juveniles transferred to criminal court will reenter society stigmatized by their criminal label and, in all likelihood, more dangerous than they were before being sanctioned as adults.

Legislative Reforms and Reduction of Juvenile Crimes

The basic question is whether "get-tough" legislation effectively reduces juvenile crime in the African American community. The idea of severely punishing the few to deter the many is counterproductive, because potential criminals either think that they are not going to get caught, or because they are so emotionally desperate, or psychologically distressed, that they do not care about the consequences of their actions. Transferring juveniles to criminal court has a role in public safety, but it is not the cure-all. Its value is limited, and its use should be limited.

The federal juvenile justice legislative reforms lack balance. The legislation is full of punitive measures to prosecute and lock up children, but contains no preventive strategies. Focusing only on the back-end of the juvenile justice system—after children get into trouble—is short-sighted. Society should be preventing children from getting into trouble and intervening at the first warning signs, before they drift into criminal activity.

Instead of trying so hard to be "tough on crime," the federal government should be "smart on prevention" by providing programs that can reduce crime. Effectively addressing the issue of juvenile offenders holds the greatest potential for reducing the nation's juvenile crime rate. The alternative to transferring juveniles to adult court is a comprehensive community response to juvenile unlawfulness that views juvenile and criminal justice as components of a larger whole—society. Moreover, this response must address crime as a community problem with a community solution, instead of viewing it solely as a justice system problem with a justice system solution.

The reasons why African American males enter the juvenile justice system are complex and need to be addressed in a comprehensive way. The following are some recommendations:

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[12] M. Mauer, *Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later.*

[13] E.L. Jensen and L. Metsger, "A Test of the Deterrent Effect of Legislative Waiver on Violent Juvenile Crime," *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 40, pp. 96–100.

[14] S. Singer and D. McDowall, "Criminalizing Delinquency: The Deterrent Effects of the New York Juvenile Offender Law," *Law and Society Review*, 22(3), 1994, pp. 521–35.

- The practice of transferring juveniles to criminal court should be abolished because it is ineffective and results in the creation of a permanent criminal record for the juvenile. The legislation needs to be reexamined.
- Programs in the juvenile justice system should be designed to rehabilitate offenders and reduce the likelihood that they will return to the system.
- Governments should develop and implement a wide range of effective options for violent offenders. States and federal governments should spend more money on diversion and rehabilitation programs, instead of on transferring juveniles to adult court. Transfers should be used as a last resort for offenders who cannot be diverted or rehabilitated.

Given the fact that "get-tough" legislation would have little or no deterrent effect on crime rates among African Americans, and the fact that the practice of transferring African Americans to adult court has social and financial consequences for the community, the question is: How can the number of African Americans in prison be reduced? The answer lies in crime prevention strategies and the elimination of discrimination in the criminal justice system.

Punitive measures to combat crimes are "after-the-fact" solutions to the juvenile crime problem in the African American community. These measures attack delinquency and delinquents rather than the social factors that are linked to the criminal behavior of African Americans. Instead of "after-the-fact" efforts, governments need to provide "before-the-fact" comprehensive social programs to prevent criminal behavior among African Americans.

Solutions to the delinquency problem must focus on factors that predispose African American males to delinquent behavior. Although a high percentage of African Americans have more contact with the criminal justice system than many whites do, this does not mean that race or ethnicity is related to criminal behavior. Instead, social class is a more important factor than either race or ethnicity. Many African Americans reside in the inner city areas that are socially disorganized, physically decayed, and economically deprived. These personal circumstances are conducive to high rates of crime. The social environment of African Americans is, therefore, primarily responsible for crime rate differences.[15]

The most effective way to curb crime and delinquency among African Americans is to prevent African Americans from committing the acts in the first place. Governments, therefore, need to focus their crime and delinquency control measures on increased employment policies and educational programs. Specifically they should:

- Focus on poverty and the lack of economic opportunities in the African American community by providing more jobs and job-training programs. Given the role of poverty and economic inequities in fostering delinquency among African Americans, it is plausible that reducing poverty and the economic disparity between African Americans and the rest of society would help reduce delinquent behavior.
- Provide African Americans with early childhood developmental programs, parent-training programs, educational and recreational programs, drug treatment programs, and counseling programs. Criminal behavior among African Americans would be more effectively reduced by education and treatment, with prison as a last resort.
- Provide preventive measures which are more effective and significant than punitive reactions. Punishment may be necessary, but often fails to teach new, alternative means to achieve desired goals.

The above recommendations are both short term and long term. The tendency is for governments to focus on short-term policies and ignore long-term strategies. The problem of delinquency cannot be solved entirely with legislative policies and strategies because these are reactive in nature. What is also necessary is prevention, which requires long-term policies and strategies. Governments have to focus more on prevention if they are to deal with delinquency among African Americans.

Summary

Transferring juveniles to adult court is part of the "get tough" policy of federal and state gov-

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[15] T. Duster, Crime, "Youth unemployment, and the black underclass," *Crime and Delinquency*, 33(2), pp. 300–16.

ernments. There is little evidence that this federal legislation deters delinquency. Consequently, claims that transferring youths to adult court protects the community appear to be inaccurate. The legislation will instead cause numbers of African American males to be entangled in the criminal justice system.

Criminal justice policies are often shortsighted and formulated in response to emotional appeals. The media sensationalism of particular crimes and criminals, and the political power of the crime issue usually prompt new legislation—legislation that often lacks proper planning and thorough examination of long-term impact. "Getting tough" has always been a quick fix for crimes that society fears.

If the current federal juvenile justice legislation is left unchallenged and unchanged, the number of African American males transferred to criminal court will increase and the so-called get tough measures will continue to be detrimental to the black community. To break this cycle and reduce the number of African American males in the criminal justice system, state and federal governments need to reexamine their "get tough" legislation on minority juveniles, especially African American males. In addition, there needs to be much more discussion about effective prevention programs. State and federal governments should provide social programs for African American males to break the cycle of poverty, unemployment, and crime. Delinquent behavior and violence can be reduced in the African American community if governments provide education and jobs. The choice is clear; schools and jobs should be available to African Americans instead of harsh punishment. When federal and state governments choose to build more prisons to house juveniles instead of providing better schools and job opportunities for African Americans, this is criminal. It appears, however, that further increases in the use of transfers are likely, given present "get tough" sentiments among politicians and the public in general.

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Crisis of the Young African American Male and the Criminal Justice System

MARC MAUER*

Introduction

In recent years policy attention regarding the crisis of the African American male has focused on a variety of areas in which African American males have suffered disproportinately from social ills. These have included education, housing, employment, and health care, among others. Perhaps in no other area, though, have these problems been displayed as prominently as in the realm of crime and the criminal justice system.

African Americans have been affected in this area in two significant regards. First, African Americans are more likely to be victimized by crime than are other groups. This creates a set of individual and community problems which impede upon other areas of productive activity. Second, the dramatic rates at which African American males have come under some form of criminal justice supervision has created a complex set of consequences which affect not only individual victims and offenders, but families and communities as well.

This paper will explore the current status of African American males within the criminal justice system, and consider projections for the future should current policies continue. It will also assess the factors that have created such high levels of criminal justice control. Finally, it will provide a set of recommendations for public policy that would help to alleviate the disastrous circumstances that currently prevail, while having a more constructive impact on public safety.

Overview of the Status of African American Males and the Criminal Justice System

A wealth of statistical information is now available to document what a walk through vir-

tually any urban courthouse or state prison displays quite graphically. A courtroom observer in New York, Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles, or any other major city will witness a sea of black and brown faces sitting at the defense table or shackled together on the bus transporting prisoners from the jail for court hearings. In the prison visiting room, mothers, wives, and girlfriends who have often traveled several hours by bus or car wait to see their loved ones in stuffy and noisy visiting rooms with little privacy.

Living conditions within the prison system have never been pleasant or comfortable, but a harsher political climate now threatens to undo many of the reforms achieved through litigation and political advocacy over the past several decades. Congressional action in 1994 prohibited inmates from receiving Pell grants to continue higher education studies, while many states have passed their own legislation denying inmates access to various forms of recreation or cultural activities. Much of this legislation has been not just mean-spirited, but counterproductive as well, by limiting prisoners' access to the acquisition of skills that might be used constructively upon their return to the community.

These conditions now disproportionately affect African American males and other minorities due to their overwhelming numbers within the criminal justice system. The state of these disproportions can be seen in the following:

- 49 percent of prison inmates nationally are African American, compared to their 13 percent share of the overall population.[1]

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[1] Unless otherwise specified, all data on prison and jail populations throughout is taken from various reports of the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- Nearly one in three (32 percent) black males in the age group 20–29 is under some form of criminal justice supervision on any given day—either in prison or jail, or on probation or parole.[2]
- As of 1995, 1 in 14 (7 percent) adult black males was incarcerated in prison or jail on any given day, representing a doubling of this rate from 1985. The 1995 figure for white males was 1 percent.
- A black male born in 1991 has a 29 percent chance of spending time in prison at some point in his life. The figure for white males is 4 percent, and for Hispanics, 16 percent.

While African American males have been the most severely affected demographic group within the criminal justice system, other minorities have also been disproportionately affected. Hispanics now constitute 17 percent of the prison population nationally, compared to their 10 percent share of the total population. The number of Hispanic inmates increased by more than half in the period 1990–96. Women, and particularly minority women, while incarcerated in smaller numbers than men, have also experienced dramatic growth in recent years. The number of women in the prison system increased by 418 percent from 1980 to 1995, compared to a rise of 236 percent for men. Black women are now incarcerated at a rate 7 times that of white women.

Toward an Understanding of the Overrepresentation of African American Males in the Criminal Justice System

In 1954, at the time of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education*[3] decision, African Americans constituted about 30 percent of persons admitted to state and federal prisons. That figure should have been disturbing since it was substantially higher than the black share of the national population. But that proportion has now increased still more dramatically, to the point where blacks represent half of all prison admissions.

This development would seem to be rather odd considering the changes that have taken

place in American society over the past half-century. The nation has experienced the civil rights movement, and economic opportunities have opened up for many historically disadvantaged groups. Within the criminal justice system, minorities have moved into positions of leadership in many jurisdictions, so it is now common to see blacks as police chiefs, judges, and prison wardens, perhaps not in proportion to their share of the population, but nonetheless considerably more prominently than in earlier times.

Given these positive changes, how has the situation of black males within the criminal justice system worsened so considerably to the point where it threatens the viability of an entire generation? Some have argued that these outcomes may be unfortunate, but are inevitable given high black rates of crime. Others suggest that a new generation of "superpredators" unlike any cohort of the past has been created. In the following sections we analyze the statistical evidence and research findings that enable us to understand these developments. These can be divided into four areas of inquiry: 1) Crime rates; 2) race and class effects; 3) bias within the criminal justice system; and 4) drug policies.

Crime Rates

All things being equal, the degree to which members of a demographic group engage in crime should be related to the extent to which members of that group are incarcerated. In addition, among those individuals who commit crimes, the extent of an individual's criminal history is a critical factor that influences whether an offender will be sentenced to prison. Thus, if African Americans exhibit higher rates of serious offending and/or have lengthier criminal histories than other groups, we could expect this to be reflected in the composition of the prison population.

For property offenses, African Americans constituted 32 percent of arrests in 1996,[4] disproportionate to their 13 percent share of the national population. (While arrest rates may not correlate precisely with crime rates, they are generally the best approximation of the degree of offending.) For violent crimes, though, black of-

[2] Marc Mauer and Tracy Huling, "Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later," The Sentencing Project, October 1995.

[3] 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

[4] FBI, Crime in the United States, 1996, 1997. All subsequent data on crime rates taken from this and previous reports in this series.

fending rates are considerably higher than for other groups, accounting for 43 percent of those arrests in 1996.

The high black proportion of violent crime clearly explains some of the disparity that we see in the prison population, but not to the extent that is often portrayed in popular media. Two issues in particular stand out in this regard:

- While the black proportion of violent arrests is high, it has remained essentially unchanged for 20 years. Since 1976, this proportion has fluctuated in a narrow range of 43–47 percent. Even during the upsurge of black juvenile homicides in the late 1980s, a declining rate of homicide among black adults resulted in a stable rate overall for African Americans.
- Explanations of black juvenile homicides in the 1980s that focus on the "superpredator" theory have no basis in fact. Justice Department data show that the entire rise in such homicides for the period 1984–1994 was related to firearms, as has been the decline in homicides beginning in 1995. Thus, the *lethality* of young offenders increased by having access to guns, rather than there being a new "breed" of young killers. Further, if the 15- to 19-year-olds who were committing violent crimes in the late 1980s were actually "superpredators," then they should have displayed these tendencies in the early 1980s as well, when they were in the 10–14 age range. Data for this period, though, show no such trends, with that group's rate of violence similar to other periods of time.[5] This therefore lends support to the explanation that the greater availability of firearms, much of it related to the drug trade, was the primary source of the increase in violence.

Prominent analyses of the overall racial composition of the prison population have been conducted by criminologist Alfred Blumstein. In an examination of the 1991 state prison population, he concluded that 76 percent of the higher black rate of imprisonment could be accounted for by higher rates of arrest for serious offenses.[6] While this held true for most crimes, the critical exception in this regard was drug offenses, which will be detailed further below. The remaining 24 percent of disparity might be explained by criminal histories, racial bias, or other factors.

A related examination of incarceration data by sociologists Robert Crutchfield, George Bridges, and Susan Pitchford found that while national level data seemed to show a high correlation between arrest rates and incarceration for African Americans, the variation in this relationship at the state level was quite significant.[7] In the northeast states, only 69 percent of racial disparity was explained by arrest, while in the north central states, fewer blacks were actually incarcerated than one would have predicted by just using arrest data. Overall, this suggests that a variety of factors, which include crime rates, law enforcement practices, and sentencing legislation, may play a role in the degree of racial disparity in incarceration.

A second factor that may explain higher rates of incarceration is the criminal history of an offender. The more serious a prior criminal record, the greater the likelihood of receiving a prison term for a new offense. Whether one acquires a criminal record is clearly in part related to the level of criminal activity, but it is also often a function of race, geographical location, and other factors.

Many African Americans, for example, have experienced the crime known as "driving while black." In different parts of the country, there is strong evidence regarding the propensity of police to stop black males, while driving, for alleged traffic violations. Often, the justification offered for these actions is that they are necessary for the purpose of apprehending alleged drug traffickers, with the aid of drug courier "profiles." In Volusia County in central Florida, researchers documenting traffic stops made by local police in the late 1980s found that more than 70 percent of the drivers stopped were either African American or Hispanic. This com-

[5] Philip J. Cook and John H. Laub, "The Unprecedented Epidemic in Youth Violence," in Michael Tonry, ed., *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming, 1999.

[6] Alfred Blumstein, "Racial Disproportionality of U.S. Prison Populations Revisited," *University of Colorado Law Review*, vol. 64, no. 3, 1993.

[7] Robert D. Crutchfield, George S. Bridges, and Susan R. Pitchford, "Analytical and Aggregation Biases in Analyses of Imprisonment: Reconciling Discrepancies in Studies of Racial Disparity," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 31 (May 1994).

pared to data showing that blacks constituted 12 percent of the state's driving age population and 15 percent of drivers convicted of traffic violations. Blacks and Hispanics were also stopped for longer periods than whites, and represented 80 percent of the cars that were searched following a stop.[8] These types of discretionary law enforcement practices may lead to African Americans acquiring a criminal record more rapidly than whites, later resulting in a greater chance of receiving a prison sentence. In addition, given that most drivers stopped in "profile" checks are in fact not drug traffickers, these practices often contribute to African American distrust of law enforcement.

Race and Class Effects

As the trials of O.J. Simpson illustrated so clearly, discussions of race and the criminal justice system are often heavily overlaid with considerations of class as well. Racial disparities are related in part to the volume of crime committed by various groups, but they are also a function of differing forms of treatment that relate to the background and resources of the offender.

Criminologist Delbert Elliott has conducted analyses of youthful offending and its relation to race and class.[9] In longitudinal studies of data from the National Youth Survey he has found several intriguing patterns:

- Self-reported rates of offending behavior by young males are high across all racial groups, with 42 percent of males reporting that they have engaged in some form of violent offending—aggravated assault, robbery, or rape—by the age of 27.
- Black males engage in serious violent offending at higher rates than white males, but not dramatically so. By age 27, 48 percent of black males have reported at least one instance of such behavior, compared to 38 percent of white males, a ratio of about 5:4. For lower class males, the differences are even smaller, about 7:6 black to white.

- Offenses by blacks are more likely to lead to arrest than those of whites. While the self-reported involvement of adolescent males represents a 3:2 black/white differential, the arrest ratio is 4:1.
- While there are no dramatic differences in the degree to which blacks and whites become involved in offending at some point, blacks are nearly twice as likely to *continue* offending into their 20s. The key variable in this regard is the adoption of adult roles. Thus, among young adults who are employed or living in a stable relationship, there are no significant differences in the persistence of offending by race.

Overall, these studies suggest that while criminal behavior cuts across race and class lines, the societal response to these behaviors may significantly influence the course of a potential criminal career. Decisions regarding the most effective balance of responses by law enforcement, social services, and community intervention are critical in determining many of these outcomes.

Racial Bias in the Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system has historically served as a focal point of much of societal racism. A long legacy of practices such as the convict leasing system, extra-judicial lynchings, and police brutality have shaped the history of African Americans and the criminal justice system. Over the past 30 years, though, significant change has occurred in some aspects of the system. In many jurisdictions minorities have moved into positions of leadership within law enforcement, the courts, and corrections systems. Supreme Court decisions have placed restrictions on such practices as prosecutorial bias in jury selection. Despite these constructive changes, though, racial disproportions have worsened over this period of time.

In assessing the extent to which racial bias within the criminal justice system has contributed to these disparities, there is mixed research evidence. Imposition of the death penalty provides the most compelling evidence for ongoing racial disparity. A series of studies has demonstrated that, controlling for a wide range of variables, the race of both victim and offender has a significant impact on the determination of a sen-

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[8] David A. Harris, " 'Driving While Black' and All Other Traffic Offenses: The Supreme Court and Pretextual Traffic Stops," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 87 (summer 1997), p. 562.

[9] Delbert S. Elliott, "Serious Violent Offenders: Onset, Developmental Course, and Termination—The American Society of Criminology 1993 Presidential Address," *Criminology*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1994): 1–21.

tence of death as opposed to life in prison. David Baldus and colleagues, for example, found that murder defendants charged with killing whites faced a 4.3 times greater chance of receiving death than those charged with killing blacks.[10]

In looking at sentencing outcomes for other offenses, the research evidence is less clear regarding whether minorities receive harsher sentences than whites. A number of studies have found little difference in sentences imposed when controlling for relevant variables, particularly the severity of the offense and the offender's prior record. A 1990 Rand study, for example, concluded that offenders in California generally received comparable sentences regardless of race, for most offenses.[11] The one exception was in the area of drug sentences, a distinction that we will explore below.

Other research illuminates the complexity of these findings. A review of prosecutorial decisionmaking conducted by John Hagan and Ruth Peterson suggests that prosecutors stereotype cases according to case-specific characteristics, by making racially biased assessments of the credibility of the victim and offender as witnesses. Nonwhite victims tend to be considered less credible witnesses, while white victims, especially of nonwhite defendants, are considered highly credible.[12] Since most crime is intraracial, committed against victims of the same race, these dynamics may actually benefit black defendants but penalize black victims in some cases. Thus, studies that conclude that no racial bias can be detected at sentencing may actually be overlooking more complex victim-offender racial dynamics.

Research on sentencing in a number of jurisdictions has concluded that disparity based on race does in fact occur. One of the more sophisticated such studies examined case processing and sentencing outcomes for persons arrested for a felony offense in New York State, for the years 1990–92. Controlling for factors including prior criminal history, gender, and county, the researchers found that for the more serious offenses, there was relatively little difference in sentencing, although it was estimated that 300 black and Hispanic offenders who received prison terms would not have had they been white. For property offenses and misdemeanors, though, minorities were considerably more likely to receive jail terms, resulting in an additional 4,000 sentences a year for minorities statewide.[13] Similar results regarding sentencing in less serious cases have been found in other studies.

The key issue in this regard appears to lie in the use of discretion by the courts when sentencing offenders. Violent offenders, regardless of their race or ethnicity, are quite likely to be sentenced to prison. For less serious offenders, however, where there is an option but no *obligation* to sentence an offender to prison, prosecutors and judges are making decisions in each case about whether an offender will, for example, receive 6 months in jail, or be required to enter a treatment program and make restitution to a victim.

It would be a mistake simply to attribute the results of such studies to prosecutorial and judicial racist beliefs; in some jurisdictions a significant number of prosecutors and judges are minorities, prosecuting and sentencing other minorities to terms of incarceration. The results instead may reflect the degree to which offenders bring different sets of resources with them to the court system. For example, do white offenders have greater access to private defense attorneys, who can devote more time to their cases, to try to convince prosecutors and judges that a jail or prison term is not warranted? Do they have greater access to expert psychiatric testimony, or can they afford to subsidize placement in a substance abuse treatment program? Or, is unconscious racism at play: Do whites speak in a language and manner that is more comfortable to the decisionmakers in the courtroom?

These questions have important implications for developing remedies for the racial disparities that are so prominent in the criminal justice system. While some might advocate that a solution to minority overrepresentation in the prison sys-

[10] David C. Baldus, Charles Pulaski, and George Woodworth, "Comparative Review of Death Sentences: An Empirical Study of the Georgia Experience," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 74 (fall 1983), pp. 661–753.

[11] Stephen Klein, Joan Petersilia, and Susan Turner, "Race and Imprisonment Decisions in California," *Science* (Feb. 16, 1990).

[12] John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson, "Criminal Inequality in America: Patterns and Consequences," in John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson, *Crime and Inequality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 28.

[13] James F. Nelson, *Disparities in Processing Felony Arrests in New York State, 1990–92* (Albany, NY: Division of Criminal Justice Services, 1995).

tem would be to sentence more white offenders to prison, such an approach would be extremely costly, and would not alleviate any of the harms suffered by minority communities.

The alternative approach is to examine the factors that enable white, or middle-class, offenders to be sentenced to nonprison terms more frequently, and to replicate those conditions for low-income people. For example, if middle-class offenders have greater access to drug treatment resources, courts and communities could expand such services to make them accessible to a broader range of offenders. Additionally, greater resources could be devoted to indigent defense services, a proposal to which Attorney General Janet Reno has frequently called attention.

Drug Policies and Racial Disparity

Since 1980, the "war on drugs" has been the most significant factor contributing to the rise of prison and jail populations. Drug policies have also had a disproportionate impact on African Americans and have exacerbated the racial disparities that already existed within the criminal justice system. This has come about in two ways: First, drug offenders overall have increased as a proportion of the criminal justice population, and second, the proportion of African Americans among drug offenders has been increasing.

From 1980 to 1995, drug arrests nationally nearly tripled from 581,000 to 1,476,000, thus bringing nearly a million additional drug cases to the court system each year. Over the course of this period, drug cases came to be treated much more harshly. Primarily as a result of mandatory sentencing policies adopted by all 50 states and the federal government, convicted drug offenders are now far more likely to be sentenced to prison than in the past. Justice Department data reveal that the chances of a drug arrestee being sentenced to prison rose by 447 percent between 1980 and 1992.

The combined impact of increased drug arrests, along with harsher sentencing policies, has led to a vast expansion of drug offenders in the nation's prisons and jails. Whereas in 1980, 1 of every 16 state prison inmates was incarcerated for a drug offense, by 1995, 1 of every 4 prisoners was a drug offender. The increase from 19,000 drug offenders in 1980 to 225,000 in 1995 represented more than a 1,000 percent increase in this 15-year period.

While the numbers of inmates in the federal prison system are smaller overall, the scale of the increase has been similar. The 4,900 federal drug offenders in 1980 represented 25 percent of the inmate population. This grew to 51,700, or 60 percent, by 1995. Looking at prisons and jails combined, there are now an estimated 400,000 inmates either awaiting trial or serving time for a drug offense, out of a total inmate population of 1.7 million.

As these policies have been implemented, they have increasingly affected African American and Hispanic communities. The African American proportion of drug arrests has risen from 25 percent in 1980 to 37 percent in 1995. Hispanic and African American inmates are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be incarcerated for a drug offense. As of 1991, 33 percent of Hispanic state prison inmates had been convicted of a drug offense, 25 percent of blacks, and 12 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

In recent years much attention has also been devoted to discussion of the federal crack/cocaine sentencing disparities. As a result of mandatory sentencing legislation passed by Congress in 1986 and 1988, crack cocaine offenses are punished far more harshly than powder cocaine crimes. Whereas the sale of 500 grams of powder cocaine results in a mandatory 5-year prison term, only 5 grams of crack cocaine is required to trigger the same mandatory penalty. Since crack cocaine is manufactured from powder cocaine these sentencing policies create a set of odd consequences. For example, a major dealer in powder cocaine who is apprehended with 499 grams of the drug will receive at most 1 year in federal prison. But when those 499 grams are converted to crack and distributed at the street level, someone possessing just 5 grams will receive a mandatory 5 years in prison.

The racial disparities created by these policies have been dramatic, and have resulted both from the sentencing legislation and law enforcement practices. In 1995–96, for example, 86 percent of persons charged with crack trafficking offenses in the federal system were African American, while blacks represented just 30 percent of persons charged with powder cocaine offenses.[14] Federal prosecutors have often contended that the high numbers of black crack

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[14] United States Sentencing Commission, *1996 Sourcebook of Federal Sentencing Statistics*, tab. 29.

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prosecutions reflect the proportions of large-scale traffickers in crack, who qualify for federal prosecution because of their substantial role in the drug trade. Data analyzed by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, though, cast doubt on this contention. In the commission's analysis of crack defendants in 1992, only 5.5 percent of the defendants were classified as high-level dealers, while 63.7 percent were considered street-level dealers or couriers, and 30.8 percent were mid-level dealers.[15]

The ways in which the racial disparities in the prosecution of drug offenses come about are complex. Overall drug use by African Americans is not substantially different than for other demographic groups. Household surveys conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have found that blacks represent 15 percent of monthly drug users, roughly comparable to their 13 percent share of the national population. For drug selling, there is no means of estimating precisely whether African Americans are more engaged in these activities than other groups, although a National Institute of Justice analysis of drug transactions in six cities found that respondents were most likely to report using a main source who was of their own racial or ethnic background.[16]

A report issued by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, for example, assessed differences in the white suburban drug markets and inner-city black and Hispanic neighborhoods of Milwaukee.[17] While drug dealing was prevalent in each of the communities, the inner-city sales tended to be neighborhood based, often taking place on street corners. In contrast, the suburban distribution of cocaine and other drugs took place by word of mouth through contacts at work, bars, athletic leagues, and alternative cultural events such as "raves." Suburban sales locations were more hidden from law enforcement than were those in the inner-city neighborhoods, but they were "not very difficult to locate," in the words of the author.

Most criminal justice observers believe that these disparities have emerged as a result of the underlying assumptions behind the "war on drugs." Unlike crimes such as murder or armed robbery where it is clear that a strong law enforcement response is immediately necessary, drug crimes offer a range of policy options by which to respond, with increased law enforcement representing just one choice.

A justification that is often presented for the heavy law enforcement presence in low-income communities is that these communities have distinguishing characteristics in regard to drug sales. In many such communities drug sales are more likely to take place in open air drug markets, in contrast to middle-income communities where they are more commonly conducted behind closed doors. Thus, in the low-income communities, drug use is both more disruptive to community life and provides an easier target for law enforcement.

From this point of view, the disproportionate impact of the "war on drugs" on minority communities might appear somewhat reasonable. The problem with this assumption, though, is that the available policy options are *not* to just make drug arrests or to do nothing. Rather, a whole range of family and community interventions could plausibly address substance abuse problems. These would include support for preschool families, job creation, community-based policing, expanded treatment options, and other services. A consistent body of research has demonstrated that treatment interventions for substance abuse are far more cost effective than continued reliance on an expanded prison system. The Rand Corporation, for example, has estimated that investing an additional $1 million in drug treatment programs would reduce 15 times more serious crime than expanding the use of mandatory prison sentences for drug offenders.[18]

Despite these and similar findings, federal drug spending through both Republican and Democratic administrations since the early 1980s has emphasized the back-end responses of law enforcement and incarceration over the front-end approaches of prevention and treatment. Approximately two-thirds of the current

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[15] United States Sentencing Commission, *Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy*, February 1995, tab. 18.

[16] K. Jack Riley, *Crack, Powder Cocaine, and Heroin: Drug Purchase and Use Patterns in Six U.S. Cities*, National Institute of Justice, December 1997, p. 1.

[17] John M. Hagedorn, *The Business of Drug Dealing in Milwaukee*, Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, June 1998.

[18] Jonathan P. Caulkins, et al., *Mandatory Minimum Drug Sentences: Throwing Away the Key or the Taxpayers' Money?* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1997), p. xxiv.

$16 billion federal allocation for antidrug spending is designated for law enforcement purposes, a proportion that has held steady for 15 years.

By choosing to focus primarily on law enforcement and incarceration, therefore, policymakers have implicitly chosen an approach that both worsens racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and is demonstrably less effective in responding to the problem of drug abuse than other options. This approach has not necessarily been consciously adopted with the intent of locking up more black males, but in the failure to anticipate its likely consequences, policymakers have contributed to such an outcome.

Intended and Unintended Consequences

The stated intent of policies that result in large-scale incarceration is to respond to and control crime. While the decline of crime in recent years has been cited by some as due in part to the rising number of people in prison, the evidence in this regard is ambiguous at best. Proponents of greater incarceration point to the 17 percent decline in crime since 1992, a time when the prison population rose by 51 percent, as evidence that prisons reduce crime. But in the 7 years just preceding this, the prison population rose by 79 percent, yet crime rates *increased* by 17 percent. Looking over a broader timeframe, the nearly six-fold increase in the prison population from 200,000 in 1973, to 1.2 million in 1997, has not had any dramatic impact on crime overall. In a 1993 analysis, the National Research Council asked what impact the tripling of time served for violent crime had between 1975 and 1989, and answered, "Apparently, very little."[19] Other factors in recent years that have been coincident with the increased prison population—a decline in the drug trade, efforts to remove guns from juveniles, the expansion of community policing, a growing economy—are much more likely explanations for recent drops in crime.

While much attention has been focused on the relationship between incarceration and crime, comparatively little analysis has been conducted on what might be termed the unintended consequences of large-scale incarceration of the sort that is now quite prevalent in many African American communities. That is, are there family and community dynamics that come into play once the scale of incarceration reaches a certain threshold?

One area of inquiry relates to the effect of imprisonment on deterring crime. It is generally assumed that since people fear the prospect of going to prison, some may refrain from crime as a result. But what happens to that deterrent effect as the experience of prison becomes quite pervasive in a community? Since going to prison is now a commonplace event in some neighborhoods, the prison experience may come to be seen almost as an inevitable part of growing up for many black males, and one over which many individuals believe they have little control.

While the impact of imprisonment on individual offenders is direct, there are also a set of consequences for the families and communities of offenders. These will vary significantly depending on the individual and the offense. Removal of a violent offender who is terrorizing a neighborhood brings some level of public safety to a community. But what about removing large numbers of property or drug offenders? Some modest reductions in crime may be achieved, but negative consequences may ensue as well.

One effect of the high rate of incarceration of African American males has been to contribute to the declining number of marriageable men in the African American community. Along with high rates of homicide, AIDS-related deaths, and other factors, this has created a substantial imbalance in the male-female ratio among adult African Americans. Whereas gender ratios for African Americans at birth are about 102–103 males for every 100 females, by the age range 40–44, this declines to 86 males per 100 females, whereas white rates are 100:100 for this group.[20] Further, men who have been imprisoned or are likely to be so are hardly strong marriage prospects.

The large-scale reach of the criminal justice system also may interfere with the informal mechanisms of crime control that exist in varying degrees in all communities. This dynamic involves the influence of families, schools, religious bodies, and other institutions to transmit values and promote positive role models. Neighborhoods with high levels of joblessness and so-

[19] National Research Council, *Understanding and Preventing Violence* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1993), p. 6.

[20] David T. Courtwright, "The Drug War's Hidden Toll," *Issues in Science and Technology* (winter 1996–97), p. 73.

cial disorganization may be less able to have parents and neighborhood leaders assert the type of influence that would bring greater social cohesion in more well-off neighborhoods.

The negative consequences of high rates of incarceration may well extend to the next generation of children. Children whose parents are imprisoned may develop feelings of shame, humiliation, and a loss of social status. This may lead to acting out in school and a distrust of authority figures. The changing economic circumstances of families experiencing imprisonment may also lead to greater housing relocation and transitory populations, resulting in less cohesive neighborhoods. In far too many cases, these children may come to represent the next generation of offenders.

The impact of the criminal justice system on communities goes beyond issues of well-being and family stabilization to issues of political influence, as well. One of the most significant areas in which this emerges is voting rights. As a result of laws that disenfranchise felons and ex-felons in various states, an estimated 1.4 million African American males, or 13 percent of the black male adult population, is either currently or permanently disenfranchised as a result of a felony conviction.[21] In 14 states, a felony conviction can result in lifetime disenfranchisement, and in 7 of these states, an estimated one in four black males is permanently disenfranchised. Thus, not only are criminal justice policies contributing to the disproportionate incarceration of African Americans, but imprisonment itself then reduces the collective political ability to influence these policies.

Projections for the Future

With crime rates having declined for the past 6 years, one might have thought that prison populations also would have begun to decline. Common sense would suggest that with fewer crimes being committed, there would be fewer offenders to be locked up. In fact, though, nothing of the sort has happened. Both the total national prison population, as well as the number of incarcerated African American males have

risen by about 40 percent during this 6-year period.

The primary reason why these institutional populations have continued to increase is increasingly harsh federal and state sentencing policies. The establishment of these policies also suggests that absent any change, the number and proportion of African American males under the supervision of the criminal justice system is likely to increase over the next 10 years, and racial disparities will grow even wider. These increases can be anticipated for several reasons.

First, it is likely that the prison population overall will continue to grow in coming years. A survey of state corrections agencies found that state officials projected that the 1994 prison population would rise by 51 percent by the year 2000.[22] Despite falling crime rates, a variety of sentencing policies adopted in the past 15 years are contributing to the burgeoning of the prison population. These include the mandatory sentencing laws now in effect in all 50 states and the federal system, the "three strikes and you're out" laws in nearly half the states, and newly adopted "truth in sentencing" policies that will increase the time served in prison for many offenders by requiring that they serve 85 percent of their sentence. Preliminary indications of this trend are already evident in research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which show that the percentage of sentence served prior to release increased from 38 percent in 1990 to 44 percent in 1996.[23]

With African Americans representing half the national prison population, any increase will clearly affect them in a substantial way. It is likely, though, that the racial disparities we observe today will actually worsen as prison populations rise, primarily due to the impact of drug policies. As we have seen, drug arrests and prosecutions represent the most significant change in the criminal justice system since the early 1980s. These policies have disproportionately affected minorities. To the extent that drug offenders continue to comprise a substantial portion of the inmate population, it is likely that the

[21] Jamie Fellner and Marc Mauer, "Losing the Vote: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws in the United States," Human Rights Watch and The Sentencing Project, October 1998.

[22] Amanda Wunder, "Prison Population Projections," *Corrections Compendium*, March 1995.

[23] Paula M. Ditton and Doris James Wilson, "Truth in Sentencing in State Prisons," Bureau of Justice Statistics, January 1999.

African American share of the prison population will grow as well.

None of these developments are preordained, of course. Most criminal justice officials now recognize that prison populations represent public policy choices as much as they do crime rates. Thus, decisions regarding which types of offenses should represent priorities for prosecution, what sentencing options exist for judges, and legislative policies regarding sentencing and time served in prison, will all play a significant role in determining the size and composition of the prison population.

In assessing future trends in crime and the criminal justice system it is critical to engage in a broad and proactive perspective. As we have seen, the contention that there is a coming wave of "superpredators" on the horizon has little basis in reality. Even if this were true, though, one can consider the policy options that it presents. The predicted coming generation of hard-core criminals would be primarily composed of boys who are 5 years old today, but who would be believed to develop into high rate offenders 10 years from now. A society that anticipated these developments has one of two means by which to respond. It could begin a massive prison construction program designed to have sufficient space to house these high-rate offenders when they unleash their projected crime wave. Or, it could invest in a variety of family, community, and school-based programs designed to reduce the prospects that this crime wave would take place. It would seem that only a society with an extremely bleak view of the future would choose the former course in public policy.

Approaches to Reducing Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System

Since racial disparities in the criminal justice system arise from a complex set of circumstances, there are no "quick fix" solutions to the problem. Only a multifaceted approach can respond to many of the underlying social and economic forces that have contributed to the current situation. Nevertheless, within the criminal justice system, there are a variety of policy and programmatic changes that could have a direct impact on the scale of incarceration and the degree of racial disparity within the prison system. In order to accomplish these goals, it is first nec-

essary to establish a framework for such change. This would include the following:

- *Jurisdictional commitment to reducing disparity.* Efforts to reduce disparity will only succeed if there is a jurisdictionwide commitment to address the problem. Otherwise, efforts to reduce disparity at one point in the system may be offset by countervailing actions within other components of the system.
- *Coordinated efforts by relevant actors.* Approaches to reducing disparity require a coordinated effort by all the relevant actors in the system, including law enforcement, prosecution, defense, judiciary, corrections, probation, and parole.
- *Public safety focus.* Approaches to reducing racial disparity should not be inconsistent with improving public safety and, in fact, generally represent rational public policy on crime control. Thus, any proposals to reduce disparities should also assess the crime control impact of the proposed changes.

Specific recommendations for change can be considered in the areas of legislative change, criminal justice officials' initiatives, and criminal justice/community partnerships. The following are suggested means of promoting efforts to reduce racial disparities.

1. Legislative Actions

- *Reconsider Mandatory Sentencing Policies*

Mandatory sentencing policies, particularly for drug offenses, have contributed to the escalating number of minorities in prison. While these policies have proved to be politically popular, they have also resulted in the incarceration of many low-level offenders at great expense. A vast body of research, as well as practitioner perspectives, suggest that mandatory sentences are unnecessary for crime control purposes, and have a variety of negative consequences. Repeal of mandatory sentencing laws would thus provide one of the most significant steps that could be immediately undertaken in this regard.

In light of the current absence of political will to repeal mandatory sentencing, several interim reforms can be considered by policymakers to lessen the negative impact of these policies:

- *"Safety valve" provisions.* Recognizing the impact of mandatory sentencing on low-level federal offenders, in 1994 Congress adopted a "safety valve" that grants judges wider discretion for offenders who have limited criminal history and no involvement with violence. This has resulted in 4,000 offenders a year being sentenced to a shorter prison term than would otherwise have been possible. Congress and state legislatures could now consider an expansion of the "safety valve" to a broader category of offenders.
- *Restore practitioner discretion.* Criminal justice leaders in a number of jurisdictions have utilized their discretion to avoid some of the excesses of mandatory sentencing, while providing effective responses to offenders. "The Drug Treatment Alternative" to Prison program developed by Brooklyn, New York, District Attorney Charles Hynes, for example, diverts drug offenders facing mandatory prison terms into long-term residential treatment programs. Recidivism rates for offenders completing the program are considerably below those of comparable offenders sentenced to prison.
- *Sunset legislation.* Given the controversy regarding the effectiveness of mandatory sentencing, legislatures could adopt sunset provisions that would result in the laws expiring after a set period of time unless renewed. Such a provision would thus require a legislative review of the effectiveness of any legislation, and would permit appropriate modifications.

- *Equalize Penalties for Crack and Powder Cocaine*
The racial disparities that have resulted from the federal sentencing distinctions for crack and powder cocaine offenses have been well documented. The 100:1 quantity disparity has contributed to the disproportionate number of African Americans in prison, as well as causing great resentment in the black community. Equalizing penalties for offenses involving the two forms of cocaine would reduce some of the racial disparities in incarceration, as well as some of the inappropriately lengthy sentences for lower-level offenders.

- *Develop Racial/Ethnic Impact Statements for Sentencing Policy*
In recent years some jurisdictions have required that fiscal impact statements be prepared for any proposed legislative changes in sentencing policy. Similarly, legislatures could require that projections be developed to estimate the racial/ethnic impact of sentencing legislation prior to its adoption. Such a policy would not prohibit legislatures from adopting new sentencing legislation, but would allow policymakers to assess whether any unwarranted disparities might result. This would aid in consideration of alternative crime control measures that could produce effective results without undue disparities.

- *Establish a Goal of Reducing the Nonviolent Offender Population by 50 Percent Over 10 Years*
Nonviolent property and drug offenders now constitute 53 percent of state prison inmates, an increase from 45.5 percent of the total in 1986. Nationally, this represents more than a half million inmates and a total cost of incarceration of more than $10 billion. Legislatures could adopt a policy goal of reducing this population by 5 percent a year for 10 years, using the funds saved on imprisonment for community-based supervision and treatment programs.

- *Increase Funding for Indigent Defense and Sentencing Advocacy*
To the extent that minorities in the criminal justice system are disproportionately low income, they do not obtain the advantages that wealthier defendants bring to the system. These advantages include access to attorneys with reasonable caseloads, sentencing consultants, and diagnostic services. Greater provision of these services would aid courts in fashioning more appropriate sentencing options for many low-income offenders, and would likely result in diversion from prison for some minority offenders.

2. Criminal Justice Officials' Initiatives
- *Expand Drug Policy Options*
Criminal justice officials are increasingly recognizing the importance of providing drug treatment as a component of effective sentencing and corrections policy. Drug treatment might reduce the number of minorities, and others, in

prison in one of two ways: by diverting offenders to treatment programs rather than incarceration, and by reducing drug addiction and therefore recidivism. Options in this area include drug courts, prosecutorial diversion programs, in-prison residential treatment, and other approaches.

- *Expand the Use of Alternative Sentencing*

A variety of alternative sentencing programs have been developed in recent years. These programs include community service, day reporting centers, victim-offender mediation, and a variety of substance abuse treatment programs. While these programs' prison reduction results are mixed, they have the potential to both divert offenders from a prison sentence, and to address the issues and needs of offenders and victims.

- *Monitor Alternative Sentencing Programs to Assess Racial Balance*

In many jurisdictions, white offenders are more likely to be sentenced to probation and alternative sanctions than are minority offenders. This may be due to relevant factors such as crime severity and criminal record, or to system bias. Jurisdictions can attempt to monitor the racial/ethnic composition of offenders sentenced to alternatives, in order to determine whether minority offenders are appropriately represented, and if not, to conduct an analysis of the reasons for disparity.

3. Criminal Justice/Community Partnerships

- *Increase Community-based Diversion from the Criminal Justice System*

Many young and first-time offenders are stigmatized by their contact with the criminal justice system, without necessarily receiving either appropriate supervision or support. Opportunities exist to divert many of these offenders to individuals and organizations which can better focus on problems that are most effectively handled in a community setting. These could include

mentoring programs, counseling, tutorial support, and other options.

- *Strengthen the Link between Communities and the Justice System*

The experience of community policing in recent years has demonstrated that a "problem-solving" approach to crime can be effective in increasing public safety, while also building valuable links to the community. Variations on this model are now being explored by prosecutors, probation departments, and other components of the system. These approaches hold the potential of both increasing minority confidence in the justice system, and building on community strengths to promote public safety.

Conclusion

The origins of the crisis of African American males as it regards the criminal justice system extend far back in the nation's history. Unfortunately, despite admirable progress in reducing racial bias in many areas of society during the past several decades, the overrepresentation of black males in the justice system has clearly worsened.

While the situation is urgent in many regards, there is some reason for cautious optimism. Support for change in criminal justice policies and programs has been growing in recent years. The introduction of drug courts, prison-based treatment programs, and community policing are all indications of public and policymaker support for problem-solving responses to individual and community crises. In addition, many communities are now engaged in locally based programs that provide support to young people. These include mentoring programs, recreational activities, and personal skills development. The challenge for the community at large is to engage in broad discussions of the mix of family, community, and government initiatives that can begin to reverse the cycle that has been set in motion in recent years.

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Education

Improving the Educational Achievement of African American Males in the Third Millennium

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The perplexing questions about African American males' academic performance in the nation's elementary and secondary schools, as well as their small and declining representation at the collegiate, graduate, and first-professional degree levels, continue to remain unanswered as we approach the next millennium. Even though much factual data and anecdotal evidence exist to confirm the gravity of this situation and the identification of some of the reasons for this unfortunate circumstance, a variety of educational and community-based organizations have made serious efforts to improve this situation. However, having investigated this issue from a variety of vantage points in a major metropolitan school district more than 10 years ago (Garibaldi, 1988), and having had some of those findings replicated in two other school districts (Garibaldi, 1992), my perspectives and philosophy on the reasons for the poor academic performance of many of these young men, as well as their notable absence in the higher education sector and their minimal educational attainment at all levels of the educational continuum, have not changed significantly since that report was released in 1988. Interventions and strategies that have been designed specifically to improve the performance of African American males in America over the last 10 years show signs that some progress has indeed been made. Thus, it is important to improve upon, replicate, and promote those initiatives that have been developed to expand the pool of academically successful African American males. The majority of the second half of this paper, therefore, focuses on a variety of realistic educational prescriptions and strategies that can reduce the severity of this situation at the beginning of the 21st century.

Before presenting some of the data on the status of African Americans in education, it is necessary to state again that some African American males are indeed succeeding in education. However, the numbers and the percentage of African American males' enrollment and attainment of educational goals indicate that more must be done to expand this group's opportunities for obtaining a first-rate education in our nation's schools, colleges, and universities. These successful African American males have performed well because they have worked hard, have been encouraged and motivated to aspire to and reach high goals, and have been supported by a variety of individuals and organizations that believe in their academic potential. As one example, this paper highlights the work of University of Maryland Baltimore County president Freeman Hrabowski III, who began in 1988 a special program known as the Meyerhoff Scholars to increase the numbers of high-achieving African American males pursuing graduate and professional degrees (Hrabowski, Maton, and Grief, 1998). The results from this program and others similar to it confirm strongly the possibility that much larger numbers of African American males can perform well and compete in challenging educational settings.

To accomplish this ambitious yet realistic goal, however, our society must address the fundamental reasons for the less than satisfactory performance of African American males in elementary and secondary schools, and their low undergraduate numbers and percentages in colleges and universities, as well as their representation in graduate and professional schools. These reasons are:

- low expectations of African American males' achievement potential;
- low teacher expectations of male, particularly minority, students;
- insufficient reinforcement of academic success at the lower grades;
- declining levels of achievement growth beyond the elementary school grades;
- limited male role models and individuals who can mentor these young men in the upper elementary grades;
- limited attention to the financial rewards that can be gained by the pursuit of higher educational attainment; and
- lack of social support systems in the community and society in general.

While the majority of the aforementioned reasons postulated by this author can be confirmed with empirical research, they evolve more confidently from a 25-year career in education working as a teacher and administrator with students, particularly African American males, in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities in different parts of the country. In the next two sections of the paper, several of the above explanations for African American males' low academic performance are supported by two sources: (1) data from an action-oriented research study conducted by the author 10 years ago, and (2) by data comparing the enrollment and educational attainment of African American males and females at the high school, college, graduate, and professional levels.

The 1987–1988 Study on the Status of Black Males in New Orleans Public Schools

In this author's 1987–1988 study on the status of African American males in the New Orleans public schools, the results indicated that the majority of students, most of whom were African American in this school district, did want to achieve, but the standards established for them by teachers appeared to be much lower than the expectations of the students. For example, in a survey of more than 2,250 African American males in the New Orleans school district, 95 percent reported that they expected to graduate from high school. However, 40 percent responded that they believed their teachers did not set high enough goals for them, and 60 percent suggested that their teachers should push

them harder. (Black females in the study responded similarly to the boys on these items.) However, when a random sample of 500 teachers were surveyed, almost 6 out of every 10 of the 318 who responded indicated that they did not believe their black male students would go to college. This finding became even more significant when the analysis of the backgrounds of teachers revealed that 60 percent of those who responded taught in elementary schools, 70 percent had 10 or more years of experience, and 65 percent of them were black! Thus, the opinions, perceptions, and expectations of teachers impact strongly students' potential academic performance and influence what is taught and what standards are used to gauge students' success. The latter viewpoint is more popularly known in the literature as the "self-fulfilling prophecy theory," and it is particularly relevant when attempts are made to explain why students, and minority males specifically, do not perform as well as other students (Irvine, 1985, 1990). But because this is an attitudinal factor, it is one that can be changed to produce more positive academic results for all students.

The New Orleans study also pointed out that there was a major gap between the perceptions of parents and teachers with respect to students' aspirations and academic expectations. This was especially true for African American males. Eight out of every 10 of the 3,523 parents surveyed, for example, indicated that they believed their sons expected to go to college, compared to the fact that only 4 out of every 10 teachers believed that they had aspirations of attending college. However, the survey also showed that one-fourth of those parents responded that they had never gone to their child's school for parental conferences during which report cards are usually given out and children's performance in classes is discussed. The importance of this finding must not be overlooked. For, as I stated in 1992,

Because some parents do not (or cannot) attend parental conferences, it is very likely that some teachers may misinterpret parental absenteeism as a sign that the children of these parents are not interested in finishing school or do not have positive educational aspirations. This may further confirm teachers' skepticism regarding African American male children's futures in particular. Given the latter possibility as well as the large perception gap that apparently ex-

ists between parents' and teachers' appraisals of African American males' educational expectations and aspirations, more must be done to increase the amount and quality of communications between parents and teachers to minimize incorrect interpretations about these students' motivation and desire to succeed academically (Garibaldi, 1992, p. 7).

Educational Attainment of African American Males

High School Completion Rates of African American Males and Females: 1976 and 1996

Over the last 20 years, the high school completion rate for 18- to 24-year-old African American males has increased from 62.3 percent (936,000) in 1976 to 71.3 percent (1,199,000) in 1996. The corresponding figures for African American females, however, were 71.8 percent (1,302,000) in 1976 and 78.7 percent (1,539,000) in 1996 (Wilds and Wilson, 1998, p. 77). During this period, African American 18- to 24-year-old males had their highest graduation rates in 1990 (75.9 percent), 1994 (73.7 percent), and in 1995 (75.1 percent). Even though African Americans' 1996 high school graduation rates are not equal to the national average for all Americans in this age group (i.e., 81.6 percent—a 1.5 percent increase since 1976), these high school graduation rates for both groups are favorable and encouraging.[1] However, if a larger number and percentage of African American males had completed high school, the overall rate for African Americans would be almost equal to the national average. This is an attainable goal if more of the strategies, which I will describe later, are employed in many of the nation's public schools, where 94 percent of African Americans attend school (Frederick D. Patterson Institute, 1997).

College Participation Rates of African American Males and Females: 1976 and 1996

Using 1976 high school graduation data as a baseline, the annual percentage of African American males attending college in 1996 is almost the same when comparing these two time periods. In 1976, 35.4 percent (331,000) of 18- to 24-year-old high school graduates were enrolled in college. In 1996, the percentage of African American males attending college was 35.2 per-

cent, but the total number was 91,000 more than in 1976, or 422,000 (Wilds and Wilson, 1998, p. 77). The comparable numbers for African American female high school graduates were 32 percent (417,000) in 1976 and 36.4 percent (561,000) in 1996. Thus, the percentages of college-going African American males and females are about the same and have not changed appreciably over the last 20 years. However, the overall gap of African American males and females in college has grown wider each year despite this almost equal percentage of high school graduates.

In 1996, almost 1½ million (1,499,000) African Americans were enrolled in higher education institutions. While African Americans accounted for about 10 percent of the 14,300,000 students in college, the number of African American females exceeded the number of African American males by 372,000, i.e., 936,000 compared to 564,000! Of this total enrollment, 241,000 more African American students attended four-year institutions compared to two-year institutions: 870,000 versus 629,000. This total indicates that 42 percent of African Americans in 1996 were enrolled in two-year institutions, which is almost the same proportion as 1976 when 41 percent were enrolled in those colleges. However, when analyzing the entire data, it is important to note that African American male enrollment in higher education increased 29.3 percent between 1986 and 1996, and by 44.9 percent for African American females between this same period. Such growth must be enhanced to obtain a higher number of undergraduate degrees for both groups, but particularly African American males.

Bachelor's Degrees Conferred to African American Males and Females: 1976 and 1995

Mirroring the growing gap with respect to enrollment between African American males and females, a similar chasm is occurring with respect to each group's share of baccalaureate degrees. In 1976, African American females received 33,489 baccalaureate degrees compared to 25,026 that were awarded to African American males—or a difference of almost 8,463. By 1993 the difference had grown to 20,000 (48,989 compared to 28,883); and in 1995, the gap had grown to almost 24,000 more baccalaureate degrees awarded to black females, i.e., 55,428 versus 31,775. (Note, however, that this total figure is

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[1] For purposes of comparison, the overall graduation rates for whites in 1976 and 1996 were 82.4 percent and 82.3 percent, respectively.

almost 30,000 more than in 1976.) Even though the number of baccalaureates awarded to African American females and males has increased by 61 percent and 31 percent, respectively, between 1985 and 1995, significantly more work must be done to close the growing gap with respect to undergraduate degree production between these two groups. While academic support at the institutional level is extremely important to increasing these numbers, an even more critical solution is to assure that these students have adequate financial aid to improve their retention and graduation rates.

The aforementioned increases in the numbers of black baccalaureate recipients are partly due to the rising number of undergraduate awards made by historically black colleges and universities, or HBCUs. In 1985, for example, HBCUs awarded 16,326 bachelor's degrees; between 1991 and 1994, they awarded an average of almost 21,000 degrees to African Americans (Hoffman, Snyder & Sonneberg, 1996). The annual number of bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans by HBCUs for 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1994 were 17,930, 19,693, 22,020, and 23,434, respectively. HBCUs annually accounted for approximately 28 percent of all undergraduate degrees to African Americans between 1985 and 1994, compared to the late 1970s and early 1980s when they accounted for between 35 percent and 32 percent of all black bachelor's degrees. Nevertheless, this is still a favorable sign that HBCUs, which represent barely 3 percent of all American colleges and universities, continue to enroll and graduate a significant number of students, even though African American students have much more access to other institutions of higher education than they did previously (Garibaldi, 1997).

Graduate and First-Professional Degree Rates for African American Males and Females: 1976–95

At the graduate level, the number of African American females receiving master's degrees has almost doubled when comparing 1985 and 1995 statistics (from 8,739 to 16,068); and more African American females than males receive doctorates today. In 1976, for example, black females received 488 doctorates compared to 766 that were awarded to African American males. By 1986, however, African American males received 325 doctorates for that year compared to

505 for African American females. As was the case in 1986, females received 59 percent of the total doctorates in 1996, i.e., 780 compared to 535 for males. Thus, where African American males accounted for three-fifths of all doctorates in the 1970s, females now hold that edge as this century comes to a close.

Finally, with respect to first-professional degrees, African American females have also overtaken males in this degree category over the last 10 years (Carter and Wilson, 1997, p. 83). In 1985, African American males received 1,623 first-professional degrees compared to 1,406 that were awarded to African American females. By 1991, however, females had received 1,903 compared to black males' 1,672; and in 1994, African American women received 2,542 first-professional degrees compared to 1,902. Thus, between 1985 and 1994, African American women had increased their share of doctorates by 80 percent, compared to black males' increase of only 17.2 percent for this same period. Thus, African American females receive more undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional degrees than African American males in the late 1990s compared to their lower share of these degrees in the 1970s. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that positive gains have been achieved in each of the enrollment and degree categories over both the last 20- and 10-year periods for African American males and females combined.

Proven Strategies to Improve the Academic Achievement of African American Males

Improving the educational attainment of African American males will require the implementation of a variety of strategies in the home, at the school level, in colleges and universities, in the community, and at the national level. As was stated earlier, this is not an impossible task. But more attention must be placed on those interventions that are proving to be successful in communities across this country, rather than focusing on the negative statistics that too often precede the discussion of this serious issue. In this section, a few national and regional initiatives that have been successful in improving the academic performance, aspirations, and motivational levels of African American males are summarized. As the reader will see, the value of reinforcement, mentoring and support systems

are critical ingredients of these programs and all play essential roles in reversing the substandard performance that typically, but unfairly, characterizes the ability levels of these young men.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Family and Community Violence Prevention Program

The Family and Community Violence Prevention Program was established in 1994 through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Minority Health and Central State University to develop and sustain programmatic models for reducing and preventing family and community violence. The original agreement included support for 16 historically black colleges and universities/minority institutions (HBCUs/MIs) to establish family and community violence prevention programs. Each of these institutions, collectively known as the Minority Males Consortium, established a Family and Community Life Center, the mechanism through which violence prevention initiatives were and still are conducted to impact the academic and personal development of African American youth. This national program currently includes 19 institutions: Alcorn State University, Central State University, Chicago State University, Clark-Atlanta University, Howard University, Knoxville College, Morehouse College, Morgan State University, North Carolina A&T State University, Philander-Smith College, Prairie View A&M University, Southern University, Talladega College, Texas Southern University, Tougaloo College, University of the District of Columbia, Voorhees College, Wilberforce University, and Xavier University of Louisiana.

A primary goal of this nationwide program was the establishment of community partnerships to address the increasing incidents of violence and socially unacceptable behaviors in low-income communities. Collaborative efforts were undertaken by HBCUs/MIs with local social service agencies, churches, government agencies, schools, and community-based organizations. Through these partnerships, each of the family life centers began, among other interventions, the promotion of increased educational performance by African American male students as an effective violence reduction strategy.

An important objective for using education as a violence prevention strategy was the provision of direct financial support to educators at local public schools. As an example, this kind of support was incorporated into the Xavier University of Louisiana Family Life Center (FLC), which was developed by this author. Using the findings of the 1988 study on African American males, Xavier's project was conceptually developed as and titled "An African American Males Collaborative." The primary intent was to use the entire community and its many organizational components to join as a "collaborative" to address and solve critical problems affecting young African American men in the New Orleans community, namely, high rates of black male homicides, crimes, incarceration, school suspension and dropouts, and so forth. Thus, city government and its leaders, the school district's entire staff, the local police and the juvenile justice system, community-based organizations, local foundations, other colleges and universities, and other groups became an extremely effective and powerful force that could systematically address the numerous issues related to African American males.

One of the reasons for focusing on the development and enhancement of collaborations involving local organizations and agencies that provided services to young African American males was based on the results obtained from a local study prepared for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies by a Xavier faculty member. The study revealed that while there were more than 80 organizations focusing on African American males in the city of New Orleans, there was a lack of communication and collaboration among these programs (Blanchard, 1994). Thus, Xavier's Family Life Center hosted biannual, on-campus miniconferences, during which feasible and productive means of collaboration were discussed and planned to address community needs and concerns. Among the many initiatives that evolved, in part, from these meetings was the City Council's Conflict Resolution Task Force, which mandated the implementation of youth conflict resolution curricula in city-funded recreational activities and programs. Also, a partnership between Xavier's FLC and Each One Save One, the regional mentoring program, was established to support efforts to identify, train, screen, and place mentors in local

schools, recreational programs, etc. Additionally, the project produced one of the city's first comprehensive directories of the more than 150 community-based organizations, social services agencies, church groups, and school-related programs focusing on the needs of African American males and their families. This directory was used by parents, school officials, and community organizers, as well as many other social service agency professionals.

Recognizing the important role that teachers play in educating and motivating students, Xavier's Family Life Center also developed a competitive minigrants program for teachers in the New Orleans public schools so that they could develop or sustain initiatives focused on the overall academic success of students, particularly young African American males. These grants, which ranged from $750–$1,500, were used as a stimulus to increase and improve the academic performance, attendance, and behavior of students at participating schools. Furthermore, recognition awards (i.e., T-shirts, certificates, plaques, etc.) were provided to students who performed academically well in school. Providing reinforcement to students by giving those awards and also holding small ceremonies to recognize the school achievement of African American males was a major recommendation of the New Orleans public schools study, and these teachers and some of their principals were able to implement these supporting activities.

More than 100 minigrants were awarded to individual teachers, groups of teachers, and schools over a 3-year period. Teachers often used this support to supplement existing efforts designed to improve in-class activities, and to develop new initiatives such as after-school tutorial and homework-assistance projects. All grant recipients were required to conduct an implementation and outcome assessment of their projects. The continued funding of projects was contingent on the demonstration of a tangible and measurable impact on a project's proposed objectives (e.g., improvement of parental involvement, increasing academic performance, etc.), and many teachers were able to document the academic progress of their students as a result of the supplemental programs or activities funded through these minigrants.

The Family Life Center at Wilberforce University also focuses on educational enhancement

as a method for reducing and preventing violence among youth in the city of Xenia, Ohio. The center sponsored the Partnership in Education with Parents and Schools (PEPS) Summer Session, a summer residential program for area youth. PEPS, a yearlong program, was designed to assist elementary students in the development and enhancement of social and academic skills. Additionally, the "Man-to-Man" workshop series was initiated to allow junior and senior students from Wilberforce University to serve as mentors for approximately 60 community youth and students.

The Howard University Family Life Center (FLC), which was co-developed by this author also, was funded in 1997 through this HHS initiative. Howard's FLC includes several programs that address the problems of violence and crime affecting young people in its surrounding communities. Through its Day Program, the FLC is attempting to reduce the rates of absenteeism, tardiness and student expulsions, and increase simultaneously the average student GPA, standardized reading test scores, and levels of self-esteem among students at participating schools. These objectives are accomplished through the implementation of several initiatives, including an academic incentive program that provides rewards for positive academic performance and appropriate school behavior. Additional components of Howard University's program include an after-school program that provides tutorial, mentoring, educational, and counseling services for adolescents and adults; a summer program that includes camping, academic reinforcement, and career and educational development for minority males; and the Family Life Center steering committee, which comprises community members and is responsible for monitoring and, if necessary, revising the center's objectives to ensure that community needs are addressed. The Family Life Center is a component of the Howard University Center for Urban Progress, an interdisciplinary unit established to assist the university in addressing urban issues through applied urban research and collaborative community outreach activities

As of this date, the 19 Family Life Center programs at each of the member institutions have participated in three national conferences on Family and Community Violence Prevention to present and assess relevant data on effective

programmatic strategies for reducing incidents of violence among minority youths, particularly African American males. Additionally, public health practitioners and scholars from across the country are invited to discuss and share information on emerging and innovative violence intervention strategies for minority communities. These programs, over a short 5-year span, have made a considerable impact on the educational performance and future aspirations of many young minority men and women in several urban and rural communities.

Meyerhoff Scholars Program

The Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) was established in 1988 to help college-age African American students to succeed in the fields of science, mathematics, and engineering and to pursue professional and graduate degrees in these fields. The program was developed as a response to the concerns of Robert A. Meyerhoff, a Baltimore philanthropist, and Freeman Hrabowski, then vice president of UMBC, who noted differences between white and black male students seeking college degrees (particularly those interested in obtaining advanced degrees in the sciences). While the program initially focused on the academic success of young black males, it has included, since 1990, highly motivated and talented African American female students and high performing students of other races who demonstrated a commitment to working with minority communities (Hall, 1998).

An examination of African Americans enrolled in some of this nation's highly selective academic institutions revealed that many of these students transferred to "less-challenging" schools, dropped out or changed their areas of concentration to nontechnical majors (Hill, 1998). Dr. Hrabowski found that some of the main reasons for these occurrences were: the lack of financial resources among the parents of these students; a feeling of social isolation and an unwillingness of students to establish mentoring relationships with professors; and less academic preparation for college among black students compared with their white counterparts. Thus, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program attempted to replicate, on the campus of a predominantly white institution, the kind of close-knit, nurturing environment often found at his-

torically black colleges and universities where the majority of African American scientists and engineers have received their undergraduate, and in some cases, graduate academic training.

This program builds upon the Calculus Workshop approach developed at the University of California at Berkeley by Dr. Uri Treisman. The program focuses on 13 key components: recruitment; a summer bridge program; scholarship support; study groups; program values; a family atmosphere; personal advising and counseling; tutoring; summer research internships; faculty involvement; administrative involvement and public support; mentors; and family involvement (Hrabowski, Maton and Greif, 1998). By devoting attention to these issues, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program is able to help produce positive academic outcomes among students by utilizing the influence of five important sources of student contact, namely, peers, faculty, administrative staff, family, and community members. A compelling indication of the program's success is best demonstrated by the finding that 92.2 percent of the first four cohorts of students are currently enrolled in graduate or professional school. Additionally, Meyerhoff Scholars are more likely to maintain majors in the sciences and achieve a grade point average of at least a 3.0 in their science courses compared with other groups of equally talented students (Hrabowski, Maton and Greif, 1998).

In a 1995–96 study of program participants, 60 African American male students from UMBC and their families were interviewed. Approximately 40 percent of the young men were raised in single-parent households, while about 50 percent of the households included college-educated parents. The study identified five common characteristics that helped these families to produce academically successful students: a strong commitment to education that began during the students' early ages; a strong focus on self-determination; spiritual beliefs; a support system that included extended families; and a focus on service to others.

The young men in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program credited much of their success to the support provided by their parents. In particular, parental support and the internalization of parental values served as an important buffer against peer pressure. As one Meyerhoff Scholar indicated, "If you are black and intelligent, you

have to be better than the stereotype of a regular black person" (Hall, 1998). Furthermore, the program provided strong support that students believed was vital to their academic success. For example, approximately 90 percent of program participants received scholarships. Because Meyerhoff Scholars had a smaller amount of debt after their 4 years, compared to the financial burden of most students, Meyerhoff Scholars were able to concentrate on their studies. Students received encouragement from fellow program participants and felt a part of a group of intelligent and committed black male students. Also, regularly scheduled "family meetings" were held to discuss individual and group academic progress, and program-sponsored social and cultural events were coordinated to create an atmosphere of a large, supportive community of young scholars. Thus, it is not surprising that 92 percent of program participants indicated that the program's staff and their peers in the program contributed moderately or significantly to their academic success.

Sankofa Mentoring and Rites of Passage Program

One additional successful program worth mentioning here is the Sankofa Mentoring and Rites of Passage Program. With the support of a $400,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity has established mentoring centers across the nation to provide individual and group mentoring to hundreds of African American males. The Sankofa Mentoring and Rites of Passage Program addresses the physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social development of African American males from ages 3 to 18.

The daily program begins with a meal and is followed by school homework. It ends with individual and group dialogue during 1-hour sessions. All of the participants are required to participate in community service. The program also includes field trips to historically black colleges and universities and cultural centers, and a yearly conference on issues facing African American males.

In addition to time spent with students at the Alpha Community Mentoring Centers, mentors are available to give protégés guidance in their family and social lives. Mentoring centers are established in each of the Fraternity's five regions: Eastern, Midwestern, Southern, South-western, and Western. Each of the centers provides mentoring to at least 100 African American males. Student participants are recommended to local centers by area churches, schools, and community agencies. The fraternity's mentoring centers are open 5 days a week during after-school hours. Mentors are screened to ensure their suitability for assigned tasks. Mentoring takes place in four specific phases, starting with matching between protégé and mentor, and continuing with establishing relationships, living the relationships, and the termination (or transition) phase. This program, like the others described previously, takes full advantage of college-age and adult males who spend valuable time with young African American males as they encourage them to focus on their education so they can achieve their career aspirations. Other fraternities and sororities have established similar types of programs, in addition to providing scholarship support, and it is important that more collaborations are developed to maximize these effective efforts across the country.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the educational status of African American males and the subsequent discussion of a selected group of programs that have been implemented to improve this group's educational performance indicate clearly that progress is being made to address this situation in local communities and across this nation. But the number of males who are succeeding must be increased significantly. Through the implementation of more collaborative programs where schools, community-based organizations, and concerned individuals are involved in mentoring and related programmatic activities, the educational performance and attainment of these youth can be enhanced.

The findings of the New Orleans public schools study demonstrate convincingly that African American males, especially in the early grades, want to succeed in school and have aspirations to finish high school and pursue a college education. Because those results are in direct opposition to prevailing public opinions that imply that these youth have low ability levels and low self-concepts, it is our civic responsibility to ensure that all African American males, as well as other minority youth who are not obtaining

the full benefits of a quality education, have the opportunity to learn and reach their full academic potential. But these goals will not be achieved if we do not actively counter the inaccurate and prevailing assumptions that too many in our society accept as fact.

In addition to some of the initiatives that have been cited thus far, other nationwide programs such as the National Urban League's recently established Campaign for African American Achievement and an almost completed College Board Task Force on Minority High Achievement must also be noted because of their emphasis on proactive educational solutions that can raise the levels of academic excellence and achievement of all students in the nation's schools. Sharply stated, local and national efforts must focus attention on "what's working in schools and communities" rather than on "what's wrong in our educational settings and communities." By placing the emphasis on solutions and meaningful intervention strategies that can reduce the rates of unsatisfactory academic performance, dropouts, suspensions, and expulsions of African American males, these youth no longer become the "victims" in our society, but rather the beneficiaries of a free and open educational system. Thus, parents have a special role to play in reinforcing the aspirations of their children while schools and community organizations complement the teaching and learning in classrooms with supplementary educational programs. Simultaneously, the above-average performance of the many talented and highly motivated black male students who are succeeding in elementary and secondary schools, and also at the college and graduate and professional levels must be recognized so that these young men will fully appreciate the fact that education is an not only an investment in their future lives but also the most important factor that will determine their long-term earnings.

At a time when educational standards are becoming the norm for calibrating levels of individual student achievement in most school districts, minority students' high expectations, as the New Orleans public schools study confirmed, must be reinforced by all teachers irrespective of what they believe most students want to or can achieve in classroom settings. The importance of these factors is confirmed

further by a recently published study on the characteristics of African American high achievers. Using a cross-sectional analysis of 5,000 African males and females who scored 1200 or higher on the SAT in 1996 and who comprised only 5 percent of all black students who took the SAT, this study indicates that these successful students have a high desire to succeed academically, have higher academic aspirations than their peers who do not perform as well in the classroom or on the SAT, take more challenging courses such as calculus and honors English, have higher grade point averages and class rankings than their black peers, and participate in more "intellectually stimulating" extracurricular academic clubs in their schools (Bell-Rose, 1999). Thus, the challenge is to increase these numbers by encouraging all African American students to meet higher and rigorous standards and by developing more programs that can help these students to attain their educational goals and career aspirations.

In summary, we must work diligently to increase the numbers and percentage of African American males who complete high school, who enroll and graduate from institutions of higher education, and who pursue graduate and professional school. To accomplish these goals, we must expand existing programs designed to further and improve black male students' educational success with the assistance and support of the federal government, foundations, schools, community-based organizations, and concerned members of the community. Single entities or temporary programs cannot address these multifaceted problems; but collaborative ventures, as have been highlighted earlier, can. Legislative bodies in states as well as state and local school boards can also do their fair share by reducing class sizes, expanding the availability of more challenging curricula, and raising student performance levels on various standardized and subject-specific tests.

As this author has indicated in a recent discussion of issues related to African American education, "Change and real growth are possible, but hope must be supported by a commitment to standards, carefully designed educational programs, systematic action, and the realization that success is within reach" (Garibaldi, 1997). With continued emphasis on

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the numerous obstacles affecting African American males' educational achievement and a sustained commitment to ensuring the provision of a quality education for everyone, our nation's youth, especially African American males, can move forward with the necessary tools and resources to become productive citizens in the 21st century.

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Continuing the Dialogue: The Overrepresentation of African American Males in Special Education

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As a consequence of structural inequalities in access to knowledge and resources, students from racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States face persistent and profound barriers to educational opportunity.[1] Thus consideration must be given to these ongoing inequalities in the improvement of the quality and outcomes of education for all students. Reform initiatives have been designed to improve educational outcomes for all children, however for many culturally diverse and poor children, educational practices have proven inequitable, resulting in the overrepresentation in special programs. By the year 2000 demographers estimate that a minimum of one-third of the school population will consist of minority, special needs, and economically disadvantaged students.[2] Whereas in contrast, the population of preservice and inservice P–12 educators remains primarily European American female, which will not change in the next millennium. Apparently children of color have already reached majority status in the 25 largest school districts[3] with increasing numbers of children living under impoverished conditions.[4] These changes have impacted upon the educational experiences of minority students.

In addressing the disproportionate placement of African American students in special education, this paper applies the definition offered by Chinn and Hughes[5] as plus or minus 10 percent of the total percentage of children, based on the overall population of school-age children. The argument was relevant in 1968 when Dunn[6] pointed out the phenomenal increase in special day classes for retarded students which consisted of 60 to 80 percent of students that were minority children, and the argument is still relevant in 1999.

In 39 states, according to a *U.S. News*[7] analysis of Department of Education data, African American students are overrepresented in special education programs, compared with their percentage of the overall student population. Significantly, the analysis found that African American students are most likely to be over-represented in special education classes when they are students in predominantly *white* school districts. In some school districts, neither the number of African American students nor household demographics accounted for the high percentage of African American students. These findings tend to support arguments by critics of the special education system who attribute the overrepresentation of African American students in the system to cultural bias in testing and placement procedures, not to any inherently high level of disability.

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[1] Linda Darling-Hammond, "Inequality and access to knowledge." In *Handbook of research on multicultural education,* edited by James Banks (New York: Macmillan, 1995).

[2] H. Hodkinson, "What's ahead for education?" *Principal,* 65, 3 (1986), pp. 6–11.

[3] G. Gay, "Building cultural bridges: A bold proposal for teacher education." *Education and Urban Society,* 25, 3 (1993), pp. 285–99.

[4] H. Grossman, *Special education in a diverse society* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995).

[5] Philip Chinn & Selma Hughes, "Representation of minority students in special education classes." *Remedial and Special Education,* 8, 4 (1987), pp. 41–46.

[6] L. Dunn, "Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable?" *Exceptional Children,* 7 (1968), pp. 5–24.

[7] *See* "Separate and unequal." *U.S. News and World Report* (December 1993), pp. 41–60.

Educational experiences for minority students continue to be substantially separate and unequal. A 5-month examination of the nation's special education system by *U.S. News* has documented a network of programs that regularly use subjective testing criteria, that rely on funding formulas and identification procedures that funnel ever greater numbers of children into special programs each year and that, in state after state, include disproportionately high numbers of African American schoolchildren. More troubling, nearly 40 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*,[8] the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark school desegregation ruling, Americans continue to pay for and send their children to classrooms that are often separate and unequal.

The federal statute that has had the greatest impact on the education of American children in urban settings over the past 30 years is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).[9] IDEA expanded the definition of special education to include instruction in all settings. However despite almost 30 years of data that have demonstrated that African American children, especially males,[10] are disproportionately,[11] and inappropriately,[12] placed in special education, this unfortunate trend continues.[13]

However, the most significant ruling in American history on the battle for equal educational opportunity is *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. In *Brown*, a case involving racial segregation in public schools, the United States Supreme Court recognized the great importance of providing all children with an appropriate education. The Court relied on the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment when it held that "it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity to an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."[14]

Inequitable Practices

For many culturally diverse and poor children, educational practices have proven inequitable.[15] These children are disproportionately overrepresented in classes for children with disabilities. Demographic studies repeatedly show that minority students, particularly African American males, are disproportionately referred for behavioral and learning problems, compared to their majority counterparts. It is disturbing to note that African Americans and Native Americans are overrepresented in classes for students with serious emotional disturbance (SED) and moderate mental retardation (MMR).[16] African Americans tend to be placed in classes for those with retardation twice their numbers in the general population. The authors further state that "the issues of ethnicity, social class, and gender appear to be intricately intertwined with the issues of exceptionality."[17] It is apparent that significant numbers of children from African American, American Indian, and Latino families, many of whom come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are systematically excluded from classes for the gifted and talented.

Other related data indicate that, compared to majority populations, minority youths with disabilities are more likely to be programmed into punishment facilities such as juvenile court rather than treatment, given more pathological labels than warranted, and less likely to have appropriate family involvement in their treatment plans.[18] In comparison to their dominant

[8] 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

[9] Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 *et seq.* (1996).

[10] B. Harry & M. Anderson, "The disproportionate placement of African American males in special education programs: A critique of the process." *Journal of Negro Education*, 63, 4 (1994), pp. 602–19.

[11] Alfredo Artiles & Stanley Trent, "Overrepresentation of minority students in special education: A continuing debate." *The Journal of Special Education*, 27, 4 (1994), pp. 410–37. *See also* Chinn & Hughes (1987), Dunn (1968), and Maheady, Towne, & Algozzine (1983), and Smith (1983).

[12] K.Heller, W. Holtzman, & S. Messick, "Placing children in special education: A strategy for equity." Washington, DC: National Academy Press (1982).

[13] Charlie Russo & Carolyn Talbert-Johnson, "The overrepresentation of African American children in special education: The resegregation of educational programming?" *Education and Urban Society*, 29, 2 (1997), pp. 136–48.

[14] Page 493.

[15] F. Obiakor, "Self-concept of African American students: An operational model for special education." *Exceptional Children*, 59, 2 (1992), pp. 150–59.

[16] Donna Gollnick & Philip Chinn, *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society*, 5th ed. (Ohio: Merrill, 1998).

[17] *See* Donna Gollnick & Philip Chinn, p. 162.

[18] S. Forness, "Planning for the needs of children with serious emotional disturbance: The national special education and mental coalition." *Behavioral Disorders*, 13, 2 (1988), pp. 127–39.

culture peers, they receive remedial instruction, are tracked in low-ability classes,[19] and are retained in their grade levels more.[20]

Regarding gender, African American males are placed in SED classes 3½ times more often than females,[21] and children of lower socioeconomic backgrounds are also overrepresented in SED classes.[22] African American males are also placed in classes for students with mild retardation, moderate retardation, speech impairment, SED, and learning disabilities at higher percentages than females. Gollnick and Chinn note African American males are placed in classes for students with mild retardation at 1½ times, for speech impairment at 1¾ times, for SED at 3½ times, and for learning disabilities at 2½ times the rate of placement for females. The more subjective the diagnosis, the higher the representation of males. It is possible that rather than identifying learning problems, school personnel may be mislabeling behavioral problems. The literature supports that teacher attitudes toward culturally diverse students may affect their referral rates for placement in special education of these youths. Males who are enrolled inappropriately in special education classes face limited educational opportunities, tend to drop out of school, and carry a lifelong label.

Arguably the most controversial issue surrounding the placement of African American children in special education is test bias. Yet, despite language in the federal regulations on special education that requires that "testing and evaluation materials and procedures used for the purposes of evaluation and placement of children with disabilities must be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory,"[23] the matter is far from satisfactorily resolved. The federal regulation on discrimination-free assessment notwithstanding, test bias is an issue that is not likely to go away.

However, because the Supreme Court appears to be unlikely to resolve the legal status of test bias, it will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It will be left to policy makers and educators to ensure that standardized measures are employed to evaluate students for placement in special education. Even prior to judicial challenges concerning test bias, OCR was created to monitor and enforce compliance with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964[24] by conducting bi-annual surveys of the schools regarding student enrollment and placement. Maheady, Towne, and Algozzine[25] posit that although no single element has been identified as the cause of the imbalance in the placement of African Americans in special education, there is some evidence that test bias is a substantial factor.

The majority of teachers in elementary schools are females who have been socialized differently from male students and in some instances, the teacher tolerance level for assertive or aggressive male students may preclude effective teacher-student relationships and may precipitate special education referrals. Accordingly, Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson[26] suggest that the continuing trends of an increasingly greater proportion of minority students in the public school population and a teaching corps of largely white females set the occasion for "cultural discontinuities" that potentially undermine the learning of students and serve to frustrate teachers. Accordingly, Gilbert and Gay[27] have identified four areas of potential cultural conflict: learning style, interactional or relational style, communication style, and differing perceptions of involvement. They suggest that African American students devote a lot of energy to "stage setting" behaviors that precede the performance of a task, which are usually interpreted by teachers as avoidance techniques or noncompliance. The behavioral repertoires of

[19] J. Oakes, *Keeping Track* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[20] S. Meisels & F. Law, "Failure in grade: Do retained students catch up?" *Journal of Educational Research*, 87, 2 (1993), pp. 69–77.

[21] Office for Civil Rights, *1990 Elementary and secondary schools civil rights survey* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education 1992).

[22] James Kauffman, *Characteristics of emotional and behavioral disorders on children and youth*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997).

[23] 34 C.F.R.–300.500(b) (1996).

[24] 20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.* (1996).

[25] L. Maheady, R. Towne, & B. Algozzine, "Minority overrepresentation: A case for alternative practices prior to referral." *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 6, 4 (1983), pp. 448–56.

[26] Gwendolyn Cartledge & Carolyn Talbert-Johnson, "School violence and cultural sensitivity." In *School violence intervention: A practical handbook*, eds. Arnold P. Goldstein and Jane Conoley (New York: Guilford Press, 1997).

[27] Shirl Gilbert & Geneva Gay, "Improving success in school of poor Black children." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 67, 2 (1985), pp. 133–37.

African American males may be quite challenging for teachers, who often label these individuals as being "hyperactive," a term that this author believes is abused and overused.

In her discussion of their culture, Irvine[28] points out that African Americans' arguing style tends to be direct, entering a heated argument without following the turn-taking rule. This energetic, fast-paced, confrontational manner in which many of these youths are socialized may be misunderstood and may be in conflict with the culture of the classroom. Aggression is increasingly problematic for African American youths, especially males, who are disproportionately singled out for disciplinary actions in schools and punishment for delinquent activities in the community. The tendency to believe in aggressive alternatives is typical of low-income individuals—particularly those from urban, violence-prone areas, where children are often socialized to counter-aggress, ostensibly as a means for survival.

Some researchers contend that general and special educators have failed African American students.[29] Researchers cite the areas of identification, assessment, placement in the least restrictive environment, individualized education instruction, and adaptation to change and reform, as adversely impacting the educational needs of minority students.[30] The cultural differences exhibited by students result in varying learning styles and preferences that may predispose students to fail in classroom settings that do not recognize these differences.[31]

McDermott[32] has hypothesized that for many culturally different children, school failure is best explained by the cultural makeup of the classroom. He labels schools in which African American children are taught by European American teachers as "parish-host" communities and maintains that children and teachers in these environments produce communication breakdowns simply by being themselves, that is, by behaving in ways their subcultures see as "normal." What actually occurs is a "miscommunication'" between teachers and students, which could result in school failure.

Teacher Preparation

Surprisingly, in the United States of America, children who are required by law to attend school are not guaranteed the right to a knowledgeable teacher.[33] Underprepared teachers constitute more than 25 percent of those hired each year, and they are assigned disproportionately to schools and classrooms serving the most educationally vulnerable children.[34]

Studies have consistently found that, with little knowledge of learning or child development to guide them, teachers who lack preparation are more reliant on rote methods of learning, more autocratic in the ways they manage their classrooms, less skilled at managing complex forms of instruction aimed at deeper levels of understanding, less capable of identifying children's learning styles and needs, and less likely to see it as their job to do so, blaming students when their teaching is not successful. Because of the capacities of their teachers, most classrooms serving poor and minority children continue to provide students with significantly less engaging and effective learning experiences.[35]

[28] Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, *Black students and school failure* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

[29] N. Ewing, "Restructured teacher education for inclusiveness: A dream deferred for African American children." In *Effective education of African American educational learners*, ed. B.A. Ford (Austin: Pro-Ed, 1995). *See also* Alfredo Artiles & Stanley Trent's "Overrepresentaiton of minority students in special education: A continuing debate."

[30] F. Obiakor, "The education of African American learners with behavior disorders: An unresolved issue for general and special educators," unpublished manuscript (1994).

[31] Deborah Voltz, "Learning and cultural diversities in general and special education classes: Frameworks for success." *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 1 (1995), pp. 1–11.

[32] Ray McDermott, "Achieving school failure: An anthropological approach to illiteracy and social stratification." In *Education and cultural process: Anthropological approaches* (2nd ed.), ed. George Spindler (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1987).

[33] Linda Darling-Hammond, "The right to learn and the advancement of teaching: Research, policy, and practice for democratic education." *Educational Researcher*, 23, 6 (1996), pp. 5–17.

[34] Linda Darling-Hammond, "Teaching and knowledge: Policy issues posed by alternative certification for teachers." *Peabody Journal of Education*, 67, 3 (1992), pp. 123–54. *See also* J. Oakes, *Multiplying inequalities: The effects of race, social class, and tracking opportunities to learn mathematics and science* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1990).

[35] J. Oakes, *Keeping Track* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). *See also* Linda Darling-Hammond (1992a).

Factors associated with classroom climate include teacher attitudes[36] and the impact that these attitudes have on a student's self-concept and sense of being. Attitudes can impact upon the achievement expectations that teachers have for students in their classes. According to Voltz,[37] the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy may adversely impede student performance.

Teachers' perspectives are rooted partially in their prior experience in school. They are also rooted in their general life experiences,[38] which provide a basis for generalizations, decisions about what is important, and styles of relating to others. A study by Talbert-Johnson & Cochran[39] investigated this very issue in their research of preservice educators' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes relevant to the management of diverse populations and its impact on future employment decisions. The data supported that preservice educators felt more "comfortable" seeking employment in environments similar to the ones in which they were raised. One individual stated, "I grew up in a suburban school district, not that there is anything wrong with urban schools, but I don't think I would feel very comfortable or safe in these kinds of schools, besides my dad said I can't work in them—he won't let me." The findings are consistent with previous research that teacher education programs have done little to alter the prior beliefs of preservice educators and that these programs should encourage these individuals to recognize and directly confront their biases as they operate in urban settings.

Jones and Sandidge[40] purport that teachers in urban settings have problems that are exacerbated by increasing levels of violence in and around school campuses, funding inequities that exist between urban schools and their more affluent suburban counterparts, and inadequate preparation of many teachers to provide culturally relevant curricula for students in urban settings. They further suggest that given the reluctance of many teachers to teach in urban schools and the excessively high attrition rates of those who do, urban school leaders constantly struggle to maintain a cadre of highly qualified teachers who are committed to high academic achievement for all students in the urban school setting. For various reasons, new and returning teachers are not attracted to teaching assignments in urban schools. To further compound the situation, many of the nation's highest teacher attrition rates occur in urban districts.[41] To address these problems, urban schools in every state nationally have, at some time, resorted to hiring uncertificated, misassigned, or emergency-credentialed teachers who are unprepared to assume teaching responsibilities in urban city schools.

The Agenda for the New Millennium

Unequal access to knowledge, unequal outcomes, and inequity continue to exist because policies and legislation have not provided effective resources for schools populated primarily by urban and minority children.[42] Improved opportunities for minority students will rest in part on policies that professionalize teaching by increasing the knowledge base for teaching. Teachers must be better prepared to support current education reform initiatives that refuse to compromise on teacher qualifications. As Goals 2000[43] is on the horizon, it is imperative that a teaching corps of qualified individuals is trained to respond to *how* students learn. They must posses requisite skills to intervene on the unique learning needs of these individuals, regardless of the racial or ethnic group, or socioeconomic backgrounds.

[36] *See* N. Ewing, "Restructured teacher education for inclusiveness: A dream deferred for African American children for literature on teacher behaviors and attitudes."

[37] Deborah Voltz, "Cultural diversity and special education teacher preparation: Critical issues confronting the field." *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 21, 1 (1998), pp. 63–70.

[38] Marilynne Boyle-Baise & Christine Sleeter, "Field experiences: Planting seeds and pulling weeds." In *Making schooling multicultural: Campus and classroom*, ed. Carl Grant (NJ: Merrill, 1996).

[39] Carolyn Talbert-Johnson & Lessie Cochran, "Perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of preservice educators in the management of diverse populations: Implications for employment decisions?" unpublished manuscript.

[40] Deneese Jones & Rosetta Sandidge, "Recruiting and retaining teachers in urban schools: Implications for policy and the law." *Education and Urban Society*, 29, 2 (1997), pp. 192–203.

[41] G. Adams & M. Dial, "Teacher survival: A Cox regression model." *Education and Urban Society*, 26 (1993), pp. 90–99.

[42] *See* Deneese Jones & Rosetta Sandidge, "Recruiting and retaining teachers in urban schools: Implications for policy and the law." *Education and Urban Society*, 29, 2 (1997), pp. 192–203.

[43] P.L. 103-277 (H.R. 1804), 20 U.S.C. § 5801.

There are no simple solutions to the problems of the disproportionate placement of African American males in special education. Several areas should be addressed to alleviate this problem as the next century approaches, including recruiting and retaining minority teachers, preparing teachers for urban settings, recognizing and valuing all learners, and determining best practices to improve student learning.

Recruiting and Retaining Minority Teachers

The recruitment of minority educators continues to be a major crisis in teacher education. Minority faculty should be vigorously recruited, and promotion, tenure, and faculty development policies must be reexamined to ensure equity. In an effort to address the recruitment crises the University of Dayton is aggressively recruiting "seasoned" persons from urban public school districts, some of whom have obtained terminal degrees, as adjunct instructors.[44] The mentoring of younger potential students is another strategy utilized to strengthen the pool of minority teachers. Padilla[45] concurs that schools of education need to strengthen their resolve to identify promising minority students and to develop mentoring strategies to ensure their training and success.

Preparing teachers for cultural diversity has been an often cited weakness in teacher preparation programs. Insofar as most teacher preparation programs—including those in special education—still function within a framework that is exclusively Eurocentric, few teachers are equipped to deal with cultures, languages, lifestyles, and values in their classrooms. The result is that many teachers expect all students to "conform to the norm." The typical student for whom educators' pedagogy and prescriptions are designed is an endangered species. Highly motivated, achievement-oriented, white, middle-class students from two-parent families are becoming scarce in most school systems, whether rural, suburban, or urban. By the year 2000, these students will be even more atypical.

One of the challenges facing teacher educators is to prepare future teachers who are capable of maximizing the fit between instruction and students' learning, regardless of racial or ethnic groups, gender, or socioeconomic background. A unique feature of urban schools is the diversity of students who are in attendance.

Teachers must be cognizant of their roles and its impact on African American males and children of color. Further research should investigate the relationships between students and teachers and how these can be either improved or damaged by their interactions. King[46] notes that African Americans serve critical roles as role models and surrogate parents. She asserts that African American teachers are better able to bridge the gap often found between students from low socioeconomic status families and middle-class teachers who tend to have higher expectations than white teachers for students of color. Moreover, according to Irvine,[47] minority faculty should be vigorously recruited, and accompanying policies for promotion, tenure, and faculty development should be reexamined for possible bias and disproportionate impact. Additionally, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities[48] task force suggests nationwide changes in teacher education programs toward increasing their ethnic diversity and the preparation of teachers to educate children from diverse cultures. Even though efforts have been made, the presence of minorities in higher education remains a problem of critical magnitude.

To further compound the situation, there is a shortage of males in the teaching force. This is a problem of particular significance regarding young African American males because they generally lack positive male role models in their lives. Ancarrow's[49] analysis showed that 2 to 3

[44] Carolyn Talbert-Johnson & Beverly Tillman, "Perspectives on 'color' in teacher education programs: Prominent issues." *Journal of Teacher Education* (1999).

[45] A. Padilla, "Ethnic minority scholars, research, and mentoring: Current and future issues." *Educational Research*, 23, 4 (1995), pp. 24–27.

[46] Sabrina Hope King, "The limited presence of African American teachers." *Review of Educational Research*, 63, 2 (1993), pp. 115–49.

[47] Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Making teacher education culturally responsive." In *Diversity in teacher education: New expectations*, ed. Mary Dilworth (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

[48] American Association of State Colleges and Universities, "Colleges suggest ways to improve teacher training." *The Columbus Dispatch* (1999), p. 3.

[49] J. Ancarrow, "Characteristics of regular and special education teachers in public schools, 1987–88: E.D. tabs." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, OSERS, Office of Special Education Programs (1991).

times as many general educators were female than male. In light of the rapidly changing shifts in today's population, it is in the best interests of schools and society as a whole to recruit and retain a diverse cadre of teachers as it enhances the learning experience of all students.

It is evident that a restructuring of teacher education is needed if the current school reform efforts are to be successful. The focus must be on preparing preservice educators to teach *and* manage diverse learners, particularly African American males in urban settings. In addition, these individuals must learn to behave in ways that positively affect interpersonal interactions, and pedagogical strategies should be adapted to reflect the individualized needs of students and their unique learning styles.

Preparing Teachers for Urban Settings

Policies regarding multicultural education in all institutions of teacher preparation must be explicit and dominant in all coursework as well as clinical and field experiences. It is imperative that preservice educators have field experiences in rural, suburban, and urban settings. The literature supports that one-shot workshops have not proven to have a lasting impact on preservice students, therefore curricular changes are required. Curriculum development should be a dynamic process, one in which culturally relevant pedagogies are adopted. Strategies such as cooperative learning, working towards full inclusion, opportunities to learn, and experimental learning are beneficial in the educational process. Accordingly, Artiles and Trent[50] also suggest a reform in professional preparation programs. They indicate that a process-oriented component should be included so that teachers can deal with issues of diversity at the personal level (e.g., reflect about individual values, perceptions, stereotypes, and expectations of diverse learners). Researchers encourage the examination of the sociocultural climate, including racial/cultural prejudice in the learning environment.[51] This is vital if educators are to impact

upon the lives of individuals in an effective manner.

To work effectively in urban schools teachers must develop competencies specific to an increasingly diverse and challenging student body. Teachers must understand the impact of conditions associated with poverty and other influences that place children at risk. Issues such as an examination of teachers' beliefs and attitudes focusing on procedural knowledge, classroom control, and "survival" skills should be addressed as an alternative to traditional programs.[52]

Recognizing and Valuing All Learners

Schools should be important, empowering environments for all students, including those from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. It is critical to remember that children are first and foremost children, therefore within schools students need to feel welcomed and valued,[53] and they should be given the opportunity to develop a sense of competence, usefulness, and belonging. Schools must focus on adapting either the classroom organization or curriculum and instruction to meet the instructional needs of students. This is a vital link in school reform. Cultural and ethnic differences should be embraced and valued in all forms and degrees as reflections of the contributions that different groups of Americans have made to our society. To affirm students means that we validate them for who they are, individuals who are valuable members of the classroom community. Students should be affirmed not only for the qualities that they have in common, but also for their uniqueness, which can facilitate how they can learn self-respect.[54]

Determining Best Practices to Improve Student Learning

Current reform initiatives, such as the opportunity to learn standards (OTL), propose that all students will have access to a high-quality education in the United States, regardless of their

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[50] *See* Alfredo Artiles & Stanley Trent, "Overrepresentation of minority students in special education: A continuing debate."

[51] Judy Wald, "Culturally and linguistically diverse professionals in special education: A demographic analysis." National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education (1996).

[52] *See* Deneese Jones & Rosetta Sandidge, "Recruiting and retaining teachers in urban schools: Implications for policy and the law."

[53] A. Vargas, "Culture-focused group therapy: Identity issues in gang involved youth." Paper presented at the 102nd annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles (1994).

[54] S. Stainback & W. Stainback, *Curriculum considerations in inclusive classrooms: Facilitating learning for all students* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks, 1992).

race, sex, or socioeconomic background. Successful outcomes for diverse students become a reality when the key stakeholders hold themselves accountable for meeting the diverse needs of students. This accountability includes recruiting and retaining diverse teachers—at every level of the "pipeline," preparing all teachers to work with minorities in urban settings, adopting multicultural curricula and instruction, providing adequate funding and other resources for urban schools, and examining policies and practices that impede equal access, equal outcomes, and equity in urban schools. Statements of best practice should include, but are not limited to, age-appropriate placements in public schools, integrated delivery of services, social integration, transition planning, curricular expectations, home-schools partnerships, and systematic program evaluation.[55] The focus should be that best educational practices are identified for *all* students.

Final Thoughts

An unwavering commitment to diversity must permeate every level of the educational system.[56] The professoriate needs to move beyond lipservice to issues of diversity, to engage in assessment of attitudes among themselves and their students, and to become active participants in the change process, in the development of partnerships with P–12 settings. A major challenge facing teacher education is to help candidates begin the process of critical examination of the practices of educators and schools in the teaching and learning process. Thus a pressing national concern is to prevent the high proportions of failure among students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Young males, especially in the African American community, lack role models and are failing at an alarming rate within the current system. The culture of the school must change to meet the individualized needs of this unique population in learning environments that are positive, affirming, and safe.

As Darling-Hammond[57] asserts, if the interaction between teachers and students is the most important aspect of effective schooling, then reducing inequality in learning has to rely on policies that provide equal access to competent, well-supported teachers. The educational system ought to be able to guarantee that every child who is required by law to go to school is taught by someone who is prepared, knowledgeable, competent, and caring. Schools should embrace the diversity of the student body, respecting and appreciating the rich ethnic and cultural differences in a safe environment conducive to students' learning styles and needs. If schools can accomplish these tasks, then perhaps in the next millennium they can escape the conundrum of the overrepresentation of minority students in special education.

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[55] J. Thousand & R. Villa, "Strategies for educating learners with severe disabilities within their local schools and communities." *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 23, 3 (1990), p. 5.

[56] W. Russell, "Achieving diversity in academe: AERA's role." *Educational Researcher*, 23, 9 (1994), 26–28.

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[57] *See* Linda Darling-Hammond, "Inequality and access to knowledge."

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Assessment and the Educational Progress of African American Males

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The educational progress and development of urban African American males in the United States, as measured by standardized assessments, is a matter of serious national concern. Though there is substantial variability among their scores, it has been well documented that African American males, on the average, have performed considerably less well academically than other groups of young Americans. This is particularly true of those residing in urban areas when they also come from low-income families. (Garibaldi, 1992). This very observation rests upon the existence and function of a major component of the educational process, that of assessment. It has been the consensus of many educators over the span of several decades that optimum student outcomes of public education result from a good alignment of three essential components: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The importance of assessment is unquestionable in the educational enterprise. It is measurement that quantifies and illuminates the unique and alarming predicament that we find too many African American male children in, with respect to faltering academic achievement at the grade school and secondary levels, and later in attempts to qualify for postsecondary education. The Governor's Commission (1989) highly publicized the finding that African American males score lower than any other group on standardized tests.

Any student of the educational odyssey of African Americans in this country is bound to be struck by the many obstacles to educational progress that coexisted with the many attempts to facilitate their progress. At the time that abolitionists, religious groups, and free blacks struggled in the early years of the republic to educate people of color, it was illegal in slave states to teach an African American to read, and some paid for this knowledge with their lives. Despite the light years of progress since that time, the coexistence of impediments and facilitators, though very different in expression from that earlier time, is still a feature to be considered in understanding educational progress among this group, and performance on testing and assessment measures of the performance.

This paper will review the educational progress of African American males as measured by a variety of widely used assessments. It will examine the relative levels of these measures over time, and their relationships to the same or similar measures among other groups. The paper will also explore the meaning of these scores as valid measures of performance, and as predictors of future performance.

Standardized Test Performance in Elementary and High School

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports the progress of American students nationally at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels. A national probability sample is selected, and samples of items are administered to them. The base of items measuring achievement is much larger than the number of questions given to each student. Inferences are made to the levels of performance of subgroups based on gender, race and ethnicity, region, geographic density (urban and rural), and parent's level of education. Currently published NAEP reports do not delineate gender *within* ethnicity, so the following summary reports results on African American males and females, combined.

NAEP results in mathematics show strong improvement, about equal to half of a standard deviation, for black students at ages 9, 13, and 17 from 1973 to 1990. At the same time, the pro-

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portion of black students in the nation as a whole was increasing from 12 percent (age 17), 13 percent (age 13), and 14 percent (age 9) to 16 percent at all three age levels in 1990. These are important and statistically significant gains in mathematics performance, coupled with an increase in population proportion. They still represent performance well below that of white students, and for students as a whole. From 1990 to 1996, progress in mathematics has been mixed with a slight decrease in the average performance for 17-year-olds, and the suggestion of a small gain for 9- and 13-year-olds.

NAEP reports progress in terms of a 500 point proficiency scale, and in terms of achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. Figure 1 from the 1996 NAEP trends report shows average scale scores for black and white students; e.g., in 1996, black 9-year-olds on the average achieved a proficiency score of 212, while students of the same age scored 237.

The achievement level scores are structured to emphasize and direct policy action toward progress of students at the highest levels. In 1994, the NAEP reported that the achievement level in mathematics for black and white fourth-grade students at the advanced level was 0 percent and 1 percent, respectively; among grade 12 students, 2 percent of white students and 0 percent of black students scored at or above the advanced level; and among grade 8 students, 5 percent of white students, and less than 1 percent of black students scored at the advanced level.

The NAEP reading scores show a similar upward trend for black students from 1971 forward, but since 1988, scores for ages 13 and 17 have tended downward, with scores from 9-year-olds dropping, but finishing in 1996 at a level not significantly above the 1988 level (see figure 3). Among black students as a whole, there was a positive trend in reading scores from 1971 to 1996.

NAEP science results on black students show a mixed trend pattern, with 13- and 9-year-olds in 1996 showing significantly higher scores than their counterparts in 1970. Scores for black 17-year-olds showed a trend steadily downward from 1969 to 1982, but they have shown steady upward progress since that time (figure 4). In general, the trend lines in NAEP results from black students have shown greater gain than the trends for white students, with the result that the gaps between the scores of white and black students were smaller in 1996 in most subject areas than they had been in 1971 or 1973.

The NAEP report (Campbell, Voelkl, and Donahue, 1998) notes the need to consider a number of factors when interpreting achievement differences between subgroups. The authors noted that research indicates that many minority students attend schools with substandard physical facilities, fewer academic resources, and less challenging curricula, thus their opportunities to learn are limited (Fine, 1991; MacIver and Epstein, 1990; Oakes, 1990). They note that others have argued that disproportionate numbers of minority students are placed in low-ability classes and provided with less intensive curricula (King, 1993; Meier, Stewart, and England, 1989).

Recently, researchers have looked at the NAEP data from the perspective aimed at examining the factors most related to score differences. Using linear models based on a hierarchy of variables, Raudenbush and his colleagues (1999) have found that when differences between the average scale scores of states in the NAEP Trial State assessment are examined, these differences are found to be strongly related to differences in resource allocation and availability. Minority students and students whose parents had lower levels of education were found to have less access to course-taking opportunities, favorable school climates, highly educated teachers, and cognitively stimulating classrooms. The strength of this relation varied across the states, which could provide an alternate index to the current NAEP Report Card for reporting the relative educational progress of students and subgroups within the various states. Such an approach could be very useful in structuring policy to advance educational progress for all groups.

Using another model, Finn and Achilles (1990) analyzed the Tennessee school size experiment data, in which students were randomly assigned to small or medium class sizes in grades 1–3. All students gained more in small classes, but black students gained most nearly a third of a standard deviation. Some effect from these gains carried into the seventh grade, which was the most recent work available on this study. These latter analyses show the importance of fuller examination of the data to gain information useful in structuring educational programs and educational policy and planning.

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Figure 1
NAEP Mathematics Trends for Black and White Students, 1973–96

	1973	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	310(1.1)	306(0.9)	304(0.9)	308(1.0)	310(1.0)	312(0.8)	312(1.1)	313(1.4)			+	+
	—	83(1.3)	81(2.0)	78(0.5)	73(0.5)	75(0.5)	72(0.5)	71(0.6)				
Age 13	274(0.9)	272(0.8)	274(1.0)	274(1.3)	276(1.1)	279(0.9)	281(0.9)	281(0.9)	+		+	+
	—	80(1.7)	79(2.1)	77(1.0)	73(0.7)	74(0.5)	73(0.5)	71(0.6)				
Age 9	225(1.0)	224(0.9)	224(1.1)	227(1.1)	235(0.8)	235(0.8)	237(1.0)	237(1.0)	+		+	+
	—	79(1.4)	79(2.5)	77(1.1)	75(1.1)	75(0.9)	75(0.7)	72(1.1)				

	1973	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	270(1.3)	268(1.3)	272(1.2)	279(2.1)	289(2.8)	286(2.2)	286(1.8)	286(1.7)	+		+	
	—	12(1.1)	13(1.7)	14(0.3)	16(0.3)	15(0.3)	16(0.3)	15(0.3)				
Age 13	228(1.9)	230(1.9)	240(1.6)	249(2.3)	249(2.3)	250(1.9)	252(3.5)	252(1.3)	+		+	–
	—	13(1.5)	14(1.8)	14(0.9)	16(0.3)	16(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.4)				
Age 9	190(1.8)	192(1.1)	195(1.6)	202(1.6)	208(2.2)	208(2.0)	212(1.6)	212(1.4)	+		+	
	—	14(1.4)	14(2.0)	15(0.5)	16(0.7)	16(0.4)	15(0.5)	16(0.5)				

Below each average scale score, the corresponding percentage of students is presented.
Standard errors of the estimated scale scores and percentages appear in parentheses.
[– – –] Extrapolated from previous NAEP analyses.
* Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in .1973.
‡ Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in 1994.
L Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) linear trend is significant.
Q Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) quadratic trend is significant.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1996 Long-Term Trend Assessment.

Figure 2
NAEP Achievement Level in Mathematics, 1994

Grade 4

Grade 8

Grade 12

Figure 3
NAEP Reading Trends for Black and White Students, 1971–96

WHITE

	1971	1975	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	291(1.0)	293(0.6)	293(0.9)	295(0.7)	295(1.2)	297(1.2)	297(1.4)	296(1.5)	294(1.2)		+		
	87(1.3)	84(1.0)	83(1.6)	77(0.6)	77(0.6)	74(0.5)	75(0.6)	72(0.8)	72(0.7)				
Age 13	261(0.7)	262(0.7)	264(0.7)	263(0.6)	261(1.1)	262(0.9)	266(1.2)	265(1.1)	267(1.0)	+	+		
	84(1.4)	81(1.2)	80(1.8)	77(0.6)	76(0.7)	74(0.8)	73(0.7)	74(0.5)	71(0.7)				
Age 9	214(0.9)	217(0.7)	221(0.8)	218(0.8)	218(1.4)	217(1.3)	218(1.0)	218(1.3)	220(1.2)	+	+		
	84(1.4)	80(1.2)	79(1.3)	75(1.2)	75(1.0)	74(1.0)	74(0.9)	75(0.7)	71(0.9)				

BLACK

	1971	1975	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	239(1.7)	241(2.0)	243(1.8)	·264(1.0)	274(2.4)	267(2.3)	261(2.1)	266(3.9)	265(2.7)	+		+	−
	11(1.2)	11(0.8)	12(1.4)	14(0.2)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)				
Age 13	222(1.2)	226(1.2)	233(1.5)	236(1.0)	243(2.4)	242(2.2)	238(2.3)	234(2.4)	236(2.6)	+		+	−
	15(1.4)	13(0.9)	14(1.3)	14(0.2)	15(0.3)	15(0.2)	16(0.4)	15(0.5)	15(0.6)				
Age 9	170(1.7)	181(1.2)	189(1.8)	186(1.1)	189(2.4)	182(2.9)	185(2.2)	185(2.3)	190(2.7)	+		+	−
	14(1.3)	13(0.8)	14(1.0)	16(0.5)	16(0.7)	16(0.6)	16(0.4)	15(0.6)	17(0.5)				

Below each average scale score, the corresponding percentage of students is presented.

Standard errors of the estimated scale scores and percentages appear in parentheses.

[– – –] Extrapolated from previous NAEP analyses.

* Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in 1973.
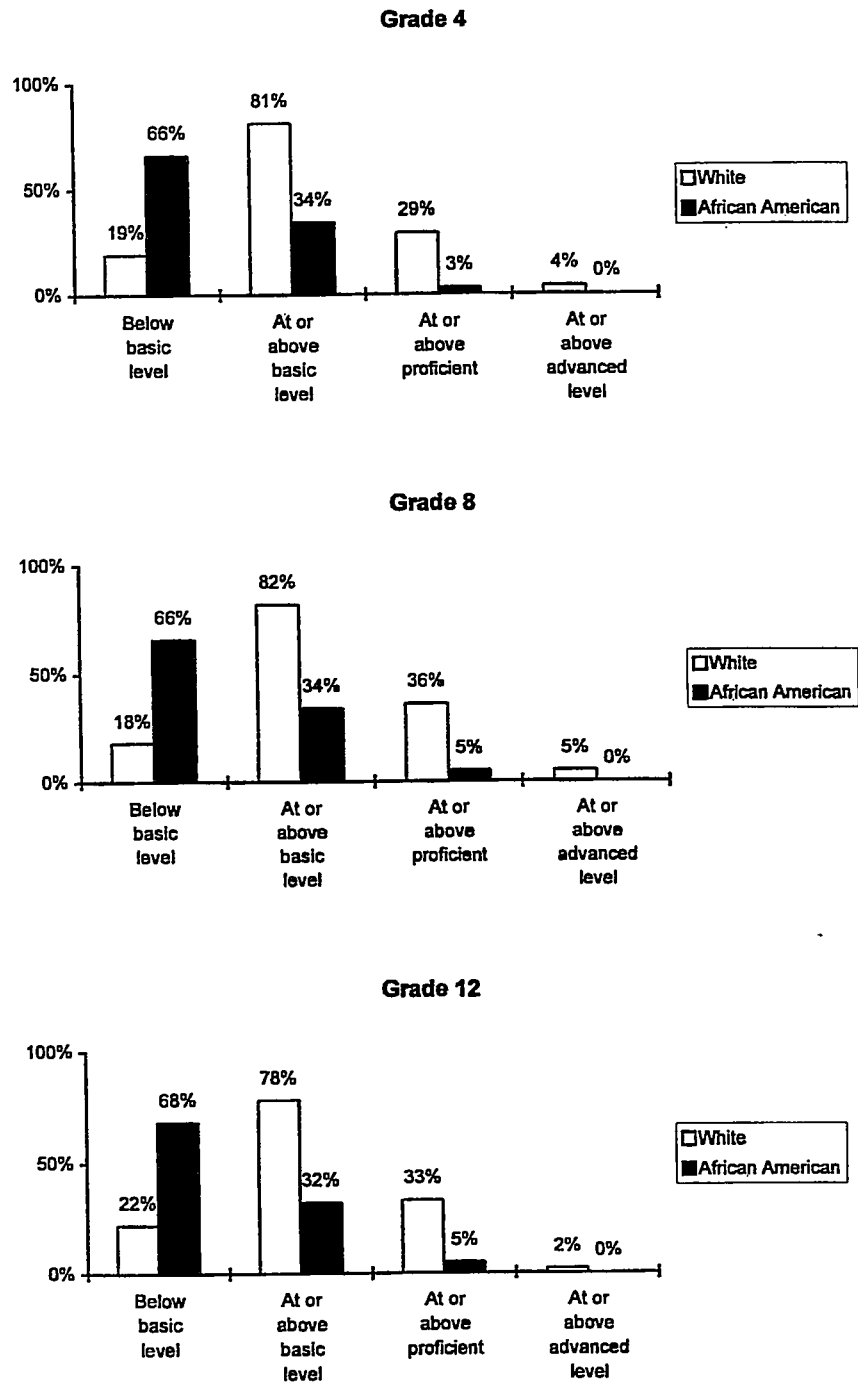
‡ Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in 1994.

L Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) linear trend is significant.

Q Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) quadratic trend is significant.
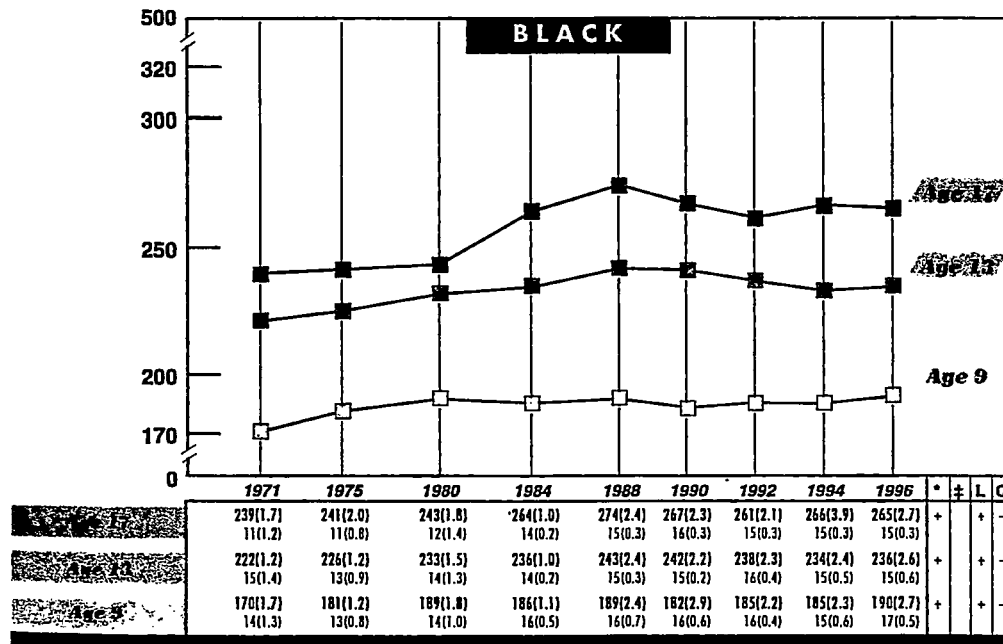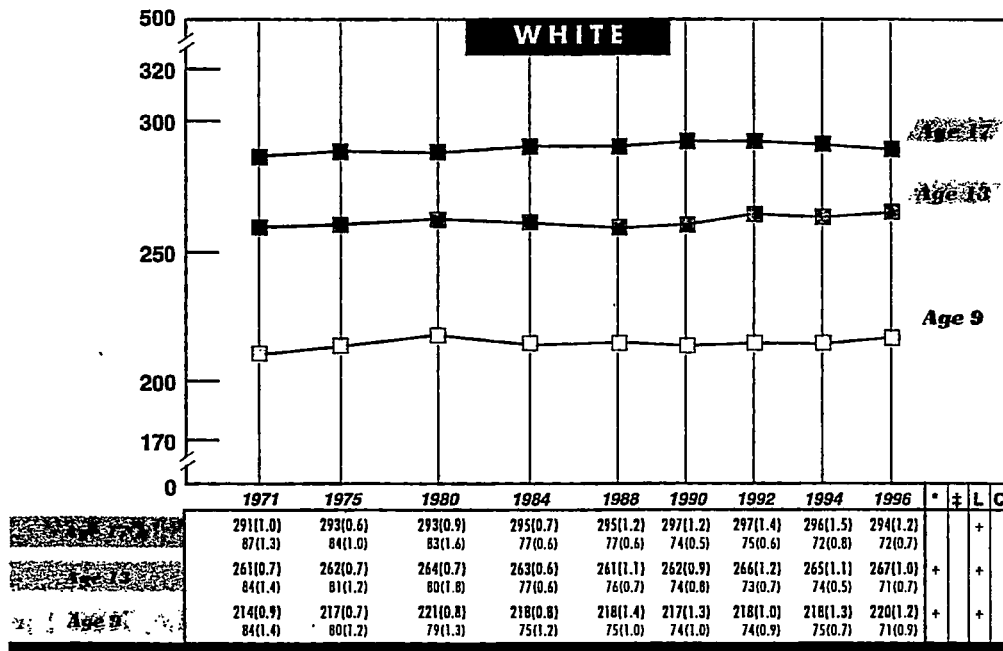
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1996 Long-Term Trend Assessment.

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Figure 4
NAEP Science Trends for Black and White Students, 1969–96

WHITE

	1970	1973	1977	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	312(0.8)	304(0.8)	298(0.7)	293(1.0)	298(1.7)	301(1.1)	304(1.3)	306(1.5)	307(1.2)	–			+
	–	–	83(1.3)	81(2.0)	78(0.5)	73(0.5)	75(0.5)	72(0.6)	71(0.7)				
Age 13	263(0.8)	259(0.8)	256(0.8)	257(1.1)	259(1.4)	264(0.9)	267(1.0)	267(1.0)	266(1.2)		+		+
	–	–	80(1.6)	79(2.1)	77(1.0)	73(0.7)	74(0.5)	72(0.8)	71(0.6)				
Age 9	236(0.9)	231(0.9)	230(0.9)	229(1.9)	232(1.2)	238(0.8)	239(1.0)	240(1.3)	239(1.4)		+		+
	–	–	80(1.6)	79(2.6)	77(1.1)	75(1.1)	75(0.9)	74(0.9)	72(1.1)				

BLACK

	1970	1973	1977	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	1996	*	‡	L	Q
Age 17	258(1.5)	250(1.5)	240(1.5)	235(1.7)	253(2.9)	253(4.5)	256(3.2)	257(3.1)	260(2.3)			+	+
	–	–	12(1.1)	13(1.4)	14(0.3)	16(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.3)				
Age 13	215(2.4)	205(2.4)	208(2.4)	217(1.3)	222(2.5)	226(3.1)	224(2.7)	224(4.2)	226(2.2)	+		+	
	–	–	13(1.2)	14(1.9)	14(0.9)	16(0.3)	16(0.3)	15(0.3)	15(0.4)				
Age 9	179(1.9)	177(1.9)	175(1.8)	187(3.0)	196(1.9)	196(2.0)	200(2.7)	201(1.7)	201(2.6)	+		+	
	–	–	14(1.4)	14(2.1)	15(0.5)	16(0.7)	16(0.4)	15(0.5)	16(0.5)				

Below each average scale score, the corresponding percentage of students is presented.

Standard errors of the estimated scale scores and percentages appear in parentheses.

[– – –] Extrapolated from previous NAEP analyses.

* Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in 1973.
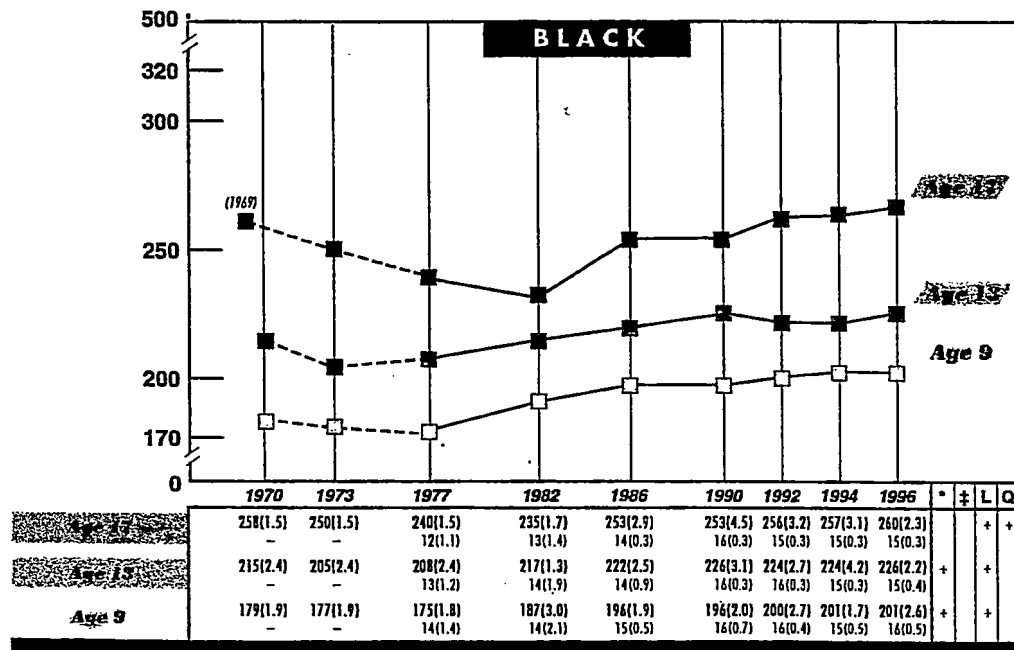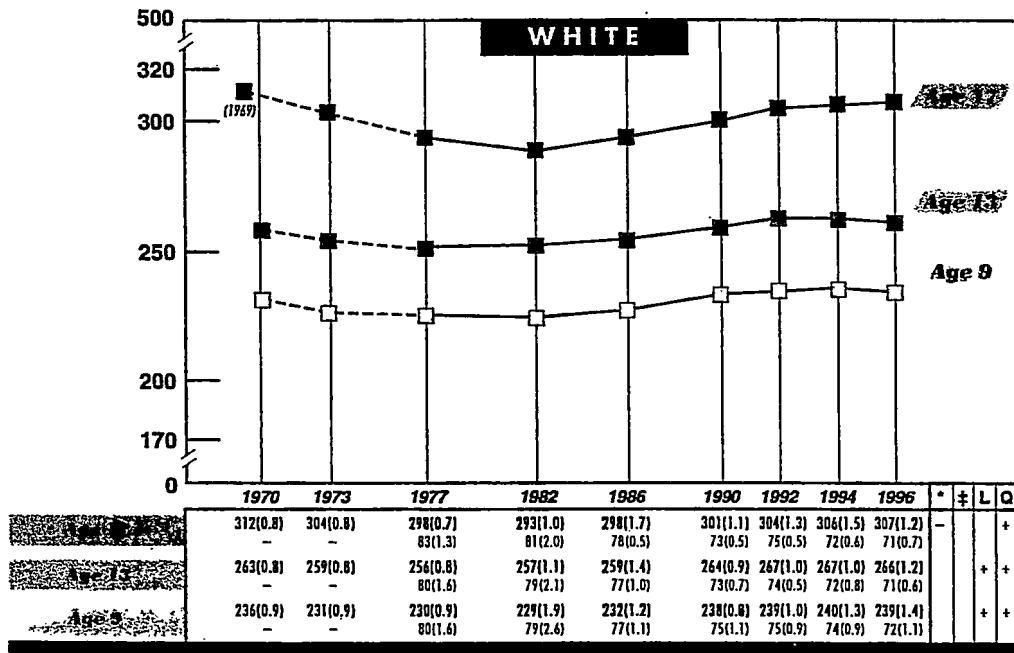
‡ Indicates that the average scale score in 1996 is significantly larger (+) or smaller (–) than that in 1994.

L Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) linear trend is significant.

Q Indicates that the positive (+) or negative (–) quadratic trend is significant.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1996 Long-Term Trend Assessment.

A number of studies conducted in relatively large school systems in major urban areas show varying performance levels. Based on 1986–87 data, the public schools of New Orleans, Louisiana, with 87 percent of its students African American, had one-third of them scoring in the lowest quartile on the reading and mathematics subscales of the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). Of concern is that only 18 percent of the males in that school system scored in the highest quartile on the mathematics subscale and only 13 percent scored in that quartile on the reading subscale of the CTBS. Similar findings have been reported by other jurisdictions serving predominantly African American communities (Garibaldi, 1992). School systems such as Prince George's County (MD) Public Schools indicated comparable performance of African American males and African American females in both mathematics and reading on criterion-referenced tests up to third grade. At grade four, however, the performance of black males in both key instructional areas evidenced a sharp downturn. This finding appears to be consistent across a number of studies and has been observed repeatedly by Kunjufu (1985). Likewise, in Milwaukee (WI) Public Schools during the 1988–89 school year, the percentage of African American males scoring at or above the national average on the norm-referenced test in reading dropped from 28 percent in second grade to 24 percent in grades five and seven. On the norm-referenced mathematics test, 45 percent of the African American males scored at or above the national norm in second grade, with that proportion falling to about 33 percent in grade five, and falling again to 22 percent in grade seven (Garibaldi, 1992).

Academic outcomes for African American males are not only influenced by assessment in the form of standardized measures. Assessment in education encompasses much more and involves a variety of types of measurement instruments, procedures, and practices. Some of these assessments can be as basic and informal as when a teacher observes a student's behavior over his/her shoulder, perhaps during or after a lesson when activities are being completed by the learner, merely acknowledging in an evaluative way with a spoken or unspoken response. The response, at times may be as minimal as an "uh-huh" or a more positive reinforcing "good" or "great." This type of assessment is apparently

influenced considerably by teacher attitude toward the student, affecting his performance and in turn the teacher's (assessor's) perception of what the learner knows and can do at that moment. Holliday (1985) observed that young African American male students received more negative teacher attitudes and negative behaviors, when compared to African American female students. This result is consistent with that of an earlier study by Maehr and Rubovits (1973). It is reasonable to infer that this type of teacher attitude contributes considerably to the explanation of the striking and persistent variance in assessment outcomes across groups. Other assessment activity in classrooms will surely include teacher-made tests and quizzes (some of which may or may not be of the paper-pencil variety). These instruments are most closely aligned (or should be) with the specific instruction that has taken place with the particular individual or group of test/quiz taker(s). Differences in performance on these items, between gender groups of the same racial origin within the same class, might be expected to the extent that there are differences in the way that instruction may have been delivered to the groups or in the different way in which that instruction was received or interpreted by those groups.

The complex relationship between test scores, race, and instruction is examined in a study by Lomax and colleagues (Lomax, Maxwell, Harmon, Viator, and Madaus, 1995). They surveyed the six most widely used test batteries for school-age children and found that the tests failed to examine higher order thinking, high-level conceptual, or high-level procedural knowledge in mathematics or science. In a survey of 2,229 mathematics and science teachers of high- and low-minority classes, teachers of high-minority classes were found more likely to report negative impacts of standardized testing on teacher practice and minority student achievement in mathematics and science.

Using Tests for Placement in Special Education and Gifted Programs

Opportunity to learn suitable content at appropriate rates, by virtue of having access to particular special and other programs, such as those targeted for "gifted and talented" students, is often out of reach of many African American students who do not qualify, based on criteria

that relies heavily on a test score. To the extent that the measures and procedures used for this screening or sorting purpose are valid, reliable, and unbiased, we can have some degree of confidence in the proper inclusion of program participants. Johnson (1979) stated in her description of test bias that it occurs when a test does not measure the same dimensions across groups, resulting in unfair selection (or labeling) and ultimately resulting in unfair access or limitation in relation to educational and other types of opportunities. Muthen, Khoo, and Golf (1994) found multidimensionality in NAEP 1992 mathematics items, and noted that this had an impact on the description of subgroup differences. They stated that studying subgroup differences with respect to specific factors may lead to a more "instructionally sensitive" way to analyze achievement data.

Not only are African Americans (especially males) not proportionately represented in programs aimed at the highly academically able and for enrichment, but are disproportionately placed in special education and remedial classes (USDOE, OCR, 1993; Artiles and Trent, 1994). That is, a relatively smaller proportion of African American children are provided access to gifted and talented services and programs when compared to the proportion of African Americans in the population. Conversely, as Harry and Anderson (1994) point out in their study of the process of special education placement of African American males, racial, gender, cultural, and linguistic biases continue to be integral aspects of the special education process, particularly for this subgroup. The entire process is seen as "seriously biased against African American male students," from their earliest experiences in regular education through their disproportionate referral to, assessment for, and subsequent placement in special education programs. This placement can, in fact, be misplacement, having profound and devastating implications for the futures of those affected. Beyond placement or misplacement in special education is the classification of students into a variety of categories, essentially of various levels of severity. This aspect of the process, in which labels such as educable mentally retarded (EMR) and severely learning disabled (SLD) are attached to individual students, will be described a bit more. Part of the focus of the present discussion includes the function and consequences of assessment as it is used in the process of special education placement, particularly as it affects the great and growing numbers of African American males. African American males, as pointed out by Harry and Anderson (1994), continue to be present in the most stigmatizing and limiting categories, such as that of mentally retarded (EMR), at nearly 2½ times the rate that would be expected.

A brief look at several of the disability classifications, in terms of issues of assessment and implications for American male students may be helpful. The official definition of mental retardation, the term used to refer to it (formerly termed "mental deficiency"), and the IQ score cut-off point have all changed over time. The IQ score cut-off point for this category moved from 85 to 70 (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurbow, 1992), thus declassifying many with the stroke of the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) pen. This "categorical drift" or shift resulted in the number of students placed in the EMR category being reduced by approximately half between the years of 1977 and 1992. Consequently the number of students in the learning disabled (LD) category doubled (USDOE, 1993). It is important to note that despite the reduction in numbers in the former category, African American males continue to have a presence in the EMR category at a rate nearly 2½ times that which would be expected (Harry and Anderson, 1995).

Focus on the issue of bias or potential bias in IQ tests used to determine placement in special education programs has been part of an ongoing controversy, as well as a focus in early litigation. While one camp of researchers contends that the tests are not biased (Jensen, 1974; Sandoval, 1979), based primarily on highly technical statistical methods of item analysis, numerous other researchers maintain that the more technical approaches aimed at determining test validity are too narrowly focused on the process and miss an inherently biased foundation of standardized testing (Hilliard, 1991; Jones, 1988). Other work has questioned the validity of Jensen's methodology (Johnson, 1981). The critics of IQ test use in placement of special education students, which we have recognized as disproportionately inclusive of African American males, argue that the premise of the process of test construction that holds that a test invariably reflects the cultural knowledge base and cognitive orientation of its developer(s) and of the sample on which its

items have been standardized. Tests then, that are standardized or normed on the European-American majority and that include primarily test items constructed using the cultural experiences and standard language of that majority group, are biased in favor of that group and therefore biased against minorities (Taylor and Lee, 1991), particularly subgroups such as African American males.

Many of those African American males who are low-achieving academically find themselves labeled as SLD, the acronym for "specific learning disability," and representing a classification that Ysseldyke et al. (1992) describe as ill-defined, poorly conceptualized, and popular. The important aspect of this classification, with regard to the focus of the present discussion, is the manner in which assessments are employed in the categorization. We have already observed the occurrence of disproportionate effects with regard to our African American male subgroup of interest.

In order to be classified as SLD, students are required to score in the normal range on an IQ test, but score significantly lower on academic achievement measures. Recognizing that African American students have been found to routinely score at least 1 standard deviation below whites on IQ tests and using the "discrepancy criterion," the African American child is less likely to record the level of discrepancy required for LD classification (Collins and Camblin, 1983; Samuda and Kong, 1989). African American males, then, who demonstrate learning difficulties and whose home environments are considered disadvantageous to academic learning and success, are likely to receive the more stigmatizing and limiting label of mentally retarded rather than learning disabled.

The Effects of High Stakes Tests

Although the aim of NAEP achievement levels and similar score systems may be the increase of student scores, Madaus (1998) has noted, in appraising the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, that the classification of such large number of students as low achievers provides information of questionable validity to parents and schools, provides a misleading view of changes, and forces school systems and teachers into goals for change that are not legitimately possible (Koretz and Barron, 1998).

The style of response that some school systems turn to when faced with low test scores can put stress on teachers, and since scores tend to be lower for low-income and minority students, it is here that pressures may be greatest. Without appropriate support, capacity, and professional development, these pressures have the potential to be most harmful to students by creating a climate that pushes for narrow, specific performance, and does not really support learning.

Some cities are moving toward using tests to retain children in grades, and to create entire classes, and even to group these classes within separate schools. House (1998) has suggested that this situation indicates a lack of concern when African American children are involved, and that the choice of retention as a strategy for effective change is poor, given the negative findings when it has been used. He questions whether such solutions would receive any consideration in a setting that served white middle-class children.

House's conjecture, along with the views expressed by African American parents, and Madaus' findings suggest that the negative impacts of testing fall more heavily on African American and Hispanic children. This is especially tragic, given that well-designed and conducted educational experiences offer the most promising path for successful transition to college and career development, and considering the responsibilities of the society for public education.

There is evidence of some positive impact of test data on teaching and learning. The Equity 2000 program of the College Board is aimed at creating systemic change in entire school districts by an initially narrow-appearing goal: having all students take and successfully complete algebra by the ninth grade (CB, 1990). This goal grew out of correlational findings that students who took the SAT, and had at least algebra and geometry in high school, did significantly better, made subsequent progress, and had more options for college major and career choices than those without this mathematics background. They also tended to have taken more college preparatory courses in high school in sciences, social studies, and foreign languages than students with weaker math backgrounds.

These students probably also tended to have parents with college backgrounds, to have made more plans for college themselves than less prepared students, and to have a system of supports aimed at planning for higher education. However, the College Board used the algebra connection finding to build a strong, substantive program which was piloted in six urban school districts spaced across the country. Findings indicate outstanding success in increasing the proportion of students taking algebra and successfully completing it early enough in high school to have the option to go on to strong mathematics preparation. These findings were for entire school systems, not for simply a single school in a district (Everson, 1998). The program includes a range of "safety net" strategies, such as Saturday academies and tutoring, and extensive professional development for elementary and high school teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. The challenge will be for the districts to maintain those gains without the substantial financial support that the experimental years provided. A second program for the College Board is Pacesetter, designed to be the "pull" to match the "push" of Equity 2000. With strong professional development and use of performance assessments, this program includes a college preparatory mathematics class in elementary functions, and similar demanding level classes in other academic subjects. The courses are designed with interesting features to make them attractive to students who might not yet be aimed at college. Pacesetter is at a relatively early but promising stage of development.

A program developed in a Washington, D.C., Maryland suburban county with sizable African American and Hispanic populations used existing test data and created new tests to identify children with creative and intellectual strengths that had not been identified by traditional test measures (Johnson, Stearnes, Gregory, and Blaylock, 1985). The program used professional development to create a cadre of teachers to conduct classes for these children in the early elementary grades. Some children moved into the gifted and talented program and others continued to be successful in standard classes in the upper elementary grades (Foster, 1992).

These findings on the impact of testing on the classroom show the extent and scope of negative effects on minority children from testing, particularly high stakes testing. The potential for positive use, when positive use is an initial goal do offer some promise. The weight of the evidence is clearly on negative effects, and supports the finding that emphasis on testing is not the effective route toward positive school reform, and that negative impact falls heavily on African American and Hispanic children. The intention of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) was not to effect a competition between states. It was designed to provide a low-key, nonintrusive estimate of student progress nationally. With its current visibility, more work should be done with professional development in school systems to make NAEP more understandable and accessible to teachers.

At the transition from high school to college, many students take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or American College Testing Program (ACT) tests as admission requirements for college. They also seem to function as one element to use in self-appraisal of college readiness.

The number and proportion of African American students taking the SAT and the ACT examinations has increased from 1980 to 1998. There were about 1,250,000 1998 college-bound seniors of all races who took the SAT I or II test. Among these, African Americans constituted about 10 percent, an increase from 9 percent in 1980, and a numerical increase from 83,000 to over 120,000. Among the 950,000 ACT test takers in 1995, there were about 89,000 African Americans, an increase from about 58,000 in 1986, which then represented 8 percent of the total. Many students take both SAT and ACT tests. The total number tested is uncertain, due to this overlap. There are about 14.3 percent among the national population who are at college entrance age.

Among all groups, there are more female than male test takers. This fact also speaks to the effect of earlier educational outcomes for males that contribute to their removal from the pool of students pursuing higher education. Among African Americans, about 41 percent were male. All males nationally received average scores of 509 and 531 on the verbal and quantitative SAT I tests, respectively, while black males received average scores of 432 and 436 on the same tests. There were black males scoring at the highest levels, but in smaller proportions. About 10 percent of this group scored above the overall mean.

In terms of academic preparation, the English course work for African American males was less concentrated in grammar and composition than for students in general. The amount of mathematics taken has increased over time, but fewer black students indicate that they have taken trigonometry and calculus than students in general.

Higher scores are found among black males taking SAT II, which are achievement tests in specific academic areas. Black male SAT II test takers received average scores of 546 and 557 on the verbal and math SAT I tests, respectively. Black students with higher academic aspirations, e.g., a graduate or professional degree, tended to score higher. Family income among African American males was much lower than for the test takers as a whole. In fact, 27 percent of black males reported a family income below $20,000, while only 14 percent of the total group fell into this category. At one upper end, 9 percent of black male students had family income above $80,000, while 22 percent of the total group did. There is a strong relationship between income level and test score, with each increasing level of income having a higher SAT mean score, than the next lower income level.

Taking the PSAT prior to taking the SAT was also related to higher scores. Black males who did so scored about 50 points higher on both verbal and math tests than those who did not.

Higher income, well-academically prepared black males earned SAT scores higher or comparable to other groups. This included students who took 20 or more years of academic subjects in high school, which would mean five subjects during each year of high school, such as English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language, and social studies. The stronger the academic background, in general, the higher the mean SAT score. Higher level of parent education was also accompanied by higher test scores. Among all groups, average scores increased, related to increasing parent education from "no high school diploma" through "graduate degree."

The many factors that correlated with test scores illustrate the importance of considering multiple factors when interpreting test scores. The correlates of ACT scores are not reported here, but there are similar relationships in those data.

The Test, the Tested, and Test Taking: Context and Motivation in Test Performance

Test item content can present a source of bias, particularly for young African American males from urban and low-income regions. Due to their lack of exposure to and unfamiliarity with prerequisite material or because of the different meanings that are conveyed across cultural groups and socioeconomic classes, items on assessments may be inappropriate, invalid, or unreliable (Johnson, 1979). As mentioned earlier, many members of this subgroup have relatively fewer opportunities for exposure to a wide range of concepts, objects, places, and experiences that are afforded other subgroups mainly due to socioeconomic status. Certainly, test item developers largely draw from these sources in construction of their instruments. Early work by Hess and Shipman (1965), Bernstein (1961, 1972), and others has supported the conclusion that low-income parents often have sparse, rather unclear verbal interactions with their children that lack generality. Scott-Jones (1984), however, in a study that shed light on possible methodological and interpretational weaknesses of earlier work, noted that much research on maternal language and teaching styles gives limited attention to actual outcomes that follow from the teaching strategy employed.

It should be noted that poor parents, many of whom are single mothers today, generally have even less time for more involved, thoughtful, nurturing, growth-promoting interactions with their children, due in many cases to a number of stressors and demands related to day-to-day struggles to survive. Poverty is a precarious position, and seemingly insignificant changes in financial status can wreak havoc. Male children, in particular, may suffer in these instances more than females, with little or no interaction with male role models to model academically related behaviors such as reading, watching (and discussing) televised educational programming, and taking field trips and excursions to stimulating and interesting places.

Clark (1983) through intensive ethnographic methodology conducted in African American homes, concluded that what parents actually do in the home in terms of language and achievement modeling—rather than the status of the parents in terms of education and occupation—influences their children's academic achievement

and intelligence test scores. He reported that in families of low-income, high-achieving high school seniors, psychosocial orientations and home activity patterns were directed toward achievement. In those homes, parents were observed to be warm and nurturing, to take charge in the home, to set clear limits for a wide range of behaviors, to provide strong encouragement in academic pursuits, and to carefully monitor how time was spent in and out of the home. Optimism and faith in the child's ability to do well and an interest in assessment tasks as a fundamental academic activity were transmitted from parent(s) to child.

The psychological characteristics of the person being tested, in this case the African American male, are factors to consider in understanding a test score. There is a general acceptance that school-related achievement is a function of direct and interactional effects of many factors. The mediating and attenuating factors related to student academic achievement stem from school and extra-school factors (Johnson, 1992). Academic achievement refers to the traditional indices of the degree to which a student has encountered success in learning in school. These indices include scores and other summaries of performance, based on the administration of a variety of assessment tools (Johnson, 1992).

A considerable amount of research has indicated the great influence that the factor of expectancy wields on achievement (Atkinson, 1964; Slavin, 1977). The sources of expectancy, as applied or related to the learner, are seen as both school based which include expectancy of teachers, of administrators, of other school staff, of peers, and of the students themselves—and extra-school (or beyond school)-based factors which include the expectancy of parents, of siblings, of significant others in the home, and of significant others in the broader community (such as church members).

The expectancies of students and their parents were important variables identified in a study by Johnson and Prom-Jackson (1986). They surveyed all graduates of college-preparatory high schools who were clients of A Better Chance, Inc. (ABC), a nonprofit educational organization. In one of their programs, they identify talented children from low-income backgrounds as possible candidates in such schools. The sample was 76 percent African American, 11 percent Hispanic American, 6 per-

cent white American, 3.5 percent each Asian American and American Indian. The complete survey reports information on elementary school, high school, and college experiences; career choice and progression; family background; parental attitudes and values; and personal skills, abilities, and attitudes. The authors found that self-perceived ability was the best predictor of academic performance, and also the best predictor of the choice of a career in mathematics or science. Self-perceived ability can be considered as personal expectancy. In a subsequent report of the relationship between family characteristics and high school academic achievement, using the average of English and mathematics grades of the above sample as the achievement measure, Prom-Jackson, Johnson, and Wallace' (1986) noted that maternal attitudes and values were the most significant predictors of success from a set of family variables. School success was not related to family configuration (one- or two-parent family), and the findings for family size were small and inconsistent. However, as the sample was selected from achievers rather than from a general population of individuals from one- and two-parent families, the study provides stronger information on the characteristics of achievers, but weaker information on the relationship between family configuration and achievement. That is, it is difficult to compare the incidence of high achievement among both family configurations from such a study.

The 1984 survey also identified parental education and personal values as significant predictors of career aspirations and career attainment. Students whose parents viewed education as a means of improving their economic condition and whose mothers encouraged them to study science and mathematics were more likely to aspire to and attain careers in mathematics and science. Notably, among this entire sample, the proportion (25 percent) choosing careers requiring emphasis in mathematics and science was about the same as that among students in high school and college in general. This finding shows that when minority students have adequate opportunity and access to an adequate instructional program in mathematics and science in the high school years, along with high parental expectation, they are as likely to aspire to and enter careers with this emphasis as are white youth.

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The effects of parents' expectations and values are also shown in a study of black high school students who, while they had relatively low Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, held aspirations of college and beyond (Johnson and Prom-Jackson, 1986). Through this study, the education department of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sought to determine whether an intervention program would be useful in improving the SAT scores of black students from low-income backgrounds in New York, Atlanta, and San Francisco. The program design called for the program to be replicated in each city such that students enrolled in the second session would serve as a control group for first session participants. Statistically significant and important gains were reported for the sample of 184 students, with the largest gains being made in mathematics and smaller gains made on a test of verbal ability. Gains for low-scoring subjects were greatest, as would be expected; but these gains were much larger than those which could be explained by regression effects. For all subjects, parental expectations and parental ratings of student achievement were significant predictors of SAT scores.

In a later review of the literature, Slaughter and Epps (1987) examined the role of African American parents in student achievement. They documented four approaches to parental impact on the achievement of black children and youth which identify the parent as (1) decision maker, (2) supporter, (3) mediator, and (4) teacher. They also synthesized current knowledge about how social class and race influence academic achievement through their impact on childhood and adolescent socialization. They pointed out that the extensive evidence on the impact of parents on school achievement among families with limited resources emphasizes the need for crucial, yet relatively low-cost, interventions to help parents provide better educational environments for their children. They noted the work of McAdoo (1982) on the important functions of extended families and fathers as part of the support structure in single- and two-parent families. Slaughter and Epps concluded by noting that when the struggle to survive is a daily one, the amount invested in enriching family life is minimized; therefore, efforts to relieve the poverty and marginality under which so many black families presently function must be renewed if these families are to fulfill their functions as the major source for the development of academic motivation. As additional support for their recommendations, they also noted the Coleman (1966) finding that family background and associated parental influences were identified as the major factors affecting student achievement. It follows that if increasing numbers of black males are locked out of educational and vocational opportunities, then relatively fewer family formations will occur, thus maintaining a vicious and continuous cycle of underachievement. Simultaneously, we can observe a proliferation of correctional facilities, which offer no substantive educational programs to those incarcerated. It is well documented that these institutions hold African American men in grossly disproportionate numbers.

Other motivational factors have been extensively represented in the research literature from a variety of theoretical approaches. About two decades ago, Banks (1978) gained ground in making more coherent previously conflicting findings in this area of inquiry. His conclusions, very common sensical and fundamental, and supported by a series of empirical studies, were that the interest in a task that is facing African American and white students strongly affects intrinsic achievement orientation toward the task. The consideration and inclusion of motivational factors in analyses focusing on African American males, from several perspectives seem quite reasonable. One direction for such inquiry will logically come from investigating the impact of motivation related to the nature, structure, and content of the test item or assessment task. Another direction of inquiry comes from the examination of the effect of motivation as produced by interactions with those in the learner's environment, including school-based sources (i.e., teachers, administrators, peers, etc.), home sources (parents, siblings, extended family members, etc.), and significant others from the broader community (i.e., involved people from community institutions, agencies, etc.) All of these factors, we are reminded, operate within the societal context, with its many messages transmitted from media of many sorts, including the immensely powerful television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, video and telecommunication technology, the Internet (perhaps most powerful, or will soon be), live gatherings of people of many sizes and configurations, etc.

Banks' findings infer that African American males are in many cases not motivated to perform well in assessment tasks or situations that are perceived as having little or no relevance to them and to hold less interest for them. It is a challenge to all stakeholders in the milieu of the African American male child to foster, nurture, and generate higher motivation for learning generally that will carry over into performance on assessment tasks associated with educational objectives. Parents of African American males, in addition to transmitting high expectations for academic performance to their sons, should be encouraged to recognize the effect of the modeling of academically related behaviors (such as reading) and the expression of enthusiasm and interest in the pursuit of intellectual growth overall.

Other findings from studies of achievement among African American students who have had access to academic preparation and have received adequate support are more likely to follow motivational models developed for other populations. Problems in the interpretation of research findings arise when African American young people with inadequate home support and minimal academic preparation are measured and some conclusion regarding the overall competence of African American youth is drawn from achievement test scores. Such results ultimately mean little, and efforts to make them appear meaningful are misguided at best and harmful at worst.

The Testing Environment

The testing or assessment condition (environment) likely poses a differential challenge to African American males, particularly in light of research results indicating the unique predispositions of this subgroup behaviorally and in terms of learning styles. The high level of physical activity characteristic of African American boys, as compared to girls, has been documented by many researchers (Hale-Benson, 1982; Kunjufu, 1985). This characteristic has been referred to by Boykin (1982) as the African American boys having increased or greater "verve," greater propensity for movement. He suggests that instructional approaches should build on, rather than attempt to extinguish this tendency (Allen and Boykin, 1991). It follows that the design of assessment activities and the environment in which they are conducted should be congruent with such instructional concerns, in order to best serve the interests of African American boys. It is possible that the newer performance-based assessments may in some positive ways influence achievement measurements for this group. However, this line of inquiry is presently in its infancy.

When we consider the typical and traditional testing situation or scenario, we see a setting of a certain quality in which test takers uniformly will sit in a somewhat restricted manner (i.e., in a limited amount of space) for a prescribed amount of time, under the control or direction (and watchful eye) of the tester. How does the African American male see and completely perceive this setting, this condition, based on his prior experiences, as he enters it and must instantaneously perform in a certain purposeful, focused, and efficient manner? This young man brings with him to this testing situation a certain level of anxiety (a level of which promotes optimal performance), a certain degree of preparation, the culmination or interaction of expectations from a number of sources (including that of the tester), and a certain level and type of motivation to perform.

With regard to physical setting, Johnson (1979) points out that physical surroundings can be very crucial because they provide cues to the person being tested. If then, the environment in which the testing takes place is threatening, is scary, is uncomfortable, depressing, or perhaps reminds this young test taker of another place with which he associates negative emotions—his performance on the measure may too be negatively affected. Thus, the results of the assessment may have less validity. That is, the score arrived at as a result of the assessment, in this case, may not represent what he knows and can do. The potential of expectation as a "powerful motivator," as it is related to setting, is emphasized.

It seems reasonable to conclude that, at a minimum, a particular type of care and sufficient time should be taken to ensure that young African American male students understand the importance of doing their best, with particular emphasis placed on the testing condition. It should be conveyed to them clearly that they have the potential to do well and are expected to do so by their parents, teachers, siblings, peers, extended family members, and significant others from the broader community. It is true that all

students should have this testing condition. However, many students have received these positive messages already, and the preponderance of data suggests that this may not be the case for the urban African American male. They should be informed of the general nature of the tasks and the physical requirements of testing at an early age. They should be at least just as informed as other test takers of the specific nature (i.e., format, types of content etc.) of the types of items and tasks they will face in the assessment process (e.g., review and completion of sample materials, usually provided by test developers). Clark (1983) observed that such supportive behaviors as those mentioned here are difficult, if not impossible, to provide by many parents in a stressed state. The challenge for parents, teachers, and other stakeholders involved with African American males is to accomplish all of the above without increasing test anxiety to a counterproductive level, in the face of their anxiousness for these youth to succeed.

Access to Educational and Employment Opportunities

This area is probably seen by many as one of the most important areas of test impact, because it is the most publicly visible. Who gets into college, and into which ones? What about graduate and professional schools, and presumably the major goal of employment, whether just out of high school or after many years of postgraduate study?

Campbell and Ramey (1995) have found in an extensive review that schooling and measured intelligence have a bidirectional relationship, with each variable influencing variations in the other, and both influencing economic outcomes. Each increase in school attendance seems to convey returns in psychometric intelligence, and in economic and social areas, including the likelihood of college attendance.

Access to opportunities has been influenced by the finding that African Americans and Hispanics as groups have average scores systematically lower than whites and Asians on a broad range of standardized tests, often .5 to 1 standard deviation below (Nettles, 1977). Therefore, when these tests are used alone for selection, an arbitrary score point will exclude proportionally more of these groups from selection. The within

group variability for all groups is much greater than any of the mean differences.

Many selection systems for college admissions and employment have used procedures designed to more fully access the broad range of abilities necessary for success and recognize the extent of inadequacy in predicting solely from a test score. These procedures involve the consideration for a variety of other factors in evidence of talent (GRE, 1995), and the treating of observed test scores that do not differ significantly from one another as reasonable estimates of the same true score (banding). These procedures are also recommended by developers of test selection instruments. Wagner (1997) supports these and similar procedures on the basis that average criteria performances of groups will be closer together than their average performances on the predictor, given typical or even optimal levels of the validity coefficient. The use of banding has been attacked by others because it causes different scores to be treated as if they were the same score (Gottfredson, 1994). Yet each score has a standard error of measurement that provides an estimate of the likely range of the true score, and substantial overlap of these distributions would seem to support this procedure.

Personal financing for higher education may be affected by test scores, and thus they become an indirect factor in the process of higher education selection. Prospective students may choose the military as an alternative after finishing high school, with the anticipation that the military college plan will finance subsequent college attendance. The level of funding provided is related to the scores on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test as well as time spent in the service, a factor not always recognized in enlistment planning. Test scores are also a factor in the selection of students for a broad group of merit financial awards, including National Merit Scholarships, and scholarships awarded by states, corporations, universities, and other organizations.

The opposition to affirmative action practices which has grown during recent years is now a major factor in access to higher education. A study by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1998) examined entering classes of graduate science and engineering programs at 93 major research universities from 1994 to 1997. Between 1996 and 1997, a time when affirmative action programs were being curtailed, they found that the number of black

students fell 20 percent, and Hispanic enrollment fell 18.2 percent. A study by two former Ivy League presidents, using a large database of students entering 28 highly selective colleges and universities in 1976 and in 1989, found that black students entered schools such as Yale and Stanford with test scores which on the average were lower than means of white students, although some scored at the highest levels, and some white students were admitted with scores at the lower end of the distribution of black students. Graduation rates and mean grade point averages were lower for black students. Yet black students earned advanced degrees at rates equal to or higher than white classmates, and then went on to become community leaders and enjoy remarkably successful careers. When this occurs, they become "the Backbone of the emerging black and Hispanic middle class" (Bok and Bowen, 1998).

White students were asked about race-sensitive admission policies. Regardless of whether they had been admitted to their first choice school, about 80 percent indicated that they favored such policies. Bowen and Bok conclude that if the schools in the study were to adopt policies that were not sensitive to race, white students' chances for entry would increase from the present 26 percent to 26.5 percent. The proportion of black students admitted would drop by more than one half, from 7 percent to 3 percent.

The ban on the inclusion of race as a factor in admission policies at the University of California, Berkeley in 1998 resulted in 191 black students being accepted for the fall 1998 freshman class, a 64 percent drop from the 562 black students accepted in 1997 (Johnston, 1998). Six hundred Hispanic students were accepted, a drop of 53 percent from the 1,266 Hispanic students enrolled in 1997. Similar figures were reported at UCLA where the number of admissions for black students in 1998 fell 42.6 percent, from 488 to 280, and among Hispanic students fell 33 percent, from 1,497 to 1,001. A decline in American Indian admissions at Berkeley resulted in the number admitted falling from 69 to 27, or 59 percent, and at UCLA the 46 acceptances were 43 percent below the 1997 total of 81 (Johnston, 1998).

Wolf-Devine (1997) argues against the use of affirmative action in university faculty appointments, except in narrow circumscribed circumstances on a case-by-case basis. She finds that it has bad effects on the preferentially appointed faculty, and is not fair to other applicants.

Bergman (1997) finds little evidence for such stigmatizing among either students or faculty based on the affirmative action practices for student and faculty selection in Ivy League universities, and many advantages to the university community and to the education of all students.

Having joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin during the 70s with the help of then-new affirmative action policies, Fennema (1998) reports that the past 25 years have shown the extensive effect of adding the voices of women and minorities to the active practice of educational research. Many questions have been investigated that opposed and explored an important finding which would not have been perceived by other researchers.

College admission test scores tend to have about a .5 correlation with first-year college grades, but few validity studies continue beyond that point. Using data from the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, Nettles (1997) reports test and grade performance for African American bachelor's degree recipients in 1992/93. As shown in figures 5 and 6, about 8 percent and 12 percent of this group scored in the highest and third quartiles respectively on the SAT or ACT, but their cumulative undergraduate grade point averages placed 11.3 percent and 34.4 percent of them in the categories "3.5 and above" and "3.00 to 3.49." Thus, despite relatively low test scores, nearly half of this group received grades at or above the "B" average level.

When minority student enrollment in higher education rose during the 1970s, many expected that minority groups would now be proportionately represented in graduate education. Yet, black enrollment decreased sharply from 1976 to 1982 at the time of a slight downturn for white students. The Hispanic enrollments held steady or rose slightly (Pruitt, 1985).

There has been modest progress through 1994 for both African American and Hispanic groups in graduate and professional education (Nettles, 1997). Among African Americans, the majority of graduate students are women, with a male/female ratio of 37,700 to 72,900 in 1994. Among first professional degree students, the ratio was 9,000 to 11,500 (Nettles, 1997). Among Hispanics, the gender ratio among graduate students was 27,000 to 36,900 among males and

Figure 5
Cumulative Undergraduate Grade Point Average of 1992/93, Bachelor's Degree Recipients by Race
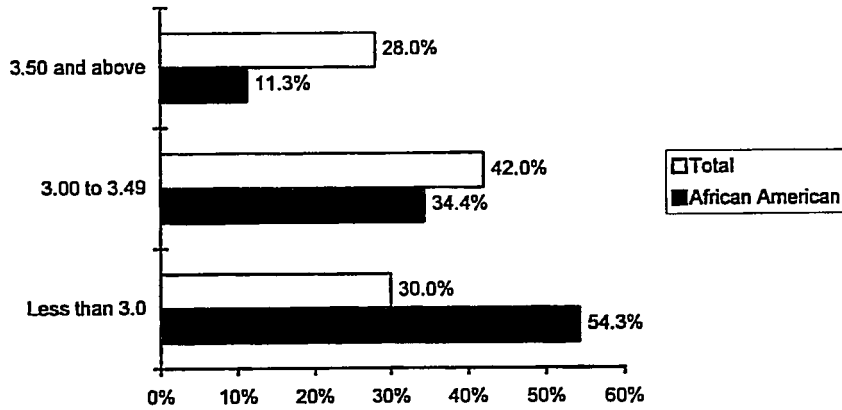
SOURCE: Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study. First Follow-up (B&B: 93/94).

Figure 6
Percentage of Test Score Quartile of 1992/93 Bachelor's Degree Recipients Who Took SAT or ACT
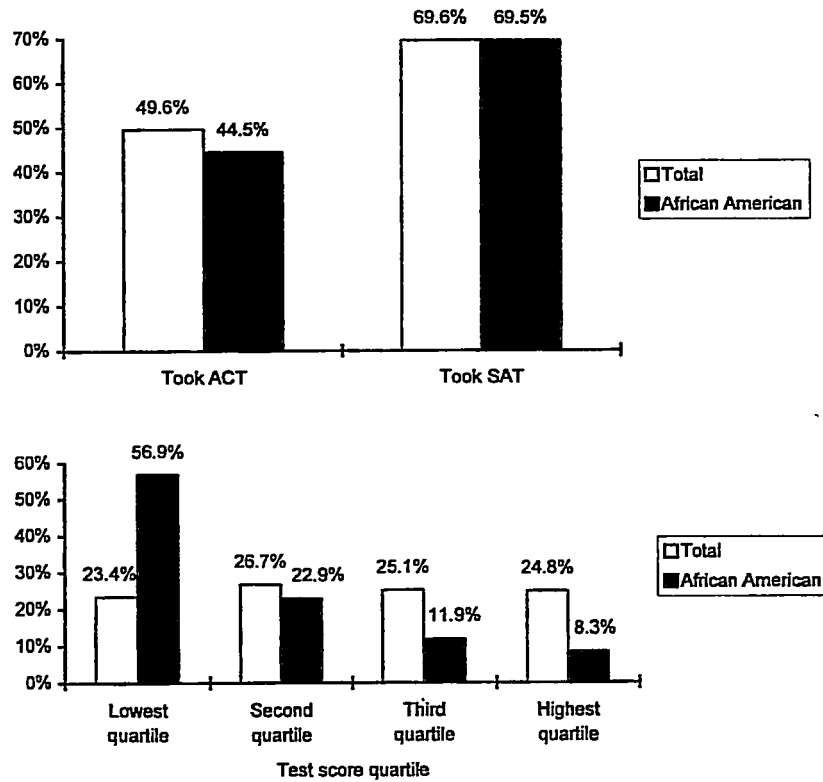
SOURCE: Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study. First Follow-up (B&B: 93/94).

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females, while among first professional degree students, there were 7,500 men and 5,900 women (Nettles, 1997). Yet, these total figures for African Americans represent only 6.4 percent and 7.0 percent of graduate and first professional degree students in American colleges and universities. For comparison, the 1995 population estimates for the U.S. population between the ages of 25 and 34 were 13 percent for African Americans, and 12.6 percent for persons of Hispanic background.

To what extent is the representation of African American and Hispanic students in graduate and professional schools influenced by testing? This is difficult to estimate, but the ways in which these figures are impacted can be discussed. Differences on the GRE test and others at the graduate level are related to earlier academic experiences. Smaller proportions of African Americans and Hispanics fall into the upper ranges on graduate and professional school admissions tests, despite some score gains. Generally, mean differences are about 1 standard deviation (Nettles, 1997). The value of the GRE for prediction among minority students has been about the same as for majority students (GRE, 1996). Hagedorn and Nora (1997) show that graduate admissions tests and grade point averages fail to consistently and validly predict beyond the first year. In terms of specific major fields, Sternberg and William (1997) found that the GRE was not a meaningful predictor in the training of psychologists.

To the extent that academic preparation for college during the upper elementary and high school years is formed by test score use in placement, tracking, and the provision of high level academic courses, college performance and the feasibility of graduate school enrollment may be affected. Earlier preparation also influences the likelihood of attending a research university at the undergraduate level, and such attendance is associated with higher graduate admissions test scores. Attendance at an historically black college or university at the undergraduate level is strongly related to graduate school aspirations. For example, about 12 percent of African Americans who took the GRE in 1991–92 were graduates of 13 historically black schools.

Conclusion

This paper has reported some of the test performance of black males on a variety of instruments, from elementary school achievement tests through the Graduate Record Examination. More extensive presentations on each of the examinations covered are available from the sources cited. We have also presented information on test development, motivation, and factors affecting test scores. All of these factors must be considered in interpreting test scores.

What should we draw from this test information in terms of the crisis of the urban African American male? It is clear that a total reliance on tests for selection results in greatly limiting the opportunities for this group, from early opportunities to learn in elementary and high school, to the opportunities that are later contingents to these learning experiences. The multiple societal forces that affect black males, their families, and their school learning experiences need to be addressed, and the climate for learning effectively improved in our schools in all of our cities. An approach is needed that is educational, economic, and political, in order to make the massive changes needed.

The positive side is that nearly all of these test scores show positive improvement over time, but much, much more is needed to effectively use the important talents of African American men, and to adequately open the upper levels of employment, education, and income to them.

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Health Care

Excess Mortality and Causes of Death for African American Males in Urban Areas

ARLINE T. GERONIMUS*

African American male residents of persistently impoverished urban areas appear to suffer the worst health of any African American or white American group studied (McCord and Freeman, 1990; Geronimus et al., 1996; Geronimus et al., 1999; Guest et al., 1998). Between 1980 and 1990, the overall health of this group of African Americans declined even further (Geronimus et al., 1999). Popular images portray urban health disadvantages as applying mainly to inner-city youth and highlight the contributions of homicide and HIV/AIDS. Yet, recent scientific analyses, discussed below, reveal that important social disparities in morbidity and mortality apply not only to youth but also extend throughout the young adult and middle ages. Moreover, analyses of causes of premature death show that popularized images emphasizing the role of homicide and HIV/AIDS are overly simplified.

Analyses of Excess Mortality among African American Men, Ages 15–64

The aforementioned social disparities in morbidity and mortality are starkly illustrated in analyses of excess mortality among all African American males, ages 15–64, residing in four persistently impoverished urban areas in 1990: Harlem, Central City Detroit, South Side Chicago, and the Watts area of Los Angeles. National data for white and black men provide a comparison.

As table 1 shows, there is substantial income inequality between families in the study populations and those in the nation. Mean family income for blacks nationwide is about $18,000 lower (or 38 percent less) than for whites nationwide, and the percentage of black families with incomes below the poverty level is almost 4 times the rate for whites.

Mean incomes are lower still for residents of the local urban study populations. Their percentage of families in poverty range from 33 percent to 58 percent, compared to only 7 percent for whites nationwide. This suggests that residents of the African American urban locales are subject to material hardships that may contribute to their poor health status. For blacks, nationwide, and for each local urban population, several measures of mortality are computed:

Excess Mortality Rate (EDR): This measure shows how many more deaths per year occurred to men, ages 15–64, per 100,000 population in the black or local population than would have occurred if they experienced the same number of deaths per 100,000 population as white men of these ages experienced nationwide. Age Adjusted Rate Ratio (RR): This measure shows how many times higher the death rate is in the black or local population for men ages 15–64, than it is for white men of these ages in the nation. P (45) and P (65): These measures show the probability a typical 15-year-old boy in a national or local population faces of surviving to

Table 1
Summary Data on the Study Areas, 1990*

Area	Number of inhabitants	Mean family income (1990 $)	Families below the poverty level** (%)
	U.S. population		
Total	248,709,873	43,803	10.0
Whites	199,827,064	46,330	7.0
Blacks	29,930,524	28,659	26.3
Others	18,952,285	–	–
	Urban, African American populations ***		
Harlem	101,697	24,174	33.1
Central city Detroit	98,833	19,841	44.3
Southside Chicago	101,895	16,651	58.2
Watts	98,488	23,743	35.4

* Author's calculations based on the 1990 U.S. Census of the Population.
** The poverty levels were those defined by the Bureau of the Census.
*** See appendix for fuller description of these geographic areas.

Table 2
Measures of Mortality among Black and White Men 15 to 64 Years Old in Selected Populations, 1990

	Annual death rate	Total number of deaths	Annual excess death rate	Age adjusted rate ratio (95% confidence interval)	P45*	P65*	YOLL*
			Total U.S. male population				
Blacks	791	69,439	374	1.90 (1.88, 1.91)	0.88	0.62	5.78
Whites	417	282,076	0	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	0.94	0.77	3.10
			Urban African American locales				
Harlem	1,713	1,600	1,296	4.11 (3.91, 4.31)	0.71	0.37	11.33
CC Detroit	1,163	1,881	746	2.79 (2.66, 2.92)	0.81	0.50	8.63
SS Chicago	1,713	1,222	1,296	4.11 (3.88, 4.34)	0.73	0.37	11.71
Watts	1,216	1,449	799	2.92 (2.77, 3.07)	0.77	0.50	9.69

*P45 = Probability of survival to age 45; P65 = Probability of survival to age 65; YOLL = Average years of life lost between ages 15 and 65.
SOURCE: Author's calculations using vital statistics and census data. See Geronimus et al. (1996; 1999) for details of the estimation procedures.

age 45 or age 65; and <u>Average Number of Years of Life Lost between ages 15 and 65 (YOLL)</u>: This measure averages across every man in a specific locale who dies between his 15th and 65th birthday. Each man who dies contributes to the average the number of years remaining between his age at death and his 65th birthday. (For example, a man who dies at age 20 contributes 45 years to the overall average; a man who dies at age 60 contributes only 5 years to the average.)

Table 2 shows great inequalities in levels of excess death for men in the prime of life. Nationwide, African American men experience an annualized rate of excess deaths relative to whites of almost 400 deaths per year and have an age-adjusted mortality rate ratio approaching 2. This level of social disparity, disturbing as it is, vastly understates the level of excess mortality experienced by young adult through middle-aged African American male residents of central cities. In the study areas, annualized excess death rates range from 746 (in Detroit) to 1,296 (in Harlem and Chicago). Age-adjusted rate ratios range from almost 3 to more than 4 times the white death rate.

The final 3 columns of table 2 show estimated probabilities of survival to ages 45 or 65 (conditional on survival to age 15) and the average number of years of life lost between ages 15 and 65 in each population. Social inequalities in these outcomes are evident. Almost every white youth can expect to survive to age 45 and more than three-quarters can expect to survive to age 65. For black men, nationwide, the probabilities are reduced. Eighty-eight percent can expect to survive to age 45, but only 62 percent can expect to survive to age 65. Residents of poor African American urban populations fare substantially worse than this. *African American youth in the poor urban study areas face lower probabilities of survival to age 45 than white youth nationwide face of survival to age 65.* Men in the poor African American urban populations face an even chance or less of surviving to age 65. In Harlem and Chicago, a full two-thirds of 15-year-old males cannot expect to survive to age 65. *This represents less than half the probability of survival to age 65 of white males nationwide.*

Considering mortality rates in terms of years of young and middle adult life lost to the community, the findings are equally sobering. All four local populations studied experienced substantially larger numbers of years of life lost among men of these ages than among blacks or whites nationwide. In two of the local populations, African American men experienced an average of over 11 years of life lost between the ages of 15 and 65, almost twice the number lost for blacks nationwide and almost 4 times the number for whites.

Causes of Excess Mortality

Decompositions of excess death rates show that circulatory diseases are important contributors to excess mortality in every poor population studied (see table 3). Circulatory diseases alone constitute about one-fourth of all excess deaths in most locations (range = 16–30 percent). Circulatory diseases are the leading cause of excess deaths for black men nationwide and in Detroit and Chicago, and the second leading cause of excess deaths in Harlem and Watts. This is particularly notable because, of all of the causes of death studied, the base rate for white men nationwide—against which any excess to black men is measured—is the highest for circulatory disease deaths. For example, in the Chicago population, there are 310 excess deaths to circulatory disease and 241 to homicide. If these numbers are added to their respective base rates, there are 433 circulatory disease deaths per year to young adult through middle-aged men in Chicago compared to 253 homicide deaths, or *71 percent more circulatory than homicide deaths.*

Much has been made in the popular media about AIDS and homicide in inner cities. And, indeed, in Harlem, HIV/AIDs is the leading cause of excess death. It alone accounts for almost 300 excess deaths per year. Elsewhere, however, AIDS deaths are not particularly important contributors to excess mortality and are usually outpaced by most other causes of death. Homicide contributes a sizeable proportion of excess deaths in each urban population, from about 14 percent in Harlem to almost 32 percent in Watts. In terms of total death rates, it contributes about 10–20 percent. Although the number of excess deaths overall to men in Harlem, Detroit, and Chicago (data are unavailable for Watts) have grown since 1980, the number of deaths attributable to homicide remained stable between 1980 and 1990 (Geronimus et al., 1999). That is, *homicide, while an important cause*

of death among urban African American men, accounts for virtually none of the growth in excess death rates in these populations. Growth in excess death rates over the decade are accounted for instead by increases in deaths due to circulatory disease, cancer, AIDS (in Harlem), and accidents (in Chicago). Some of these increases were dramatic. For example, in Harlem, *deaths due to circulatory diseases or to cancer each doubled for men in this time period* (Geronimus et al., 1999).

AIDS or homicide deaths disproportionately kill people earlier in their adult lives than other important causes such as circulatory diseases or cancers. Thus, of all the summary measures we present, the average years of life lost (YOLL) will emphasize the contribution of AIDS or homicide to total mortality. This is because those who die at younger ages (i.e., those who are more likely to die from AIDS or homicide) will contribute more to the average years of life lost than those who die at older ages (i.e., those who are more likely to die from circulatory disease or cancer). For example, a 19-year-old homicide victim will contribute 46 years towards the average years of life lost; while a 49-year-old dying from heart disease contributes only 16.

However, even with this "magnification" of the importance of deaths due to AIDS or homicide, these causes alone explain only a share of the observed mortality differences between African American men in poor urban areas and white or black men nationwide. Such differences would remain substantial in the absence of AIDS or homicide deaths and continue to reveal important social disparities. In the absence of deaths to AIDS or homicide, the average years of life lost by men between ages 15–65 in each urban population would be: Harlem—7.25; Detroit—5.83; Chicago—8.26; and Watts—5.65. These are 2 to 3 times the number for U.S. whites (2.71) and 1.4 to 2 times the number for U.S. blacks (4.16).

Comparison Groups

How unique is the mortality experience of African American men in poor urban areas? How does their level of mortality contrast with several natural comparison groups: rural poor African American men? urban poor African American women? middle-class black men in metropolitan areas? urban poor white men?

Rural Poor African American Men

Where they have been estimated, mortality rates for young adult and middle-aged African American men living in poor *rural* areas are higher than for white men nationwide, but are considerably lower than in the *urban* locales (Geronimus et al., 1996; Geronimus et al., 1999). Despite higher than average poverty rates in the rural areas studied, men's excess mortality experience is generally comparable to that of black men nationwide. So, too, are their probabilities of survival to ages 45 or 65 and their average years of life lost.

Homicide plays a smaller role in excess deaths to black men in poor rural areas, and AIDS plays virtually none at all. Circulatory disease and cancer deaths are the largest contributors to excess deaths in rural areas, but even these deaths are fewer than in urban areas. (Only excess deaths due to accidents tend to be higher in rural than in urban areas). However, even in the absence of AIDS or homicide deaths, deaths in rural areas would be substantially less than in urban areas. For example, in 1990 the average YOLL for men (excluding homicide or AIDS deaths) in highly impoverished rural areas in the Louisiana Delta and the Black Belt region of Alabama—areas where almost half of all families have incomes below the poverty level—are 4.76 and 4.72, respectively. These are lower than in any of the urban areas studied. In the worst cases, Harlem and Chicago, the average YOLL *excluding deaths to homicide or AIDS* are 55 and 78 percent higher than in these impoverished rural areas.

African American Women in Poor Urban Areas

African American women, ages 15–64, living in the same poor areas of Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, and Watts experience excess mortality relative to white or black women nationwide, but their excess mortality rates are substantially lower than those of men living in these areas (Geronimus et al., 1996; Geronimus et al., 1999). Their annualized excess death rate ranges from 355 (in Detroit) to 569 (in Chicago) compared to 746 and 1,296 for men in these locales, respectively. Their probability of survival to ages 45 or 65 is substantially lower than national averages for women. About one out of three 15-year-old girls in these locales will not live to her 65th birthday, compared to one out of five for white girls nationwide. Still, these are substantially

better odds than faced by 15-year-old boys in these locales.

Circulatory disease is the leading cause of death and excess death to women in these areas. Cancer is usually the second or third leading cause. AIDS is the second leading cause of excess death among Harlem women, but, as with men, is relatively unimportant in other locales. Homicide is the second or third leading cause of excess death among women in Detroit, Chicago, and Watts, but in absolute numbers trails circulatory disease deaths (among women) or homicide deaths among men by a wide margin. While homicide is certainly an important part of why men in these locales fare worse than women, it does not explain the full disparity. For example, average YOLL for women between ages 15 and 65 excluding deaths to AIDS or homicide are 4.25, 3.18, 4.66, and 3.47 for Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, and Watts, respectively. These are about two-thirds the numbers of YOLL excluding these causes for men in the same locales.

Black Men in Middle-Class Metropolitan Areas

Within the same major metropolitan areas as some of the poor local populations, analyses have been conducted of the mortality experience of young through middle-aged black men residing in communities with higher mean incomes and lower poverty rates. (Geronimus et al., 1996). These higher income populations are drawn from the Queens and Bronx boroughs of New York City; from Northwest Detroit; and from the Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills area of greater Los Angeles. The mortality experience of black men in these areas is similar to or better than that for black men nationwide and, therefore, notably better than that of their counterparts in poor urban neighborhoods. Comparing mortality rates directly between the urban poor population in a specific metropolitan area and the better-off suburban population shows that male residents of the poor area had age-adjusted mortality rate ratios ranging from 1.5 to 3.5 the mortality rate of male residents of the higher-income locality. In 1990, African American men in the higher-income area in New York City faced a mortality profile that approximated that of white men nationwide. This finding suggests that when a black population enjoys the same level of economic advantage or municipal services as a

white population, it also has a favorable mortality rate.[1]

Poor Urban White Men

Studies also have been made of white male residents of poor urban areas in Cleveland, Detroit, and the Lower East Side of New York City. (Geronimus et al., 1996; Geronimus et al., 1999). It should be noted that while these populations all had mean incomes well below—and poverty rates well above—the white national average, they tended to be economically better-off than the poor urban black populations.[2]

White men living in these poor urban areas experience excess mortality relative to white men nationwide, with age-adjusted mortality rate ratios ranging from about 1.5–2.0 times the white rate. Their levels of excess mortality are comparable to those of poor, rural blacks or blacks nationwide, but are well below those of African American men living in poor urban areas. Furthermore, their rates of excess mortality show less evidence of having grown than those for poor urban black populations (Geronimus et al., 1999).

While HIV in Harlem and homicide in each of the urban poor black locales account for some of the discrepancy in levels of mortality between urban poor black and white men, they fall far short of explaining it in its entirety. Excess deaths due to diseases of the circulatory system and cancer are also very important. For example, in Harlem in 1990 there were 205 and 118 excess deaths to circulatory diseases and cancer respectively, compared to 15 and 0 in the Lower East Side. In Chicago's south side there were 310 and 168 excess deaths to circulatory diseases and cancer respectively, compared to 138 and 52 in Cleveland's urban white areas. For blacks in Central City Detroit there were 192 and 76 excess deaths to circulatory diseases and cancer respectively, compared to 138 and 56 for Detroit whites.

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[1] The higher-income area in New York City included a large number of West Indian immigrants (30 percent), but even when looking only at the mortality experience of native-born African American residents, their mortality rates were comparable to those for white men nationwide.

[2] This reflects the national distribution of income, where, outside of specific rural areas in Appalachia, poverty among whites tends to be less concentrated or deep than for some African Americans (Williams and Collins 1995).

Table 3

Causes of Excess Mortality among African American Men 15 to 64 Years Old Residing in Urban Poverty, 1990

	Circulatory disease	Cancer	Accident	Homicide	HIV	Infect/pneu/ influenza	Other	Total
	National death rate per 100,000 in white men							
	123	103	54	12	23	11	92	418
	Number of excess deaths per 100,000							
Harlem	205	118	20	175	296	150	332	1,296
CC Detroit	192	76	-2	187	38	37	217	746
SS Chicago	310	168	109	241	79	82	308	1,296
Watts	239	76	36	259	61	12	116	799

SOURCE: Author's calculations using vital statistics and census data. See appendix and Geronimus et al. (1996; 1999) for details.

Table 4

Estimated Percent Disabled, Young and Middle-aged Men in Selected Populations, 1990*

Age	U.S. whites	U.S. blacks	Harlem	Central city Detroit	Chicago	Watts
25	5	9	13	15	14	18
35	7	14	21	22	22	27
45	10	20	26	28	27	33
55	16	27	33	36	35	42
65	28	39	46	48	48	55

* Author's calculations using 1990 census data. See Geronimus et al. in press for estimation procedures.

In sum, although members of these comparison groups experience excess mortality in their young adult through middle ages relative to whites nationwide, there appears to be no group which suffers as stark and growing mortality disadvantages as young through middle-aged African American men living in poor urban locales. These men remain uniquely disadvantaged even after homicide and HIV deaths are eliminated from comparisons. Chronic disease deaths in young through middle age are critical contributors to the remaining disparity.

Poor Health and Disability among Urban African American Men

Mortality rates do not tell the whole story. It is important to point out that for adult men, mortality rates due to chronic conditions such as circulatory disease understate the larger number of men who suffer morbidity-induced functional impairment or reduced quality of life. Table 4 illustrates this point. Using 1990 census data, disability rates by race, age, and sex are calculated using the responses to questions about limitations in work, mobility, and personal care activities resulting from health conditions of at least 6 months duration. Table 4 shows that those men who survive into middle age in the local populations report disability rates that are as much as 3 times the white rate nationwide for a given age. *African American young men aged 25 residing in the poor urban populations experience about the same rate of disability as 55-year-old white men nationwide. Half of the men who survive to age 65 in Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, or Watts are estimated to be disabled—almost double the rate for white men nationwide.* When the probabilities of early death and disability are combined, *at least half of the men in each of these local populations can expect to die or become disabled by age 50* (Geronimus et al., in press).

Those community members (other men, women, or children) who depend on these men or who are called on to house or care for them during prolonged periods of chronic disability are also profoundly affected.

Children in Urban Areas

In 1990, black male children under the age of 1 were more than twice as likely to die as white male children of the same age. Due to small numbers, there are no studies of small local areas that stratify infant mortality rates by sex. However, 1990 infant mortality rates in the local study areas in Harlem, Detroit, Chicago, and Watts for both sexes combined were 2½ to 4 times the white national average (Geronimus, 1997; and additional tabulations by author). In Michigan in 1989, the odds of being low birthweight for black infants living in local areas with mean incomes in the bottom 20 percent of black communities was approximately 4 times the rate for white infants and 1.5 times that of other blacks (Geronimus, 1996).

Nationally, in 1990 the overall death rate among black males ages 1 to 14 was about 1.5 times the white rate. In major metropolitan areas the differentials were greater. For example, in the Detroit and Chicago metropolitan areas, black/white mortality rate ratios were 1.7 and 2.2, respectively. Fire-related deaths, deaths due to asthma, and homicides are the major causes of excess death among African American males at these ages (Hillemeier, 1998).

It is in the late teens that the uniquely severe mortality disadvantage experienced by urban African American males clearly emerges. In infancy and early childhood, African American males are more likely to die than females, but they are no more disadvantaged relative to white males than are African American females to white females. By the late teens, excess death rates among males are on an order of magnitude higher than they were for 1- to 14-year-olds. For the late teen group, unlike older men, homicides account for most excess deaths. The number of excess deaths due to homicide doubled in New York City and tripled in the Detroit and Chicago metropolitan areas between 1980 and 1990 among males aged 15 to 19 (Hillemeier, 1998).

Summary and Implications

African American men residing in poor urban areas face the most disadvantageous mortality profiles of any group studied (Geronimus, et al. 1996; 1999). In some locales, only two out of every three boys who survive to age 15 will survive to age 45, and only one will survive to age 65. One study concluded that the chances of survival through middle age faced by some urban African American boys are lower than those faced in Bangladesh (McCord and Freeman,

1990). Initially, homicide is the greatest risk to their survival. But early in adulthood, circulatory disease and cancer add to and often outpace homicide as important contributors to early death.

What do we understand about the reasons behind these dismal statistics and the possible solutions?

Poverty and Health

Socioeconomic position is strongly associated with the risk of disease and death (Antonovsky, 1967; Syme and Berkman, 1976; Marmot, 1987; Williams, 1990; Preston and Taubman, 1994). As evidenced in table 1 above, urban African American locales are characterized by extreme poverty. With respect to income, health improves rapidly as one moves from the lowest levels of income to average or median levels. This suggests that policies that improve the social and economic status of lower income populations can dramatically improve their health.

Recent empirical evidence also suggests that relative deprivation adds to absolute material deprivation to intensify the health disadvantages African Americans experience (Lynch et al., 1998). That is, poor residents of metropolitan areas characterized by high levels of income inequality suffer worse health disadvantages than equally low-income individuals residing in metropolitan areas with lower degrees of income-inequality. Disturbingly, in the last quarter of the 20th Century, the absolute and relative economic condition of those in the lower economic strata in the United States has generally stagnated and deteriorated rather than improved, contributing to growing health inequalities as well.

Lower socioeconomic position carries with it increased exposure to nearly all health risks, including hunger, homelessness and other material hardships; acute and chronic stress; unhealthy behaviors, overburdened or absent social supports; and depression (Geronimus, 1992; Williams and House, 1991; Marmot et al., 1987). High levels of racial and economic segregation within populations also appear deleterious to their health (Polednak, 1996). Black residents of segregated low-income areas have lower levels of access to medical care, public services, safe housing, sanitation, recreation, education and training, and good jobs; increased environmental exposure to biological, chemical, physical, and social hazards; and reduced opportunities.

Behavioral Risk Profiles

A common belief is that by changing the unhealthy behaviors of poor individuals, social disparities in health will be importantly reduced. Residents of poor communities often do have worse behavioral health risk profiles than members of more advantaged populations (Northridge et al., 1998); yet, socioeconomic differences in mortality are due to a wider array of factors and additional measures are necessary (Link and Phelan, 1995; Lantz et al., 1998). Even unhealthy behaviors themselves are best addressed when interactions between behavior and environment are taken into account. For example, high smoking rates in poor urban African American communities are likely, in part, to reflect coping responses to the pervasive psychosocial stress residents experience. Short of addressing the stressors, smoking cessation will be hard to achieve. This is especially true in the current context where tobacco companies selectively target urban minority groups for advertising (Davis, 1987; King, 1997). Such advertising strategies help create demand for cigarettes in these communities, increase the chances that residents use smoking as one way to alleviate stress, or hinder the ability of current smokers to quit.

More generally, interventions to reduce the impact of unhealthy behaviors on mortality may be ill-suited to poor communities because they are (mis)informed by knowledge gleaned from more advantaged populations. For example, unlike among whites, smoking uptake among African Americans continues well into adulthood, and quit rates of current adult smokers are lower among African American than white adults (Geronimus, et al. 1993; King et al. 1998). Yet, relatively less effort has been expended in developing anti-tobacco interventions appropriate for adults compared to those that target youth or are school based.

Sometimes stereotypes are substituted for knowledge. This, too, undercuts effective behavior change strategies. An example is the widespread, but undocumented, belief that poor women of color are the most likely to abuse substances during pregnancy. Chasnoff et al. (1990) collected urine samples from pregnant women in Pinellas County Florida for evidence of sub-

stance abuse during pregnancy. They found the frequency of a positive urine test was similar among white and black women. Yet, during the 6-month period in which they collected the samples, black women in Pinellas County were reported to health authorities for substance abuse during pregnancy at 10 times the rate of white women, suggesting that something other than objective medical criteria were used to identify substance-abusing women. Such stereotyping can result in counterproductive effects including: mispecifying the problem, and thus the solution; reducing public support for addressing the needs of poor Americans of color; and providing minority Americans with reason to mistrust, or even fear, health care providers.

Similarly, there is a presumption that excess rates of low birthweight or infant mortality in poor urban locales would be importantly reduced through the prevention of teenage childbearing. Yet, in the poorest African American communities in Michigan, infants with 15-year-old mothers were *less* (one-half as) likely to be low birthweight as those whose mothers were 25, and one-third as likely as those whose mothers were 35 (Geronimus, 1996). So, too, in Harlem, 1990 infant mortality rates for teens were *half* those for mothers in their 20s (Geronimus, 1997). In poor African American communities, the health of women deteriorates sufficiently rapidly over the young adult ages to present a poignant dilemma: postponing childbearing *increases* their infants' risk of preterm birth, low birthweight, or death (Geronimus, 1992, 1996; Geronimus and Korenman, 1993; McCarthy and Hardy, 1993).

Negative stereotypical characterization of African Americans, itself, is associated with increased mortality. For example, Kennedy et al. (1997) demonstrated that statewide measures of collective disrespect for blacks are associated with mortality levels. A 1 percent increase in the prevalence of state residents who reported in a national survey that they believed blacks lacked innate ability was associated with an increase in age-adjusted black mortality rates of 360 deaths per 100,000 population. The dominant American cultural framework provides clear negative stereotypical characterizations of young urban African American men, but few, if any, identity-affirming symbols for this group. This lack might also contribute to the poor health of black men (James, 1996).

It is essential to encourage poor communities in efforts to empower residents to engage in health-promoting behaviors. However, the success of such efforts will be limited if we do not also augment the scientific knowledge base about the prevalence and patterns of unhealthy behaviors within poor urban communities, apart from national averages or stereotypes.

Violence

Homicide accounts for an important share of excess deaths to African American men in poor urban locales and for the majority of excess deaths to 15- to 19-year-olds. Living with fear of violence or coping with the loss to homicide of a peer or family member might also exacerbate the risk of stress-related disease, including cardiovascular disease. To be most effective, interventions to reduce homicide must extend beyond individual-oriented approaches, such as programs to deal constructively with anger, to also include broader interventions. Gun control measures, improved access to city and hospital services in poor communities, and improved public housing are examples of policies extending beyond individual control that may reduce deaths due to violence. A number of studies support this conclusion (Centerwall, 1984; Wallace and Wallace, 1990; Sampson, et al. 1997; Wilson and Daly, 1997).

HIV/AIDS

As of the early 1990s, AIDS appears to have played little role in excess mortality in poor populations outside of specific locales. Whether the epidemic remains contained in those areas or whether their experience is a harbinger of things to come in other poor locales cannot be known without continued surveillance. Harlem's experience illustrates how devastating HIV disease can be for a local community.

In poor communities, HIV is spread, as it is elsewhere, by sexual contact and by injection drug use. In addition to general "safe sex" education campaigns, interventions to reduce the use of injection drugs or to break the connection between drug use and HIV would reduce infection rates. In urban poor African American communities, such programs should be designed with attention to the long history of mistrust some African Americans have for government initiatives (Dalton, 1989; Thompson, 1998). In addition, programs that reduce the likelihood of infected

mothers passing the virus on to their fetuses would be beneficial, such as making available prenatal drug therapies that have been shown to be efficacious in reducing fetal infection. Consideration should also be given to work by Wallace and Wallace (1990), who attribute the AIDS epidemic in low-income New York City minority neighborhoods to the chain of events emanating from the closing of fire stations in these neighborhoods and the subsequent movement of drug users into burnt-out buildings and drug trafficking into the neighborhood. This depiction offers the suggestion that maintaining and improving city services and revitalizing urban areas, more generally, may be important strategies for stemming the spread of HIV in urban locations.

Homelessness

People who are homeless suffer starkly elevated rates of many mental and physical disorders (Wright and Weber, 1987; Gelberg, 1997; Wright, 1990), while experiencing particular difficulties in accessing medical care (Kreider and Nicholson, 1997; Gelberg et al., 1997; Redlener and Karich, 1994). Disturbingly, there has been a dramatic upsurge in family homelessness in the last two decades—it has mushroomed in some cities including New York (Bassuk et al., 1996; Thompson, 1997). Moreover, the urban homeless are the tip of an iceberg comprising a larger group who are marginally housed. Most of the extremely poor avoid literal homelessness by being given housing at little or no charge by kin (Bassuk et al., 1996; Thompson, 1997). Yet, doubled-up households in poor communities can have negative health implications for all residents of the doubled-up household. They suffer increased space pressures and household crowding, lowered privacy, lower food quality and quantity, increasingly unsanitary or unsafe housing conditions, more concentrated cooking, smoking, and use of electricity (often on over-aged wiring systems), increased wear and tear on household facilities, and increased potential for interpersonal conflict and the spread of infectious disease (Sontag, 1996; Bruni, 1996; Thompson, 1997).

Medical Care

Given the high rates of disease and premature death, strategies to improve access to quality medical care are also important. There is ample evidence of deficiencies in medical care provided to African Americans at every stage of life (Geiger, 1996). This is true even where insurance is not an issue or when disease type, severity, or co-morbid conditions are taken into account (Whittle et al., 1993; Peterson et al., 1994; Lee et al., 1997). Black men receive lower rates of some forms of life-saving treatment, including organ transplantation and specific high-tech treatments for ischemic heart disease (Whittle et al., 1993; Peterson et al., 1994; Gornick et al., 1995; Ford and Cooper, 1995). Such findings suggest the possibility that stereotyping or subtle forms of discrimination result in rationing of health care to the detriment of black men. Given the significant contribution of cardiovascular disease to excess mortality among urban African American men, these findings are especially disturbing.

Unfortunately, a variety of secular trends combine to suggest that access to quality care may have been reduced among the urban poor in recent years. Among these are the closing of many inner-city out-patient departments; staff reductions in public hospitals; reduced incentives for hospitals to provide uncompensated care in a managed care environment (Schlesinger, 1987); and, given links between health insurance and employment, macroeconomic restructuring intensifying black male joblessness in inner cities (Wilson, 1996). Concern has been raised about the possibility for new forms of discrimination as options for Medicaid recipients increasingly favor managed care over fee-for-service arrangements (Rosenbaum et al., 1997; Smith 1998). These should be monitored.

In addition, few health care providers locate their practices in central cities. In fact, Fossett et al. (1990) suggest that access to care in urban areas is constrained more by the lack of accessible physicians than by the lack of insurance. To improve the situation, concerted efforts are needed to increase physician supply in depressed urban areas (Schlesinger, 1987; Fossett et al., 1990; Fossett and Perloff 1995). In addition, variations across impoverished urban locales in causes of excess death provide evidence that available medical care should be responsive to local conditions and mortality risk profiles. These findings underline the importance of community representation on the boards of local health care facilities (Schlesinger 1987).

Targeted, locally responsive, and nondiscriminatory medical care practice is critical towards reducing social disparities in health, or, at least, to avoid their widening further. However, it will play a role only in secondary and tertiary prevention. To affect important progress in primary prevention other strategies are required.

Environment

Characteristics of the social, economic, or physical environment of urban areas also contribute to the stark health disadvantages of their residents. Inequities by race in the distribution of environmental hazards in or near communities (Mohai and Bryant 1992) may contribute to increasingly excessive rates of cancer, asthma, and reproductive disorders in urban areas. The disproportionate citing of hazardous wastes in or near low-income minority communities may also indirectly affect health to the extent that it depreciates the value of housing or undermines private investments in poor communities. Similarly, blood-lead concentrations among the inhabitants of inner cities have been found to be higher than those in outer cities, as a result of exposure to dust from lead paint, lead pipes, and soil dust lead (Hasselblad and Nelson 1975; NCHS 1984; Geronimus and Hillemeier 1992).

High-Effort Coping

Chronic, stress-related diseases, such as circulatory disease and cancer, are major contributors to the premature mortality of urban African American men. This suggests the potentially important role of the complex interplay between adverse life circumstances, psychosocial stress, and high-effort coping in their etiology. For example, in the case of hypertensive disease, James (1994) originated and empirically validated the construct of "John Henryism," a strong behavioral predisposition to engage in persistent high-effort coping with social and economic adversity. His ongoing empirical research suggests that high levels of John Henryism interact with low socioeconomic status to increase the risk of hypertensive disease among African American men.[3] This is contrary to the stereotype that

young urban poor African American men's fatalism predisposes them to engage in unhealthy behaviors that place them at risk of disease or death. Instead, their *persistent active effortful coping* with material deprivation, social barriers to upward mobility, and other widespread forms of social injustice may exact the physical price of a high risk of early cardiovascular mortality. For example, in one study, James and colleagues (1987) found that differences by socioeconomic status in hypertension prevalence among young adult and middle-aged blacks were small for those scoring low on John Henryism, but for those with high scores, hypertension prevalence was 3 times greater for those of low socioeconomic status compared to those with higher socioeconomic status (31.4 vs. 11.5 percent).

Geronimus' (1992) "weathering" concept suggests that the more rapid decline in health among low-income African Americans compared to the typical American—a decline that, as we have seen, is detectable as early as young to middle adulthood—is the consequence of *cumulative* exposure to the *full range of risks* associated with social inequality. For African Americans in poverty, there are multiple routes by which the health of young through middle-aged adults might progressively worsen. They include cumulative exposure to hazards in residential and work environments; increased psychosocial stress as obligations to dependents, kin, and work activities multiply; continued temptation to engage in unhealthy behaviors to cope with increasing stress and uncertainty; the progression of undiagnosed or unmanaged chronic conditions and diseases; and the increasingly deleterious impact of medical underservice in light of escalating health needs.

Conclusion

This paper documents a poignant dimension of social disparities in health—that young people in some U.S. communities cannot expect to survive through middle adulthood. While highly publicized causes of premature death such as AIDS and homicide do contribute to this tragedy,

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[3] John Henrysim is measured by a 12-item scale. The items reflect the following themes: 1) efficacious mental and physical vigor; 2) a strong commitment to hard work; and 3) a single-minded determination to succeed. For each item, the respondent answers on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "completely false" and 5 is "completely true." Examples of the items are: "I've always felt that I could make of my life pretty much what I wanted to make of it"; "Once I make up my mind to do something, I stay with it until the job is completely done"; "When things don't go the way I want them to, that just makes me work even harder."

they do so by adding to social disparities in mortality experience that are already substantial and result primarily from chronic disease in young and middle adulthood. This evidence that poor urban African American men cannot expect to enjoy a "prime of life" is a major social indictment.

Eliminating the staggering disparities in the probability of survival to or through middle age should be recognized as a high priority policy goal. For example, high levels of health-induced disability among working-age African American men contribute to their relatively low rates of labor force participation (Bound et al. 1995; 1996). That is, poor economic conditions can cause or exacerbate health problems that, in turn, will reduce the chances a person can remain gainfully employed and economically self-sufficient through middle age. Such disabilities also pose practical challenges for the members of family or larger informal social networks who care for the disabled. These challenges also may undermine the caretakers' efforts to fulfill competing obligations to family and work.

To achieve improvements in the health of African American men in poor urban areas, reorientation and restructuring of conventional wisdom is required. First, the critical role of public policy in this endeavor, above and beyond efforts to promote individual behavior change, must be acknowledged. Public policy can be applied as a tool to regulate the distribution of guns, toxic exposures, and advertising of harmful products; to insure equitable delivery of health services; to improve the supply and quality of housing; to revitalize urban areas in ways that support rather than disrupt existing communities; and, generally, to bolster municipal services, urban infrastructures, and investments in human capital in these locales.

Monitoring and surveillance are also necessary. Traditionally, a community's infant mortality rate has been used to measure the general social and economic conditions of that community. By this metric alone, poor urban African American communities are inextremis. Excess mortality during the prime of life—the reproductive and working ages—should be added to the "report card" for monitoring the success of governing bodies in equitably fulfilling the mission of public health to assure citizens the conditions in which they can be healthy. In addition, requiring health impact statements for proposed economic or social welfare policies would reduce the chances that the health of urban African American males is further eroded and allow for a more complete evaluation of the merits of specific policy proposals.

While not diminishing the importance of violence or, in some cases, AIDS, the evidence reviewed reinforces the centrality of cardiovascular disease as the *leading* threat to the health and well-being of poor urban African Americans and their communities. As noted above, many of the causes of excess mortality are beyond the control of individuals and require public intervention. The reviewed evidence also raises the possibility that to the extent that individuals behave in ways that increase their risk of cardiovascular disease, it may be that 1) these behaviors are encouraged by aspects of their environments (e.g., prominent cigarette advertising or pervasive pyschosocial stress); and 2) that they can reflect the best in people (e.g., persistent high-effort coping), not always the worst. This proposed undermining of stereotypes is scientifically supported, humane, and strategic. It may also be key to initiating a cascade of changes in public policy and clinical practice that now emanate, in part, from misunderstanding the motivations of urban youth and the nature of the health risks they face. Re-educating policy makers, clinical practitioners, and the broader public will alter the premises on which relevant professional judgments are made, leading to more effective policies and services, and increasing public support for them.

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Appendix

Study Populations

The level of analysis encompasses all African American or non-Hispanic whites in entire aggregates of census tracts, zip codes, counties (for mortality measures) or PUMAs (for disability calculations) and all blacks or whites nationwide.

The impoverished urban African American populations discussed are the residents of:

Harlem: Central Harlem Health Center District. *South Side Chicago:* Near South Side, Douglas, Oakland, Fuller Park, Grand Boulevard, and Washington Park community areas. *Central City Detroit:* Central, University, Central Business District, Foch, Jefferson-Mack, Airport, St. Jean, Chene, and Jeffries subcommunities. *Watts:* the Watts area of South Central Los Angeles and adjacent areas to the south and west.

The impoverished rural African American populations discussed are the residents of:

Delta Louisiana: Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, La Salle, Vernon, and Winn parishes; *Black Belt Alabama:* Dallas, Fayette, Greene, Bibb, Sumter, Hale, Lamar, Marengo, Marion, Perry, and Pickens Counties; *East North Carolina:* Pitt, Northampton, Halifax and Edgecombe Counties.

The economically better-off African American metropolitan populations are the residents of:

Queens-Bronx: sections of the Jamaica East and Flushing Health Center Districts (eastern Queens) and the Pelham Bay Health Center District (north Bronx, including Woodlawn, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Baychester, Edenwald, Eastchester, Glen Oaks, New Hyde Park, Floral Park, Bellerose, Bellaire, and Queens Village. *Northwest Detroit:* Palmer Park, Pembroke, Bagley, Redford, Rosedale Park, Evergreen, and Greenfield subcommunities. *Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills:* areas of suburban Los Angeles, including Crenshaw, Ladera Heights, Leimbert Park, Baldwin Hills, and Windsor Hills.

The impoverished non-Hispanic white urban populations are the residents of:

Lower East Side: areas in the southern part of the Lower East Side Health Center District of Manhattan and directly across the East River in the Williamsburg-Greenpoint Health Center Distirict in Brooklyn. *Cleveland:* the west-central area of Cleveland. *Detroit:* subcommunities on the northeastern and southern periphery of Detroit, including Delray, Clark Park, Chadsey, Condon, Springwells, Jeffries, State Fair, Burbank, Denby, Finney, Mt. Olivet, Grant, Davison, Pershing, and Nolan.

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An Exploration of Parental Attachment Patterns of Young African American Males Living in the Inner City

Camille Huggins, CSW, ACSW*

Preface

Anyone, regardless of their ethnic and/or cultural makeup, subjected to live in substandard conditions without the proper support systems will invariably have little to no self-esteem. Even though the task of building or elevating a person's self-esteem with little or no experience of hardship to overcome is formidable in itself, it is surmountable.

If we can accept that there was a traumatized generation of Depression children in the 1930's, a scared generation of World War II teenagers who gained maturity and found death on battlefields in Asia or Europe, a relatively affluent but anxious post-war generation in the 1950's, an embittered, floundering Vietnam generation in the 1960's and early 1970's, then it should not be difficult to accept the possibility that the 1980's promise to produce a generation of grasping competitors with narrowed horizons in terms of both mobility and ideals. In a society that can no longer sustain economic growth, the class system becomes more rigid. Competition increases, especially among the young. The prognosis for people from poor backgrounds is extremely bad. They are prime candidates for depression, chronic unemployment, homicide, crime, and exploitation. We shall see, on the other hand, that despite their disadvantages there is a significant proportion of young people from poverty backgrounds who succeed despite all the odds.[1]

Introduction: Low Socioeconomic Status + Parental Attachment = Self-Esteem

This equation best demonstrates the basis of this paper. It is an exploration of the parental attachment patterns of African American boys living in poor socioeconomic conditions and its impact on their self-esteem. As a social worker working with clients from some of Brooklyn's poorest neighborhoods in New York City, such as Brownsville, Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Williamsburg, I have observed a correlation between African American males between the ages of 6 to 33 years old with behavioral problems, their self-esteem, and their relationship with their parents.

Self-esteem cannot be fully defined without looking at personality development, which is a very complex and multidimensional topic in nature and could not be fully explained in this one paper. For this reason, Attachment Theory was chosen because it has been researched and empirically substantiated to be linked to personality formation, especially in the attachment of the primary caregiver (the mother figure) in childhood. Attachment Theory, however, does not in any way completely explain the totality of the character.[2] It is the positive affirmation and the security from loved ones that help to·provide a positive outlook, and eventually elevate self-esteem.

This paper delineates African American family attachment patterns and the contributing stress factors of living in poverty in the inner cities. It will illustrate the impact these factors have on the African American male's self-esteem and the personality indicators that lead to self-destructive behavior patterns. In conclusion, this

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[1] Williams & Kornblum, *Growing Up Poor*, Preface.

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[2] Holmes, p. 9.

paper will offer suggestions for policy makers to help support the African American family in their most vulnerable state.

Socioeconomic Status and the Poor

Membership in the lowest socioeconomic class in one's country can be perceived as an impediment in a stagnant economy. A family in this predicament may be one of generations of people in the lowest class structure with no hope for upward mobility. Fortunately, this is not the case in the United States, where our vibrant economy provides the opportunity for upward mobility. However, the economic distribution of these resources is pragmatic for individuals of a particular race or gender, while for others, this may not be the case.

Poverty is measured in the United States, by the number of members per family unit and the cost of a minimum adequate diet, multiplied by three to allow for other expenses. A family's status is computed by this equation. Their resources are defined as cash income before taxes.[3] The Social Security Administration first issued this equation in August 1967, and the United States Office of Management and Budget, as well as other benefit programs have also adapted the calculation. For example, a family unit of two adults and two children who have a threshold level of $3,100 in purchasing power in 1963, would subsequently have $16,050 in purchasing power in 1997, if inflation rates were factored into the equation.[4] In 1997, the average family income for my clients was $11,716.[5]

In the late 1950s, the overall poverty rate for individuals in the United States was 22 percent, which represented 39.5 million persons in poverty. Presently, when the American economy was at its best in 1996 (the last year for which data was available), the poverty rate was 13.7 percent, which represented 36.5 million people.[6] The substantial differences between the overall poverty rate and the poverty rates of individuals in certain demographic groups were also staggering. In 1996, 28.4 percent of African Americans were categorized as poor, which was 26.5 percent of the overall poverty population.

Specifically, my agency serves a racially and ethnically diverse population. Forty-three percent of the residents are of African descent, 37 percent are Hispanic, 16 percent are white, and 3 percent are Asian.[7] These families and individuals are largely excluded from the American occupational system. They lack training and skills, and either experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force. As a result, they may tend to engage in street crime and other forms of antisocial activities.

Historically, the poor throughout history have been children and the elderly. The demographics of groups in the low socioeconomic bracket have changed throughout history. In 1959, over half of the poor lived in nonmetropolitan areas, but by the 1970s, urban cities became the new home of a majority of the indigent.[8] In the early 20th century, the vast majority of both black and white low-income families were intact. One scholar, Herbert Gutman, examined black family structure and found that between 70 to 90 percent of black households had a "male-present," with a majority of the families represented in a nuclear family structure. This demonstrated that neither slavery, nor economic deprivation, nor the migration to urban areas affected black family structure by the first quarter of the 20th century. However, persistent poverty and degraded conditions in which most blacks lived were not without consequences.[9]

Some of these consequences included: higher rates of mortality among poor men due to improper health care, drug use, racism, and violent crimes (i.e., black-on-black and white-on-black). Black men sometimes lived apart from their families and in transient residences, due to their search for viable employment. The high incarceration rates among black males also contributed to the separation of the black family. These factors contributed to the new trend of the poor. Given their disproportionate concentration among the poor in America, black families were more strongly affected by these conditions and therefore were more likely than white families to become female headed.[10]

[3] *Revising the Poverty Measure* (1998).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Claritas, Health & Hospitals Corporation, FY '97.

[6] 1998 Green Book (appendix H).

[7] Claritas, Health & Hospitals Corporation, FY '97.

[8] Current Population Reports, pp. 60–102.

[9] Gutman, p. 57.

[10] Wilson, p. 40.

Hence, single-female-headed African American households became more at risk of staying in the cycle of poverty. This is primarily because the family's economic well-being depends solely on the woman's salary, which is likely to be less than a male's income with comparable work experience due to existing gender bias. Moreover, single mothers of dependent children often have a difficult time with job retention, as well as securing higher salaried jobs, because of the lack of support systems in the family and appropriate child care.[11] For example, approximately 58 percent of the community populations that my agency serves are women between the ages of 15 to 44 years old. Most of my clients are from single-parent homes.[12]

Mothers who are faced with spending long periods of time out of the home with little emotional and financial support may have a difficult time providing a secure environment for their children. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to establish bonds with their children. In samples of poor African American families, family instability was identified as a potential disruption of the attachment process.[13] Hence, this ultimately affects the parental and child bonding process.

Secure-based Attachment

Attachment Theory is defined as the basis of the search for security or a safe haven, throughout life's continuum from infancy to adulthood. This security provides individuals with a sense of autonomy. An intact attachment framework provides a basis of a secure inner world. We can go out on a limb, stand our ground, make our own choices, and tolerate loneliness if we can be sure that attachment and intimacy are available when needed.[14] Without this secure base, an individual will feel hesitant or frightened to venture into the environment for fear that he or she will have no one or nothing to protect them. This insecurity will then have a negative impact on successive relationships.

Further, the connection or relationship that develops between the child and his or her caretaker, and the repercussions on the child's emerging personality and developing view of the social world become essential. It is generally acknowledged among attachment researchers that the nature and quality of an individual's close relationships in adulthood are clearly influenced by affective events, which occurred in childhood, especially within the child-caretaker relationship.[15]

John Bowlby's view of Attachment Theory in *Attachment and Loss* also illustrates and explains the persuasiveness of human social bonds and reactions to their disruptions. Bowlby conceived of attachment as an instinctual drive, the goal of which is to maintain proximity with a discriminated person during childhood. This serves the adaptive function of protecting the person from physical or psychological harm. The attachment drive is present throughout the life span, but the attachment behavior is best observed when a child is threatened by separation, illness, harm, etc. Attachment behaviors help maintain proximity, but at the same time, provide security to an attachment figure. This relationship gives the attached child the confidence to explore the environment. The psychological awareness of the attachment figure's responsiveness and availability is sufficient to encourage healthy independence.[16]

The Significance of the Father-Child Relationship in the Attachment Process

Have you ever heard of the adage, "Mothers raise their daughters but they love their sons?" In researching this paper I found this adage to hold true. However, mothers usually cannot replace the profound contribution of a father's role in the caregiving attachment process. The paternal role in father-child attachment and father-son relationships has a tremendous impact on a boy's sex identification, socialization skills, as well as, understanding the dynamics of the relationship with the opposite sex. The Bronson[17] study found that characteristics of the father-child relationship have greater formative significance than the father's avowed masculinity or punitiveness. A father's warmth and sensitivity determine the security of the father-infant bond, and in the case of the mother's secure rela-

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[11] O'Neill (1992).

[12] Claritas, Health & Hospitals Corporation, FY '97.

[13] Sims-Standford, B. (1997).

[14] Holmes (1996).

[15] Collins & Reid (1990).

[16] Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980).

[17] Bronson (1959).

tionship, it can foster the ability to relate positively to others.

Limited research has been done to distinguish between maternal and paternal parenting styles. Osofsky & O'Connell, 1972; Osofsky & Oldfield[18] findings suggest that fathers were consistently more likely to take an action-oriented role, whereas mothers more often provided emotional support and encouragement. Nevertheless, those fathers who are sensitive enough when interacting with their own infants to permit attachment to form have better outcomes. Therefore, both parents contribute to their child's psychological development, and thus the extent of the father's commitment to child rearing is crucial.

Attachment Theory and the Impact of Culture

Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall used the "Strange Situation" paradigm to study attachment bonds. In their investigation, they used a laboratory setting to observe children's reactions when they were separated from a caretaker, and then exposed to a stranger. Their model was located in a laboratory or another setting that was unfamiliar to the children. Each caretaker was asked to leave the room and a stranger would then appear. The researchers noted that most children would cry, but when their caretakers returned, the children usually would instantly calm down. They found that children used their caretakers as a base of security, in order to regulate feelings of distress and anxiety that arose in unfamiliar situations.[19]

Sagi and Lewkowicz[20] also made a critical point when using the Strange Situation method to examine attachment patterns. They contended that this model may not be a valid instrument for measuring attachment quality across various cultures, primarily because caretakers and infants experience the stressful laboratory situation in drastically different ways. Thus, the use of the Strange Situation paradigm would result in different interpretations of attachment styles, due to cultural variances. However, Sagi reported that although this concept is, right in principle: it has to be realized that during the past two decades the procedure has been widely used

in investigating the development of individual differences in the quality of infant-adult attachment and has therefore produced most of the available empirical data in this area.[21]

John Bowlby theorized that the attachment phenomenon was universal. The Strange Situation was mostly used with the traditional nuclear family formation, and is more typically associated with white, middle-class samples and their concept of secure attachment. For this population, secure attachment is characterized by a child's early age demonstration of independence, autonomy, and self-maximization.[22] African Americans view secure attachment differently, as demonstrated in the Harwood study.[23] This study described security in two perspectives: (1) A child strikes a balance between individualism and emotional connectedness, and (2) A child develops proper demeanor and an emotional closeness that allow him or her to connect to the cultural group.

The Strange Situation paradigm takes into consideration African American caregiving patterns. The Jackson study[24] suggested that many African American families utilize extended caregiving networks in raising young children. This tendency has been reflected in the African adage that "it takes a village to raise a child." Many African American extended family models include several generations, and siblings and kin from the same generation who are living together. These families may share households or pool their resources across families. As a result, they are more likely to utilize extended caregiving networks in raising young children. Hence, these children are more likely to develop a close relationship or an attachment to two primary caregivers.[25]

In the Sims-Stanford study,[26] the researchers determined there were three caregiving patterns

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[18] Osofsky & O'Connell, 1972; Osofsky & Oldfield (1971).

[19] Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978).

[20] Sagi and Lewkowicz (1987).

[21] Sagi (1990).

[22] Harwood et al., 1995.

[23] Harwood (1995).

[24] Jackson (1992). In this study of black infants' attachment patterns, the researchers concluded that African American children were likely to form attachments to two primary caregivers.

[25] Scott & Black, 1989; Stack, 1974; Wilson, 1986.

[26] Sims-Standford Study (1997). The researchers examined care-giving patterns among single mothers in low-income communities. They concluded that black families have a variety of patterns in structuring their children's care-giving

of attachment among low-income African American families:

1. *"Supported" patterns*: In this instance, mothers receive help in raising their toddlers, but do not share the primary responsibility for raising the toddler with another person.
2. *"Shared" patterns*: Mothers receive help in raising their toddlers and share this primary responsibility with another person; and
3. *"Unsupported" patterns*: Mothers neither receive help in raising, or sharing the primary responsibility for raising their toddlers.

Low-Income Children and the Importance of Family Involvement

The low-income African American couple that share household responsibilities is more likely to provide positive affirmation and attentiveness to their child's needs. This child will have a secure base and be well adjusted. The major stress this child may encounter will be due to his socioeconomic position. As a result, both parents may encourage their son to succeed academically, and have higher expectations for him to help bring himself and the family out of poverty.

Williams and Kornblum coin these children as "superkids," since family involvement is a key factor. In low-income communities, most children live in homes where parents have struggled for years to provide them with as many of the benefits of stability and education as possible, even at great sacrifice to themselves. In the absence of material resources, these youngsters' life chances of achievement are shaped by the influence of family values, the relative security of religious beliefs and practices, and fortunate experiences with teachers and schools. They manage to survive adolescence and achieve upward social and economic mobility. These "superkids" have their own drive and motivation. However, if they do not have the support of adults who are concerned about their welfare, adverse circumstances created by a lack of positive and early intervention will inhibit their ambition.[27] One case in point is "Charlie."

Case Study: "Charlie"
I do not come across many "superkids" in my patient load, because they usually already have the necessary support at home. But due to unusual circumstances, one "superkid" did become my client. Charlie is a 7-year-old African American boy who was put in kinship foster care with his mother's uncle. Charlie and his two sisters were removed from his mother due to neglect when he was only a few months old, and as a result he became selectively mute for 2 years.

Charlie's Uncle George and his wife Mary were very involved in their family life, and paid close attention to Charlie. Aunt Mary spent a lot of time teaching him, as well as reading and singing to him. Uncle George enrolled Charlie in supportive counseling and ensured that he would attend the sessions. Charlie also attended Sunday school, day care, and speech therapy services with the financial support of a foster care agency, who obtained a private tutor for him.

Within 2 years, Charlie began to speak and socialize with others. Presently at 7 years old, Charlie can do addition, simple multiplication, and can read on a second-grade level. He now expresses his feelings, and he has also begun to sing in the front row of the church choir. This is evidence of his elevated self-esteem, and the secure attachment that he feels towards his aunt and uncle. In Charlie's case, secure attachment is now a success, even though he was first labeled as "mentally retarded."

Policy makers and social service organizations can only help to bolster these children by reinforcing the values of their parents. This can only be done with mentoring programs, organized sports, multiservice organizations, after-school programs, and free and available resources in their community. Children greatly benefit from these extracurricular programs, which usually suffer from a lack of consistent funding. As a psychotherapist at a inner-city mental health clinic, I speak with so many parents who want to enroll their children in some sort of constructive extracurricular activity, such as baseball teams. However, many cannot afford team uniforms or equipment fees, or they are not aware of available local activities for their children.

The Effect of Insecure-based Attachment on African American Boys

The above-mentioned success of low-income children with adequate family support is particularly difficult for children of single parents or

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environments. As a result, there was relationship between care-giving and attachment patterns.

[27] Williams & Kornblum (1985).

with no parents at all. In 1996, the United States census estimated that 34.9 percent of people living in poverty were female-headed families with children.[28] Accordingly, African American female-headed families with children face the most obstacles in moving out of poverty, because of the lack of support in child rearing and joblessness.

Insecure-Avoidant, Insecure-Ambivalent, and Insecure-Disorganized Attachment Behavior

With these contributing stressors, single parents are not always able to provide a secure environment for proper attachment for their children. Some of the instances of increasing violence in today's society can be attributed to "attachment gone wrong." The angry self-destructiveness of modern youth, seen also in borderline personality disorders as well as psychopathic disorders, can be understood, in Bowlby's original formulation, as the protest of children separated from, or deprived of, a secure base.[29]

"Insecure" attachment was first recognized by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall's Strange Situation model. They identified three primary patterns of attachment behavior: "insecure-avoidant," "insecure-ambivalent," and "insecure-disorganized." Secure attachment was displayed by approximately 70 percent of the children studied, who used their caretakers as a base of security to regulate feelings of distress and anxiety that arose in the strange situation. For these children, the caregiver's presence provided a clear source of comfort and support. The secure children displayed little or no anxious attachment behavior (i.e., resistance or avoidance). These secure children cried or maintained physical contact after rejoining the caretaker, who was easily able to provide relief.[30]

Secondly, an insecure avoidance attachment pattern was displayed by approximately 20 percent of the children who protested little on separation of the caregiver. Upon the caregiver's return, the child actively sought support, but from a distance (i.e., hovered nervously nearby). This illustrated the caregiver's inability to regulate and dissipate negative feelings when they arose;

therefore the child manifested a false independence. These children displayed little grief or fear, but when they rejoined the caregiver, the children avoided him or her either by looking or turning away. According to Ainsworth, et. al, "[t]he avoidant person . . . and this is a pathology particularly of men, is detached but not autonomous. He longs for intimacy but fears he will be rejected; he hovers on the shores of intimacy, ever fearful to take the plunge."[31]

An insecure-ambivalent pattern was displayed by approximately 10 percent of the children whose relationships involved conflicted and ambivalent attempts to derive emotional support from inconsistent caregivers. Upon the caregiver's return, ambivalent children clinged furiously to the caregiver and were unsure if they would be left again permanently. Furthermore, these children appeared extremely frightened and sorrowful, and demonstrated a lower threshold for distress. These behaviors seem to indicate an underlying sense of uncertainty about the caregiver's availability and support. Thus, this pattern is said to stem from caregiving that is inconsistent and unpredictable or from long-term separations from caretakers.

The insecure-disorganized pattern was displayed in children who could not easily be classified as avoidant or ambivalent. These children show no pattern of response; they "freeze" or collapse, or lean vacantly against a wall upon the entrance of their caregiver.[32] Crittenden cited a large proportion of this attachment pattern is mostly seen in at-risk groups, such as the socioeconomically disadvantaged and those mothers who have been abused as children.[33]

In general, most of the children that I treat can be categorized as insecure-avoidant or insecure-disorganized. They often exhibit attention deficit hyperactivity and oppositional behavior patterns. These children are usually angry with their mothers, due to their fathers' absence. They feel that if their mother could not keep their fathers with them, then how can she take care of them? Typically, my clients refuse to adhere to house rules. They are aggressive towards authority figures, territorial, possessive of toys, and take objects from other children (only to

[28] Current Population Reports (1995).

[29] de Zulueta (1994).

[30] Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978).

[31] Ainsworth et al., 1978.

[32] Holmes (1996).

[33] Crittenden (1988).

hoard the items). In some cases, young boys exhibit disorganized attachment patterns, when they have experienced early traumatic conditions (such as, neglect, starvation, or abuse prior to entering foster care or a supportive environment), or if their mothers abuse drugs. These children show behavior patterns of stealing, opposition, clinging to the caretaker, hyperactivity, unresponsiveness, as well as the initial stages of a chronic mental illness.

Hamilton maintained that insecure attachments patterns can be seen as defensive strategies that are designed to maintain contact with rejecting or inconsistent parents. Avoidant children cling to things because they find people threatening, while ambivalent children cling to people to compensate for their perceived inconsistency.[34] Both patterns contrast with the "fluid attentional gaze" of the securely attached child, who can move from things to people and back to himself with confidence and poise.[35]

Paternal insensitivity can also result in insecure attachment. The triadic relationship of mother-father-infant also affects the infant's social style in the same way. The paternal influence, or lack thereof, also exists within the child's family structure or social environment via the existing relationship between the mother and father. The paternal figure can relieve or add stress to the mother thus affecting her own attentiveness to the child. In the context of boyhood, the absence of the father seems to affect boys more than it does girls. Gender identity formation is fostered in the boy child by the father's presence as well as the mother's love of and affirmation of her husband's maleness; both countervail the son's modeling of his core gender identity towards the mother.[36]

Even in the best attachment circumstances, an African American boy of a female-headed household still undergoes a great deal of adversity in his search for a father figure and sex identification. His perception of manhood and masculinity throughout childhood may become distorted because he does not have a male available to define himself. He may feel dominated by his mother, and since she is not like him physically, he may become rebellious to polarize their

differences. He may also become submissive because he is unable to differentiate himself from his mother.[37]

Insecure father-child attachment and the failure to achieve same-sex identification may be pathogenic. Some have even suggested that disturbed father-child relationships are precursors of homosexuality.[38] "Chucky's" case study provides an example. Chucky is a 33-year-old African American male who has been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia for the past 18 years and who exhibits insecure-avoidant attachment patterns. He is also confused about his sexual identity, due to a poor relationship with his father:

Case Study: "Chucky"
Chucky has been hospitalized more than 10 times because of poor medication management that often leads to psychotic episodes. His episodes include paranoid aggressive feelings and illusions of grandeur. When Chucky is stable, he functions quite well. He graduated from college and is currently attending graduate school. His career goal is to work in the radio broadcasting field. Chucky is well read, culturally and politically aware, and always willing to work. However, he often loses jobs when he is hospitalized. Therefore, he is usually employed in job positions that he can easily obtain, but where he is overqualified (such as in grocery or retail stores).

Chucky is very involved in therapy and can be quite introspective with his feelings. He recalls that his father was never attentive, and as a result, they do not have a close relationship. When Chucky was a teenager, his father and mother began having an unusual and strained relationship. During that time, his father began living with another woman, but never dissolved the marriage with Chucky's mother. Chucky's father still had physical access to the home, and he returned at will. Other household members responded as if he had not been absent from the home.

Chucky indicates that he has a positive relationship with his mother, but does not understand why she allowed her marriage to his father (or his behavior) to continue for all of these years. Due to the confusion in his home life and the strained relationship with his father, Chucky has never had a meaningful intimate relationship. Instead, he engages in anonymous sexual encounters with men who remind him of his father. However, Chucky does not consider himself to be

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[34] Hamilton (1982).

[35] Main (1985).

[36] Blas (1985).

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[37] Blas (1985).

[38] Brown, 1957, 1958; Nash, 1965.

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a homosexual. He feels awkward around women, but hopes to someday marry and have children.

He feels that the lack of a positive father-child relationship has tremendously affected his mental health. Because Chucky has a chronic mental illness (schizophrenia), the most that I can do to assist is to help him with his medication management, and provide a supportive environment, where he can speak without fear or repercussion. Although Chucky's father recently showed some brief interest in Chucky's health condition, this may not last for a consistent period of time.

As Chucky's therapist, it was my goal to find a more supportive living environment to help stabilize him, regardless of his parental involvement. I eventually assisted in helping him obtain medication that can be injected, as well as locating supportive housing for the mentally ill. With these supports in place, Chucky will hopefully function better and be hospitalized less.

Other examples of insecure-attachment patterns are described by one researcher, Wilson, who defines male children with false manhood ideals as misled or misdirected. He indicated that due to the oppressive circumstances that these boys have experienced, when they become adults, they will begin to form a "reactionary masculinity" type personality. In his book, *Understanding Black Adolescent Male Violence*, Wilson lists 27 characteristics of the reactionary masculinity personality type. In my experience, I have found five of these characteristics the usually occur in some of my young male clients:

1. They tend to be opinionated and to view every social encounter as a test to his masculinity, and as a struggle for power.
2. They mistakenly identify physicality and crudeness, with masculinity; view domination, insensitivity, unconcern, willingness to injure or kill, seeks revenge, as essentially masculine traits.
3. They are motivated primarily by fear, avoidance, escape, retreat from responsibility, ego-defense, and reactionary frustration; by a deep and ever-present sense of inadequacy; by an inferiority complex; and an obsessive need to appear superior.
4. They are motivated and defined by self-alienation, exhibit an absence of self-knowledge, are ignorant of his ethnic-heritage, exhibit unbounded hedonism and

narcissistic drives, have deep insecurities regarding the reality of his masculinity and of his masculine courage.
5. They find no deep satisfaction on any level of activity and are forced into continued pursuit and conquest. Therefore their relationships with women tend to be exploitative, fleeting, unstable, disloyal, and unreliable.[39]

For example, one of my cases that best demonstrates insecure-avoidant attachment and the reactionary-masculinitycharacteristics is "Jessie":

Case Study: "Jessie"
Jessie was a 10-year-old African American boy diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder with psychotic features, as well as mental retardation. He was hospitalized once at 5 years old for hearing voices and stealing a gun from a police officer. He was referred to me for supportive counseling and to learn anger management skills. Jessie lived with his mother, who had a boyfriend who lived with them from time to time. Jessie's father rarely came to visit him. During play therapy sessions, Jessie would vigorously bang a male doll on a desk to demonstrate his anger with his father. His mother was also very overwhelmed with caring for Jessie and would often complain about this in front of him. Sometimes Jessie's mother would pick fights with him and hit him for no reason. She refused therapy for herself since she felt she was extremely dedicated to Jessie. Also, because he needed constant attention, she felt that she could not obtain a worthwhile job and make a better life for them.

Jessie exhibited a disorganized attachment relationship with his mother. He would occasionally not want to be separated from her. However, if she dismissed his affection he would suddenly become very distant towards her, curse, and walk away. I also observed in some instances, role reversal between mother and son. He would become the caregiver and order his mother around as if she were the child. Jessie was preoccupied with wanting to be the "man of the house" and would make constant references to what he thought men should be doing, such as "having sex."

Due to the unpredictability of his mother, Jessie was extremely hyperactive and aggressive with other children. When the stress of his home life became too much, Jessie would complain of hearing voices, and become quite abusive towards his mother, peers, and teachers at school. On one occasion I had to have Jessie hospitalized in an in-patient mental health set-

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[39] Wilson (1991).

ting. It then became clear that Jessie was not my only patient. His mother had some sufficient mental health problems that compounded Jessie's, but she was in denial of the need to seek treatment. Once Jessie became well enough to be discharged, I worked with his mother to put him into a school that is specifically geared to help children like him. The school had a very supportive teaching staff and was open 12 months of the year. School authorities involved Jessie's mother in various activities, and offered a special sleep-away camp (that Jessie attended for 2 weeks in the summer). I also arranged for a visiting nurse and a home attendant to come to their home after school to provide medication management, and to help relieve any stress Jessie's mother was feeling. These support systems were essential for both Jessie and his mother to help them achieve secure foundations.

Jessie's and Chucky's circumstances differ from Charlie's attachment situation as illustrated in the "superkids" example. In insecure-avoidant and reactionary-masculinity cases, the role of the psychotherapist and the policy maker must be structured to offer dependable support for those in desperate need of available services.

Discussion

Today's policy makers do not have to create new and innovative safety net programs for most of these children. Existing programs, such as mentoring and after-school programs, organized sports, dance and art classes, tutoring, home care services and specialized services (i.e., speech therapy), are quite adequate in addressing the majority of these children's needs. The primary barrier to helping children in need is the accessibility and quality of local services. Many free services, such as reliable after-school programs are not always located in nearby schools. For example, one parent told me that he attempted to enroll his child in an after-school program, but it was located too far away from the child's school. In most middle-class neighborhoods, after-school programs are usually in the child's school or in the vicinity. Another parent of four boys told me that she tried to enroll her children into an organized football or baseball sports team in her East New York neighborhood in Brooklyn. However, the nearest baseball team was in Queens, which is in a different borough. She also could not believe the amount of money she would have to pay for all of their uniforms and equipment. It is not difficult

to imagine how restless four boys become, if no extracurricular activities are available to them.

There is also a lack of essential educational services in low-income communities for these children. One exception is the New York City Early Intervention (EI) program, which originates from New York State regulations and 1993 Federal laws.[40] EI is an entitlement program for at-risk children from birth to 3 years of age who may be suspected of having developmental delays or confirmed disabilities. The program offers free intervention services and/or therapy (i.e., speech or physical therapy).[41] State agencies are authorized to operate this program.[42] In New York, the program is regulated by the New York State Department of Health, and on the city level, the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services. Evaluations and services are of no cost to the parents and can be provided in the child's home or at a designated Early Intervention center-based location.[43]

In low-income urban neighborhoods, at least 15 percent to 20 percent of the children are emotionally at risk and are in need of Early Intervention services[44] One difficulty is that some of the parents who would like home-based Early Intervention services for their children may not receive it, because Early Intervention providers are usually hesitant to venture into inner-city neighborhoods. As a result, some EI program providers choose not to provide services in these areas. Many young children who have been contracted for home-based services tend to be wait-listed for approximately 4 to 6 weeks, until an EI provider becomes available, or else the children have no alternative but to attend a center-based program. If infants are forced to attend center-based programs, they risk exposure to allergens

[40] N.Y. PUB. HEALTH LAW § 2540 (Consol. 1998); *see also* United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, "Children and Youth with Disabilities—Funding Priorities," 56 Fed. Reg. 51766 (1991). This source includes an early education program as a proposed funding priority for fiscal years 1992 and 1993.

[41] Infant-Child Health Assessment Program Fact Sheet.

[42] *See* N.Y. COMP. CODES. R. & REGS. tit. 10, § 69-4.12(a) (1998). The regulation provides a listing of approved service providers in New York State.

[43] *See* N. Y. COMP. CODES R. & REGS. tit. 10, § 69-4.30(a) (1998). Eligible providers can receive reimbursement from Medicaid for their services.

[44] Infant-Child Health Assessment Program Fact Sheet.

and other contaminants that may jeopardize their developing immune systems. Hence, their risk of illness increases. In fact, the lack of EI providers in low-income neighborhoods has become such a prevalent problem in New York City, that the New York City Department of Mental Health (Regional Brooklyn) office has assembled a task force to address this issue.

The Early Intervention program reflects typical policies that stipulate that everyone has the right to receive services regardless of his or her race, creed, religion, or residence. However, when these programs are managed by local agencies, oftentimes low-income children do not receive accessible services in an equitable manner. It is clear that the federal government must not merely design the ideology for Early Intervention programs, but also must supervise the provision of the programs' services. It must be ensured that every child in need, regardless of the neighborhood he or she resides in, receives appropriate intervention services. Moreover, continuous funding for these programs is also needed, since too often a noteworthy program is offered for 1 year, but then it is eliminated the following year due to funding cuts. How can we address the crisis of the young African American male, if we are not consistent in providing secure, available, and supportive intervention resources for at-risk youth in the community?

Suggested Innovative Strategies

Establish Intervention Opportunities in the Foster Care System

Foster care can be seen as the ultimate breakdown in the attachment process. It is here where children from poorly attached families require safe placements. Every year, the influx of children who enter the foster care system increases. It is estimated that by the end of this century, the AIDS epidemic will result in approximately 80,000 orphaned children in the United States.[45] This will further tax an ill-prepared foster care system with its existing policies for placing children in foster care.[46] I concur with the following policy recommendation from the Committee on Pediatrics AIDS, as de-

scribed in "Children Whose Parents are Dying of HIV/AIDS," who advocates for health care policies that would help to alleviate this upcoming problem:

Agencies should "develop flexible policies that permit temporary placement of children during parental illness and the return of children if the parent regains sufficient health.. . . . Furthermore, policies should address the special concerns about the continuity of health care during placement."[47] Quite often, children who are placed in the foster care system are removed from their primary provider without warning and as a result, the child may not receive proper medical care.[48]

Secondly, supportive counseling should begin in the foster care placement process, once the child is assigned to a caseworker. So often, I have observed that caseworkers do not have accurate perceptions of a child's family dynamics to make helpful assessment of the future placement plan. In cases when the child will be returning to his or her natural parents, the foster care agency should mandate family counseling for at least 6 months prior to placement. This should help to ease the child's transition process. Specifically, the benefits of this counseling for displaced children and their families include:

1. Helping children who usually suffer from separation anxiety and depressed moods with their feelings of isolation and abandonment. This is an opportunity to prevent children, who may be at-risk to join gangs, runaway, or steal, from becoming involved in additional harm, as well as allowing them the chance to express their feelings while staying connected with their natural family.
2. Helping parents to better organize their lives by improving their coping skills with drug treatment, twelve-step programs, parenting classes, support groups on an as-needed basis. In some cases, parents require assistance with the case management of health care. The foster care system cannot just require parents to help themselves, but should also provide a mechanism for them to do so.

[45] Committee on Pediatrics AIDS, "Planning for Children Whose Parents are Dying of HIV/AIDS," *Pediatrics*, 1999, vol. 103, pp. 509–10.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

However, if parents do not comply or accept this assistance, then a time limitation should be established and enforced for the parent to obtain his or her child from foster care placement. It is necessary for a child to know of his future living arrangements as soon as possible. A lingering timeframe, during which a child is uncertain of his living arrangements, only heightens his anxiety, and makes him insecure in his current living situation.[49]

All-Male Programs

I think it is absolutely necessary for male children, particularly those who are raised by single mothers, to spend some of their formative years in an all-male environment, such as grammar schools or a boys' camp. This will expose them to more male figures and mentors who can guide them and balance the lack of male figures in their family structure. These boys can begin to develop the secure male relationships that can help them identify their sexual identity, role orientation, and a quality relationship with the opposite sex. These suggestions do not fully address an insecure-relationship with their father or mother, but at least they will be able to have access to more positive male influences.

African American Male Programs

Although African American male programs are ideal environments for young black males to learn their history and culture, as well as establish secure attachment relationships with men, I maintain that they are not the sole mechanisms for these opportunities. Because my clients live in ethnically diverse neighborhoods, I maintain that *any* responsible, sincere, and dedicated man (regardless of his race or ethnicity) can teach a young African American male to become similarly responsible and secure with his manhood.

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[49] *See* Case Study: "Sammie." Sammie is currently experiencing this problem. She is a 10-year-old girl, who was placed in foster care due to neglect, maternal drug use, and poor school attendance. She exhibited a depressed mood, constantly wrung her hands and bit her fingers, and reads below her grade level. She has been in foster care for one year and has expressed her happiness with being placed with her foster parents. Her greatest fear is that she might have to return to her natural mother. This child lives in constant fear and anxiety that she will be unable to return to her foster home, when she has a mandated visit with her natural mother. Her natural mother is verbally abusive towards her children in Sammie's presence. In cases such as this, the children's caseworker should be aware of the family's situation and make appropriate plans that benefit the children.

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The Health Crisis of Young Black Men in the Inner City

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Introduction

Young black men in the inner city have a health status that is, by most measures, worse than that of their white counterparts. With regard to a number of diseases, most of them preventable, young black men are disproportionately affected. Because of this fact, black men have a higher death rate at all ages and a lower life expectancy. In 1995, the age-adjusted mortality rate for black males in the United States was 1,107 per 100,000, 80 percent higher than the rate for white males. The life expectancy at birth for black males is 66.1, compared with 73.8 years for white males.[1] While the life expectancy at birth has generally increased over time for the United States population, twice in the past decade, there has been a decrease in the life expectancy of black males. Much of the disparity in life expectancy and the higher mortality rate can be accounted for by: deaths due to violence, the higher rate of infant mortality in blacks, and the climbing rate of deaths due to HIV disease, all of which disproportionately affect black males. Violence and homicide take their worst toll in younger men, especially those who live in cities. But for other nonfatal diseases, young black males also have a higher rate of disease than their white counterparts.

Why does this population, described by a combination of age, race, and gender, suffer worse health outcomes than other groups? It is worth taking a moment to understand what we know about the way in which each of these demographic characteristics contributes to

health status, as a way to interpret the health statistics of young black men.

Age

Young people tend not to be affected by chronic diseases, but rather tend to have a higher burden of acute diseases related to specific behaviors. Adolescence, particularly, is a time when teenagers engage in normal risk-taking behavior in an attempt to explore their unique identity and progress toward the independence of adulthood. Adolescents also are in a unique stage of cognitive development and are progressing from a time of concrete thinking to greater and greater levels of abstraction. The turbulence of adolescence for all young people cannot be overstated. Young people in this age period experience physical, mental, and emotional transformation that does not occur to the same degree at any other time in their life spans. It is precisely because of the uniqueness of this period that typical approaches to health care and health promotion may prove to be ineffective.

Diseases relating to sexual behavior, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and injuries (both intentional and unintentional) predominate as causes of morbidity and mortality. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, contracted in the teenage years, begins to manifest itself in the early 20s as symptomatic HIV disease. Substance abuse related problems are also common, owing to experimentation with tobacco, marijuana, and more serious drugs like alcohol, cocaine, LSD, and opiates. Mental health problems, including depression and psychoses, may also become apparent here. The relationship between age and health then is manifested by diseases that are related to behaviors. Some of these behaviors are a natural outgrowth of the

[1] Anderson R.N., Kochanek K.D., Murphy S.L., *Report of Final Mortality Statistics*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995.

turbulent stage of life that all young people must traverse.

Race

Race is not a biological construct but a social one. It is meaningful only in the context of a society and while it may be related to culture, it is distinct. Race has a potent association with our health presumably because it proxies for a number of unmeasured factors such as poverty, lack of access to health care, disparate treatment within the health care system, poor housing stock, living in close proximity to environmental hazards, and racism and the stresses that accompany real and perceived oppression.[2] Each of these factors is documented in literature. Racism decreases the value of a given level of education or set of skills. For example, United States census data[3] clearly demonstrate that black males earn less money than their white counterparts for the same occupation and level of education.

Social scientist David Williams has noted that racism is a critical part of the model of explaining the poorer overall health of black people.[4] His model suggests that historical macro-social factors created racism in society by highlighting certain physical characteristics and geographic origins. These significant conditions, in turn, create social statuses such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender roles, some of which negatively affect health through certain risk factors (e.g., health behaviors, stress, medical care) and resources (e.g., social, psychological, cultural). Consequently, these factors when combined with the lack of essential resources,

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[2] Freeman H.P., "Poverty, Race, Racism and Survival," *Annals of Epidemiology*, 1993, vol. 3, pp. 14–49; Montgomery L.E., Carter-Pokras O., "Health Status by Social Class and/or Minority Status: Implications for Environmental Equity Research," *Toxicology and Industrial Health*, 1993, vol. 9, pp. 729–73; Greenberg M., Schneider D., "Violence in American Cities: Young Black Males is the Answer, but What is the Question?" *Social Science and Medicine*, 1994, vol. 39, pp. 179–87; Williams D.R., Lavizzo-Mourey R., Warren R.C., "The Concept of Race and Health Status in America," *Public Health Report*, 1994, vol. 109, pp. 26–41; Williams D.R., Collins C., "U.S. Socioeconomic and Racial Differences in Health: Patterns and Explanations," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1995, vol. 21, pp. 349–86.

[3] U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997.

[4] Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, and Warren, "The Concept of Race," pp. 26–41; Williams and Collins, "U.S. Socioeconomic," pp. 349–86.

impact psychological and biological mechanisms to negatively affect health status.

Gender

Biologic and social factors may cause males to be more vulnerable to certain health problems. Testosterone, the hormone responsible for male development, also imparts certain behavioral aggressiveness to males that is a biologic response. This biologic response is coupled with a societal expectation that males are aggressive, violent, and dominant. In American society, the expectation that manhood must be proven is incubated in males from infancy. Media images, military service, organized sports, and school rituals all support an image of males as aggressive, reticent to display emotion and fears, self-reliant, and self-sufficient. These expectations affect the health of men of all ages. Men are less likely to utilize health care services and to take advantage of mental health resources, such as stress reduction therapy. The propensity to avoid physical and mental health care has a profound effect upon future disease. Unrestrained stress, for example, has been associated with coronary heart disease, the number one killer of black men. Opportunities for effective early detection of fatal disease later in life, such as prostate and colorectal cancers, are often lost when men avoid regular medical care.

The Health Combination: Young + Black + Male

The foregoing discussion has determined how three factors—age, race, and gender are related to health. However, when combined in this unique and familiar phrase—"young black men"—the words and their associated risks, somehow become more than the sum of their parts. Young black men have unjustly come to serve as representations of menacing crime, violence, sexual promiscuity, drug addiction, and hopelessness. There is a profound lack of understanding on the part of health care, social service institutions, and public health about the roles that the urban social environment, racism, and poverty play in the health of young black men. Media depictions and marketing schemes have seized upon the image of young black men as the embodiment of urban cultural "cool." Ambitious politicians have painted young black men as criminals, drug dealers, and gang members, and promptly constructed larger prisons to hold them. This population is often viewed as mono-

lithic, since it is perceived as being disproportionately affected by poverty, economic and educational deprivation, arrests, and police brutality. Citizens, policy makers, and health care providers who are constantly bombarded with these unilateral images, come to believe that they understand the lives of young black men without stopping to question underlying factors that have led them to their conclusions. Health care providers and health policy makers are not immune to these stereotypes and, as a result, medical and public health policies too often reflect the biases inherent in the larger society. To the extent that this is true, young black men in urban environments may be relatively invisible to the health care and public health infrastructure, while bearing a major share of the disease morbidity and mortality.

Overview of the Health Issues that Disproportionately Affect Young Black Men
Violence

Young black men are disproportionately the victims of violence. Homicide is the leading cause of death for young black men ages 15 to 34 years old.[5] In 1996, 5,626 black men in this age group died from homicide in the United States. In 1989, the lifetime chances of a black man dying as a result of homicide was 1 in 27, compared to 1 in 205 for white men. In 1992, despite making up only 1.3 percent of the nation's population, black males ages 16 to 24 years old experienced 17.2 percent of the nation's homicides. This is equivalent to a homicide rate of 114.9 per 100,000 for this group. Black males in 1992 were nearly 14 times more likely to be victims of homicide than the general population.[6]

While the effects of homicide in young black men are well known, the impact of nonfatal violence is much less appreciated. In 1992, among young black males ages 12 to 24 years old, there was one violent victimization for every eight black males.[7] Yet, the actuality of young black men being victims of violence is often overshadowed by their roles as perpetrators. Most young black men who are injured are hurt by other

young black males. U.S. Department of Justice statistics show that the vast majority of interpersonal violence for blacks and whites is intraracial. For example, in 1992, among the victims of violence ages 16 to 24 years old who could determine the characteristics of their assailant, 82 percent of the assailants of black males and 71 percent of the assailants of white males involved an offender or offenders of the same race.[8]

While most have quantified violence in terms of homicide rates or lives lost, nonfatal injury accounts for significant morbidity. It occurs 100 times more frequently than fatal violence. Violence is also clearly a recurrent problem. Several studies have demonstrated that among individuals (of all races and genders) who have experienced a penetrating injury, 45 to 50 percent will be injured again in the 5 years, and 20 percent will be dead.[9] By some estimates, for each homicide victim, there are 100 victims of nonfatal violence. These episodes of nonfatal violence have serious consequences. Some young men are left with crippling disabilities that remove them from the work force and destroy their chances for future meaningful work. Others are left with significant emotional disability, due to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a trauma-related syndrome, characterized by extreme hyperstimulation, nightmares, depression, hyper-vigilance, and flashbacks to the traumatic experience. PTSD has not been studied extensively in young men in the inner city, but overall, the disorder may contribute to significant disability, substance abuse, and possibly recurrent violence.[10] Young men who are injured in the inner city may feel vul-

[5] Anderson, Kochanek and Murphy, *Report of Final Mortality.*

[6] *Young Black Male Victims*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1994.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Sims D.W., Bivins B.A., Obeid F.N., Horst H.M., Sorensen V.J., Fath J.J., "Urban Trauma: A Chronic Recurrent Disease," *Journal of Trauma*, 1989, vol. 29, pp. 940–47; Goins W.A., Thompson J, Simpkins C., "Recurrent Internal Injury," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 1992, vol. 84, pp. 431–35.

[10] Breslau N., Davis G.C., Andreski P., Peterson E. "Traumatic Events and Post-Traumatic Stress disorder in an Urban Population of Young Adults," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 1991, vol. 48, pp. 216–22; Campbell C., Schwarz D.F., "Prevalence and Impact of Exposure to Interpersonal Violence Among Suburban and Urban Middle School Students, *Pediatrics*, 1996, vol. 98, pp. 396–402; Fitzpatrick K., Boldizar J., "The Prevalence and Consequences of Exposure to Violence Among African-American Youth," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 1993, vol., 32, pp. 424–30.

nerable when they return to their neighborhoods. Plagued by symptoms of anxiety and hyperstimulation, even in environments that previously seemed safe to them, some may feel compelled to arm themselves with guns or knives. They may doubt the ability or desire of the police to protect them or to apprehend their assailants. Others may turn to alcohol or other drugs such as marijuana, in an attempt to self-treat their anxiety. The combination of these reactions related to the symptoms of trauma have the potential to increase the young man's risk of violence.

Several studies confirm the notion that victims of violent injury are more likely to suffer subsequent violent injuries. In a retrospective analysis of victims of violence in Detroit, Sims, et al. found that 44 percent of patients suffered a recurrent injury within a 5-year period. Over that same period, there was a 20 percent mortality rate in the cohort study, due to both violence and substance abuse.[11] The authors concluded that violence is a chronic disease with a significant mortality. Goins, et al. conducted both retrospective and prospective studies on hospital admissions for abdominal trauma. They detected a recurrence rate of 48 percent in the retrospective study, and 47 percent in the prospective study. The researchers also found an association between unemployment and recurrent violence. They suggested that efforts aimed at reducing the rate of unemployment might help to lower episodes of violent injury.[12]

Some have suggested that this increased rate of reinjury is due to these young men returning to illicit or dangerous activities, or attempting to exact revenge upon their assailants. Some researchers have indeed found that young men who are injured, may feel compelled to attempt retribution, not out of anger, but due to a perceived need to show their strength and avoid future victimization. This reaction to assault in a social environment that is perceived as very hostile is common, and may be resistant to traditional conflict resolution approaches. In the language of these young men, the need to avoid being a "sucker" is deeply rooted in their notions of what it means to be a man, as well as in their

ideas about the consequences of being perceived as weak or vulnerable. Equivalent slang terms like "punk," "chump," or "buster" have similar connotations and represent a central notion of what it means to live in the world as a young black man in the inner city.[13]

Effective approaches to curbing violence should center on the understanding that violence is a complex phenomenon. It is important to realize that violence results from a number of factors, and therefore a "one size fits all" approach to addressing this health problem is likely to fail. While some young men are injured due to their involvement in gangs or in the illicit economy, according to police data, many more are injured as a result of interpersonal conflicts, perceived jealousy, and conflicts inflamed by the presence of drugs or alcohol.

The dramatic decrease in violence in the United States, particularly due to homicides among youth less than 16 years old, has been largely credited to the collective efforts of churches, community-based organizations, public health authorities, and innovative law enforcement strategies such as community policing. These reductions have not occurred in all cities, but a substantial number of cities such as Boston, Chicago, and New York have noted significant decreases in violent crime. Still, little objective research is available to confirm the relative contributors to the reduction in injuries. However, despite the recent tendency to regard violence as a public health problem that is amenable to surveillance, program implementation, education and policy development, many of these reductions in violent injury have been accompanied by significant increases in the number of young black men in prison. While few would doubt that increased law enforcement efforts are an integral part of any strategy to decrease violent injury, it is not at all clear that such approaches have a positive effect on either the young men who are incarcerated or on the communities to which they will eventually return. In fact, given what we know about the effects of trauma and violence in young men and the lack of economic opportunity in communities of color, young men who spend significant amounts of

[11] Sims, Bivins, Obeid, Horst, Sorensen, and Fath, "Urban Trauma."

[12] Goins, Thompson, Simpkins, "Recurrent Intentional Injury."

[13] Rich J.A., Stone D.A., "The Experience of Violent Injury for Young African American Men: The Meaning of Being a 'Sucker'," *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 1996, vol. 11, pp. 77–82.

time in jail ultimately have high rates of substance abuse, homelessness, and recidivism to jail. Indeed, jails often lack resources to provide adequate drug treatment services and mental health support. Overcrowded jail conditions, which are also frequently the rule in American cities, expose newly incarcerated young men to even more stress and violence in a confined environment. Many young men find that incarcerations, which are rapidly becoming a "rite of passage" in the inner city, are traumatic and lacking in adequate health services.

HIV and AIDS

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the leading cause of death for black men between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. The rate of HIV infection is rising among black men at a higher rate than in any other group.[14] While 35 percent of HIV infections result from the use of intravenous drugs and the sharing of infected needles, a substantial proportion of these are due to sexual transmission. Of these sexually transmitted HIV infections, the largest proportion (38 percent) have resulted from men having sex with men. HIV infection was attributed to heterosexual contact in 7 percent of these cases, while no risk factor was identified in 12 percent of the cases. This high proportion of cases in which no risk factor can be identified is significantly more than the proportion in any other group, perhaps indicating that black men are reluctant to acknowledge risk behaviors, even when diagnosed with AIDS.

The introduction of effective therapies for AIDS has modified the use of mortality data as a reasonable means of detecting HIV infection, given the fact that the disease is uniformly fatal. The reduction in symptomatic HIV infection because of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART or informally known as "the cocktail") treatment measures makes it necessary to have more accurate data about the rate of new HIV infections. Blinded seroprevalence data[15] on HIV

infections also indicate that black men are at a high risk of new HIV infection.

These data point to the necessity of finding effective ways to change the behavior of young black men. National studies of urban adolescent males that were conducted between 1988 and 1995 have shown that while black adolescents' attitudes about premarital sex became more conservative, there was no change in their sexual behavior.[16] In addition, AIDS education did not lead to any significant modification in sexual activity among black males, although some change did occur among nonblack males. While certain communities of gay white men have been successful in reducing the rate of HIV infection among men who have sex with other men, these approaches have had less success in the African American community. This is due in part to some resistance among black men to acknowledge bisexuality or homosexuality. In general, African American communities, particularly members of religious organizations, stigmatize these behaviors. Consequently, some young men who are struggling with their sexual preferences may be unwilling to seek health resources that are identified with gays or bisexuals. Moreover, some young black males in urban areas may have anonymous sexual encounters or otherwise engage in unsafe sex, in order to avoid revealing their sexual identities. However, a significant number of HIV positive men of color do identify themselves as bisexual. If indeed these men are having sex with both men and women, while practicing unsafe sex and not informing their partners of this fact, it is possible that women and consequently their children ultimately could become infected with HIV.

Mental Health

Mental health services for young black men are sorely lacking. It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of mental health problems in this population, but anecdotally, a large number of young men present themselves before health providers with complaints of psychosocial stress, trauma-related symptoms, and general anxiety.

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[14] *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, 1998.

[15] "Blinded seroprevalence data" is obtained through a public health surveillance technique. This data collection method tests blood samples for the presence of a variety of diseases, in order to determine the percentage of individuals in a certain population who may have certain illnesses. The

blood samples are not classified by patients' names or identification numbers.

[16] Leighton K., Sonenstein F., Lindberg L.D., Bradner C.H., Boggess S., Pleck J.H., "Understanding Changes in Sexual Activity Among Young Metropolitan Men: 1979–1995," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1998, vol. 30, pp. 256–62.

Often these young men are reluctant to utilize traditional mental health services, such as counseling and therapy. When they do consent to such therapy, all too often they are referred to health providers who are completely unfamiliar with the realities of life in the inner city. Consequently, young patients perceive these providers as not helpful or not able to understand the issues that they face. Indeed, studies suggest that when African Americans seek assistance for mental health problems, black men are more likely than white males to be diagnosed with psychotic disorders. As a result, black males are more likely to be committed as inpatients for mental health treatment. For example, in Boston, psychosis is the second leading cause of hospitalization for men between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Injury related illnesses are the primary leading cause of hospitalization for this age and gender group. For men between the ages of 25 and 34, substance abuse is the leading cause of hospitalization, with psychosis as the second leading cause.[17]

Many of the mental health problems that young black men experience are related to the unique stresses they encounter as a result of poverty, racism, and past trauma. In general, young black men have higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the scarcity of meaningful employment opportunities. These men find themselves excluded from productive work, due to the lack of quality education they more than likely received from poorer quality inner-city schools. Because of their real and perceived need for economic survival, some of these young men turn to unlawful measures to meet their economic obligations. Because of this fact, and due to the closer level of scrutiny that young black males routinely receive from the police, these young men are much more likely to be arrested or incarcerated. By some estimates, fully a quarter of young black men in their 20s are under the supervision of the criminal justice system.[18] This disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system means that many of these young men have criminal records that further hinder their ability to obtain meaningful work. The

stresses of balancing multiple life pressures, often without material or social capital, may lead to feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Moreover, in addition to these circumstances, the impact of trauma in the form of losing friends and family members to violence results in a formula for a mental health crisis.

Over the past decade, there has been a substantial increase in suicide rates not only among black men, but among young black males in particular. While suicide rates in young black men are still lower than the rates for their white counterparts, this rate is increasing more rapidly than for any other group. Insufficient data are available to help us understand the reasons for this change, but it is likely to be due to the stresses that were previously discussed, as well as the lack of access to mental health services. We can also speculate that some of the suicides among young men are due to their confusion about their sexual identities, since a major contributor to suicides in young people is the feeling of alienation brought on by their emerging sexual preferences. Given that homosexuality is particularly stigmatized in African American communities, this alienation may be felt in an extreme manner by inner-city young black males.

Substance abuse behaviors also provide some insight into the emotional health of young black men in urban environments. While alcohol use rates are higher among white males than black males, young black men have a particularly high rate of marijuana use. This rate seems to be on the increase.[19] This is in contrast with cocaine use, which seems to be decreasing in all American populations. In my interactions as a physician with young black male patients, I have the sense that while many use marijuana because it is part of the pop culture (i.e., using it mainly during social interactions), a significant number use this drug to treat themselves of anxiety symptoms, particularly in the aftermath of a life trauma. While the medical implications of this use are unclear, there is a growing sense that marijuana is a "stepping stone" drug to more serious substances, such as alcohol, cocaine, and possibly even heroin. There is reason to be con-

[17] *Health of Boston* (Boston, MA: Boston Public Health Commission, 1998).
[18] *Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem*, The Sentencing Project, Washington, DC, 1990.

[19] McCaig L., Greenblatt J., Office of Applied Studies, Drug Abuse Warning Network: Advance Report #17, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies, 1998.

cerned about this progression, since black men have a higher rate of substance abuse mortality as they grow older. Moreover, these drugs are not effective in treating their symptoms of anxiety. In addition, given the illicit nature of marijuana in particular, use of marijuana may lead to even more adverse interaction with the police and criminal justice system, thus compounding overall stress.

The effect of racism and oppression in the mental health of young black men also bears discussion. While less easily quantified than data on specific diseases, racism stands as a constant backdrop against which these men live their lives. Harvard University psychiatrist, Dr. Chester Pierce, in a groundbreaking article, expressed the notion that "micro-aggression" factors (i.e., small racial insults that are experienced on a daily basis by people of color), have an aggregate effect that is equivalent to or greater than "macro-aggression" circumstances, such as beatings or lynchings.[20] Due to the stereotypes that have been associated with black men, they are more likely to report experiences such as arrests, harassment from the police, denial of front line employment, poor treatment in the health care system, and being followed by security guards in stores. To the extent that the effects of these insults are additive to the other stresses of life, it is clear that greater attention to this issue is critical.

Access to Health Care and Health Care Utilization

Despite the health problems that were previously discussed, young men of color are less likely than others to have access to effective health care services. Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old in the United States are the least likely group to have insurance coverage. In fact, 25 percent report having no insurance.[21] Young black men in particular, because of their socioeconomic position, are less likely to qualify for public sources of insurance, such as Medicaid. Even though Medicaid eligibility has been greatly expanded in the past few years, young men over the age of 18 only qualify if they are classified as "long-term unemployed,"

which is defined as having been unable to find work for a period of 2 years or more. Otherwise, nondisabled young men cannot obtain Medicaid. Most Americans who are insured, obtain health insurance from their employer. Employer-sponsored insurance coverage is less likely to be offered at work settings that have mainly unskilled and nonunion jobs. In addition, health insurance is prohibitively expensive for any lower income or working class individual to purchase on the open market. The social position of young urban black men with higher rates of unemployment and lower skilled jobs, ultimately means that they have less access to health insurance. Even those individuals who qualify for coverage may not know that they are eligible, since few institutions with which young black men have routine contact, such as the criminal justice system, have the will or capacity to ensure that they are informed of their health options.

Finally, even for those young men who are fortunate enough to have employer-sponsored health insurance or public health insurance, competition among managed care health insurers may affect their access to care. Fierce contention within the health care market has relegated preventative care initiatives to a low priority. As a result, decisions about community-based health outreach often focus on financial considerations, with minimal efforts to sponsor health outreach programs for the most disenfranchised populations. Therefore, even young black men who may be insured, still face barriers to effective preventive care. Health insurers are currently making little effort to change this trend.

The lack of health insurance leads to several problematic health-seeking behaviors. First, young men may defer necessary care for nonemergent problems because of their concern that they will be unable to pay for treatment. Secondly, they may seek care in settings such as emergency rooms or urgent care clinics, which are not well-equipped to offer preventive health services. Furthermore, encounters in emergency settings tend to be less satisfying, since patients are faced with harried staff and long waiting times. Such experiences may further alienate this group from seeking care, particularly preventive health care, which is the mainstay of future health and wellness.

Access to culturally appropriate providers may not exist, even for those individuals with

[20] Pierce C., "Offensive Mechanisms," cited in *The Black Seventies*, Barbour F., ed. (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher; 1970), pp. 265–82.

[21] Hoffman C., *Uninsured in America: A Chart Book*, The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, 1998.

health insurance or the ability to obtain free health care services. Health care providers are affected by societal stereotypes of young black males in the same manner as the general public. Providers who hold these unconscious preconceptions may judge patients based upon stereotypical notions and relate to them in an alienating manner. Anecdotally, numerous young black men have related that providers assume that they were involved with gangs, sold or used drugs, or had particular attitudes based solely upon their appearance. For example, a young man who was an innocent victim of random street violence recalled being lectured by a white health care provider about the need to "change his lifestyle," without even asking the youth about the circumstances of his injury.

Recent research supports the notion that providers unconsciously consider race when making treatment decisions about the diagnostic workup of heart disease. Specifically, Schulman and colleagues found that physicians viewing videotapes of actors depicting patients with heart disease recommended certain high technology cardiac diagnostic studies less often for black patients and for women.[22] In this study, all of the "patients" were scripted to have identical symptoms, test results, occupations, and socioeconomic status. If health care providers, in the face of an experimental environment, consider a patient's race when making treatment decisions, then it is likely that when they interact with a young black male in an actual health care setting, racial stereotypes as well as other deeply held notions influence the level of care. This finding is of particular concern, given that the vast majority of physicians are white, even in areas where the population is much more diverse.

Results of a Study of Young Men Visiting an Urban Primary Care Clinic

Since 1992, the Young Men's Health Clinic has existed at Boston City Hospital (now Boston Medical Center). The clinic was begun out of a need to provide more effective primary care services for young men who were infrequently seen in the primary care clinic, and even less

frequently identified with a primary care physician. Between 1992 and 1995, we gathered data about the patients' health care problems in order to more fully understand their range of concerns.[23] Most striking in these results were the range of serious social pressures these young men were facing and their lack of utilization of health care services in the past. Nearly 20 percent reported that they had never had a physical examination, and for those who had, more than 60 percent had not had a physical examination in the past year. Almost 25 percent reported that they had never had any dental care, and 54 percent had not seen a dentist in more than a year. Also, 45 percent indicated that they had been shot, shot at, stabbed, or beaten in the past. Experience in the criminal justice system was common: 58.1 percent had been arrested, 29 percent had been incarcerated, 44 percent reported having been harassed by the police, and 61.2 percent had witnessed violence. A large number of these young men were parents (39 percent), and more than half (52.9 percent) were unemployed. Not surprisingly, lack of education, a history of incarceration, having children, and being black were all associated with having experienced a violent assault in the past.

While the majority of the young men who were coming in for their initial visit reported that they were coming in for a "check-up," a substantial number came to be evaluated for sexually transmitted diseases or for stress-related complaints. Many young men were concerned about their bodies in very specific ways, but most were anxious to gain weight and were looking for advice about fitness and muscle development. As expected for a population of younger people, skin and dental complaints were also prominent.

These results highlight the wide range of critical health problems in this patient population, and also emphasize the ways in which the societal conditions of these young men so profoundly impact their health. Health and social factors are so interrelated that they must be considered together. The experiences of violence, so much a part of the urban landscape, directly and indirectly influence the physical and mental health of these young men. Their experiences with social institutions, not the least of which

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[22] Schulman K.A., Berlin J.A., Harless W., et al., "The Effect of Race and Sex on Physicians' Recommendations for Cardiac Catheterization, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1999, vol. 340, pp. 618–26.

[23] Rich J.A., Unpublished data, 1998.

the criminal justice system, are profoundly negative and often traumatic. Although these young men develop ways of coping that exemplify their resilience, in the long run they basically accept their circumstances.

The Future of Health for Young Black Men in the Inner Cities

In light of the foregoing discussion of the interconnectedness of health status, social factors, and barriers to effective health care for young urban black men, it stands to reason that the future depends in large part upon our approach to these social factors. The collapse of the effort in the early 1990s to establish a national health care system has led to a proliferation of health care management organizations, and has intensified competition in the health care arena. Unfortunately, the health concerns of those most in need and the public health concerns of inner-city communities have not been paramount in this movement. Still, with growing dissatisfaction among the general public with the bureaucracy of managed care, it is likely that some changes will occur in the next decade to improve the quality of health services and to increase patient satisfaction. To a large extent, the population that we are discussing has been peripheral to this debate, as have the poor in general. However, it is likely that the poor health status of young black men in urban areas will continue, since they remain without a voice or an advocate on their behalf in this health policy debate.

On the other hand, the public health community is acquiring a greater understanding of the plight of these young men, based upon the disturbing health trends seen in public health data. Public health resources can be applied and innovative partnerships can be developed within inner-city communities to improve the overall health of this population. These partnerships must include the assistance of churches, schools, the criminal justice system, and the labor infrastructure in order to have the needed effect of improving health status. Such programs must integrate the voices of young black men themselves and recognize their capacity to contribute to the health of their communities. In addition, health care strategies should be evaluated to ensure that they can be shared with and replicated by other urban communities.

More specifically, with regard to specific health problems that disproportionately affect young black males, medical advances must be paired with prevention strategies and improved access to care. New therapies are now available to extend the lives of people with HIV infection. These treatments are quite expensive, yet many states have developed programs to ensure that affected patients have access to these life-saving drugs, without regard to their ability to pay. However, young black men, who comprise the fastest growing segment of patients with AIDS, will not obtain these treatments if they do not get tested for HIV. As mentioned previously, stigma within communities of color about the sexual behaviors that lead to HIV infection, may cause young men at risk to avoid testing for fear they will be ostracized. Attention to this barrier is critical, since access to HIV medications and targeted prevention strategies will be central to our ability to reduce the growing HIV epidemic in urban areas.

The problem of violent injury, the most pressing issue for young black men, has seen some decrease in the past few years. While many have taken credit for this reduction, its causes are not yet clear. Any approaches to this problem that include incarcerating large numbers of young urban black men will further poison their ability to function in the work world. Moreover, we can fully expect that violence will worsen as economic prosperity gives way to recession, more black males progress through puberty and into adolescence,[24] and previously incarcerated young men return to their communities. Programs designed to address the behavioral precursors of violence must be grounded in the realities of life for these young men. Where possible, health initiatives should include the input of young black men in the design and evaluation stages of the programs, which will empower them to change their own communities and to critically evaluate the social forces responsible for the disproportionate incidence of violence in their neighborhoods. Further study is necessary to better comprehend the unique demands and characteristics of the current urban environment, as a means of understanding the ecological aspects of the problem of aggression. Larger system solutions

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[24] *Resident Population of the United States: Middle Series Projections, 2001–2005, by Age and Sex,* Washington, DC: United States Bureau of the Census, 1996.

are also called for to decrease the threat of violence in urban communities. Recently, a number of American cities initiated lawsuits against gun manufacturers, and sought damages under public nuisance and product liability legal theories. Such efforts on the part of municipalities and public health departments may have the desired effect of reducing the flood of guns into communities of color, while obtaining resources to further decrease the pain of violence and homicide.

Lastly, the mental health of these young men must be given the highest priority. In an environment of shrinking resources for therapeutic mental health services, more attention and resources should be provided to community-based preventive mental health resources that are culturally appropriate and accessible to these young men. We must move beyond a recreational view of mental health and development—i.e., "the keeping them busy approach"—and fully create and fund approaches that recognize that this segment of the population has been grossly neglected, scapegoated, and underserved. Effective approaches would move away from blaming the victim, recognize the unique social position occupied by these young men, and build upon their strengths and capacities. Approaches to preventive health care that further stigmatize and marginalize these young men will not be successful. Societal biases held against young African American men will ultimately infect health care providers, who are charged with protecting their health. Within health care and public health, we must push to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the complex health issues facing young black urban men.

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The Effects of Internalized Prejudice on the Mental Health of African American Youth

BRIAN K. WILLIAMS, PH.D.*

Introduction

In 1954, the Supreme Court, in *Brown v. the Board of Education*,[1] ruled that racial segregation in education was unconstitutional. This decision was a major breakthrough in providing better educational opportunities for African Americans and other people of color. In spite of the ever-increasing numbers of people of color reaching professional ranks and positions of power, there has been research that suggests that members of minority groups may be perceived and evaluated less favorably than their white counterparts. Members of these minority groups may be found to harbor some of these negative perceptions themselves.

Several terms have been used to describe this tendency to self-negate. Internalized prejudice, internalized racism, and internalized oppression are terms used to describe the acceptance of negative stereotypes and expectations from society, which result in the devaluation of the work or performance of minority members, in comparison to the work or performance of members of the white majority group in society. When an individual incorporates these negative stereotypes into his or her self-image, self-hatred and divisiveness among in-group members may result. Blacks with high levels of internalized racism have been reported to have less marital satisfaction (Taylor, 1990; Taylor & Zhang, 1990), are more likely to commit serious crimes against other blacks (Terrell, Taylor, & Terrell, 1980), and are likely to consume more alcohol than blacks who internalize lower levels of racism (Taylor & Jackson, 1990a; Taylor & Jackson, 1990b).

Several authors have developed stage theories of black identity development which describe the process of "becoming black," or progressing from a worldview in which blacks are devalued and whites are idealized, to a worldview characterized by self-pride, self-acceptance, and pro-black feelings. These theories are commonly referred to as models of psychological Nigrescence. The models generally describe black identity development primarily in response to racially oppressive conditions. The stage in which negative racial stereotypes have been internalized has been described variously as passive acceptance (Jackson, 1975), Negromachy (Thomas & Thomas, 1971), and pre-encounter (Cross, 1991).

The Legacy

It is not difficult to see how this perception can develop. In this country, African Americans have been systematically convinced of their inferiority through an education system that has consciously excluded the contributions and influence of African people. This has helped create a condition in which there has been a pervasive lack of self-knowledge and unawareness of the history and accomplishments of African Americans. Esteemed African American psychologist, Dr. Na'im Akbar (1984), has addressed the destructive impact that slavery has had on people of African descent. Dr. Akbar quite effectively identified the psychological legacy of slavery, including the disrespect of African American leadership, feelings of personal inferiority, an unnatural attraction to material objects, the harmful influence on the black family, and the overall devastating effect on the personalities of African American people.

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[1] 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Dr. Akbar also examined the negative psychological consequences, to both blacks and whites, of portraying religious images in any particular race. According to Dr. Akbar, one of the more obvious outcomes of viewing God in an image other than oneself, is that the image of the deity becomes superior. Hence, the individual's image is inferior. This can create a self-fulfilling prophecy of a poor self-image, when the individual begins to think and act in inferior ways. Dr. Akbar then referred to how, in American society, historical references to most Christian religious images (i.e., Jesus and other individuals in the Bible) were primarily displayed as Caucasian, and the resulting psychological consequences on the viewers of these images. He explained that depicting an image or concept of God and other religious figures, with certain attributes that resemble a particular race of people, endows these individuals with an unnaturally inflated perspective of themselves and their self-worth. These individuals then ultimately perceive themselves to be superior. As a result, Dr. Akbar concluded that the Caucasian worships himself, and the African American regards the Caucasian as being "God-like." He maintained that having such representations thus tends to limit the concept of the Creator, and suggested removing these images both from the society and the minds of all individuals.

A distressing fact is that black scholars have identified and have addressed internalized prejudice for decades. African American historian and educator, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, delineated how African Americans have been taught to view themselves as inferior. In his classic work, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), Woodson stated:

The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race (p. xiii).

Thus, being trained to adopt a Eurocentric worldview, African Americans are vulnerable to the development of a distorted self-image and perception of inequality. The mass media play a major role in contributing to the perception of the inferior status of African Americans. There are relatively few images of successful African Americans in positions of power, outside of the athletic and entertainment industries. The media portray negative images of blacks being incarcerated or involved in illegal activity, subjected to brutal and dehumanizing mistreatment by law enforcement officials, or cast in low-status or buffoonish roles. The majority of the images of African Americans depicted in the media are based on negative or derogatory stereotypes.[2] Furthermore, images of beauty and desirability seldom depict African features.[3]

Hence, the overwhelming portrayal of African Americans in negative representations and the relatively few number of positive and dignified images reduce the sense of self-respect. These portrayals also invite a sense of inferiority. As a result, a high black-on-black crime rate, participation in illegal drug and gang activity, and limited interest in academic endeavors are all indicative of a fundamental sense of disrespect for black life and lack of a sense of self-worth.

Racial Preference

Self-identity problems have commonly been associated with problems of self-esteem. Pettigrew (1964), in elaborating on the self-esteem problems of African Americans, stated the following:

For years, Negro Americans have had little else by which to judge themselves than the second-class status assigned them in America. And along with this inferior treatment, their ears have been filled with the din of white racists egotistically insisting that Caucasians are innately superior to Negroes. Consequently, many Negroes consciously or unconsciously, accept in part these assertions of their inferiority. In addition, they accept the American emphases on

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[2] For example, many major cities have evening news reports that tend to identify or highlight the ethnicity of alleged perpetrators of crimes when the suspects are African Americans. References to the ethnicity of crime suspects are less likely to occur when the suspects are white. Secondly, other common examples include: music videos that depict blacks in suggestive and sexually explicit scenes, popular television situation comedies and movies that routinely include African American characters referring to each other in vulgar and derogatory terms, and normalizing violent behavior.

[3] Collins, 1990; Neal & Wilson, 1989, describe how media images of beauty and desirability seldom include individuals with African features.

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"status" and "success." But when they employ these standards for judging their own worth, their lowly positions and their relative lack of success lead to further self-disparagement (p. 9).

Investigations into the black self-concept have generally focused on the paradigm of preference behavior. White choice preference in blacks was hypothesized to be indicative of racial self-rejection. As a result of social rejection and being relegated to an inferior and second-class status, African Americans may develop a negative self-concept, which would be expressed by evaluative and self-identification preferences in favor of stimuli with physical characteristics that were not black. The majority of these studies have found that: 1) accurate self-identification increases with age; 2) white children tend to surpass black children in identifying with their own race; and 3) both white and black children tend to prefer white over black choices (Clark & Clark, 1947; Friedman, 1980). Findings from many of these studies appeared to indicate that black children may have lower levels of self-esteem and self-pride.

Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1939a, 1939b, 1940, 1947) were among the earliest investigators to report white identification and preferences in black children. In their now famous doll study (1947), they used black and white dolls to elicit identification and preference responses from 253 black children, and found that in spite of their own skin color, these black children tended to prefer the white doll and negate the black doll. A substantial amount of evidence has been found to support the Clark and Clark early findings (Asher & Allen, 1969; Gopaul-Mc Nicol, 1988; Morland, 1962; Radke & Traeger, 1950; Stevenson & Stewart, 1958).

Opposing Evidence

Results from later studies suggested that movements stressing "black pride" and acceptance of one's race changed the tendency to identify with and prefer white over black (Fox & Jordan, 1973; Mahan, 1976; Vershure, 1976; Winnick & Taylor, 1977). Spencer (1984) found evidence that challenged the common interpretation of many of these studies. She found that although black preschoolers showed majority group racial attitudes and pro-white biased cultural values on a racial attitude and preference measure, 80 percent of the sample obtained posi-

tive self-concept scores. Additional findings have questioned the typical interpretation of poor self-esteem in blacks from white racial preference responses (Clark, 1982; Leung & Drasgow, 1986; Rosenberg, 1979; Samuels & Griffore, 1979). Other researchers investigating racial identification and preference in African American children also found conflicting evidence (Fox & Jordan, 1973; Hraba & Grant, 1970; Ogletree, 1969; Ward & Braun, 1972).

Criticisms of Earlier Investigations

The early research that investigated the black self-concept did not go without criticism. Nobles (1973) not only questioned the interpretation of the findings of earlier studies, but argued that establishing research on the black self-concept in theoretical approaches that do not incorporate African conceptions of self was sufficient reason to discard or reject most, if not all, previously published research in the area.

Baldwin (1979) also addressed the issue of cultural sensitivity. He stressed that the failure of previous black self-hatred research to recognize or give consideration to basic cultural differences between the Euro American and African American communities was a major cause of the misperception of black behavior. Moreover, he indicated that these cultural differences contributed to the erroneous conception of the black personality being a result of racial oppression in American society, rather than resulting from a distinct socio-cultural orientation.

In addition, Banks (1976) disputed the statistical significance of most of the research on preference behavior in blacks, and also raised another important point. He questioned the common use of white subjects as a comparative group for the choice behavior of black subjects. Banks stressed that employing a white comparative group tended to perpetuate the notion of black self-rejection. Assumptions made in these instances reflect the belief that white behavior represented a standard of mental health. Further, Banks questioned the desirability of responding in highly ethnocentric response sets, as is commonly the case with white samples. He pointed out that this type of orientation has traditionally been regarded as maladaptive for both individual and group functioning. According to Banks, the tendency for blacks to prefer white stimuli in evaluative preference situations or as

objects of self-identification has generally been mistakenly interpreted as a failure to adopt positive racial self-regard. Although Banks' views did not go without challenge (e.g., Williams & Morland, 1979), his points certainly warrant consideration when designing and reviewing research in the area of racial preference.

Research with Adult Populations

As evidenced from the literature reviewed thus far, the majority of racial preference research has focused on preschool and elementary school age children. A few studies have been directed toward adult samples. For example, in a study examining possible racial preferences towards social service providers, Dubey (1970) found that in spite of using black interviewers, the majority of his survey sample (taken from a predominately black neighborhood) showed no racial preference in professional service providers. This pattern was virtually identical for men and women, and across age groups. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey appeared to be indifferent to the race of the person providing the social service. Later survey research supported this finding (Clark & Clark, 1980).

Is the evidence of African American self-hatred real? Has there been a substantial improvement in black self-perception? Clark and Clark (1980) sought to investigate whether the influence of the civil rights movement had a lasting effect on the self-images of blacks. They conducted a national survey of 1,200 blacks with subjects representing all major regions of the country. They found indications that while blacks were making progress in achieving healthier self-images, they generally have not consistently developed an overall sense of positive self-esteem and racial acceptance. They summarized their results with the following:

Whatever were the positive gains obtained by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s[,] these gains have not yet resulted in a consistently positive self-image for the majority of Blacks. American Blacks are still involved in a turbulent struggle for self-esteem, self-respect and racial self-acceptance even as they are burdened with the negative stereotypes, self-rejection and deep feelings of inferiority which the pervasive racism of the larger society imposes upon them and their children. In spite of the removal of the more flagrant signs of racial rejection, the rise of the Black Power movement and the demands for racial pride of the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of Blacks still appear to be burdened with racial self-doubt (p. 178).

As a researcher, I sought to investigate the effects of internalized prejudice on African Americans by ascertaining whether black college students show evaluative biases according to their understanding of an individual's gender or ethnicity, and whether or not that evaluation is influenced by the level of the student's self-esteem (Williams, 1993). A modification of a methodology initially used by Philip Goldberg (1968) was used to determine whether a sample of professional writing, with varied authorship, would be evaluated differentially by students when it was presented in black-authored and white-authored versions, and with both male and female authors.

Three hundred and thirty-five students enrolled in two historically black state universities were administered a brief professional article and instructed to read and evaluate the article on various aspects of worth. Authorship of the article was varied by inclusion of an appropriate photograph of an African American or white man or woman. At a subsequent class period, a brief self-esteem scale was used to obtain a measure of the subjects' self-image.

Results of the study failed to support the notion that African American college students internalized prejudice, to the extent that they would devalue work they perceived to have been produced by an African American of professional status. Students gave significantly more favorable evaluations of the journal article when it was presented as being written by an African American author. The gender of the purported author also had a significant influence on the evaluations given to the article, with female authors receiving significantly more favorable ratings than male authors. This result was consistent for both male and female subjects. The respondents' level of reported self-esteem had no significant influence on the evaluations of the article.

It was suggested that environmental factors may have influenced the results of this study. Subjects for the study were obtained from two historically black universities. It has often been claimed that a predominately black college environment might foster an improvement in self-confidence and enhance racial self-pride in Afri-

can American students, in part due to the nurturing that students receive. These educational institutions tend to have a large number of positive African American role models serving as instructors, professors, administrators, and mentors. Previous research (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Joesting & Joesting, 1972) has found strong support for the notion that having positive role models can have significant influence on the self-image of minority group members.

Hopson and Hopson (1992) reported evidence demonstrating that racial preferences among children could be changed at least temporarily. In an earlier study (Powell-Hopson, 1985), the Clarks' (1947) doll experiment was replicated. The results indicated that 65 percent of the black children in the sample chose the white doll to play with, and 76 percent chose the black doll that "looked bad" to them. However, a second part was added to the study, that included an intervention. Those children who chose a black doll were reinforced with verbal praise. The black doll was also described by positive adjectives, and a story was read that depicted black children in favorable ways. Finally, the researchers modeled pro-black responses to preference questions by choosing black dolls themselves. The children were then retested, and the results showed that 68 percent of the children now chose the black doll to play with, and only 27 percent indicated that the black doll "looked bad" to them. The Hopsons also observed that the children's attitudes and choices were also positively affected by the presence of black researchers as role models. They suggested that early exposure to black Americans in positions of authority and power should begin as early as preschool age. They also stressed that open acknowledgment of racial issues, positive modeling, and reinforcement of blackness is needed to combat low self-esteem and poor racial identity in black children.

Gopaul-McNicol (1988) discovered that brief interventions are insufficient to overcome harmful influences that result from a social climate that is replete with negative stereotypes associated with African Americans. She found that most of the children who had participated in the Powell-Hopson (1985) study failed to maintain their pro-black attitudes and had reverted to white doll preference and selection. She concluded that a holistic effort that includes par-

ents, educators, and society at large, is needed to promote racial pride and self-acceptance in black children.

Jawanza Kunjufu (1988) also emphasized the need to have African American professionals as positive role models for African American youth, in order to help combat the perception of limited job opportunities and enhance their desire to study. According to Kunjufu, having more professional African American role models would also show the youth the range of opportunities that are available to them, aside from the athletic and entertainment fields. Kunjufu specifically highlighted the need for more black men to spend time with black youth, and identified how black peer groups can be a valuable resource to connect with younger youth.

An Example of a Model Program

How do we implement these ideas and suggestions to help promote the development of a healthy sense of self-worth in African American youth? As a practicing psychologist working in a large university counseling center, I have had the opportunity to personally observe the disturbing prevalence of self-devaluation among African American college students. For example, I have counseled African American clients who have fantasized about harming and eliminating the black community out of shame and distaste for "their" behavior. Other clients refused to identify their ethnicity. Some prefer to list themselves as "American" on student information forms that clients complete when initially presenting themselves to the counseling center for services. If I probed this issue further, these students revealed a conscious attempt to avoid identifying themselves with other African Americans. In addition, I have also observed young black male students commonly using negative and derogatory terms to refer to each other and to black women. Occasionally, I still hear students making references to certain African Americans who either have "good" or "bad" hair, as well as comments about their preferences for dating someone who has "light skin." As someone with a particular concern for the mental health and well-being of the African American community, I found these instances to be quite disturbing.

While seeking an intervention to assist the African American male students at Texas A&M

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University, a large public institution with an enrollment of approximately 3 percent African American students, I collaborated with an African American male colleague in the Department of Multicultural Services of the university to create a Black Men's Discussion Group. This colleague attended a historically black college known for developing strong African American male scholars and leaders. He also earned a law degree from a prestigious law school, and was still in his 20s when the group was initially formed. The forum allowed the participants in the group to have direct and ongoing exposure to two African American male professionals, one of whom is an attorney, and the other, a licensed psychologist in the state of Texas. Our goal was to provide a forum where issues of importance to black men could be discussed in a supportive and collegial atmosphere. It was anticipated that these issues would not be limited to topics that were germane to this university, but would also encompass issues of relevance to their overall well-being. Some of these topics would include: societal and gender roles, racial/cultural identity issues, male/female relationships, general social problems, and political concerns.

Unfortunately, typical perceptions often include regarding those individuals who seek counseling for personal difficulties or support as weak or mentally disturbed. In the African American community, individuals often rely on family, friends, and the church for needed support and guidance. Accordingly, concerns about trust will often prevent most African American students at a large, predominately white university from seeking available assistance. Because of the stigma that still appears to be associated with counseling-related activities within this population, we decided to hold the meetings in the student center on campus rather than in the building where the student counseling services are usually held. Initially, the group meetings were not publicly advertised, and participation was limited to students that the group facilitators individually invited to attend. We then encouraged group members to invite their male peers whom they felt were sincere about wanting to address issues confronting black men, and who were willing to be vehicles for change. The facilitators stressed the point that we would generally not come to group sessions with an agenda and would expect the members to generate the discussion topic. Self-respect and respect

for others were also identified as expectations for participation in the group. We acknowledged that disagreements can and will occur, but respect for others' opinions is expected. The group has followed standard counseling procedures regarding confidentiality of information, but group members have not been considered as "clients" of the counseling center. Relationships between group facilitators and group members have been of a mentoring quality.

Occasionally, members have been challenged or confronted by the facilitators or other group members on behaviors or attitudes that were self-destructive in nature or antithetical to Africentric principles of group cohesion.[4] Response to the feedback has usually been positive and well accepted. As one member has fondly responded, "It's all good!" Group discussions have encouraged positive and healthy dating and friendships with women, consistently stressed the importance of being positive role models for African American youth, and promoted strong identities based on Africentric principles.

Involvement with the Black Men's group has been beneficial to both the members and the creators of the group. The facilitators have often commented how we have enjoyed the interaction with other black men, especially considering the relatively few social outlets geared towards African Americans on the campus or in the community. It has also allowed me to establish credibility with other African American students, as members have occasionally directed their peers to me for counseling services. Ongoing mentoring relationships have been maintained with former members who have since graduated from the university and moved on to professional careers of their own.

Participation in the group has apparently had an impact on some members. After discussions with a staff member of a local youth organization, the need for more black male involvement in community outreach became apparent. Several of the students in the Black Men's group independently formed a student service organi-

4 Africentric principles that have been promoted in the group include: self-knowledge/tribal knowledge, oneness or harmony with nature, unity and the survival of the group, cooperation and collective responsibility, interdependence, commonality, and spirituality. The group facilitators have emphasized these principles because we believe that they are most consistent with nature, promote good mental health, and encourage positive group and community functioning.

zation designed to reach out to the youth in the local community. According to their mission statement, the organization was built on principles of unity, spirituality, and service. Their primary goal is to provide positive guidance and alternatives to youth by promoting self-improvement in various aspects of their lives. They have designed mentoring programs and activities, provided tutorial services, and worked with the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in the area, as well as various elementary, junior high, and high schools. They continually stress the importance of education and emphasize self-empowerment in their interactions with the youth in the community. Founding members of the organization selected the name, "Brothers of the Roundtable," to reflect the concept that all members are equal and valued. When the students decided to seek recognition as an official organization by the university, they asked the two co-creators of the Black Men's Discussion Group to serve as advisors. This organization is just one example of the possible benefits of mentoring initiatives. Although no formal outcome measures have been used to determine the effectiveness of the group, this appears to be a promising area for future research.

Other Recommendations: Texas A&M University Programs That Encourage a Positive Self-Image

Several other programs at Texas A&M University appear to be beneficial in helping to develop healthy self-images and self-esteem, while increasing retention rates of students of color at the university. The Department of Multicultural Services provides a proactive orientation program for first-year students who have been admitted to the university. This program, "Excellence Uniting Culture Education and Leadership" (ExCEL), was designed to ease the transition to the university, and to enhance students' academic and leadership skills, while promoting the preservation of students' cultural identities. ExCEL participants also have the opportunity to interact with both peer and faculty/staff mentors, and to become familiar with other university services.

Secondly, outreach efforts initiated by the Student Counseling Service, often attempt to address the misconceptions associated with participating in counseling. These outreach efforts are helpful in informing all students of our services that are available to them.

Educational programs have also been implemented which instill a sense of pride in black students. One such program is the "Leadership of the Civil Rights Movement Seminar and Tour," which is sponsored by the Department of Multicultural Services. This seminar includes a detailed review of significant events and leaders of the movement, and culminates with a week-long tour of southern cities where many of these historic events took place. Students or "Freedom Riders" that participate in this program also have the opportunity to meet civil rights leaders. Students who have participated in this seminar and tour leave with an increased sense of cultural awareness and pride. They describe their participation as a life-changing experience.

Hence, young black males are more likely to develop healthy self-images when they receive the same opportunity to participate in self-esteem promoting activities as others in this society. Accordingly, opportunities for such experiences in goal-oriented male mentoring groups; leadership, academic, and skill-building initiatives; and cultural programs should be routinely provided to every young African American male.

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The Pseudomasculine Identity and the African American Male

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Introduction

The "crisis" of the African American male is considered to be real by some and imagined by others. Unfortunately for many, whether it is real or imagined, it is not deemed important enough to warrant the type of attention necessary to bring about a change in the issues undergirding this "crisis."

Yet, African American males have been labeled an endangered species by some and as super predators by others (Bennett, Dilulio, and Walters, 1996). This is largely due to the number of African American males who are incarcerated, on probation or parole, or who have become the victims or perpetrators of homicide. This "crisis" of the African American male has been presented as statistical information in such diverse categories as employment, crime, education, drug abuse, sexual behavior, and health.

According to Bennett, et al. (1996), violent crime is on the rise. They report that while males ages 14 to 24 years old comprise about 8 percent of the general population, they constitute 27 percent of all murder victims and 48 percent of all murderers. Within this statistic is the fact that between 1985 and 1992, the murder rate for blacks ages 14 to 17 years old increased by over 300 percent. Also, black males ages 14 to 24, representing slightly more than 1 percent of the population, accounted for 17 percent of the victims of crime and 30 percent of the criminal offenders. At the current rate of African American male incarceration, by the year 2000, 60 percent of the total United States prison population is projected to be composed of African American males (King, 1993). In contrast, only 25.9 per-

cent of black males ages 18 to 21 were in college in 1993. In 1990 and 1993, blacks (male and female) represented only 5.8 percent of individuals with bachelor's degrees (Smith and Horton, 1997). African American males constitute more than 48 percent of the prison population in the United States, even though they comprise only about 6 percent of the general population (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). As reported by Brazaitis in King (1993), their incarceration rate is 4 times higher than indigenous African males in South Africa, thus making the United States the largest incarcerator of people of African descent in the world.

While the foundations of American society are crumbling, it is perhaps the African American community that best serves as a barometer for the larger segment of society. It is also the sons and daughters of the African American community who are largely paying the price for the seemingly unchecked deterioration of our social and political structures, and even in some circles, being cast as scapegoats. Fundamentally, this "crisis" is a dilemma of American society, which includes a deterioration of values, family, patriotism, and spirituality and the failure to transmit such constructs across generations due to changes in family and societal structures. It is no surprise that the crisis of American society would first be evident in the African American community. Social science research has indicated that the ills of society are more likely to manifest first and more prominently in the marginal groups of a society, due to their position of less power, influence, and fewer resources to cope with adverse conditions. However, given the legacy of adversity faced by African Americans and their resilience in enduring, it is surprising that there exist conditions that can be labeled as having reached crisis proportions. It would appear that something has changed

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within the African American culture since the forces of racism and discrimination have remained ubiquitous for at least the past 400 years.

Unemployment has always been highest among teenage black males, and Smith and Horton (1997) reported that in 1993, 33.1 percent of blacks lived below the poverty line. Yet, neither poverty nor other external forces produced the factors that we are labeling a "crisis" at the present time.

Factors Contributing to the "Crisis" of the African American Male

Theoretical explanations abound to explain this "crisis" in black America. Using crime as the factor of investigation, Bennett et al. (1996) have posited that the root cause for our current increases in crime is "moral poverty." They define moral poverty as,

the poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach you right from wrong; the poverty of being without parents and other authorities who habituate you to feel joy at others' joy, pain at others' pain, satisfaction when you do right, remorse when you do wrong; and the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach morality by their own everyday example and who insist that you follow suit. In the extreme, moral poverty is the poverty of growing up severely abused and neglected at the hands of deviant, delinquent, or criminal adults.

The problem with most theories is that they select one variable to explain a complex phenomenon and cite it as the sole cause. The behavior of African American males, as in all individuals, is caused by a cluster of contributing factors. Moral poverty appears to be but one of the contributing parts of this dilemma.

Lost in the focus on crime, drug abuse, and other deviant behaviors as the defining elements of the "crisis" of young African American males is the tragic loss of human potential, and the stifling effect it has on the progress of the African American community. This crisis is the loss of productive citizens who are contributing to their families and communities by reaching their social and spiritual potential, both individually and for the benefit of the African American community as a whole. Explanations that focus only on the elimination of crime, drug abuse, and other deviant behaviors are short-sighted. What

is needed are explanations that can be operationalized to move the African American male into an African-centered manhood, out of second-class citizenship, and up from the pit of "learned helplessness" that resulted from the legacy of racism and slavery. To do this would address the issues of crime and delinquency as well, but would serve to elevate the young African American male to an *empowered* manhood, stabilize the family and community, and further the cause of African Americans for equal participation in the fraternity of mankind.

Like other ethnic groups in the United States, African Americans have been subjected to the socializing effects of the American Dream. Perhaps in no other group is "success" wanted so badly and so quickly. However, this "success" is often misinterpreted or reduced to materialistic gratification. Yet there is a common thread of wanting to be financially secure, having adequate shelter, providing for one's family, having your own and not having to grovel and beg for just the basics of life—the kinds of things money, power, and respect can bring. Many African American males have made dangerous environmental adaptations in an effort to obtain the money, power, and respect that seem to be so valued by this society and, in so doing, have created a hostile environment for themselves and others who must exist in it. Many have redefined what it means to be a man. They have developed a "pseudomasculine identity" that is reinforced, yet feared by society. It is an identity driven to obtain money, power, and respect at any cost. It is an identity born out of a street orientation, pop culture, moral poverty, hopelessness, and cultural/historical poverty which includes a lack of self-love and self-knowledge. It is an attempt to live up to being a man as defined by the peer culture, and a rejection of the definition of what a man is by mainstream society, because it is not a role viewed as attainable or worthwhile.

"Street" vs. "Decent" Orientations

Anderson (1994) discusses two orientations that socially organize the community of many African American males—"decent" and "street." The "decent" orientation is characterized by men who raise families that tend to accept mainstream values. These men attempt to teach these values to their children. "Decent" men value hard work and self-reliance and are willing to

delay their own gratification for the betterment of their children. Many of them go to church and are interested in their children's schooling. They tend to be strict in their child-rearing practices and adhere to a straight moral line.

In contrast, the "street" orientation is characterized by men who raise families that often show a lack of consideration for other people, and have only a marginal investment in their family and community. Although these men may love their children, many of them are unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands of parenthood. They have difficulty reconciling their needs with those of their children. They are more fully invested in the "code of the streets," and may aggressively socialize their children into this subculture in a normative manner. Specifically, this code of the streets is a set of informal rules which govern interpersonal public behavior, including violence, and prescribe a proper comportment and an approved method of responding if challenged. These men regulate the use of violence and support a subculture lifestyle that may be characterized by hustling, promiscuity, and a host of other antisocial behaviors.

It is this street orientation which allows for the growth and development of the pseudomasculine identity. Once this identity is rooted, environmental changes such as a new neighborhood, an increase in material possessions, contact with moral wealth (the opposite of moral poverty), or even incarceration will not bring about a change. An internal change in the way the individual *thinks* about himself and the world becomes necessary.

Most families of all ethnic groups strive for a "decent" orientation. It is the absorption of positive mainstream values into the psyche of the individual that greatly guides him or her into a pro-social lifestyle, and away from those attitudes and behaviors that constitute what we now call crisis behaviors. This psyche, however, is undergirded by an individual's identification with a firmly rooted and developed culture, which provides a sense of worth, value, and direction. It is important to note that this decent orientation, which is synonymous with "true middle-class values," can be learned by anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or whether they live in the suburbs or inner city.

Unfortunately, for many African American males, there is difficulty reconciling the virtue of such an orientation with the experience of being an African male in America. A value system that should be natural and desirable to him, may be deemed a scheme by white America to impose "whiteness" on him, even when the rejection of the decent orientation is to his detriment. He fails to realize that the best of middle-class values are a part of his historical culture. The fact that black children, who are acting intelligently, e.g., using correct grammar, doing their homework, or participating in class, are often taunted by other black kids that they are "trying to be white," is an example of the confusion of values such males experience. Due to American socialization, young African American males want the same things that other Americans want. Yet, the attitudes, values, and behaviors needed to attain the American dream are viewed as being characteristic of the white race. This results in various rationalizations, projections of blame, and parallel behaviors that have the purpose of approximating the American ideal.

What is puzzling is the fact that the worst of the mainstream values, such as the pursuit of self-interests at the expense of others, is easily accepted. I have heard more than one inmate make comments to me that are similar to the following: "Man I was a nobody before I started in the drug game. But once in, everybody knew me. I had money, cars, a nice house, and those Janet Jackson looking [honeys] that I couldn't get with before. Man I was ballin'! I finally felt like somebody!" Evident in this statement is the desire for money, power, and respect. However, the behaviors used to attain these goals are associated with the street orientation. They are parallel to mainstream behaviors but deviant, e.g., drug dealing, robbery, and hustling, and entail the risk of killing or being killed and hurting others to advance one's self-interests. The inmate who made the aforementioned statement to me had been shot several times. When he gets out, he plans to return to "ballin.'"

On another occasion, I asked a young African American male inmate what would he do on the streets, if someone disrespected him by slapping his woman in public in his presence. He indicated that he would have to kill the person. When asked whether it would be more appropriate, if possible, to elicit the help of the police, he stated that it might be all right to do so. He explained:

However, it would not get you any props from the others in the neighborhood. If you killed him, people would talk about how you handled your business and how not to mess with you. If you called the cops, others might try you or think they can take your woman.

This line of reasoning indicates that there is something different about how the pseudomasculine male thinks. Although physically matured, there appears to be a cognitive adaptation to what is perceived to be a hostile environment, that has the character of arrested development. A different value system is at work along with a type of conscious awareness that is counter to navigating the social environment of the larger society; and yet, at the core, there is the desire for respect and acceptance. This is a learned adaptation and, as such, can be unlearned.

Unfortunately, "handling one's business" becomes equated with maintaining a tough image and "getting over" in dealing with life's everyday problems. This is at the expense of productively navigating the environment to obtain a better quality of life. Akbar (1985) stated it well as follows:

History has well demonstrated that when a message of moral strength, basic goodness and kindness is fed into the minds of people, the so-called "natural evil tendencies" in man begin to disappear. When children are exposed to words of hope and high ideals, those children aspire for those high ideals of sharing, cooperation, and peace. The passive reaction to destructive and evil tendencies feeds the occurrence of those very tendencies. A resignation to such violence is the hidden message in the concept of the original sin, humanity's basically evil nature, and the unconscious aggressive drive hidden in people. All of these messages are erosive to the aspiring higher nature of human beings.

Factors that Cause the "Street" Orientation

The crux of the matter lies in raising one's consciousness of self and others, developing self-love and self-knowledge, developing an African (American)-centered identity, and accurately assessing those negative forces that are external as well as internal. Many young African American males lack an integrated masculine identity (which includes self-knowledge), cultural/historical knowledge, acceptance of self, and an African (American)-centered orientation. They also have a conflicted image of their spiritual selves due to the racist use of religious text. The prob-

lem lies in the psyche of the African American male. It has not been nurtured to develop a positive masculine identity of "self." All cultures have their heroes, martyrs, legends, and rituals which serve to inspire and guide the human potential of its members. However, if you examine the psyche of the average African American male, you will find that it is bereft of the very images, symbols, values, and rituals that lead to cultural cohesiveness and harmony, knowledge of self, and the true potentiality of the human potential. Where such rituals, symbols, values, etc., exist, you will find that the icons behind them are not of the African American culture, or they are less than ideal symbols which have been synthesized from what is thought to be attainable, available, or proper for African Americans. In order to be accepted by the African American psyche, the heroes, martyrs, icons, and other positive symbols must represent "him."

Akbar (1985) asserts that due to the unreal images of manliness portrayed by the mass media, men struggle with the unattainable ideals of what they should be. African American males become bombarded with images of unreal macho men who display a pseudomasculinity, and who are violent or have conflicted racial and/or gender identities. This unreal image of manhood influences the African American male to define his manhood in terms of some physical dimensions like fashions, "gangsta' skills," pimping, or being a "mean bad dude." This perception inhibits his desire to be a participant in the marketplace of world trade, production, or culture.

African Americans have been fed the same informational diet as Caucasian Americans. Such information has served to solidify the white psyche; however, the black psyche cannot develop fully from it. European Americans have ensured that their consciousness has been well informed about their greatness. They do not lack in self-knowledge. The great stories of Louis XIV, Columbus, Napoleon, Queen Victoria, Copernicus, Galileo, the Greeks, and the Romans are fundamental elements of the icons and heroes of the white psyche (Akbar, 1996). Their heroes, martyrs, and other symbols, however, are only partially integrated into the black psyche, while the other part is rejected as being "not me." The psyche of the African American male is fed a constant diet that he is violent, ignorant, irresponsible, and incapable of managing anything, even his own family. This results in the acceptance of

the type of negative stereotyping cited in Brown (1995) from a *Washington Post* article entitled "Stereotype Within." In general, a group of black sixth-grade students answered questions which indicated their beliefs about black people. Some of their entrenched beliefs are listed below:

- Blacks are poor and stay poor because they are dumber than whites and Asians.
- Black kids who do their schoolwork and behave must want to be white.
- Black people don't like to work hard.
- Blacks don't need to work hard because it won't matter in the end.
- Black people have to be bad, so they can fight and defend themselves from other blacks.
- Blacks see their badness as natural.
- Black men make women pregnant and leave.
- Black boys expect to die young and unnaturally.

What is evident in these attitudes is nearly a total denigration of one's self as well as others of the same race and culture. They indicate no positive cultural foundation to guide the development of a positive masculine identity. These children's attitudes reflect a psyche bereft of self-love, cultural awareness/history, and a positive cultural identity. These are the attitudes of a culturally sick psyche which lie at the core of moral poverty and social deviance. Such ideology represents a defeatist attitude and the expression of "learned helplessness." Individuals with these attitudes do not believe that they matter in the overall scheme of society. Nor do they believe that there is anything that they can do to escape their "fate." This results in both a defeatist attitude, and behaviors that reflect an alternate social orientation—one that they believe they can attain. In the vernacular of Azibo (Atwell and Azibo, 1992), such an individual is "misoriented" and suffers from "mentacide."

"Misorientation" and "Mentacide": The Result of the Street Orientation

"Misorientation" is defined as the process of operating from or negotiating the environment with a conceptual base in which African (American)-centered psychological and behavioral elements are *not* the operative ones. Instead, European-centered, Arab-centered, or other non-African cognitive elements are operative in the conceptual base. Such elements include the aforementioned negative attitudes. An African American who is misoriented does not promote the maintenance of his or her race. In fact, such a person is likely to violate the first law of survival—self-preservation. Misorientation is genetic blackness minus psychological blackness.

"Mentacide" is defined as the systematic process that depletes an African's psychological blackness/African self-consciousness or precludes its development. Mentacide produces misorientation and hinders correct orientation (Azibo, 1989). Racism, discrimination, learned helplessness, and acceptance of the victim role are procedural factors of mentacide.

In order to avert the destructive forces of misorientation and mentacide, "correct orientation" is needed. Correct orientation has been achieved when an African's beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors are oriented to (a) recognize him or herself as an African (American); (b) to prioritize African (American) interests, survival, and proactive development; (c) to respect and perpetuate all elements of the African (American) culture that are culturally enriching and stabilizing; and (d) to support a standard of conduct that neutralizes people and things that are anti-African (American) whether they be black or white, liberal or conservative (Atwell and Azibo, 1992). Correct orientation has the capacity to prevent the development of the pseudomasculine identity and, where it exists, to replace it.

Correcting "Misorientation" and "Mentacide"

The uniqueness of this ideology is in its application to African Americans. It is not new and should be recognizable by members of any culture who have been successful at promoting their interests, establishing a positive identity, and maintaining relative cohesiveness and stability. In this era of "self-help," it is an objective that can be endorsed and supported by all. Such a correct orientation would not be a detriment to the general American society. Just as it is possible for whites to have a pro-white ethnocentric orientation without being concurrently anti-black, it is possible for blacks to have a pro-black ethnocentric orientation without being anti-white. In order for the young African American

male to accept those attitudes, values, and behaviors lauded by mainstream society, he must see them as having emerged from and being a part of his own ethnic group. He must have integrated into his psyche the "big picture" which includes a historical, cultural, and spiritual interconnectedness of the ideology by which he should live his life.

It has been my experience in clinical practice within a penal institution, that the best way to engage an African American male in constructive dialogue is to address the issues of self-knowledge, cultural history, spirituality, racism, and discrimination. In contrast, one of the best ways to disengage a black male from the psychotherapeutic process is to deny that his minority status plays any role in his life circumstances or frustrations, lack of appropriate direction, and general angst that he experiences. He does not want to hear that "slavery was a long time ago—get over it." Nor does he want to hear that everything is fine now because we are on a level playing field. He will reject, summarily, efforts to characterize the problems in the African American community as being all his fault, and no amount of "statistricks" (statistics used improperly to support a one-sided view) will convince him otherwise. His senses tell him that this is not true. Dialogues which addresses culture, history, racism, and discrimination seldom conclude in a simple rehashing of the blame game. Most often it stimulates interest, places the focus on "self," and has the potential to bring about the empowerment of self that will bring about the fundamental change in his psyche that will allow him to address those very issues that have led to the national sounding of the alarm that there is a "crisis" of the young African American male. When provided the proper tools and an acceptable rationale for change, he is more likely to make the effort to change. The "blame game" only serves to build up resentment and resistance to change even when such change is in the best interest of the young African American male.

White supremacy, which included slavery, created a cultural and societal trauma in this country, and racism and discrimination continue to create a cultural and individual psychological trauma. As Bernal (1987) points out, there has been a concerted effort by white academicians and scientists to advance the Extreme Aryan Model since the mid 1800s. This has resulted in

an attempt to oppress black people, and thus has created psychological trauma. Mental health professionals know that for traumatized individuals, the traumatizing event cannot just be dismissed as an irrelevant incident. The traumatizing event must be addressed and worked through in order for the individual to recover from it. It is my contention that young African American males are in a state of psychological shock and are trying their best to survive the world as they perceive it. However, the cultural, historical, and racial trauma must be dealt with, in order to empower them to overcome the social crisis of this country.

This trauma has resulted in mental disorders peculiar to black people. Fields (1986) lists one of these disorders as "whitemanrism"—the adverse affect of the presence of white people on some blacks, which results in them acting out of character. Azibo (1998) identifies materialistic depression, anxiety, personal identity conflict, and oppression violence reactions, among others, as developing from the unique experiences of blacks with the forces of oppression.

Recommendations for Change

There are steps that can be taken to bring the young African American male into "correct orientation." Their crisis behaviors represent a deviation from the norms of African American culture. Such erosions of black identity or culture require the task of resocialization (Baldwin, 1976). Resocialization is akin to correct orientation. Band-Aid approaches will not work. Self-help without proper guidance and resources will not work.

Proper development of the African American psyche has the greatest potential for real and sustained change through empowerment. Akbar (1985) defines self-knowledge as knowing how we, as human beings, work and also knowing our real potential. Human goals and aspirations are defined by those cultural and historical images that are examples of the *best of human capacity*. The following are some suggestions for attacking the "crisis" of the young African American male:

1. *Synchronize race, black identity, and culture* by pooling the human resources of the black community, e.g., black helping professionals, the black client and family, other black pro-

fessionals, and community members, in order to facilitate and promote cultural values, ideology and identification; disseminate cultural history; disseminate culturally relevant information on health issues, legal issues, economic and political issues; and to establish treatment networks for identifying and addressing individual problems (Jackson, 1992).

2. *Restore the consciousness of black people about themselves:* From the "cradle to the grave," we must submerge ourselves in information about ourselves in order to change the content of our consciousness. Blackness needs to be celebrated and can be done without degrading others. We must unashamedly display our images and great ancestral figures throughout our environments. The stories of natural black inferiority and undesirability from Tarzan to Sambo, were stories constantly told to destroy the worth of the black psyche and give others the rationalized justification to marginalize us. Celebration of "self" is a way to promote healing by recognizing ourselves, our heroes, and our accomplishments through art, holidays, monuments, toys, and the literature that we read (Akbar, 1996).

3. *Implement the process of correct orientation* wherever possible in the community and institutions, such as churches, schools, and prisons. Gendreau, Saint John, and Andrews (1990) conducted a meta-analyses of offender treatment literature to determine the most effective means to deter recidivism. They found that high-quality treatment to offenders in need that is based on cognitive-behavioral models and linked to community-based programs works best. Further, correctional treatment had the most potential for control of recidivism. With the large numbers of incarcerated African Americans, prisons are a good place to implement cognitive-behavioral, African American-centered treatment programs designed to bring about "correct orientation." An excellent model, the "therapeutic community" already exists for dealing with the problem of substance abuse. One of its primary components is the instruction, modeling, and reinforcement of pro-social behaviors. It could be modified to

effectively socialize or resocialize the African American male into the "decent orientation" practiced by the majority of African Americans and empower him (correct orientation) to be an asset to his family and community. Similar training could be done in the schools and churches.

4. African American organizations must monitor and marshal the energies of the community to address relevant issues in education, politics, business and criminal justice. The vast network of churches and black newspapers are excellent mechanisms that could "get the word out."

5. Continue a national initiative on race to include a massive antiracism campaign in all communities and to promote positive black images in the mass media and in the African American community.

6. *Promote biculturality.* African Americans must be able to function effectively within their communities and within mainstream society. For example, they must be able to speak both proper English and slang, depending on the environment.

7. *Train leaders, teachers, preachers, and the community* at large on what it means to be pro-black, pro-political, and pro-American (Fields, 1986). We need to hold schools accountable in the education of our children. We passively accept underachievement as the best that can be done. A massive effort of empowerment training is needed.

Conclusion

Even if strategies were implemented today to deal with the problems facing the African American community, change would be slow but steady. Over the next 10 years, conditions are likely to worsen. Changes in the political climate that seek to maintain the status quo, the rise in hate crimes, the growing gulf between the socioeconomic classes within the black community, and the overall moral decay growing in American society does not bode well for the young African American male. Whereas the focus of this paper has been on the young African American male, all tenets of it are applicable to the young

African American female and the entire black community. Unless the crisis is preempted, the African American community will become further isolated from mainstream society, leading to a further erosion of our human potential and the gains made in education, economics, and politics. With the rise in antiblack activism, this could only lead to further racial conflict. The recommendations made in this paper are not focused on psychopathology but on empowerment and revival of the human spirit in all conclaves of the African American community. We achieved physical emancipation over 130 years ago. What is needed now is the adoption of a liberation ideology. One that will promote cultural, spiritual, and mental emancipation. This appears necessary to reverse the problems of "The Crisis of the Young African American Male in the Inner Cities."

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PANEL

Employment

Building Equity within Welfare Reform for Children in Fragile Families

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In 1996 Congress reformed the nation's welfare system so that work and parental responsibility became the system's core themes. The new system seeks to emancipate low-income families with children from the old system's dependency structure. In the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA),[1] cash benefits are a form of *temporary* assistance that parents receive while they prepare for work. Congress considered work and child support, typically provided by the father, to be a *permanent* solution to welfare-dependency for low-income families. PRWORA's tougher child support provisions seek to increase the child support enforcement system's effectiveness so that, in turn, child support will become a more reliable source of income for poor families.

Critics of welfare reform usually focus on PRWORA's impact on mothers—not enough jobs, not enough services, insufficient distance from poverty—(Blank, 1994; Briskin and Thomas, 1998; Duncan, et al. 1997; Edin and Lein, 1997; Hamilton et al., 1998; Haveman and Bershadker, 1998; Pavetti, 1997; Scrivener et al., 1998; Wagner et al., 1998). Some critics also note that the adverse effects of these measures have fallen disproportionately on black welfare recipients (DeParle, 1998). Low-income black women on welfare are more likely to apply for welfare before marrying, completing school, or acquiring much work experience (Bane and Ellwood, 1994). As a result, their efforts to prepare for work and leave the welfare rolls are made more difficult. They are likely to exhaust their 5-year limit on cash assistance before they secure the

kinds of jobs that pay a living wage (Duncan et al., 1997, Wagner et al., 1998).

Too few observers of welfare reform notice that African American men are overrepresented among the fathers of children on welfare, and few notice that many black fathers are too poor to pay their child support obligations. (Achatz and MacAllum, 1994; Brien, 1997; Hamer, 1997; Johnson, 1998; Koball, 1998; Levesque, 1994; McLanahan, 1998; Meyer et al., 1996; Mincy and Sorensen, 1998; Mincy and Pouncy, 1999; Patterson, 1998; Pirog-Good, 1995; Rich, 1998, Sorensen and Lerman, 1997; Wheaton and Sorenson, 1998). Many of these fathers, like the mothers of children who are long-term welfare recipients, had their first children before marrying, completing school, or obtaining much work experience. Too many of these fathers face an additional barrier because they acquire a criminal record before or after having children.

In this paper we argue that the process of creating a safety net for custodial mothers who are long-term welfare recipients generates large debts for low-income fathers. These debts thwart fathers' efforts to acquire the skills they need to get good jobs and enter the mainstream, which, in turn, diminish their prospects of helping their children and their children's mothers escape poverty. Because black children on welfare are more likely to be born to two disadvantaged parents, PRWORA is likely to have a disproportionate negative impact on the well-being of black children.

Section 1 briefly reviews qualitative and quantitative data on the early marginalization of young, low-income black and Hispanic youth. Section 2 briefly summarizes Survey of Income Program Participation data and notes similarities and differences among black, white, and Latino/a noncustodial fathers and custodial mothers. Section 3 uses simulations developed by

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[1] Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105 (1996).

Wendell Primus and one developed by Elaine Sorensen to assess how welfare reform and child support enforcement reform have affected low-income, never-married parents and their children. Section 4 presents new policy ideas for increasing the well-being of children when both parents are disadvantaged. The last section summarizes the arguments and explains why these policy proposals are likely to respond more effectively to the needs of young, minority, fragile families.

1. Young Low-Income Black Males: Dimensions of Marginalization

In the spring of 1998, researchers for the Denver Workforce Initiative[2] interviewed 45 low-income African American and Latino males aged 15 to 35 to gain some idea of how they viewed the city's labor market.[3] Although the sample was small, researchers believed it was representative of the city's 9,000 other black, Latino, Asian, and Native American men in this age group. The young, low-income men were interviewed in the places they lived, worked, went for help, or looked for jobs. Some were interviewed at a United Parcel Service (UPS) work site. Others were interviewed at a youth substance abuse and domestic violence treatment center, a young fathers support group, a public housing site, and a community-based organization.

The sample's median age was 18. Not surprisingly, given their age, only 37 percent had finished high school, finished a GED program, or begun a postsecondary education. Fifty percent said they were in a GED education program, and 8 percent had dropped out of high school. Most were unemployed (58 percent); when the UPS site is removed, unemployment increases to 67 percent. Surprisingly, given their age, 61 percent had a criminal record. Even subtracting the

young men at the youth detention site, a majority still had a criminal record. One-third had a felony conviction. Even more surprisingly, 78 percent of the young men were not married, but 56 percent had children. If the young fathers' support group is dropped from the sample, the percent having children remains high at 40 percent.

National comparative studies of American youth usually confirm the impressions captured at the Denver site. Young, low-income African American and Latino males are less likely to have an education past high school than their white peers. Over 30 percent of black teenage males are unemployed, compared with 14 percent of their white peers (Economic Report of the President, 1999). In 1994, one-third of African American men between the ages of 20 and 29 were in the criminal justice system. In urban areas, these percentages are often higher. In Baltimore, in 1991, for example, 56 percent of black men between the ages of 18 and 35 were in prison, on parole, awaiting disposition on criminal charges, or being sought on an arrest warrant (Brenner, 1998).[4] Finally, when young black males become fathers they are more likely to have a child outside of marriage—almost 70 percent of black children are born outside of marriage.

Most noncollege American youth end their adolescence with an ineffective, even chaotic entry into the labor force. As a nation, we virtually ensure such chaos by putting up significant barriers between high schools and employers. But, as the Denver focus data illustrate, the ending of adolescence for black males is catastrophic, going beyond employment instability to include crime and early unwed fatherhood.

1.1 Young Black Males and the Consequences of Early Involvement with the Child Support Enforcement System

Most young noncustodial fathers do not pay child support, primarily because their incomes are too low, at least among black and Hispanic fathers. As table 1 shows, young black men are overrepresented among the nation's 4 million young nonresident fathers. A third of young noncustodial fathers are black, half are white, 14

[2] Preliminary findings from the Work of the Men of Color Committee of the Denver Workforce Initiative. Ken Grimes, John Callahan and others.

[3] The study excludes Asian men and undersamples Native American men and Latinos. Forty-eight percent of the men are black, and 51 percent are Latino. If the sample were a true mirror of Denver's black and Latino population, 30 percent would be black, and 70 percent would be Latino. The study oversamples younger men, so the median age is 18 years old. The sample size is too small to provide statistically significant information. The data are for illustrative purposes only.

[4] Report draft notes. Eric Brenner. Fathers in Prison, Feb. 8, 1998, for the National Center on Families and Families.

percent are Hispanic, and the rest are of other races (3 percent).

Black fathers are least likely to pay child support (15 percent), followed by Hispanic fathers (30 percent) and white fathers (44 percent). The largest category of black fathers are those who do not pay child support and have low incomes (44 percent). Among Hispanic fathers, 35 percent have low incomes and do not pay child support. White fathers have the smallest fraction of low-income nonpayers (26 percent).

Patterns of race and receipt of child support by custodial mothers are similar to patterns of race and payment of child support by noncustodial fathers. Blacks are overrepresented among the ranks of young custodial mothers. Most young custodial mothers do not receive child support (59 percent). Only about one-quarter of black and Hispanic custodial mothers receive support, but the majority of white custodial mothers receive child support. Mothers who do not receive child support also tend to be poor, especially if they are black or Hispanic.

1.2 Low-Income, Nonpaying, Noncustodial Fathers: Just as Needy as Poor Moms

Welfare reform seeks to make low-income, nonpaying fathers honor their child support obligations as it seeks to make the mother and her household self-sufficient. Unfortunately, a low-income, nonpaying father often needs as much help in making his child support payment as the poor mother needs to become self-sufficient. Most low-income, nonpaying fathers have little education past high school (see table 3).[5] White nonpayers are more likely to have a high school diploma, and, perhaps as a result, a sizable minority of are likely to work full time. Notwithstanding those who are fully employed, over half of the nonpayers work intermittently (48.5 percent) or are out of the labor force (1.6 percent), as are their black and Hispanic counterparts. There are, however, noticeable racial and ethnic differences among young custodial mothers. While approximately 50 percent of young white and black mothers work intermittently or are looking for work, 65 percent of young Hispanic

mothers are out of the labor force. Presumably, child care responsibilities are an important reason for labor force nonparticipation among mothers.

These data suggest that poor black parents who are not involved in the child support system differ from their white and Hispanic peers by degree of impairment, not kind of impairment. As groups, they all share low levels of educational attainment and are all severely underemployed or unemployed. These are universal problems among poor nonpayers and nonreceivers, and like the latter the former may need assistance before they can provide for their children.

1.3. The Critical Difference: Marital Status and Household Arrangements

Marital status and living arrangements are the primary dimensions by which young, poor families differ by race and ethnicity. According to table 4, black low-income parents who are not involved in the child support system are much less likely to have been married than their white and Hispanic peers.[6] Moreover, most young, low-income black nonpayers have not established their own independent households. Less than one-quarter of these fathers live with some of their children, whether or not there is a spouse present. Forty-five percent live with a relative. The rest live by themselves (8 percent) or with a nonrelative. Many of these men are cohabiting. By contrast, most white and Hispanic low-income nonpayers have set up independent households with a spouse and/or some of their children. These differences in family formation make it less likely that black children will benefit from the father's work effort and discourage fathers from working and paying child support.

Fragile Families

The conventional wisdom about these low rates of marriage among poor young black mothers and fathers may have been best expressed by

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[5] Fifty-three percent of young, black nonpayers and 80 percent of poor nonpaying Hispanic dads had not finished high school. For an 18 to 34 age group, it would be useful to know whether these fathers eventually got their GED.

[6] We do not look to see whether currently married fathers were also previously married, or fathered children and were never married to the mothers of their previous children. Normally, this is important to know because it can help account for discrepancies in the aggregate marital status of custodial and noncustodial households

W.J. Wilson in his discussion of the ethnographic work of Mark Testa.[7]

The ethnographic data reveal that both inner-city black males and females believe that since most marriages will eventually break up and since marriages no longer represent meaningful relationships, it is better to avoid the entanglements of wedlock altogether. For many single mothers in the inner city, nonmarriage makes more sense as a family formation strategy than does marriage. Single mothers who perceive the fathers of their children as unreliable or as having limited financial means will often—rationally—choose single parenthood. From the point of view of day-to-day survival, single parenthood reduces the emotional burden and shields them from the type of exploitation that often accompanies the sharing of both living arrangements and limited resources. Men and women are extremely suspicious of each other, and their concerns range from the degree of financial commitment to fidelity. For all those reasons, they often state they do not want to get married until they are sure it is going to work out.[8]

An alternative interpretation of these data is that mothers and fathers see many barriers to marriage, but most mothers and fathers begin with the hope that they might marry and raise a family together. Mincy (1994) defines a unit composed of a low-income, unwed mother, father, and their child as a fragile family. Although parents in a fragile family do not legitimate an unwed birth by marriage or establish paternity, they do not count on single parenthood. Instead, they are involved in a process of family formation, the end result of which can be marriage. This view draws upon ethnographic research by Achatz and MacAllum (1994), who found that when young inner-city men and women have sex and a pregnancy results prior to a committed relationship, their decision making is reactive—"what can we do now?"

Support for this interpretation comes from preliminary analysis of data from a special survey of young, poor pregnant couples. McLanahan finds that most of these couples are involved in committed relationships and many contemplate

marriage (Waller, 1998). Finally, Achatz and MacAllum found that without support and positive interventions encouraging dual-parent involvement and paternity establishment, such couples are likely to move apart and eventually rationalize their separation in the manner often captured by standard ethnographies. This suggests that welfare reform may be impeding the process of family formation by treating fragile families as if they were divorcing families (Mincy and Pouncy, 1999).

3. Welfare Reform's Impact

The traditional goal of social welfare policy since the mid-1970s has been to mitigate the effects of marital dissolution on families with children. The primary strategy has been to configure taxes and transfers, including child support, in ways that raise the incomes of these mother-headed families above the poverty line while reducing postdivorce and postseparation gender inequities.

Unfortunately, this focus on the plight of divorced and separated mothers and their child(ren) ignores the plight of the many low-income mothers and fathers who may be in the process of family formation when they have their children and who are poor even before they have children. In addition, the children of fragile families face even greater prospects of long term poverty and welfare dependency because their parents tend to be younger and have less education and work experience than the divorced and separated mothers for whom welfare policy is primarily intended.

3.1. Welfare Reform's Impact on Child Well-being and Gender Equity

To examine PRWORA's intended and untended effects on low-income children, Wendall Primus (1998) of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities conducted a simulation of California's tax and transfer system. The simulation shows how much income a married couple with two children in California would retain after taxes and transfers and compares such a family with an equivalent unmarried couple that was divorced, separated, or never-married with two children and a joint earnings equal to the married couple's earnings.

Depending on the earned income of the married and single-mother family, both qualify for

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[7] Wilson, William J., 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Knopf.

[8] Ibid., pp., 104–05.

the Earned Income Tax Credit, welfare in the form of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care credits, head of household deductions, and food stamps. The single-mother family also receives child support payments according to the California child support guidelines. (The $50 child support disregard is ignored in these simulations). The noncustodial father pays child support for the two children, but does not take the Earned Income Tax Credit or food stamps, and does not qualify for tax relief provided to resident parents.

For families earning between $10,000 and $40,000, line A of chart 1 illustrates the household income of the married couple, after taxes and transfers and expressed as a percentage of poverty, assuming the father is the sole earner and the couple has two children. The children in this family never fall below the poverty line even if the father earns as little as $10,000. Lines B and C illustrate what happens to the custodial mother and children (B) and the noncustodial father (C) if the couple divorces, separates, or never marries. According to line B, the combination of child support payments, TANF, and head of household deductions is not sufficient to lift the custodial mother and children above the poverty line, no matter what the noncustodial father earns and contributes through child support.

Moreover, the distance between lines B and C illustrates the gender inequity that is created by a divorce or a separation. This inequity is an increasing function of earnings. For example, it seems patently unfair that a noncustodial parent who earns $35,000 per year should have an income that is 150 percent of the poverty level for a single-person household, while the income of his ex-wife and children is just 80 percent of the poverty level for a family of three. This is the illustration of U.S. social welfare's main policy goals—reducing child poverty and limiting the inequity between postdivorced couples.

However, efforts to reduce child poverty and gender inequity impose substantial child support burdens on low-income noncustodial fathers. As shown in chart 1, a low-income Californian father earning $12,000, for example, pays about one-fourth of his income ($3,216) in child support and is left at the same poverty level as his children and their mother. Fathers who pay child support according to the California guide-lines and have lower earnings than $12,000 are left in greater poverty than their children. For these fathers, mothers, and children—most of whose families are less likely to have been married—in California's tax and transfer system, the gender equity question is moot.

Chart 2 illustrates child poverty and gender equity outcomes when mothers work and their earnings account for 25 percent of family income. Although children in married-couple families never fall below the poverty line, the first observation is that the situation of married-couple families with combined earnings of $20,000 or more is worsened when the wife works. This can be seen by comparing chart 1's line A to chart 2's line A. For example, let us imagine two families—the Williams and the Johnsons. In chart 1, Mr. Williams earns $15,000; Mr. Johnson earns $20,000; and neither Mrs. Williams nor Mrs. Johnson works. In this situation, after taxes and transfers the Johnson family income is 120 percent of the poverty line, and the Williams' family income is 129 percent of the poverty line.

Now let us suppose that both Mr. Williams and Mr. Johnson experience a reduction in work hours, which reduces their earnings by 25 percent. To offset this reduction, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Johnson both begin to work part time. After taxes and transfers, the Williams' family income remains at 120 percent of the poverty line, whereas the Johnson family income falls to 114 percent of the poverty threshold. This occurs because at $20,000, the benefits that the Johnsons receive from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and state tax exemptions are too small to offset the increased taxes that Mrs. Johnson pays on her earnings. Policy makers have complained for a long time about the marriage penalty, which this illustrates, although such discussions usually focus on the increased tax burden and do not include benefits such as the EITC.

The second observation is that for most couples, both the increase in child poverty and the gender inequity that follows a divorce, separation, or nonmarriage are muted when the mother works. In chart 1, line B, children living with a single mother who does not work are poor no matter how much their father earns and contributes in standard child support payments. In chart 2, line B, children living with a single

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mother who earns $4,250 or more are no longer poor once they receive child support from a father earning $12,750 or more—where the combined parental incomes total $17,000 or more.

By emphasizing work and payment of child support in PRORWA and boosting the Earned Income Tax Credit, the architects of the most recent welfare reform may have succeeded in reducing child poverty, at least for children with at least one parent earning substantially more than the minimum wage.[9] However, when these same policies are applied to very low-income parents, they reverse the traditional pattern of gender inequities, leaving men destitute and mothers and children better off without them.[10] These low-income parents are likely to have been unmarried and poor even before they had children.

For the final simulation, it will be helpful if we focus on the consequences of welfare reform for the low-earning, unmarried parents captured in a discussion of child support enforcement by Jeff Johnson (Johnson, J.M., 1998). Johnson asks what happens to "Andre," a 21-year-old high school dropout who, much like the youth in Denver, holds no steady job and was once arrested for selling marijuana as he and "Benita,"

the never-married mother of his two children, struggle to support themselves.

• This fictitious couple lives in California, and because of PRWORA's work requirements, Benita works full time all year at a minimum-wage job. She earns $7,500 per year and hopes to earn more after she gains some work experience. Though she has a hard time managing work and time with her children, she is feeling better about herself now that she is off welfare. Including child support payments, which Andre is now required to pay, earned income tax credits, and other transfers, Benita and the children now have income equivalent to 120 percent of the poverty line for a family of three.

• Andre works 28 hours a week for 52 weeks, earning $7,500 per year at $5.15 an hour in part-time jobs. After he pays child support, his income is 45 percent of the poverty line.

• Benita's mother has been a big help and will continue to help as long as Benita keeps her promise to stay away from that "good-for-nothing Andre," who has been trying to see her and the children since he was released from jail, where he had been spending time for selling marijuana (Johnson). Benita keeps her promise to her mother, but she feels guilty. She has never told her mother that, just before Andre was arrested, they were both smoking and selling marijuana in order to save money to get an apartment together and, possibly, marry. Had they married, their combined earnings of $15,000 would have left them with a combined income, after taxes and transfers, of 120 percent of the poverty line for their family of four (chart 3). The 3-year separation, the wishes of Benita's mother, Andre's unstable work history, his criminal record, and other problems have all ended their joint apartment and marriage plans. Still, it does not seem fair to him that she should keep him away from his children now. Neither believes it fair that their earnings are equal, but she and the children are doing much better than he is.

As chart 3 also illustrates, when mothers and fathers make equal contributions to earnings, California's tax and transfer system gives single

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[9] Assume, for example that Mr. Johnson earns $9.21 per hour and works a 30-hour week for 52 weeks during the year and Mrs. Johnson earns $5.15 per hour and works 3 days per week, 7 hours a day, for 52 weeks during the year. Their combined earnings will be $20,000, nearly 25 percent of which will come from Mrs. Johnson's earnings. Notice, however, that if Mrs. Johnson divorces Mr. Johnson and continues working, the gender inequity (the gap between line B and C) that follows is substantially reduced (at least for parents with combined earnings near the median family income). Thus, a married couple with combined earnings of $30,000 has an income that is 140 percent of the poverty level after taxes and transfers. If the couple divorces, the income of the custodial mother and children falls to 121 percent of the poverty line for a family of three, while the income of the custodial father falls to 123 percent of the poverty line for a single-person household. At $35,000 the income of the noncustodial father and the custodial mother and children are still comparable. Below $30,000, however, income of a custodial mother and children as a percentage of poverty is actually higher than the income of a noncustodial father. This "reverse" equity difference becomes quite significant for parents with combined earnings of $15,000 or less.

[10] After paying taxes and child support, noncustodial fathers are left with incomes at just 61 percent of the poverty line for a single-person household, while the income of the custodial mother and children is 120 percent of the poverty line for a three-person household.

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mothers and children incomes that, as a percentage of their poverty line, exceeds or equals the incomes of married couples with children. Moreover, these incomes are always above the poverty line. However, the incomes of fathers remain below the poverty line unless the combined parental earnings exceed $35,000.

3.2 A Debt Engine—Impact on Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers Who Pay Child Support

Social welfare policy not only increases poverty among low-income, noncustodial fathers, it increases the debt these fathers carry. Such debt was found among participants in the Parent's Fair Share Demonstration (PFS) operated by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). PFS was designed to provide mediation, employment training, peer counseling, and enhanced child support services to low-income, noncustodial fathers who were unable to pay child support. Many low-income fathers who participated in PFS were unemployed when they enrolled in PFS, and those who had worked in the previous 9 months earned, on average, $2,800 (Doolittle et al., 1998). In the five PFS sites that provided data on arrears, almost all the fathers were in debt because of their child support obligations. Almost one-half had arrears of over $2,000, or a debt near their 9-month earnings (see table 5).

Debt among these noncustodial fathers increases for several reasons.

- *Back child support debt:* Even when a never-married, noncustodial father is willing to begin paying child support immediately after the birth of his child, the child support agency often lags behind in processing his case. These lags may be as short as a few days or as long as a year or more. When the order is determined in many states, it will be set back to the date of the child's birth. A back child support order may also include a separate charge for the medical bills related to the birth of the child. These orders do not necessarily take into account informal payments made by the child's father or that he may be living with the child.
- *Size of an initial child support order:* In many cases the child support order is high, given the father's income. Often the child support agency sets the order based on a fa-

ther's earnings potential under the assumption that he works full time and full year at the prevailing minimum wage although his actual earnings fall far below potential earnings because his employment is unstable.
- *Inflexible implementation:* As fathers experience unemployment spells, due to job instability, illness, disability, or incarceration, the child support agency does not adjust the amount of the father's child support order unless the father requests a downward modification. Few fathers know that they have the right to this, and those who do know do not have access to the legal services that could assist them. In one dramatic example, an agency assessed an incarcerated father an order based on a minimum-wage job, although he was required by law to have no earnings while in jail. When he was released from prison, he faced a $5,000 child support debt.

In a simulation of what typically happens to a poor, never-married father who begins to pay child support for a child whose mother is on welfare, Sorensen identifies several sources of debt and details their impacts (table 6). In this example, the noncustodial father lives in Wisconsin and earns $8,360, which is 103 percent of poverty for a one-person household. He does not establish paternity and receive a child support order until 1 year after the child's birth. He is assigned a "minimum-wage" order, which assumes he earns the minimum wage at a full-time, year-round job even though he does not. He is charged $4,680 in back support—$1,680 for a year's worth of back support since he did not establish an order at the time of the birth and $3,000 to reimburse the government for the medical expanses of the birth, which were paid by Medicaid.

In this example—again, a fairly typical scenario—he complicates the picture by having a second child with a second mother. This second mom is not on cash assistance but she had her child on Medicaid. Thus the father's debt grows to almost $9,000 and his retained earnings are only 44 percent of the poverty level.

As welfare reform takes hold we can expect the number of fathers in arrears to grow. In 1996, for example, over a third of the nation's fathers who had children on welfare and paid

child support were in arrears (see table 7). Unfortunately, most experts expect custodial mothers who are long-term welfare recipients to experience interruptions in their employment after they exit welfare for work. While fathers should, of course, be held responsible for their children, the child support debts they accumulate often prevent them from making the investments in training and education that would, in the long run, improve their capacity to find stable, well-paying work. Without this, we can expect increases in the number of poor children who rely on two unstable sources of parental income.

3.3 Impact on Fragile Families

In a third area, too, welfare reform has adverse effects. It does help fragile families—low-income, never-married mothers and fathers who may still be involved in a family formation process. Welfare reform's impact on mothers and fathers in such situations has received little attention.

Given the low rate at which young, never-married, low-income black fathers set up independent households, what happens when such fathers seek to do more than pay child support? What happens when a noncustodial father who lives with relatives and a low-income custodial mother who has her own household seek to pool their incomes and resources as a further step in their family formation effort? How would the tax and transfer system treat them?

Given welfare's traditional goal of providing for families in dissolution, its terms and benchmarks are poor guides for assessing impacts on fragile families. We recharacterize the term "child well-being" as the gap between a fragile family's combined income and the poverty line. We redefine the term "equity" as the gap between a married couple's retained earnings and a fragile family's retained earnings.[11]

Primus's California study provides useful data for this analysis. It includes an estimate of how the state's tax and transfer system would treat a never-married couple that combined their incomes but maintained separate households. For low-income families, California provides a marriage bonus. A married family with $10,000 in earnings will receive over $19,000 in income (including cash and food stamps) after taxes and transfers. A fragile family with $10,000 in earnings will retain between $14,588 and $16,300 in income (including food stamps), depending on how much the mother contributes to their joint income. The low-income married couple gains a bonus of between $2,823 to $4,534 over the fragile family. At higher incomes, the state's tax policies penalize marriage. If both parents earn $10,000, the married couple retains only $19,172, while the unmarried couple retains $21,627 in net earnings. However, a standardized comparison that takes into account the two-household poverty threshold of a fragile family, expressed as a percentage of poverty, shows that in all cases the equity gap favors the married couple. The gap grows as large as 50 percentage points, with an average gap of 30 points (charts 3 through 5).

Although the well-being of children of a nonworking, never-married mother improves when the mother and noncustodial father combine earnings, the children's financial well-being improves even more significantly if she and the father marry. As a custodial parent earns more, she decreases the well-being of her children if she combines income with the noncustodial father. A custodial parent, for example, who earns $10,000 and receives child support from a noncustodial parent who also earns $10,000, will provide her children with household net earnings that are 130 percent of poverty. If that custodial parent were to combine income with the noncustodial parent, their joint retained earnings leave the children in a household with net earnings that are 105 percent of poverty, reducing the well-being of their children by 25 percentage points.

4. What's Next?—A Policy for Fragile Families

Answers to the question of how better to provide for children whose parents are poor and have never married sometimes confuse ideology with evidence. Conservative policy makers, for example, are likely to conclude that encouraging marriage is the best "fragile family" policy available. States like California now transfer enough

[11] The poverty threshold for a married couple with two children is $16,766 in 1998. The poverty threshold for a fragile family is the combined poverty threshold of a custodial mother with two children ($13,086) and a noncustodial father ($8,359), or $21,445. This means in some cases that a fragile family retains more earnings than a married family, but the fragile family's earnings will fall below the poverty line and the married family's earnings will lay above the poverty line (Primus, 1998).

benefits and advantages to married couples that parents who earn at least $10,000 will always maintain a household above the poverty line. There is also evidence that marriage delivers stronger parental resources—e.g., supervision, aspirations, and involvement (McLanahan and Sandefur). From a conservative perspective, closing an equity gap between fragile and married families is actually a destructive policy because it undermines the marital choice.

This view ignores evidence that most young, poor, never-married fathers and mothers already aspire to marriage (McLanahan et al., 1998). Some already try to marry (Achatz and MacAllum), but require stronger pathways to marriage that can overcome peer norms, low earnings, poor skills, a criminal record, the risks of domestic violence, and other barriers. It might help if youth knew more about the financial advantages of marriage, but who told them, how they told them, when they told them, and what help they offered as they told them might matter more. When this policy is reduced to a "marry or else" policy, it becomes a smokescreen for doing nothing for children in poor, never-married, single-parent households.

Some elements of a more centrist or liberal view on providing for children of poor, never-married parents (Bane and Ellwood) are already captured in PRWORA. These more liberal elements are encouraging the never-married mother to become self-sufficient, the father to pay child support, and both parents to become more responsible in the future; these are already core welfare reform goals. So far, the evidence suggests that in the ideal situation where the mother works and the father pays child support, the results are impressive. A custodial mother earning $7,500 who also receives child support from a noncustodial father earning $7,500 will retain more earnings than an equivalent married couple earning $15,000. From this perspective, the most practical policy for "fragile families" is to encourage a mother's work effort and a father's child support effort.

The problem is that the policy does little to secure the parenting resources that married parents, or even unmarried co-parents, can provide for their children. It also has devastating consequences for low-income, noncustodial, never-married fathers. When such fathers earn less than $15,000 and comply with the child support enforcement authorities, their net earnings are 80 percent or less of the poverty threshold. If they fail to comply, their arrears become a permanent barrier to self-sufficiency. If conservatives fear that marriage is undermined when never-married couples can increase their combined income without marrying, then welfare reform's current goal of making single-parent households self-sufficient undermines marriage even more.

The fragile family policy initiative is an attempt to carve out a new middle ground between marriage-only policies and the centrist/liberal version of welfare reform. It creates a pathway for low-income, never-married parents to secure more stable arrangements that can end in marriage, unmarried team parenting or, at a minimum, conventional separate households with provisions that eliminate barriers to the father's self-sufficiency. Such "new middle" policies combine efforts that: (1) alleviate child support-related debt for low-income, noncustodial fathers, (2) increase and support the work effort of fathers; (3) increase the joint equity of never-married parents; and (4) increase the well-being of children in poor, never-married households. Unfortunately, most efforts achieve only one or two of these goals at the expense of other goals.

The Clinton administration's effort to increase the well-being of children by increasing the number of fathers who pay child support, for example, carries the cost of increased debt for low-income fathers as discussed in section 3. The efforts by some states that allow fathers of children on welfare to pass all or part of their support payments directly to their children and reduce a father's animosity toward the welfare system have little direct impact on his debt relief. Similarly, proposals that cap a low-income father's child support payments help fathers avoid the debt burdens outlined in section 3 during a spell of unemployment, but this measure can harm children when it lowers the child support contributions paid directly to them.

Efforts that reconfigure taxes and transfer benefits show the most promise at achieving all four policy goals simultaneously. One such effort extended Earned Income Tax credits to noncustodial fathers. This helped fathers avoid debt risks even as they paid more child support on a more regular basis (Wheaton and Sorensen).

Building on such a proposal, Primus addressed all four goals with a Child Support Incentive Plan (CSIP) (Primus, 1998). This plan matches a custodial mother's unused tax credits and child tax credits[12] against the father's child support payments.[13] These credits then subsidize the father's child support. A father who pays all of his order secures the mother's unused credits. In addition, the father's child support payments go directly to the family. The tax system does not count such income and the father's child support payments are capped. Typically, an order should not exceed 5 percent of the fathers first $5,000 in net income, 25 percent of the next $5,000, and 35 percent of the remainder.

When the proposal is fully implemented, it eliminates the net income gap between married couples and fragile couples that are willing to pool their incomes. (See charts 7 through 9). Not shown in charts 7 through 9 are the impact of the proposal on custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers. The proposal brings nonworking custodial households above the poverty line and moderates the position of noncustodial fathers. They gain, on average, 20 percentage points in increased net earnings, but those who earn $10,000 or less will remain below the poverty line.

At the same time, this encourages fathers to collaborate with custodial mothers. Primus has provided a financing scheme for achieving the four goals, but what is the mechanism for achieving fragile family collaborations? We assume that, given the opportunity to work and increase his children's benefits, a noncustodial father will want to work. However, reports from the Parents Fair Share Demonstration and field reports from earlier demonstrations (Johnson and Pouncy) suggest that the quality of the bond between the young father and mother may be a stronger governing incentive than even the robust financial incentives Primus's CSIP offers. In addition, other serious barriers to self-

sufficiency for both mothers and fathers (Danziger et al.) have to be addressed.

The national program Partners for Fragile Family Demonstration addresses just such family-building issues by helping young, never-married parents find pathways to more stable arrangements. It is the kind of program that could help young, never-married parents exploit the opportunities of a Child Support Incentive Plan.

5. Summary

Between the conservative view that marriage is the answer for the poor dependent children of never-married parents and the established policy that increases the well-being of such children within single-parent households lie new policy options that support both these goals. Efforts to increase the earnings of poor, never-married, noncustodial fathers can be designed in ways that also increase child well-being, build fragile families, and decrease the risks of child-support related debt.

Currently, poor, young black men are overrepresented among the ranks of noncustodial fathers who do not pay child support. These fathers and poor, nonpaying white and Hispanic fathers like them usually have few skills and tend not to be employed full time. In many respects they share the attributes of the poor mothers who do not receive child support payments.

As state governments comply with PRWORA requirements to find these fathers and enforce their child support obligations, they are likely to create large, permanent debts for these men and erect permanent barriers that prevent their integration into mainstream society. This also threatens the well-being of their children.

There is some evidence that most never-married parents are caught in an arrested family formation process. Established welfare policy offers little support for building such families, and in this case policy begets what it beholds. The child support enforcement system, the welfare system, and other social welfare agencies operate together in ways that reinforce existing barriers to this alternative family formation process.

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[12] These include her Earned Income Tax Credits, personal exemptions, a $500 child tax credit and state tax credit.

[13] Primus and Rosenbaum estimate that a custodial mother with no income will accumulate up to $6,909 in child tax credits and Earned Income Tax Credits that she will not use. These unused federal tax benefits decline as a mother's earning level increases, so that when her income reaches $22,000, she typically does use all the credits to which she is entitled.

We have explored some ideas for resolving these logjams to an alternative family formation process. Those that deliver incentives for low-income, never-married, noncustodial fathers to increase their earnings and attach themselves more strongly to their children seem to be the most promising.

Tables and Figures

Table 1
Noncustodial Dads (18–34) and Their Child Support Payment Status
(low income = food stamps)

	All dads	White dads	Black dads	Hispanic dads
Total	4,325,982	2,247,598	1,492,192	616,192
Percent of all dads (of row 1)	–	50%	33%	14%
All payers (% of columns 2–5))	1,299,037	989,396	225,842	182,274
	(32%)	(44%)	(15%)	(30%)
Low-income payers	423,669	194,204	137,955	86,437
	(10%)	(8.64%)	(9.25%)	(14.03%)
Able payers	1,000,915	795,192	87,887	95,836
	(22%)	(35.38%)	(5.89%)	(15.55%)
All non-payers	3,039,459	1,258,202	1,266,351	433,918
	(68%)	(56%)	(85%)	(70%)
Low-income non-payers	1,535,424	573,653	658,802	216,378
	(34%)	(25.52%)	(44.15%)	(35.12%)
Able non-payers	1,504,035	684,549	607,549	217,540
	(34%)	(30.46%)	(40.72%)	(35.30%)
Total low-income non-payers	**1,504,035**	**573,653**	**658,802**	**216,378**

SOURCE: 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Table 2
Custodial Moms (16–32) and Their Child Support Payment Status

	All moms	White moms	Black moms	Hispanic moms
Total	5,069,818	2,798.044	1,590,284	548,522
Percent by racial groups (of row 1)	–	56.6%	32.2%	11.6%
All receivers (% of racial groups)	2,083,880	1,442,254	442,022	150,952
	(41.1%)	(51.55%)	(27.80%)	(27.52%)
Poor receivers	602,690	308,816	230,686	52,959
	(11.9%)	(11.04%)	(14.51%)	(9.65%)
Non-poor receivers	1,481,190	1,133,437	211,336	97,993
	(28.8%)	(40.51%)	(13.29%)	(17.86%)
All non-receivers	2,985,938	1,355,791	1,148,263	397,570
	(58.9%)	(48.45%)	72.20%)	(72.48%)
Poor non-receivers	1,400,179	498,041	652,533	200,237
	(27.6%)	(17.80%)	(41.03%)	(36.50%)
Non-poor non-receivers	1,585,758	857,749	495,730	197,333
	(31.3%)	(30.66%)	(31.17%)	(35.98%)
Total poor non-receivers	**1,400,179**	**498,041**	**652,533**	**200,237**

SOURCE: 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).
According to Mincy and Sorensen (1998) "low income" means low enough to qualify for food stamps for a single person household.

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Table 3
Education and Employment of Low-Income Noncustodial Dads (18–34) Who Do Not Pay Child Support, and of Poor Custodial Moms (16–32) Who Do Not Receive Child Support

	White dads	Black dads	Hispanic dads	White moms	Black moms	Hispanic moms
Education						
<12	34.0	53.4	79.1	35.8	52.6	61.3
12	43.5	41.2	14.8	44.9	38.7	27.1
>12	22.6	5.4	6.0	19.4	8.7	11.6
Employment						
Worked intermittently	48.5	56.9	65.3	21.7	14.2	20.8
Looked for work	19.2	34.7	7.6	22.8	37.1	12.6
Worked full time full year	30.8	1.2	17.5	9.2	4.4	1.3
Not in labor force	1.6	7.2	9.7	46.3	44.3	65.2

SOURCE: 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Table 4
Living Arrangements of Low-Income Non-Custodial Dads (18–34) Who Do Not Pay Child Support, and of Poor Custodial Moms (16–32) Who Do Not Receive Child Support

	White dads	Black dads	Hispanic dads	White moms	Black moms	Hispanic moms
Marital status						
Currently married	56.8	25.8	61.4	14.7	6.0	9.1
Previously married	24.0	4.8	14.0	51.7	11.4	30.8
Never married	*19.2*	*69.4*	*24.6*	*33.6*	*82.6*	*60.1*
Living arrangements						
Lives with some of their own children and spouse	53.3	22.2	57.9	12.4	3.6	3.7
Lives with some of their own children and no spouse	0.9	2.0	0.0	87.6	96.4	96.3
Lives alone	16.6	7.6	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lives with spouse	1.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lives with other relatives	11.2	45.4	19.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lives with nonrelatives	16.3	21.9	17.8	0.0	0.0	0.0

SOURCE: 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Table 5

Highlights from the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation's Parent's Fair Share Demonstration Report, 1998

	All sites	Dayton	Grand Rapids	Jacksonville	Los Angeles	Memphis	Springfield	Trenton
Characteristics at random assignment								
Employed at random assignment	17.0	10.4	15.9	39.5	12.3	5.1	10.9	17.1
Ever worked	97.3	96.9	99.0	98.9	98.4	90.2	98.1	97.1
Ever employed full time	90.7	89.9	94.7	93.6	93.5	78.4	91.8	89.1
Hourly wage at most recent or current job ($)	6.33	6.14	5.87	5.55	8.14	5.26	6.73	6.87
Earnings during 3 quarters (9 months) before random assignment ($)	2,799	2,212	2,646	3,699	2,633	1,744	3,775	2,468
Arrears (%)								
Percent with arrears information available	60.3	88.1	57.2	68.5	0.0	0.0	97.1	90.4
Arrears less than $2,000	51.4	51.7	48.8	18.7	–	–	79.5	52.0
Arrears $2,000 to $7,999	31.5	30.2	35.1	48.0	–	–	15.3	32.2
Arrears $8,000 or more	17.1	18.1	16.2	33.3	–	–	5.2	15.8

SOURCE: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Table 6
Impact of Child Support and Back Support—Hypothetical Example of Child Support Policy in Wisconsin

	First mom		Dad + first mom		Second mom		Dad + first and second mom	
	Amount	% of pov.	Amount	% of pov.	Amount	% of pov.	Amount	% of pov.
Annual earnings	$0		$8,390	103	$6,032	57	$8,390 *(same)*	103
Payroll taxes	$0		($642)		$461		($642)	
Income taxes	$0		($435)		$0		($435)	
EITC	$0		$85		$2,133		$85	
Earnings after taxes and EITC	$0		$7,398	91	$7,703	73	$7,398 *(same)*	91
W2	$6,032	57	$0		$0		$0	
Current child support (assuming a minimum wage order)	$1,680		($1,680)		$1,394		($3,074)	
Back support (assuming paternity established one year after the birth, back dated order to the birth of the child)	$1,680		($1,680)		$1,394		($3,074)	
Income after W2, current support, taxes and EITC	$7,712	73	$5,718	70	$9,087	87	$4,334	44
Debt	$0		($4,680)		$0		($9,074)	

SOURCE: Sorensen tabulations based on standard Wisconsin tax, welfare and child support enforcement codes.
NOTE: Dollars expressed in 1996 values. In 1996 the poverty thresholds were: one person—$8,163 and 2 people—$10,507. The minimum wage in 1996 was $4.75. A full-time minimum wage job yielded an annual salary of $9,880.

Table 7
Summary of CSE data for Fiscal Year 1996 and Previous 4 Years on AFDC Cases and Arrears Data

Statistical overview for 5 consecutive fiscal years	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Total caseload	15,157,996	17,124,529	18,609,805	19,162,137	19,318,341
AFDC/FC caseload	6,752,458	7,471,702	7,985,983	7,879,725	7,379,958
Non-AFDC caseload	6,440,712	7,486,902	8,189,569	8,783,238	9,347,147
AFDC arrears only caseload	1,964,796	2,165,925	2,434,253	2,499,174	2,591,236
Percentage of AFDC caseload in arrears	29.0	28.9	30.4	31.7	35.1

SOURCE: Office of Child Support Enforcement. Preliminary Data Report, for fiscal year 1996, August 1997.

Chart 1
Income after Taxes and Transfers: A California Comparison of Married and Nonmarried Households
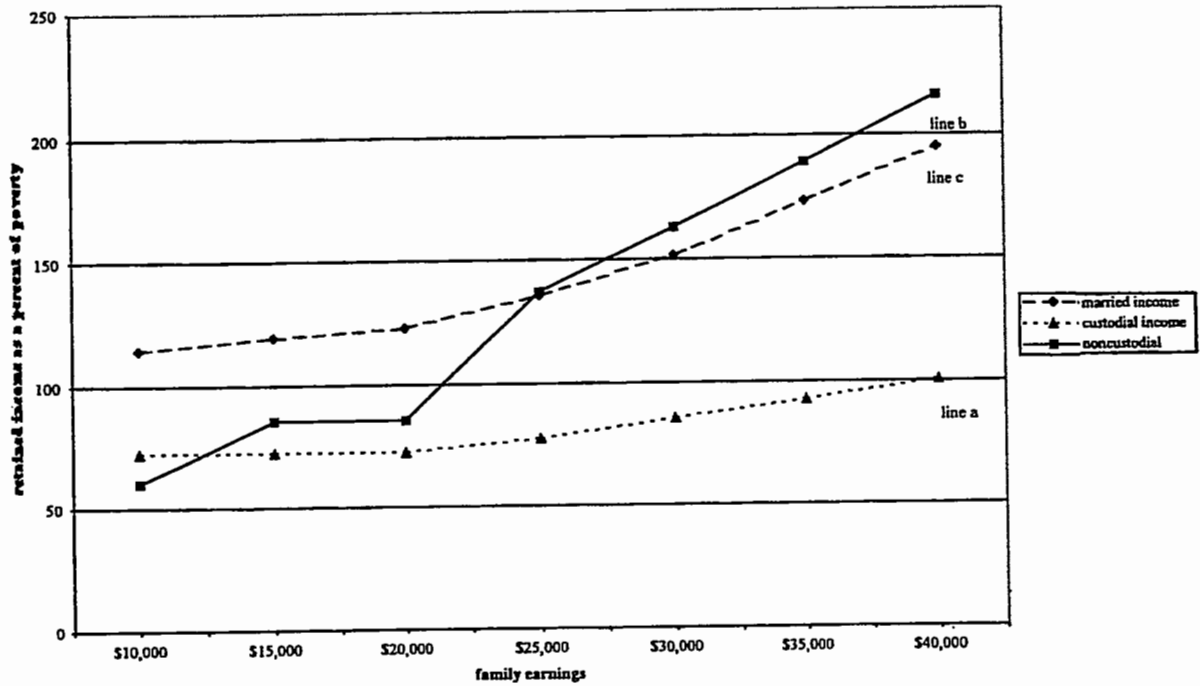
Chart 2
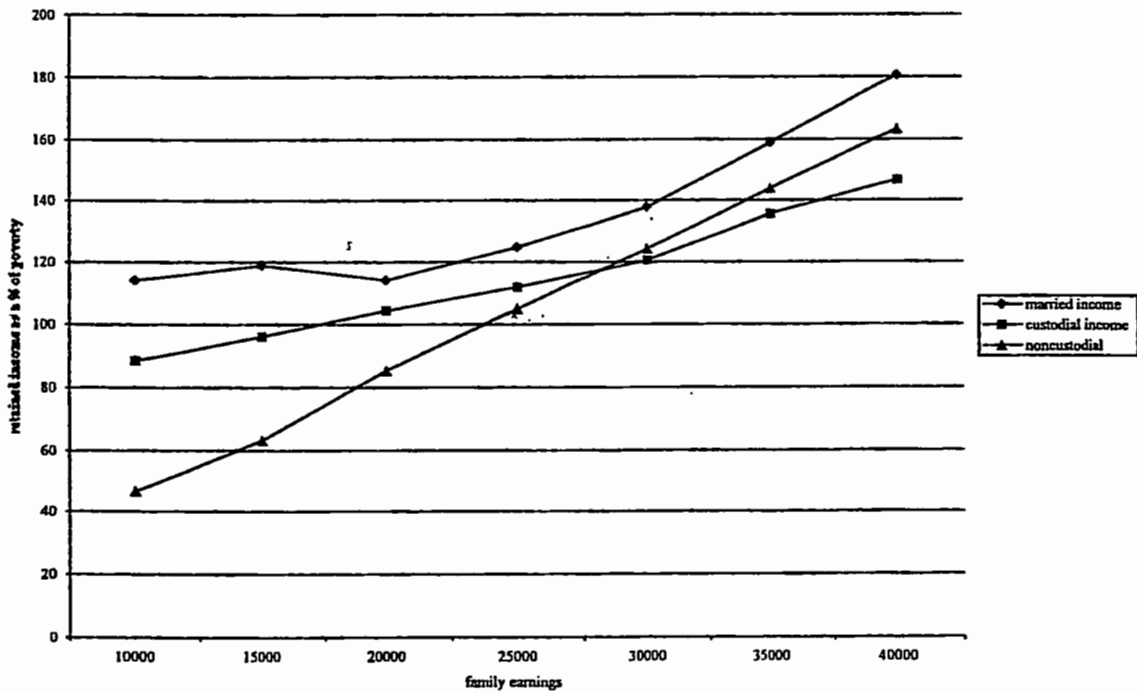**Income after Taxes and Transfers: The Mother Earns 25% of Family Income**

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Chart 3
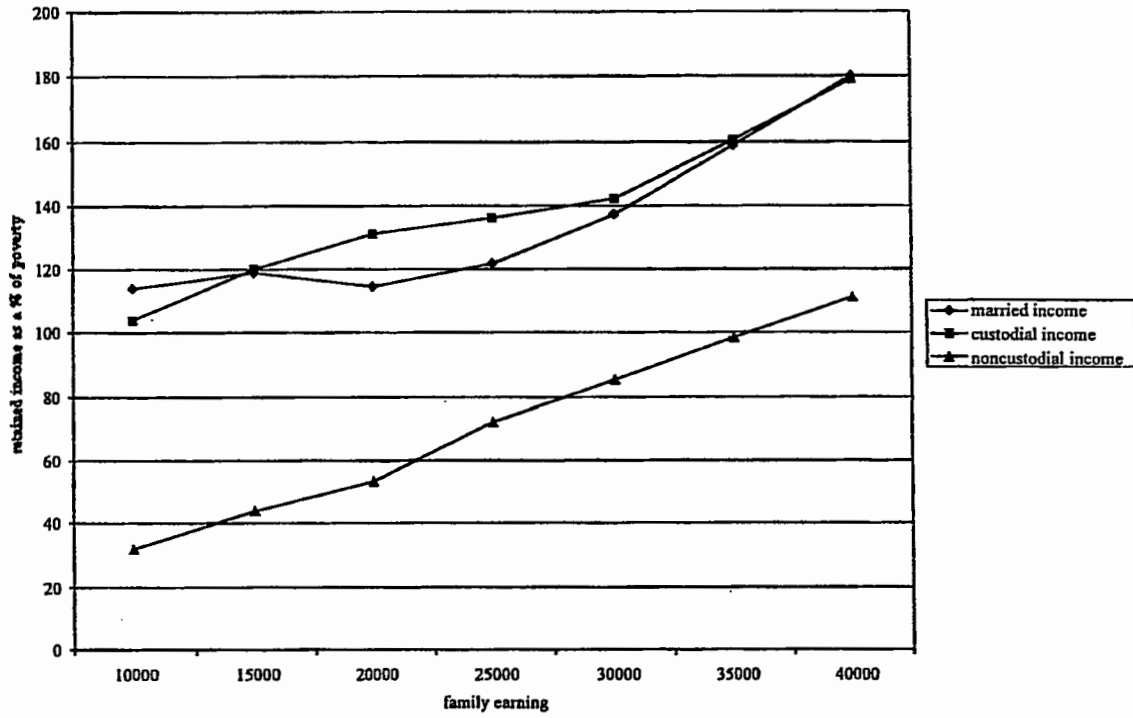### Income after Taxes and Transfers: Parents Have Equal Income

Chart 4
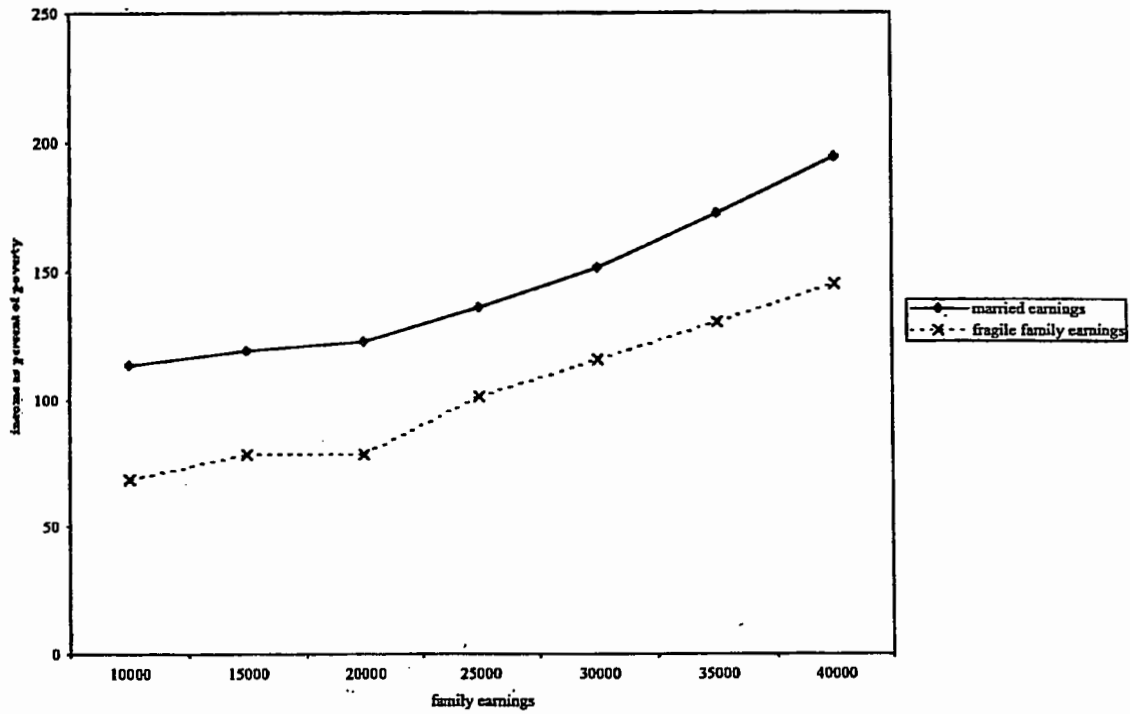### Married and Fragile Family Income when the Mother Has No Earnings

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Chart 5
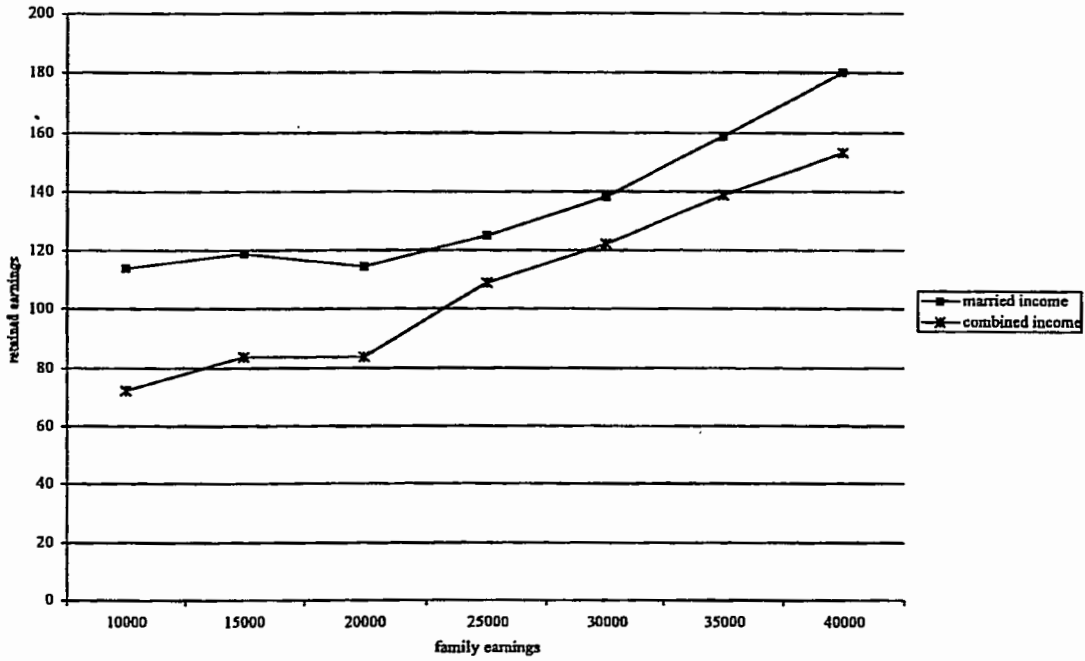## Married and Fragile Family Income Compared when the Mother Contributes 25% of Family Income

Chart 6
Married and Fragile Family Income Compared when Parent Incomes are Equal

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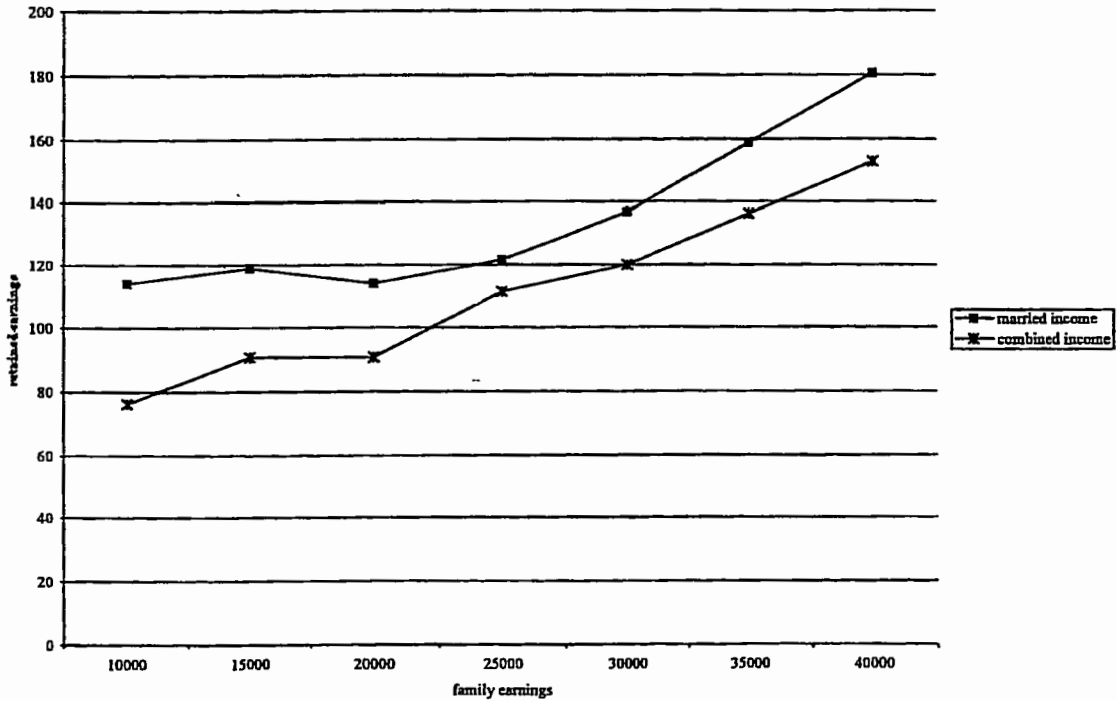
Chart 7
Fragile Family Income after Proposal when the Mother Has No Earnings
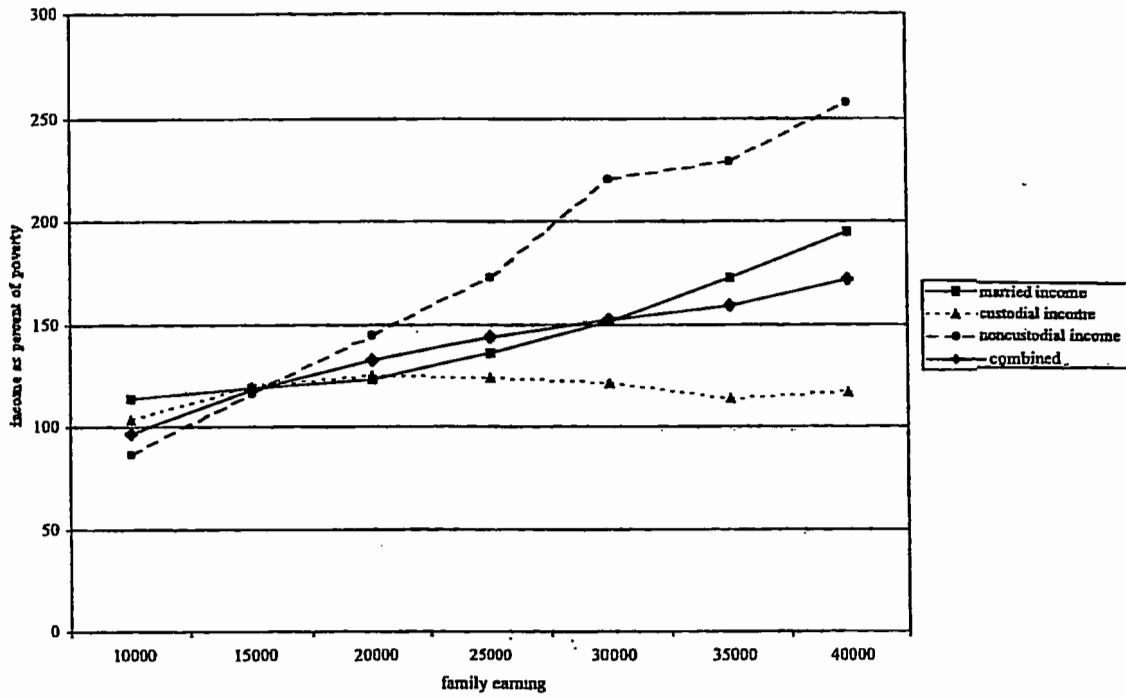
Chart 8
Fragile Family Income after Proposal when the Mother Earns 25%
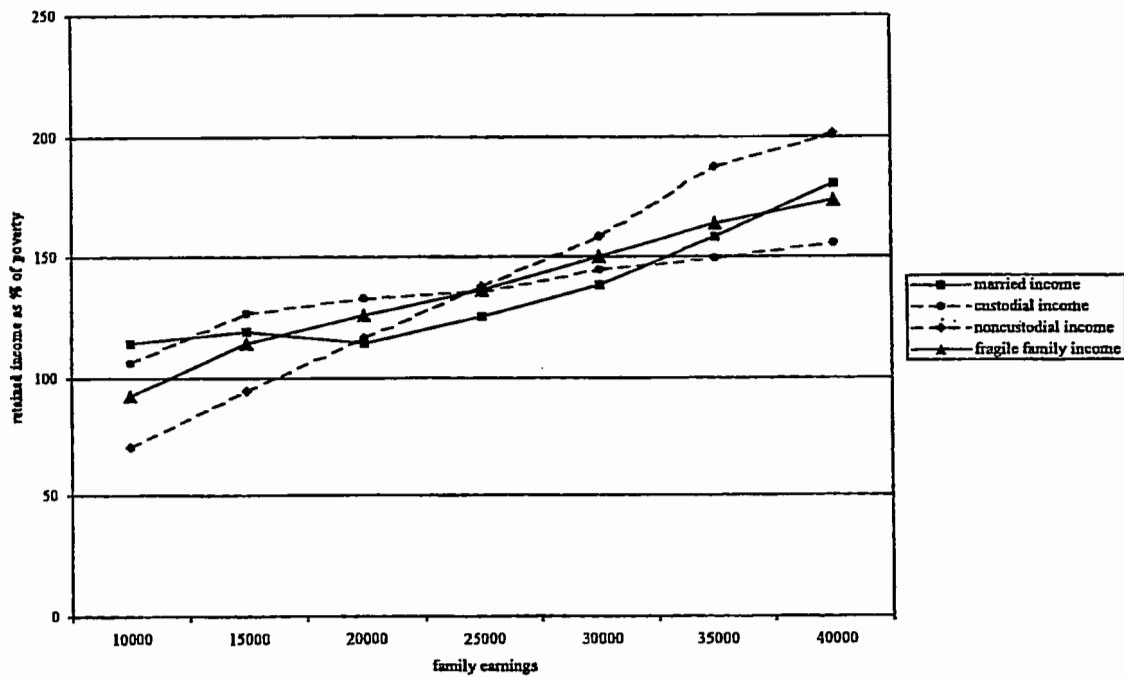
Chart 9
Fragile Family Income after Proposal when the Mother and Father Have Equal Earnings

Chart showing "income as percent of poverty" (y-axis, 0 to 200) versus "family earnings" (x-axis, 10000 to 40000) with four lines: married income, custodial family income, noncustodial income, and fragile family income.
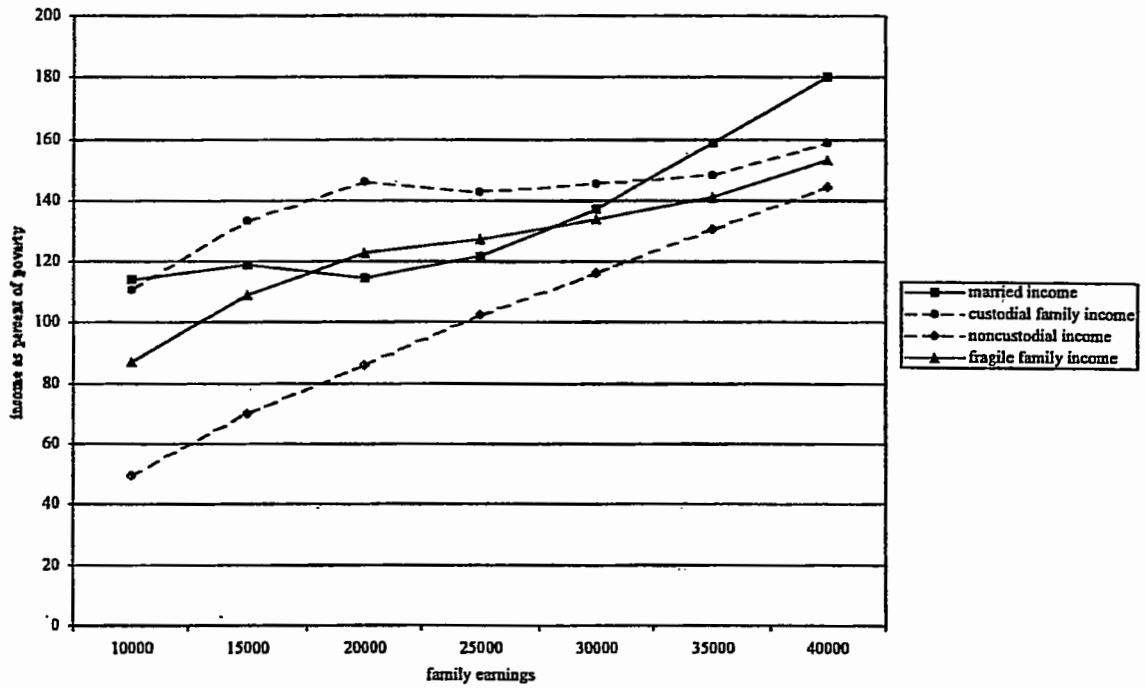
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The Crisis of African American Males: Barriers to Successful Employment

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Abstract

Black male unemployment is a multifaceted problem, which reflects the complexities associated with racial discrimination in America. This paper describes critical elements of the situation. Current literature on poverty, employment, family counseling, child development, and career counseling, as well as experience from community-based initiatives, are the foundation for addressing the issue. Strategies for policy and practice are recommended.

Background

Poverty is the single major factor affecting the employment of African American men. Researchers have concluded that chronic poverty severely constricts most life choices such as where to live, attend school, or play. When poverty defines social identity, the greater the probability that the poor person will be viewed negatively. Poverty influences access to quality education, which in turn directly impacts opportunities for meaningful and gainful employment. Moreover, joblessness and poverty increase the risk of psychological stress. Among the poor, major psychological stressors include racism, vulnerability to physical and mental health problems, inadequate housing, and limited financial resources for bills, housing, and health care. Increased forced relocation, heightened family disruption, and domestic violence may result.

Getting men to work is a pervasive theme in any discussion of African Americans and poverty. Work is crucial to a community's economic viability and a significant factor in its psychological wellness. Writing in *Forbes* magazine in February 1998, Peter Brimelow points out that while there has been a drop in unemployment over the past two decades, black male unemployment (9.6 percent) has dramatically diverged from white male unemployment (3.8 percent). Participation in the labor force is considerably less for all blacks than for whites. According to 1990 census data, black men in the labor force were grossly underrepresented. Between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of black men employed in professional jobs such as engineers, physicians, and real estate agents declined significantly.

Those in unskilled positions like janitors, guards and aides increased (Stein, 1996). The impact of these data has consequences for the economic and psychological well-being of the African American male and the entire community.

In a 1998 article, Cowdery provides insight into some of the intangibles that affect access to work for African American men. He describes "hard skills" and "soft skills" and their significance to the job search. Lack of hard skills such as reading comprehension, computer programming, or the ability to operate a cash register results in a lower median wage for black men. Practice has shown that when individuals are deficient in these areas, they are unable to read instructions in order to complete tasks, to write and file basic reports, or to utilize computer technology in positions like retail sales or the fast foods industry. Thus, deficiencies in educational background and preparation contribute to the ability to obtain gainful employment. Soft skills are characterized by attitude and values about work. They are described as motivation, work ethic, acceptance of supervision, appropriate dress, clear speech, and ability to interact with coworkers and customers (Cowdery, 1998). Cowdery reports that a significant number of employers admit that regardless of the individual's hard skills, deficits in soft skills influence whether or not a person is employable.

Black male unemployment is a multifaceted problem, which reflects the complexities associated with racial discrimination in America. Racism is a factor affecting access to work, job retention, and compensation.

In a recent article, a white professor reveals, "I never realized until I was in my late 20's how much privilege my physical appearance afforded me" (Kiselica, 1999, p. 14). Kiselica admits his lack of understanding about the benefits or liabilities that whites link to race. From their youth black men are keenly cognizant of the effects of color. As the individual begins to comprehend the value and emotional significance of alignment with a particular group, racial identity develops. Since privilege in America is closely associated with color, African American males learn the perceived deficits associated with blackness very early in life. They know that there are few choices for self-description that do not begin with color. Racial identity is multidimensional and influenced by factors such as gender, social class, nationality, religion, employment and lifestyle choice.

Research suggests "that social identity provides a link between the sense of self and identification with an in group." Group membership, whether viewed as positive or negative, is a sig-

nificant influence on the importance that the individual places upon identification with the group (Davis & Ganly, 1999).

African American men are taught from their social environment, the media, and personal interactions, the lifetime implications of being black. Perceived negativism, whatever the social context (e.g., school, employment, health care) greatly impacts the African American male's ability to benefit from societal institutions and to make meaningful contributions to society. Black men grow up in an environment of psychological insult (e.g., increased suspicion, lack of approval, fear). Common responses to this phenomenon include diminished self-esteem, negativism, and intolerance. Given the burden of adjusting to color stigma, psychological insult and deficient hard and soft skills, black men face tremendous obstacles in order to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

Response to the Dilemma

Significant efforts have been made by community-based organizations, governmental agencies, and charitable foundations to address the problems of unemployment among mostly African American noncustodial fathers. Union Industrial Home for Children (UIH), Trenton, New Jersey, has been a leader in this area. For the 140 years of its existence, UIH has provided services to children and their families. The agency offers residential care and social services to abused and traumatized teen mothers and their infants. In addition, vocational assessment, job placement, and coaching for unemployed noncustodial fathers are incorporated into a program called Operation Fatherhood. Another initiative, First Steps, targets adolescent males through after-school and summer programs. Developed in 1989, First Steps was designed to address the male role and responsibility in conception prevention. A formal curriculum provides the framework for equipping young males with skills to enhance their critical decisionmaking capacities, reduce at-risk behaviors, and promote sexually responsible behaviors (Union Industrial Home, 1991).

Operation Fatherhood at UIH was one of seven sites selected to participate in the Parents Fair Share Demonstration (PFS) in 1994. The intent of the endeavor was to implement reform legislation to reduce the number of children on

welfare whose parents were not assuming financial responsibility. The strategy behind PFS was to prepare noncustodial parents to assume legal obligations for the support of their children. Aimed at recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), this welfare reform initiative requires both parents to financially support their children.

PFS built partnerships between state child support enforcement agencies, government departments, private philanthropic organizations, and private nonprofit community-based agencies like UIH. Targeted to eligible parents regardless of race, age, and living situation, the stated program goals were:

1. To increase the employment and earnings of unemployed noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare
2. To increase child support payments
3. To support and improve parenting behavior (Doolittle, Knox, Miller and Rowser, 1998, p. 5)

A core curriculum included peer support, employment and training, and enhanced child support enforcement. Mediation was included in several programs.[1] National findings have shown that most of the seven sites were unsuccessful in locating long-term gainful employment for program participants. Operation Fatherhood outcomes have been consistent with the national research data. The national study revealed that more people paid child support than might have in the absence of the program. Doolittle, et al., found that although there was an overall increase in child support payments, there was "no corresponding increase in fathers' employment and earnings." This posed financial dilemmas for men who were usually contributing to at least two households.

Operation Fatherhood

Several years after the national grant, the New Jersey State Division of Family Development, Office of Child Support, partnered with UIH to continue the program's basic thrusts—assessment, job readiness, preparation, and placement. The agency continues to address the

issues of job stability; development of sustained soft skills and psychological support—all aimed at preventing joblessness among men 18 years of age and older. Included in the model are limited transportation assistance and funds for job training. The program has referral networks with the Department of Labor, family court, county welfare, and social service agencies. A summary of data from the 1998 Operation Fatherhood funding cycle revealed the following:

- Most of the men enrolled in the program were African American.
- Few men who participated in the program moved into substantive long-term employment.
- Of the participants, only 63 percent were employed for at least 6 months.
- Thirty-seven percent of participants lost employment for a variety of reasons, including (a) temporary employment—24 percent; (b) employer treatment—11 percent; (c) transportation problems—10 percent; and (d) layoffs—6 percent.[2]

These findings raise disturbing issues relative to African American male employment and further support the need for a comprehensive approach for addressing unemployment:

1. Education

On reviewing data from an Operation Fatherhood sample, less than 50 percent of the participants were high school graduates. Since most of those involved in the program were raised in poverty—many from single female-headed households—the high school dropout rates are predictable. Poor education reduces the capacity to compete in an increasingly technological society. These numbers reflect the generational nature of poverty. Poor education limits economic opportunity and self-sufficiency. Education tends to broaden the individual's worldview and heighten self-esteem. Uneducated African American men face limited opportunities for employment because they are unprepared to compete for more lucrative technical and professional positions. Poor education contributes to

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[1] Mediation was not a component of Operation Fatherhood, Trenton, NJ.

[2] The reasons for short-term employment, lay off, and employer treatment may be illustrative of the lack of "soft skills" raised in the previous discussion.

marginal job placements with low wages resulting in motivation problems.

2. Marriage

Most men in Operation Fatherhood had fathered 2.4 children with more than one woman. Marriage was not a common factor in parenting. This finding is consistent with research about marriage among the poor. Research on marriage among African Americans reveals a substantial decline over the last 25 years (King, 1999). It is important that the historical context be considered. Many African American male lives have been shortened by war. Others are, or have been, involved in the criminal justice or mental health systems. Data show that the ratio of African American women to African American men severely limits the prospects for marriage. According to recent statistics, the ratio of adult African American men to women (ages 25–55) is 85 men for every 100 women. The imbalance is even greater in inner-city, low-income areas. The decline in available marriage partners affects the total health of the community. It is commonly accepted that marriage is a tremendous influence on life satisfaction, and positive mental and physical health. Men who have problems with drug abuse and mental illness or those with criminal records are not usually viewed as viable marriage partners. Because there are fewer marriages, children of unemployed men often lack the benefits of the father relationship. Parental influence as well as poverty have enormous effects on children. The offspring of poor single mothers and unemployed fathers are at greater risk of becoming high school dropouts, substance abusers, or teenaged parents.[3] They are more likely to be unemployed and poor.

3. Incarceration

African American males often engage in socially unacceptable and potentially criminal behaviors which, they believe, offer access to greater economic freedom. The rate of incarceration for African American males is estimated at nearly 3,100 per 100,000 (NY Times, 1998). The effect of a father's absence due to incarceration

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[3] While poverty and single parenthood may predispose children to greater risk, where there is structure and a supportive extended family, the risks are decreased (Salem, Zimmerman and Nortaro, 1998).

has significant impact on African American males, their families, and offspring. Research findings point to the social effects of prison:

- Increased female-headed households
- Father absence from children
- Increased probability of children of offenders becoming involved in youth crime (Brenner. National Center on Families and Fathers Brief, Fathers in Prison).

Moreover, the nonrehabilitative nature of prison does not prepare released inmates for productive/competitive work. On returning to the community, reintegration proves difficult. The job search may be overwhelming, which further marginalizes the male.

4. Transportation

The valid driver's license has become the universal standard for personal identification and for access to employment opportunities. The process of obtaining a driver's license is a significant rite of passage for many young Americans. In poor communities this is less true. In the Operation Fatherhood sample, only 14 percent of men possessed a valid driver's license. As in many factory communities, Trenton experienced a sharp decline in manufacturing over the last 20 years. Manufacturing and high tech jobs relocated outside of the city's central core. The lack of public transportation also significantly impeded participants' access to a wider job pool. Using the "Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis," a geographical perspective relating work location to population centers, Cooke (1993) found that "elevated rates of African American male unemployment in central city American communities are linked to the geographic structure of urban labor markets." The decline of traditional blue collar jobs in central cities and their relocation to suburban areas have created barriers to job placement and retention that may actually discourage men from seeking jobs beyond their local communities. In his research, Cooke cites other significant barriers to African American male employment:

- Residential segregation
- Employment discrimination

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- Low economic return to commuting
- Dependence on public transportation
- Poorly developed job information networks

These factors relegate African American males, who generally reside in cities, to seek jobs in areas that are "geographically limited and devoid of job opportunities" (Cooke, 1993, p. 408).

Recommendations

The effects of joblessness are pervasive and predispose children and their families to higher levels of economic and psychological distress. Poor education, limited work opportunities, and higher rates of crime erode the fabric of the African American community. Given these relevant practice findings and research data, the following policy/program recommendations are important to helping African American males become gainfully employed and critical to raising the level of community well-being. However, impacting the work ethic of African American males will require a combination of family focused short and long range strategies:

1. Fatherhood programs are an essential element to address the complexities of employment among African American males. Programs should incorporate self-esteem enhancement and skill development in order to build a sound work ethic leading to sustained employment.

2. The literature emphasizes the importance of father involvement in the lives of their children. Regardless of income, job placement, or residence, fathers are significant to the emotional and psychological development of their children. Fathers who are employed are more likely to be involved with their children and provide financial and emotional support.

3. The stress associated with single parenthood has been well documented. Because many African American children are reared in single-female-headed households, parenting education targeted to African American mothers is advised. Programs should be based in traditional and nontraditional settings. The goal should be to raise the competency level of parents, identify methods for reducing

stress and provide an array of supports to enable successful parenting.

4. Parenting education should encourage parents to provide warm, caring, structured family environments. Whether or not they are reared by two parents, children are more successful and less prone to antisocial behaviors when love, nurturing, and appropriate limits are integral parts of child rearing.

5. Early intervention and early childhood education programs should include a curriculum specifically aimed at building self-esteem and sparking children's interest in learning. African American children must be given an expanded view of career opportunities early in their schooling. In a study that addressed career preferences among elementary school children grades one through six (Bobo, 1998), the primary choice of career among African American boys was professional athletics. The findings for white and Latino children reflected interests in a wider spectrum of probable careers.

6. Several studies have shown that key people who influence the occupational preference among black male youth were ranked as follows:

- Person holding preferred occupation
- Fathers
- Mothers
- Teachers
- Peers
- Siblings
- Relatives (not immediate family)
- Counselors
- Neighbors (Pallone, 1970, 1973)

Recent theories promulgated by African American educators emphasize that mentoring, role models, African American counselors, success stories, parental influence, and early access programs are indeed more significant than "... developmental process theories [which] do not lend much assistance in guiding African American career choices" (Murray and Mosidi, 1993, p. 444). This is even more crucial in light of the discouraging statistics regarding incarceration. It is imperative to incorporate mentoring and career counseling components into preadolescent edu-

cation programs. Career counseling for African American males must emphasize a broad range of productive work beginning in the elementary school (Bobo, 1998).

7. The literature has raised the issue of geography and work. African American males must be able to obtain and maintain valid drivers' licenses. Driver education must be incorporated into the core curriculum of urban schools. Innovative approaches to job training are integral to the design of comprehensive job readiness programs. Driver training must be included in such initiatives.

8. Programs that promote heightened self-awareness and self-esteem must address male-female relationships and aim for delayed parenthood. Partnerships must be forged between schools, community organizations, and faith-based institutions to address these important concerns.

9. Access to education in computer technology must begin in early childhood and continue into adulthood.

10. The development of public-private partnerships that facilitate access to internships and apprenticeships, and lead to substantive employment, must be understood as important tools to reducing poverty and dependency.

11. Affirmative action and EOE standards should be maintained in order to ensure the fullest possible representation of African American males in a diverse work force.

12. Attention must be paid to the insidious, detrimental impacts of poverty on the entire African American community and males in particular.

The total health of the African American community is inextricably linked to the capacity for full participation in productive work experiences. Poverty is a major contributing factor to the breakdown of important social systems. This discussion highlighted circumstances that mitigate against African American males' access to meaningful work. The challenge for our society is to help young men develop positive identities and achieve positive goals despite the prevalence of negative perceptions.

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