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The Street Life Project:
How Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men
Demonstrate Notions of Resiliency in the Face
of Inadequate Economic and Educational Opportunity
by
Yasser Arafat Payne

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City
University of New York

2005

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Abstract

The Street Life Project:
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of Inadequate Economic and Educational Opportunity

by

Yasser Arafat Payne

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine

This dissertation, housed in Participatory Action Research design, explored issues of resiliency amongst street life oriented U. S. born African men as a function of their attitudes toward educational and economical opportunities. Specifically, this PAR study explored such notions or coping strategies in a sample of street life oriented U. S. born African men in and out of high school ranging between the ages of 16-65. Quantitative and qualitative results indicate that as the men in this sample became older, their attitudes toward overall, educational and economic opportunity increasingly became more negative. In addition, substantial descriptive and qualitative data were provided to address the complex dynamics, conceptualization and/or framework of a street life orientation and ideology.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.”

W. E. B. Dubois
Souls of Black Folks (1903)

“Historically, racism and discrimination have inflicted a variety of harsh injustices on African-Americans in the United States, especially on males. Being male and black has meant being psychologically castrated—rendered impotent in the economic, political, and social arenas that whites have historically dominated. Black men learned long ago that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and hard work did not give them the same tangible rewards that accrued to whites.”

Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson
Cool Pose (1992)

“Man listen, these *motherfuckers (larger America)* don’t know, *who we (street life oriented U. S. born African men) are!* They don’t know! They couldn’t possibly fuckin’ know, dog! That’s from the heart!!!

DMX
(They Don’t Know) Who We Be (2001)

The streets is where the bottom is at—where the forgotten and the ignored roam by the millions. These people across space and time have crafted an unfortunate but adaptive lifestyle within the non-empathetic and rigid crevices of our social structural systems—a lifestyle with its own distinct conditions; its own value system, code or set of rules that moves under or coexists with the order of the status quo. Street life oriented persons typically are mythical creatures in the imaginations and consciousness of Middle America—creatures in which society has grown accustomed to, become extremely critical of, and deeply fascinated by.

The plight of the street life oriented U. S. born African men¹ street life oriented U. S. born African male has preoccupied millions throughout this country's history. He is a testament to human resiliency. These men have endured the throes of some of the worst forms of social injustice this country has had to offer. Throughout it all, his infectious persistence unnervingly has challenged the social order of the larger social structural systems. His integrity has been celebrated for largely resisting or opposing the tempting but poisonous notions of assimilation in favor of the reclamation of his genuine spirit or identity. These men's very presence has greatly shaken up all intellectual notions of human resiliency.

Their story, nonetheless, is often exploited by popular media outlets as well as misunderstood, mischaracterized and understudied within the academy and particularly in social psychology. There are a limited number of empirical arguments positioned from the perspective of these men. In fact, these men are often disrespectfully spoken for. The fact of the matter is, very few of these men participate in this lifestyle as a hobby or because it simply is the trendy thing to do. Many of these men come to this dangerous lifestyle because they have nothing—they live in squalid conditions. Make no mistake about it, the streets is the heart of marginality. While their lifestyle is often exoticized by Middle America we must remember that ultimately there is little that is fun about what they are doing.

¹ **U. S. born African** in this document will refer to what social scientists generally note as "African-American" or "Black". US born Africans have historically struggled with how America has racially and culturally labeled us an ethnic group. In particular African centered psychologists and theorists have brought significant attention to the theoretical, methodological as well as moral challenges connected to the crude labeling of African people (Nobles, 1991; Obasi, 2002). Several of the men in this study outside of the interview raised questions with me regarding how social scientists label them "African-American" in particular. Given that they are situated in some level of permanent economic poverty, it was difficult for several of the men to identify as being too American. In an attempt to be fairer to their racial, cultural, spiritual as well as socio-economic identities, this document will refer to these men as U. S. born Africans.

A number of scholars have remarked in the literature about the negative image America associates low-income U. S. born African men with (Clark, 1965/1989; Dance, 2002; Dawsey, 1996; DuBois, 1935/1992; Fanon, 1963; Fox, 1985; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Hutchinson, 1994; Gordon, 1994, Gordon, Gordan & Nembhard, 1995; Jones & Newman, 1997; Klugel & Smith, 1986; Kozol, 1992; Latif & Latif, 1994; Lemann, 1991; MacLeod, 1987; May & Pitts, 2000; Parham, 1999; Patterson, 1998; Watts & Jaeger, 1997; Wilson, 1990; Wilson, 1996; Young, 2004). Within the academy as well as throughout larger America these men are often regarded as hypersexual, suffering from “Black” self hatred, academically inferior or ignorant, lazy and inherently violent. Parham (1999) argues that as a result of our predisposed assumptions regarding these men the field of psychology largely does not possess the fundamental understanding to provide quality mental services and/or research on these men. Parham (1999) says:

“... no segment of the population has been more misunderstood and mischaracterized than Black men. Consequently, it is easy to imagine how many African-American males specifically, and African American people generally, are misserved in the mental health system when they receive services and treatments from people who have very little or no knowledge of their culture, peoplehood, character, and/or psychic debilitation” (794)

Hutchinson (1994) argues that the negative imaging of low income U. S. born African men is deeply embedded in this society’s history and value system so much so that it would be extremely difficult to find a single person who does not hold a single prejudicial, stereotypical, racist or white supremacist attitude about these men. In his book, *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*, he says, “Over time, the ancient racial stereotypes have been confirmed, validated, and deepened until they have taken on a life of their own” (47). These men have been dismissed and disrespected repeatedly by all

factions of this society. Children are raised to fear them; women are instructed how to avoid them; and men are taught to defend their loved ones from them.

A number of our inner city communities, mainly as a function of economic poverty, are confusingly riddled and peppered with high rates of infant mortality, arrest or incarceration, substance abuse, police brutality, failing or challenged school districts, and dilapidated housing, to name a few issues². Poignantly, nearly 50% of all U. S. born African children are sustained and socialized within the ranks of economic poverty (Garnezy, 1991; Patton, 1998). The socio-economic and political challenges of the inner city become even more revealing when locking an analysis to the lived experiences of inner city U. S. born African men. Specifically, a disproportionate number of these men are exposed to a number of unrelenting risk factors in their daily experiences (Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Franklin, 1999). Homicide continues to be the number one cause of death for U. S. born African men ages 15 to 44 (Franklin, 1999; Patton, 1998; Payne & Brown, in press; Stevenson, 1997; Tolleson, 1997). One out of forty-five of these men are a victim of homicide. In fact, U. S. born African men are 700 percent more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts and 1100 percent more likely to die from a firearm. Thirty-three percent of these men are on probation, parole or incarcerated. Approximately 1 million of the nearly 2 million people currently incarcerated in the United States are U. S. born African men (U. S. Department of Justice, 1996). Twenty-nine percent of all U. S. born African men will experience imprisonment at some point in their lives (Patton, 1998). It is imperative, that investigators devote more

² It is important to note, however, that inner city communities, in it of self, cannot be completely classified as a negative experience and I do not intend to give off this impression. Humanity and morality between and among community members weave concurrently in the overall inner city lived experience.

empirical energy to critically explore this issue. Placing more critical and rigorous science behind the lived experiences of these men is necessary and would prove to be extremely useful information. This data has enormous practical implications and/or could be specifically useful to teachers, other kinds of educators, school districts, parents, community members at large, churches, Mosques, social organizations and the like. Put simply, research can play a pivotal role in contributing to reframing or making better sense out of a number of these disturbing conditions.

This study explores issues of resiliency among low-income U. S. born African men as a function of their attitudes toward educational and economic opportunities. Specifically, this project explored the resiliency and coping strategies used by street life oriented U. S. born African males in and out of high school³. It was important to evaluate how these men in and out of high school contend with race and social class barriers to more deeply understand how they confront these threats to survival. Further, this project documents how these men in the face of political and economic adversity organize personal meanings around development of self-esteem, camaraderie, family commitment and male bonding as mechanisms for resiliency. In many respects, this study is an important contribution to the literature.

³ Within this text, the term “men” will be used interchangeably with the term “boy” to describe the literatures and/or experiences of street life oriented U. S. born African “men” in high school. Although these young men technically fall under the Eurocentric adolescent criterion, such parameters are often ignored, refuted and/or dismissed by the streets as well as the overall inner city community. Essentially, the argument by the people of these communities is that the typical lived experiences of white adolescent middle and upper middle class America are not synonymous, in most respects, to that of low income U. S. born African adolescents, particularly those African adolescents who are engaged in a street life orientation. For more information please see, Burton, L. M., Obeidallah, D. A. and Allison, K (1996). *Ethnographic insights on social context and adolescent development among inner-city african-american teens*. In R. Jessor, A. Colby & R. A. Shewder (Eds.), *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry* (395-418). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In a book chapter entitled, *Sites of Resiliency: A Reconceptualization of Resiliency for U. S. Born African Men Living in the Inner City* (in press) Andrae Brown along with myself proffer a framing and organization of the literatures on low-income U. S. born African men that has been used to guide this particular study. More specifically, Payne & Brown (in press) provide definitions of resiliency and street life as well as explanations for the categories, *traditional* and *non-traditional* literatures, on low-income U. S. born African men that were employed in this study to examine the men's coping mechanisms and overall attitudes toward opportunity in the United States.

Payne & Brown (in press) separate this literature into two general categories—*traditional* and *non-traditional* literatures on inner city U. S. born African men as centered on discussions of resiliency. Traditional literatures on these men as centered on discussions of resiliency are typically grounded in four problematic assumptions: (a) a middle-class and upper middle class orientation, (b) ahistorical stance, (c) an *individualized* perspective that often holds the person solely responsible for the development of his resiliency, as well as (d) a refusal to consider the overall social structural impact of economic conditions in the lived experiences of these men. Non-traditional literatures on street life oriented U. S. born African men tend to represent a counter or alternative perspective that illuminates a critical analysis that generally positions these men's behavior more from these young men's perspective juxtaposed against larger social systems. Non-traditional arguments are generally less well established in the overall literature and tend to recognize at least one of four structural/conditions that affect personal levels of resiliency: (a) the impact of race and racism, (b) socio-historical patterns or trends, (c) the intersection of capitalism and

resiliency (e. g. unemployment rates, poverty rates, etc.), and (d) the importance of phenomenologically-based analyses.

A.J. Franklin argues that, “Personal resilience can be viewed as the individual’s effective management of the hassles of daily life, cumulating over one’s life history, which enhances one’s adaptive repertoire and efficacy in coping strategies” (Franklin, 1999, p. 781). Drawing on Franklin’s work, I apply this definition of personal resilience to street life oriented U. S. born African men. Franklin’s (1999, 2004) account of these men’s resiliency is foundational in so far as he recognizes racism as a key feature of every day life that these men must negotiate.

It is important to note that resilience is a psychological construct that cuts across populations and places. I will present the reader with a review of discussions on the generic or essential aspects of the term resiliency. This brief review will allow the reader to have a necessary frame of how the term, resiliency, has evolved and moved throughout the literature as argued through its essential properties. Resiliency as a concept and construct is often understood and discussed in relation to a particular population. That is, resiliency would more so be discussed in relation to a *breast cancer* or *unemployed* population, for instance, as opposed to discussions of resiliency research that is independent of a particular population. However, sometimes it is useful for us to step back from our populations and simply explore, for the sake of clarity, resiliency as a generic construct.

Psychological Definitions of Resiliency

Resiliency, as a seriously investigated construct evolved in the literature in the 1970’s as a result of the existing research on stress and risk involving child/adolescent

psychopathology (O' Leary & Ickovics, 1995). Garmezy and Nuechterlein in 1972 are credited with the earliest resiliency study, Invulnerable Children: The Fact and Fiction of Competence and Disadvantage (O' Leary & Ickovics, 1995). Risk, stress and trauma still continue today to be key variables and/or pillars within the resiliency literature (Aldwin, Sutton & Lachman, 1996; Cohler, Stott & Musick, 1995; Garmezy, 1991; Levitt, Selman & Richmond, 1991; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; O' Leary & Ickovics, 1995; Wanderman & Nation, 1998; Werner, 1995).

There are a number of ways in which researchers have chosen to define the construct resiliency within the literature. Although there is considerable debate among theorists as to how to more appropriately define the construct, the literature reveals at least three aspects that researchers generally agree upon when proffering ways to define the term: (1) homeostatic response to adversity (Carver, 1998; O'Leary, 1998); (2) process-oriented (Cohler, Stott & Musick, 1995; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995; Rutter, 1987) and/or a (3) psychological protective mechanism (Cohler et al., 1995; Zimmerman, 1995).

Carver (1998) makes the point in his theoretical essay, *Resilience and Thriving: Issues, Models, and Linkages*, that the term resiliency has to be more clearly defined. He notes that the term is often used in the literature as if researchers mean the same thing when discussing this construct. Carver (1998) proposes that the construct resiliency should be understood as a homeostatic response to existing challenges in a person or individual's life. Specifically, Carver (1998) says, "I suggest that the term *resilience* be reserved to denote homeostatic return to a prior condition (which I believe this term is commonly understood to imply)" (p. 247). When researchers use a homeostatic

theoretical framework to move an argument around resiliency, essentially they are proposing that an indication of resiliency is demonstrated when a person is able to avoid succumbing to life's sometimes tragic and adverse experiences. More specifically, researchers who move from this theoretical perspective are arguing that persons are resilient when they are able to overcome such experiences as breast cancer or the death of a loved one, for example; the person is thought to be resilient when they are able to "return back" to their relatively and presumably stable life experience, prior to the adverse event, thus resiliency is equivalent to that of a homeostatic response.

Protective Mechanism

A number of researchers position resiliency in the literature as a protective mechanism. Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles & Maton, (1999) argue that resiliency is demonstrated when "people succeed in the face of adversity. In a risk-protective model of resilience, a protective factor interacts with a risk factor to mitigate the occurrence of a negative outcome." Put another way, Zimmerman et al. (1999), conclude resiliency results from a person's will to *protect* themselves from most instances of adversity. Cohler et al. (1995) note resiliency is best demonstrated or captured when persons are able to adequately "protect" themselves from the "inevitable" encroachment of vulnerability. Cohler et al. (1995) say, "Vulnerability reflects the failure of resilience, increasing the probability of psychological distress. ... The significant factor for adjustment is not vulnerability, which at least to some extent is inevitable. Rather, it is the capacity to protect the self from the impact of this vulnerability"(p. 757).

Moreover, within the resiliency literature, researchers often document "protective factors" (Cohler, Stott & Musick, 1995; Garmezy, 1991; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; O' Leary

& Ickovics, 1995; O' Leary, 1998; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1995; Zimmerman et al., 1999) as particular psychological and/or community mechanisms (e. g. family, church, education, etc.) employed by individuals to bolster personal levels of resiliency. Garmezy (1985) concludes that there are generally three types of protective factors used by individuals: (1) individual personality characteristics such as self-esteem, (2) family cohesion, and (3) external support systems.

Discussions involving the term protective factors were prompted by researchers' concern regarding the overemphasis of a deficit model in the literature (Garmezy, 1985, 1991, Rutter, 1987). Researchers feel there is a serious need to establish more empirical evidence that demonstrates how individuals turn adverse experiences into positive or optimistic outcomes as opposed to analysis that simply notes how so-called "non-resiliency" operates within particular populations. Garmezy (1991) vehemently says:

“The evidence is sturdy that many children and adults do overcome life's difficulties. Since good outcomes are frequently present in large numbers of life histories, it is critical to identify those 'protective' factors that seemingly enable individuals to circumvent life stressors. Unfortunately, such positive outcomes have not typically been the focus of investigators, and comparatively little is known about person's who escape those too frequent cycles of disadvantage”(p. 421).

Process

The notion of process (Cohler, 1995; O' Leary & Ickovics, 1995; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; Rutter, 1987) in relation to resiliency began to receive more attention in the literature as theorists endeavored to better conceptualize this malleable, multi-dimensional or slippery, if you will, construct. Process refers to a particular conceptualization of resiliency; a conceptualization that forces the researcher to think and operationalize resiliency as a variable that is captured within lived experiences as opposed to framing

resiliency as simply an outcome. That is, researchers argued that indications of resiliency should not be simply described and empirically explored as an outcome to adverse events (i. e. how one responds to rape, grades at the end of the year, etc.) but instead as a process that extends over time. Choler et al. (1995) makes a distinction between “relative” and “absolute” processes. Relative processes signify how resiliency should be understood through the interpretation of the person because across space and time resiliency may mean different things in different instances. Cohler et al. (1995) says, “... resilience and vulnerability may be understood as relative rather than absolute processes. Each of us is subject to particular forms of adversity that reflect extreme situations beyond our capacity to remain resilient” (757).

Drawing from and accepting the tri-partite structure of resiliency arguments – the search for homeostasis, the deployment of protective mechanisms and a recognition of process (rather than just outcome) – I turn, now, to the conditions within which low-income urban U. S. born African young men are born; into which they are socialized; through which they must survive if they are to reach adulthood. These are the conditions of racism and oppression, the conditions of “risk” which our society has placed at their feet; the conditions from which they seek a more peaceful homeo-stasis; the conditions for which they require protective mechanisms, and the conditions that thrust them into a never-ending process toward survival.

Fundamental Definitions

Street life in this text will be defined as a spectrum of networking behaviors, such as *male bonding* activities that extends to joking, “playing the dozens”, hanging on the “corner” or “block”, rhyming (or rapping), or playing basketball for example. Street life

also includes an aspect of illegal activities (i. e. robbing, selling drugs, assault or committing violent acts, etc.) generally employed to confront the effects of racism and economic impoverishment. Across street life activities, these men have acquired a strong set of entrepreneurial, leadership and organizational skills. Further, street life in this text and for the project will be defined as an ideology (Keiser, 1969). Across space and throughout time, many of these gentlemen have learned to use and move through such an ideology literally as a means for economic survival. Specifically, these men have established a particular street life value system that essentially grounds an overall street life ideology (Keiser, 1969; Payne & Brown, in press). Movement toward a street life orientation is typically accompanied by the person finding increased value and meaning in the overall ideology and/or code of the streets. Consequently, street life oriented U. S. born African men share an awareness of a street life ideology that typically has at least three key components: (1) such an ideology has been passed on by an older street life oriented U. S. born African male generation; (2) the more connected to the code or the better a person understands the ideology the more resilient a person is considered (by himself as well as his immediate community); and (3) a street life ideology is employed primarily for economic and personal survival. In addition to the three components, it is important to note that the overall ideology separates into two broader categories: (1) general street life ideology and (2) localized street life ideology. Simply, the *general street ideology* is the more generic aspect of the code. There is a general code that cuts across the very diverse street life oriented U. S. born African male experiences that all work to produce the totality of the reality. Remember in the streets you have experiences ranging from sales of narcotics and gang warfare to drug addiction and male prostitution.

However, when one observes the idiosyncrasies of a particular hustle or street life orientation, it then becomes easier to note the application or use of a more *localized street life ideology*. Specifically, the rules, code or ideology shifts according to the hustle, although every street hustle particularly amongst these men, are subsumed by a more general code. For example, the rules or code that goes along with the cocaine trade is not necessarily equivalent to that of male prostitution. Each hustle comes out of a particular history in this society, thus driving how the rules or ideology manifests for it. Also, it is important to note that the ideology is extremely adaptive. That is, the ideology moves and reshapes itself to suit the times or particular conditions on the streets. In addition to the localized nuances of a particular hustle, it is important to note that a localized street life ideology can be observed as a function of the community itself. The city or geographic region the men reside in can and will significantly influence the development of his street life orientation. Although such illegal acts as the sales of narcotics or gang warfare can be noted in virtually every inner city in the United States, the manifestation of these activities lets say in an East St. Louis versus that of a Harlem will look different. The local history, local customs, the physical space as well as the socioeconomic and political nuances of the community, to name only some key influential social structural systems, all work to produce a distinct communal style, rhythm and/or signature of a particular localized ideology for a particular low-income U. S. born African community.

Theoretical Framing: Sites of Resiliency

As opposed to viewing resiliency as a personality characteristic, or a quality that some men have and others lack, for the purposes of this study I specifically seek to understand street life as a site of resiliency (Payne & Brown, in press) in street life

oriented U. S. born African men in and out of high school. This project provides a social psychological examination of how street life, as an ideology and set of relations and networks, operates in the lives of economically poor, urban males as a space within which hope, friendships, violence, terror, risk, optimism and struggles for survival are displayed. More clearly, it is important to note that, sites of resiliency, as argued and understood through the experiences of these men, is the unit of analysis. The site is presumed to be a space and place that aids in bolstering personal levels of resiliency. Consequently, it becomes the task of the researcher to identify how the sites function for these men.

Street life, as understood in the U. S. born African male experience has to it, components that helps establish it as a viable reality for these men. Given that street life is an extant reality, like any other reality a set of rules, values, and/or ideology governs the operation and use of the reality. Street life within this study will not reflect in any respect a theoretical framing that suggests the streets is simply a wild and reckless lifestyle. The tragic outcomes rendered within a street reality are oftentimes calculated. The reckless abandon that is often noted or remarked on, actually follows a particular rhythm or social pattern that inner community members are keener to understand than outside observers. This ideology, which is synonymous to what street life oriented U. S. born African men generally refer to as the code of the street, essentially is kept in place to govern the activities of the streets. Although street life can be at times a violent world, the violence within this particular reality has to happen in a balanced fashion for the streets to continue to operate as a dependable source of economic opportunity.

Essentially, the more you understand and master the code, the more resilient you are determined to be on the streets.

Central to Payne and Brown's (in press) argument is the notion that street life is one of three commonly used "sites of resiliency" by low-income U. S. born African men. A site of resiliency is made up of two key components or dimensions: (1) physical site and (2) psychological site. Broadly, a site of resiliency represents the *psychological*, spiritual, ideological and/or *physical* spaces through which people cope or become resilient. When noting the *psychological sites of resiliency*, it is not uncommon for street life oriented U. S. born African men to draw from religious or spiritual sources, i. e. Nation of Islam, Five Percent Nation, "Black" Christian Church, with the intent of sincerely searching for guidance in their daily lifestyle. The functions of the "streets" are many. For many, the "streets" are a psychological site of resiliency for friendship, bonding, and belonging. The street philosophy or code is another example of a psychological site of resiliency for these men. This code which is often looked to as a site of resiliency is accepted, by these men, to be a baseline understanding that provides strategies, rules and guidance for the multiple negotiations and interactions that may occur within a street lifestyle. Resiliency, for these men, is often equated to how well one masters or understands the code of the streets. *Physical sites of resiliency*, in particular, represent those geographically bonded and diasporic places where, in the case of the "streets," men congregate to bolster personal levels of resiliency. Franklin (1999) and Keyes (2002) refers to these spaces as "gathering places". According to Franklin (1999) gathering places are the physical spaces U. S. born African men use to negotiate or "... bond around various Black male brotherhood rites of passage and activities"

(p.772). Franklin (1999) offers the basketball court, in front of corner stores, parties and schools as examples of gathering places.

Non-traditional perspectives generally address larger issues of inequality or the severe lack of socio-economic opportunity as playing a key role in fostering the development of a street life orientation in low-income U. S. born African men. To sharpen this study's theoretical lens on opportunity I want to draw from some previous or established theoretical conceptualizations that describe how these men experience access to economic and/or educational mobility in the United States (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; MacLeod, 1987; Merton, 1966, 1968; Wilson, 1996). Such models will help to guide how this study is conceptualizing opportunity.

Opportunity for this project specifically involves the exploration of the *economic* and *educational* aspects of the construct. Although there are several models that could arguably be used to guide this study's conceptualization of opportunity, I have selected two theoretical conceptualizations that I think best captures the assumptions necessary for understanding how these men experience the complexities of opportunities. These two models insist on a social structural analysis that distinguishes between the value systems exhibited by different social classes particularly as it relates to an analysis regarding street life oriented persons. Specifically, these conceptualizations argue that "deviant" or "non-conforming" behavior generally is in response to the lack of economic and/or educational opportunities available to someone from a low-income social strata or experience of life.

Robert King Merton's, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, offers a sociological approach to theorizing issues of opportunity for street life oriented U. S. born African

men. In his chapter, *Social Structure and Anomie*, Merton (1968) argues that “deviant” behavior results from the “pressures” of what’s expected for these men by society at large and the actual availability of opportunities so that those expectations could be “realized”. According to Merton (1968) it is when these men conclude there is a “dissociation” between the two that an interest in “deviant” behavior develops with the intent of ensuring basic survival (i. e., shelter, food, clothing, etc). Merton (1968) says, “The distribution of statuses through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for adherence to status obligations are provided for every position within the distributive order. Otherwise, as will soon become plain, aberrant behavior ensues. It is, indeed, my central hypothesis that aberrant behavior may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing aspirations” (p.188).

Merton (1968) goes on to further argue that the very value systems of the people work to contribute to the strength or viability of social structures existent in a given society. Merton (1968) explains that there are at least three levels of value systems adhered to more often than not by people in American society. According to Merton a person’s family, the school and the work place are the places that are most influential in crafting or “shaping the personality structure and goal formations of Americans”. Merton (1968) argues that parents are the primary “transmission belts” for a person’s value system while schools serve as the site that authorizes our societies “prevailing values”. “... parents serve as a transmission belt for the values and goals of the groups of which they are a part—above all, of their social class or of the class with which they identify

themselves. And the schools are of course the official agency for the passing on of the prevailing values” (p. 191).

According to Merton (1968), there at least five modes of adaptation employed by individuals in a “culture-bearing society”: (1) Conformity, (2) Innovation, (3) Ritualism, (4) Retreatism and (5) Rebellion. In his text, Merton (1968) spends the least amount of attention on the first mode of adaptation, conformity. Merton (1968) argues that most people in a given society employ conformity as a mode of adaptation. Specifically, persons who adhere to a conformity mode of adaptation simply are in line with the society’s overall cultural and institutional values. This person is your least rebellious and among your most law abiding citizen. They agree with the overall social, political and economical goals of the society they reside in. Second is the adaptive mode, innovation. Individuals who use this adaptive style generally are characterized as subscribing to societal expectations reaching some status of wealth. However, they are either unable or unwilling to do so fairly through traditional means. Thus, such individuals become *innovative* in how they bend the social structural system in ways that directly benefit them. According to Merton (1968) the average white-collar criminal is apt to use this adaptive strategy. Ritualism is the third mode of adaptation. Individuals who utilize the ritualism adaptive style play down the lofty, materialistic or expensive aspects of life in favor of a more modest lifestyle. Ritualistic oriented individuals are typically lower middle class and their adaptive response according to Merton (1968) is not technically considered “deviant”. Simply, ritualistic individuals seek to live within a humble means by not aspiring for any unrealistic goals or by not allowing themselves to slip anymore into the ranks of impoverishment. The fourth adaptive response, retreatism, is considered

to be the least used by an individual. Individuals who employ a retreatism adaptive response tend to be psychologically challenged and/or represent the extreme or fringe components of society. Merton (1968) says, "In this category fall some of the adaptive activities of psychotics, autists, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic drunkards and drug addicts. They have relinquished culturally prescribed goals and their behavior does not accord with institutional norms". The fifth adaptive style is classified as rebellion. In Merton's model, this individual would be considered to possess the most "deviant" societal adaptive style. This individual generally is and/or perceives their self to be among the most alienated by the prevailing social structural system. They view society overall as betraying them. Consequently, they employ what they consider to be a more viable or realistic value system to economically survive socio-economically in our society. Merton (1968) would argue that street life oriented U. S. born African men, more often than not, rely on this particular adaptive style. Merton (1968) notes:

"Rebellion involves a genuine transvaluation, where the direct or vicarious experience of frustration leads to full denunciation of previously prized values...

When the institutional system is regarded as the barrier to the satisfaction of legitimized goals, the stage is set for rebellion as an adaptive response" (210).

The second theoretical conceptualization that this proposal is drawing on is presented by Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, in their classic text: *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) present a theoretical conceptualization that more directly addresses the frenetic relationship between street life oriented persons and overall educational and economic opportunity. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) explicitly note that as a consequence of "blocked opportunity"

low-income U. S. born African men resort to engaging in street life activities. Specifically, they title their conceptualization as the *theory of differential opportunity systems*. The model discusses three adaptive strategies prevalent among street life or “deviant” persons: (1) criminal subculture, (2) conflict subculture and (3) retreatist subculture. The criminal subculture exhibits behaviors that are particularly connected to criminal activities that are centrally concerned with making money such as extortion, theft, number running or selling narcotics. The conflict culture achieves its status through its violent means. Street life oriented persons who employ this kind of adaptive strategy generally are concerned with representing their ability to be physically daunting. Simply, these persons are your street soldiers. The retreatist subculture is a street life oriented variation that is centrally concerned with alcohol and drugs.

At the root of the two theoretical conceptualizations is a scholarly concern for phenomenology (value systems/variation), race and culture, as well as the incorporation of a social structural (economic & educational) analysis. Further, the underlying assumption found in these conceptualizations is that many of these young men engage in these activities out of a willingness to economically thrive within a reality that provides little opportunity to do so.

The next component of this study’s theoretical framework includes a conceptualization around these men’s masculinity. Specific reference is being made to their gender identity because their masculinity is critical to examining or thinking about how they frame their resiliency. Their masculinity deeply guides the expressions of their coping mechanisms. These men’s notions of street life as a site of resiliency is significantly influenced by their concept of what it means *to be a man*. When working

with or trying to evaluate issues regarding street life oriented U. S. born African men it is extremely important to pay close attention to his notion of being a *King*. A King in this context represents a street life oriented U. S. born African male who is striving to carve out a distinct identity and role within his local community. In the context of his community his notions of being a King is not seen as sexist. In fact, he is encouraged and raised by his family and community to think of himself in this manner. To think otherwise would diminish his character, masculinity and/or status within the community. Given the prevalence of economic and communal turmoil in their community these men are expected and expect themselves to step up unflinchingly and oftentimes unsuccessfully to produce something for themselves, loved ones and local community. According to researchers, these men are expected to accomplish six developmental tasks centered around their masculinity: (1) they must fashion their male identities through their particular community; (2) accelerate through adolescence as a result of their family and individual socio-economic needs/conditions; (3) garner respect on familial, communal, social and/or individual levels; (4) demonstrate loyalty and/or a sustained commitment to family, friends and community; (5) be prepared to centrally provide for as well as (6) 'stand up' for, protect and/or defend against all threats (ranging from propaganda to actual or physical peril) made against one's family, friends and/or community (Blassingame, 1979; Bowman, 1989; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Brown, 1965/1999; Burton, Obeidallah, and Allison, 1996; Caplan, 1970; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Franklin, 1999; Gooden, 1989; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Harris, 1992; Nobles, 1976; Patterson, 1998; Payne & Brown, in press; Payne, in press, Payne, 2001; Valentine, 1978; Wilson, 1996; Young, 2004). It is important to note that this

masculine theoretical frame represents in the psychology of these men and community the ideal image of a man. Investigators when working with or conducting research involving this population should always consider this frame if earnestly seeking to reach him. Because in his mind this is what he is trying to actualize—his *Kingship*.

The last component or dimension to the theoretical framework of this study involves a specific discussion on how through their masculinity these men have manifested their street life expressions. Whether on the fields of the slave plantation, in the Northern inner cities during the Great Depression, or in the prison industrial complex of the 21st century, these men's street life energy typically has manifested into two dominant kinds expressions across time and space. Typically there has been an *inward* and *outward* expression of their street life energy. Inward expression of street life activities generally can manifest on two levels: (1) inside the U. S. born African community (e. g. interpersonal violence, hustling activities, etc.) and (2) inside the individual (e. g. suicide, substance abuse, depression, severe mental imbalance). Outward expression of street life activities represent those activities engaged in more so from an extremely aggressive socio-political or activist perspective. Typically, outward activities express themselves on to the perpetrators or those forces and evils behind the inadequate economic or educational opportunities in these low-income communities (e. g. Underground Railroad, slave revolts, slave rebellions, inner city riots, "Black" Power Movement, Black Army, Five Percenters, etc.). Although extensive attention will be given to both forms of expressions, this study will focus mainly on how these men have used this lifestyles as an inward expression. Specifically, I will pay the most attention to the first level of the inward expression just noted above.

Chapter II:
The Socio-Historical Development
Of The Street Life Orientation
In The U. S. Born African Male Experience

“One of my earliest recollections is that of my mother cooking a chicken at night, and awakening her children for the purpose of feeding them. How or where she got it I do not know. I presume, however, it was procured from our owner’s farm. Some people may call this theft. If such a thing were to happen now, I should condemn it as theft myself. But taking place at the time it did and for the reason that it did, no one could ever make me believe that my mother was guilty of thieving. She was simply a victim of the system of slavery”. –*Booker T. Washington* (1901/1995).

Prior to the nineteenth century, the main job of upbringing and training of youth was carried by the family, occasionally supplemented by apprenticeship or the church. The school played a rather marginal role in the process of child-rearing. Attendance, school reformers lamented, was sparse. Even those attending, the school year was short. As recently as 1870, less than half of the children of age five to seventeen attended school; among those enrolled, the school year averaged seventy-eight days, or less than a quarter of a year. Today, virtually all children in that age group attend school for an average of half of the days in the year”. –*Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis* (1947/1970)

This chapter will explore the socio-historical development of street life as a social phenomenon as processed in the low-income U. S. born African male experience.

Specifically, I will implement a historical analysis to examine how low-income U. S born African males have engaged in street life practices as a function of their attitudes and experiences with access to economic and educational opportunity. *Simply, how have these men adapted, coped and established personal and group levels of resiliency across time and space in the United States?* Capturing how this notion of resiliency shifted throughout his experience in the United States—how he has coped and adapted to an omnipresence of socio-political and economic turmoil is very useful to understanding the evolution of his current street life orientation. His contemporary street life activities are

given a much-deserved deeper perspective when juxtaposing his current manifestation of street life practices against a historical backdrop.

It is important to note that this historical argument has been a point of contention for a number of scholars. Generally, this literature has traditionally downplayed or disputed the historical linkages of slavery to the contemporary practices or behaviors of street life oriented U. S. born African men. Researchers interested in linking an opportunity argument to this social phenomenon has positioned the severe economic recession and a shift to a technology based work market in the 1970's as the moment of origin for contemporary street life oriented activities present in U. S. born African communities (Cross, 2003; Wilson, 1978/1980; 1987/1990, 1996). Further, it is generally assumed that the commodification of street life in the form of "Blackexploitation" films (e. g. *Dolemite*, *Foxy Brown*, etc.), fictional literature (e. g. comic books, Donald Goines novels, Iceberg Slim novels, etc.), the disco age in the 1970's and Hip-Hop culture thereafter is principally responsible for commercializing, thus, deepening the concentration of criminal culture. The sensationalization of street life oriented Hip-Hop music, specifically, is seen by larger society as deeply influencing the current manifestations of street life activities particularly amongst low-income U. S. born African men (Brown, 2000; Poussaint, 2000).

I would argue that although variance for current street life practices could be attributed to the socio-political and economic nuances of recent times (1970's), additional and much more substantial variance could be accounted for this area of inquiry through a historical examination of the practices of street life oriented U. S. born African men. It is the position of this document that a much fuller or thorough analysis can be developed on

these men by historically tracing his evolution in the United States. Situating the contemporary manifestation of street life activities inside a deeper historical argument reveals a lot about the current social psychological complexities of this phenomenon. A number of his contemporary practices, particularly around issues of resiliency and survival (i. e. interpersonal violence, homicide, substance abuse, etc.) can be witnessed occurring in a historical context extending back to slavery as a result of many of the same fundamental social dynamics present today.

If the evidence can be presented that street life as a coping mechanism has been at play or utilized throughout these men's history in this country, this in and of itself, repudiates the notion that this behavior extends from recent origins or simply as a result of ignorance, laziness or the influence of entertainment based outlets. Just as a historical analysis can be extremely valuable to understanding this phenomenon in a contemporary setting, the resisting all together of a historical analysis on this phenomenon can be equally as damaging to the development of an analysis on these men. Further, if a historical argument can be firmly established, this then forces us to more closely investigate the question, *why have a number of U. S. born African men used street life as a site of resiliency across time and space in this country?*

In contrast to the dominant position several researchers have linked the street life orientation found in these men to African enslavement in the United States. Seeking to move in this theoretical spirit, this study advances a demarcated outline of the history to better understand the evolution of these men's behavior. Specifically, this study delineates these men's history into three major periods: (1) *First Period: U. S. African Slavery: 1619 – 1865*, (2) *Second Period: The 1st Phase of Urbanization For Street Life*

Oriented U. S. Born African Men – 1866 – 1929, and (3) Third Period: The 2nd Phase of Urbanization for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men – 1930 - 1965.

Nevertheless, given the scope of this study and/or the oldest men who make up the data set of this study were born in the 1930's, the review of the historical evolution of the street life oriented U. S. born African male in the front part of the dissertation will begin with the Third Period. For an extensive review of the literature regarding the First and Second Period please see Appendix I for an in-depth discussion. The fourth period (1965 – present) which is chapter three in this dissertation is where the contemporary literatures of street life oriented U. S. born African men as it relates to issues of opportunity and resiliency are explored.

*Third Period: The 2nd Phase of Urbanization
for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men 1929 - 1965*

The third period was full of great socio-economic and political turbulence, which in turn deeply effected the evolutionary development of the street life oriented U. S. born African male. Major events like the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II and the Civil Rights Movement significantly informed his experience in a new way. In most instances these events influenced or contributed to the increased urbanization of the street life oriented U. S. born African male. The third period as in the prior two periods, was characterized by a significant concentration of street life activities reaching national epidemic proportions in low income U. S. born African communities (Keiser, 1969; Kerner Commission, 1968/1988). However, it was the Northern and Midwestern urbanization of the experience that in many respects influenced his experience the most throughout the United States.

The Great Depression which lasted between 1929 – 1939, economically devastated the larger U. S. born African community (Anderson, 1988; Benett, 1961/1988; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Katz, 1995; Kerner Commission, 1968/1988; Lemann, 1991; Marable, 1983/2000; Massey & Denton, 1993; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Perkins, 1987; Smith, 1972; Wright, 1940/1989). Millions of Southern migrants with their families migrated North in search of economic opportunity in the factories given the decline of the sharecropping industry (Brown, 1965/1993; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993); Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993; Young, 2004). In fact, it is in the third period where the sharecropping communities as traditionally understood would come to a close. The rush to the Northern factories would be for naught given that Northern and Midwestern U. S. born African inner city communities were affected the most by The Great Depression (Brown, 1965/1993; Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993; Young, 2004). Massey & Denton (1993) say:

The Great Depression of the 1930s ravaged the black communities of the north and quickly wiped out the gains of prior decades. As consumer demand fell and factories closed, black workers were the first to be fired. As income in the ghettos dropped, black businesses withered and the renaissance came to an abrupt halt. Within a few months of Black Thursday in 1929, Jesse Binga's State Bank, the pride of south Chicago, had collapsed, and John Nail's Harlem realty company declared bankruptcy. Among intellectuals, W. E. B. DuBois lost his home and life insurance, and the poet and publisher Countee Cullen wrote his former wife to explain that owing to the drop in his newspaper circulation, he could no longer meet his alimony payments...

... Although the Great Depression hurt all Americans, conditions were far worse in the northern black ghettos than anywhere else (116).

The living and health conditions were reprehensible to say the least. Southern migrants were unable to fathom the extreme mortality rates, poor housing conditions and unemployment rates they would inevitably come to experience in the North. Economic

poverty oftentimes was so strident in these communities that they literally matched the living conditions of third world countries. According to Drake and Cayton (1945/1993) the Great Depression caused droves of factory workers and former Southern sharecroppers to secure economic opportunities through traditional routes in spaces like the churches and relief stations as well as through illegal means in spaces such as local bars, pool rooms and on street corners.

The New Deal (Bennett, 1961/1993; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Gibbs, 1988; Katz, 1995; Marable, 1983/2000; Meir & Rudwick, 1966) and World War II (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Gregory, 1964/1986; Higgs & Margo, 1995; Katz, 1995; Kerner Commission, 1968/1988; Kozol, 1991; Lemann, 1991; Marable, 1983/2000; Massey & Denton, 1993; Perkins, 1987) were two key events largely responsible for bringing a close to the Great Depression. The New Deal programs signed into effect by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the mid to late 1930's considerably eased the devastating effects of The Great Depression for some low-income U. S. born Africans. Based on the relief programs designed by Roosevelt during his tenure as Governor of New York, he and his administration implemented a federal program to challenge the vast economic problems of the country. These programs resulted in social security, reformed pension, healthcare, a host of a new employment opportunities as well as welfare or public assistance programs. Also, the New Deal centrally is responsible for the development of inner city housing projects. These new densely clustered living developments greatly contributed to the increased or continued urbanization of street life oriented U. S. Born African men (Anderson, 1988; Bennett, 1961/1993; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Hill, 1992; Katz, 1995; Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001; Rainwater, 1966; Smith, 1972;

Venkatesh, 2000; Wilson, 1987/1990; Woodson, 1933/1990). World War II would prove to be an opportunity for continued economic success for some U. S. born Africans. Although there was an initial increase of employment at the outset of World War II, substandard wages and unemployment overall has been on the rise in U. S. born African communities since the end of World War II (Kerner Commission, 1968/1988; Marable, 1983/2000). According to Marable (1983/2000) wealthy industrialists such as Henry Ford during World War II secretly paid community religious leaders to convince low-income U. S. born Africans to be tolerant or “patient” with the low wages they were receiving. The further or deepened concentration of street life activities resulted inside these communities given the available lackluster wartime economic opportunities. Specifically, gambling, alcoholism, narcotics abuse and sales as well as prostitution are four activities typically heightened during wartime. Kozol (1991) notes in his study how World War II played an integral role on the concentration and continued development of street life activities in East St. Louis—one of this country’s most economically devastated and criminal ridden U. S. born African inner city communities.

“The city underwent a renaissance of sorts in World War II, when deserted factory space was used for military manufacturing. Cheap black labor was again required. Prostitution also flourished as a market answer to the presence of so many military men at nearby bases. Organized crime set up headquarters in the city. For subsequent decades, East St. Louis was the place where young white men would go for sexual adventures” (Kozol, p. 23).

The living and health conditions of these inner city communities, for the most part, remained in the dismal socio-economic conditions prior to as well as in most instances during The Great Depression (Brown, 1965/1993); Katz, 1995; Keiser, 1969; Kerner Report, 1968/1988; Massey & Denton, 1993). Katz (1995) asserts that it was not

until the 1960's that the government made a concerted effort to "slow" the concentration of economic poverty in these communities. The Kerner Report (1968) concluded the economically poorest sections or approximately 20% of the U. S. born African community between the 1940 – 60's made no significant economic gains while other sections had. The Northern migration, The Great Depression, New Deal and World War II as well as the continued fostering of third world socio-economic and living conditions would work to produce a strain or variant of the street life experience unlike no other. A vibrant round of street life activities, hustles and/or practices resulted as a mainstay in these communities ranging from or including gambling, prostitution, narcotics interpersonal violence and homicide in addition to heightened gang activity (Anyon, 1997; Bennett, 1961/1993; Brown, 1965/1993; Clark, 1965/1989; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Fraiser, 1939; Hill, 1992; Keiser, 1969; Kerner Report, 1968/1988; Kobrin, 1951; Kozol, 1991; Liebow, 1967; Lemann, 1991; Marable, 1983/2000; Perkins, 1987; Short, Jr., Rivera, & Tennyson, 1965). It is during this period that the *systems of gangs* for the first time came to play a significant role within the street life world of inner city U. S. born African communities. Gangs in this third period became increasingly organized and concentrated—more so than they ever had been. Perkins (1987) says:

“By the early 1940s most Black communities, except for the so-called affluent ones, were exposed to some gang activity. Ironically, this activity continued to increase during World War II. While Black men were being drafted to fight the Germans and Japanese, Black street gangs were being organized to fight each other. After World War II, Black street gangs continued to expand and a wave of potentially violent youth began to emerge in large numbers. It was probably during this period that the passion of turf took on a greater significance and became crucial to a gang's identity and power base” (27).

It is in this third period that narcotics and in particular heroin is first regarded as hitting the inner cities *hard* (Brown, 1965/1993; Hill, 1992; Kerner Report, 1968/1988; Marable, 1983/2000; Perkins, 1987). According to Hill (1992), a spike in the prevalence of criminal activities in U. S. born African men in the 1950's is directly linked to the "deliberate infestation of addictive narcotics" in inner city communities. Hill (1992) argues that the "infestation" of narcotics disproportionately affected the young U. S. born African male in particular ways in that he eventually became one of its greatest traffickers and users. This ultimately has resulted in the persistent control and weakening of the low income U. S. born African community. Hill (1992) says the flooding of these communities with narcotics, "... was a calculated effort to exploit the psychological vulnerability of an uprooted and unstable population and to create a dependency on a commodity by external criminal forces" (24). The findings of the Kerner Report (1968/1988) convincingly support the undue proliferation of narcotics and other street life activities during the third period inside these communities. The advisory commission of this study emphatically reported that the concentration of street life activities between the 1940's and 1960's is linked to the lack of quality economic opportunity existent in inner city communities. Also, the Kerner Report makes specific mention of how minimal economic opportunities have dramatically disrupted or shaken the U. S. born African family. This immense family breakdown ultimately has opened large numbers of fathers in particular to the temptations of street life rewards as a means to provide within the throes of economic poverty.

"With the father absent and the mother working, many ghetto children spend the bulk of their time on the streets—the streets of a crime-ridden, violence-prone and poverty-stricken world. The image of success in this world is not that of the 'solid citizen,' the responsible husband and

father, but rather that of the “hustler” who promotes his own interests by exploiting others. The dope (heroin) sellers and the number runners are the ‘successful’ men because their earnings far outstrip those men who try to climb the economic ladder in honest ways.

Young people in the ghetto are acutely conscious of a system which appears to offer rewards to those who illegally exploit others and failure to those who struggle under traditional responsibilities. Under these circumstances, many adopt exploitation and the “hustle” as a way of life” (262).

R. Lincoln Keiser’s (1969) study, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets*, chronicles the extremely organized activities of the Vice Lords in the mid 1960’s on the Westside of Chicago. Keiser’s (1969) ethnographic work gets at the underpinnings of this notorious gang by not only noting the graphic depictions of interpersonal violence. Keiser (1969) pushes his analysis several steps further by noting this organization’s history, hierarchy, bonding activities as well as core ideology. Richard Wright (1945/1993) wrote an introduction for Drake and Cayton’s classic text, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, where he boldly and passionately represents a non-traditional position that pushes a chilling caveat to America regarding the concentration of street life activities amongst U. S. born Africans in the third period. Wright (1945/1993) takes the reader through a brief theoretical analysis that argues how the socio-economic and political frustrations of low income U. S. born Africans will inevitably lead to disastrous problems on a national level. Specifically, Wright (1945/1993) warns “capitalist” larger America that they are reproducing amongst low income U. S. born Africans what Western Europe produced in Germany with Adolph Hitler. He exclaims that through the continued or pseudo-permanent fixture of capitalism, street-life oriented U. S. born African men, across space and time, in positions

of sustained economic poverty, will inevitably grow and organize to a point where it will produce its own variant of a Hitler. Wright (1945/1993) poignantly notes:

Hitler knew his industrial slums, knew the brutalized millions trapped in them, knew of their hungers, knew their humiliations, knew the feverish longing of their hearts....

Gangster of the human spirit that he was, Hitler organized into a brutal army the men who live in those areas of society that the Western world had neglected, organized those men whose reality the Western world could not see.

Let us disentangle in our minds Hitler's deeds from what Hitler exploited. His deeds were crimes; but the hunger he exploited in the hearts of Europe's millions was a valid hunger and is still there....

... the problem of the Negro in America is a phase of this general problem, containing and telescoping the longings in the lives of a billion colored subject colonial people into a symbol.

... the American Negro, {person} of the culture that crushes him, wants to be free in a way that white men are free; for him to wish otherwise would be unnatural, unthinkable (p. xxiv-xxv).

Claude Brown's (1965/1993) classic autobiography, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, discusses his trials and tribulations growing up on the streets of Harlem. Brown (1965/1993) takes the reader through Harlem offering touching experiences that demonstrate the unpleasant effects heroin, gambling and prostitution, specifically had on the psyches of Harlem residents. Brown (1965/1993) clearly reveals in his autobiography how a lack of economic opportunity often lead members of his community to engage in street life practices. Brown (1965/1993) argues that the street life activities of Harlem was greatly informed by the South in the Northern migration. According to Brown (1965/1991) the wild, violent or street life activities commonly noted in the bars and clubs of Harlem Saturday nights were activities that were customary in the live juke joints of the South on Saturday nights.

“In the tales about down home that I'd heard, everybody was trying to either cash out (die) on Saturday night or cash somebody else out (kill or severely

hurt). There was always the good corn liquor that Cy Walker used to make, and there was always that new gun that somebody had bought. The first time they shot the gun at so-and-so, he jumped out of the window and didn't stop running until he got home—and got his gun. You'd sit there and say, 'Well, I'll be damned. I never knew they had all those bad niggers in the South. I always thought the baddest cat down there was Charlie (the white man).' But it seemed as though on Saturday night, the niggers got bad. Of course, they didn't get bad enough to mess with Charlie, but they got bad. They were bad enough to cut each other's throats, shoot each other, hit each other in the head with axes, and all that sort of action. Women were bad enough to throw lye on one another.

Saturday night down home was really something, but, then, Saturday night in Harlem was really something too" (302).

The South in the third period as was the case in the first two periods was a place that hosted a very large concentration of street life activities within its low-income U. S. born African communities. This concentration arguably was bigger and more expansive in the South, during the third period than any other place in the United States. However, it is important to note that the urban experience of the street life oriented U. S. born African male was nonetheless more of a dominant impression or image in the minds of larger America which oftentimes obscured the activities taking place in the South. Also, it was in the South where the inadequate education of this community was most pronounced. The lethal combination of interpersonal violence as well as low quality economic and educational opportunities produced a Southern variant of street life activities that was extremely difficult to manage. Lemann (1991) says:

"It is clear that whatever the cause of its differentness, black sharecropper society on the eve of the introduction of the mechanical cotton picker was the equivalent of big city-city ghetto society today in many ways. It was the national center of illegitimate childbearing and of the female-headed family. It had the worst public education system in the country, the one whose students were most likely to leave school before finishing and most likely to be illiterate even if they did finish. It had an extremely high rate of violent crime; in 1933, the six states with the highest murder rates were all in the South, and most of the murders were black-on-black. Sexually transmitted disease and substance abuse were nationally

known as special problems of the black rural South; home-brew whiskey was much more physically perilous than crack cocaine is today..." (31).

The living and health conditions of the sharecropping communities, as late as 1965, literally were comparable to the conditions of the slave plantation. Large sharecropping communities often hosted not only the schools but also the churches and banks used by sharecroppers. The people were intentionally duped in that they were cut off systematically from the opportunities of larger society so that they could successfully serve and fulfill their economic purpose to the owners of the sharecropping communities. In addition to the ignorance of the sharecroppers to the larger ways of the world, many of them were legally forced or boxed into this appalling lifestyle. Southern U. S. born Africans desperately sought education as an avenue to make it through economic poverty in the third period, as in the previous two periods (Anderson, 1988; Kobrin, 1951; Short, Jr. et al., 1965; Woodson, 1933/1990). However, the so-called opportunity to be adequately educated oftentimes mirrored or echoed the inadequate educational opportunities of the past or in the first two periods. Simply, access to educational mobility was horrendous at best for the masses of Southern low-income U. S. born Africans during the third period. It was common for children to walk miles to attend poorly equipped plantation-owned schools. These schools, even in the third period, generally consisted of one or two rooms devoid of any heating or plumbing. Education generally did not exceed the eighth grade. All of the grades typically were taught in the same room and most of the students were far behind the normal grade level for their age. The school year by and large did not extend past four or five months in most instances. Schoolbooks issued to the students usually were ragged overly used books donated by white schools. According to Lemann (1991), "In 1938 the average American teacher's

salary was \$1, 374, and the average value of a school district's buildings and equipment per student was \$274. For blacks in Mississippi, the figures were \$144 and \$11" (Lemann, 1991, 17-18). The conditions or school facilities were so terrible in the South as well as throughout the country that the schools often played a direct role in the development of street life oriented U. S. born African men (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 1965/1993; Gregory, 1964/1986; Katz, 1995; Keiser, 1969; Kobrin, 1951; Kozol, 1991; Lemann, 1991; Perkins, 1987; Short, Jr., 1965; Suttles, 1968/1974). Consistent with the second period most of the schools in the U. S. born African community struggled with issues of drop out rates, truancy, school violence as well as student-teacher interactions. According to the Kerner Report (1968/1988) it was the smallest segment of the U. S. born African community or the wealthiest of this ethnic group that enjoyed the benefits of an adequate education between the 1940's and 1960's.

Furthermore, it is in the third period that notion of "Black" self-hatred is proposed and offered as a way by the academy to understand the street life phenomenon in the U. S. born African community as it relates to economic and educational opportunity. In short, the "Black" self-hatred thesis argues that as a consequence of widespread oppression, vis-à-vis staunch racism as well as an overwhelming lack of educational and economic opportunities, U. S. born Africans have been conditioned across time and space to hate or feel inferior about themselves in relation to other ethnic groups but in particular white people. More specifically, given that U. S. born African and white liberals alike willingly frame these men as being academically inferior, these so-called experts strongly argued for the placement of low-income U. S. born Africans into integrated educational spaces. Put another way, it widely was agreed that low-income U. S. born African

children notions of self-hatred would be reduced if extended the opportunity to be educated with white students in the same learning space. White students were thought to be able to model for low income U. S. born African children how to feel personally and academically confident, to curb a lot of the street life behavior noted in and out of the high schools at this time. Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) whose work greatly advanced the “Black” self-hatred thesis argued that the “Negro” is beleaguered by the “mark of oppression” which for them was the “inevitable” mark of self-hatred. Their study bolstered, framed or organized the self-hatred argument from a psychoanalytic theoretical perspective. Specifically, their racist and white supremacist assumptions held that the “Negro” largely is cultureless, psychologically impaired, inferior and prone to high levels of sexual activity and interpersonal violence.

Kardiner & Ovesey (1951) explored issues of “Black” self-hatred in a study of 26 low-income U. S. born Africans. From this study they concluded that most U. S. born Africans and in particular low-income U. S. born Africans were significantly affected or impacted by accounts of “Black” self-hatred. More specifically, U. S. born Africans were thought to have psychologically been afflicted with an inferiority complex in comparison to larger America and in particular white America. In their assessment of high school aged low-income U. S. born African boys, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) carelessly and crudely conclude:

“Part of this street life pattern is the result of sheer boredom and the irrelevancy of education. Hence, they cannot be attentive at school or get the feeling that they are engaged in a meaningful and ego-enhancing activity. Many of these high school boys have been to bed with women the age of their female teachers and the disciplines and obligations of school life make no sense to them. In consequence, school is treated as a meaningless routine. The street, on the other hand, offers adventure, struggle for dominance, mock and real hostilities. It is in other words, a better training for life—according to their sights—than education” (Kardiner & Ovesey, p. 311).

Based on their data, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) proposed a three-prong model consisting of social discrimination, aggression and low self-esteem to explain the loss of adaptive ability in low-income U. S. born Africans. Their model notes social discrimination to inevitably result in massive low self-esteem and aggression among “Negroes”. Low self-esteem is expected to be the direct result of social discrimination while aggression is the reaction to low self-esteem. Also, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) argued that “Negroes” often used several “maneuvers” for self-esteem and aggressive tendencies with the attempt to resist manifestation of self-hatred. A denial-oriented maneuver was often highlighted for low self-esteem and aggression. For instance, they believed that the “Negro” developed “high aspirations” or unrealistic obtainable goals in an oppressive environment as a response to low self-esteem. Or, “Negroes” would be in denial of their inordinate amounts of aggression to help allay the imminent onset of self-hatred.

“Negro” aggression was believed to be deeply inherent. Consequently, self-hatred was argued to uncontrollably manifest into a general rage and fear. Kardiner and Ovesey’s (1951) concern with “Negro” self-hatred, appeared to be based on a larger concern with the “Negro’s” potential for “retaliatory” behavior on fellow “Negroes”, but in particular white America. However, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) believed “Negroes” would, nonetheless, unconsciously develop “techniques” to stifle the rage, “The greater the rage, the more abject the submission. Thus, scraping and bowing, compliance and ingratiation may actually be indicators of suppressed rage and sustained hatred. Rage may be kept under control but replaced with an attenuated but sustained feeling—

resentment. ... It may finally be denied altogether (by an automatic process) and replaced by an entirely different kind of expression, like laughter, gaiety, or flippancy” (304-305).

More specifically, Kardiner and Ovesey (1951) argued that the development of self-hatred among low-income U. S. born Africans resulted from the prevalence of bad family dynamics such as female-headed homes, having children out of wedlock or early sexual activity. Also, they insisted the white oppressive environment to be mostly responsible for making it difficult for lower income U. S. born African families to raise, love and guide their children. Parents were thought to provide negligible guidance because it was expected that they grossly suffered from self-hatred. These psychoanalytically trained researchers concluded that low income “Negro” children were more apt to be delinquent or street life oriented because their parents were more likely to do a poor job of implementing “rigid anal training”. Further, the older child was expected to internalize the self-hatred modeled by their parents, which particularly lead the “Negro” male to a street life. Also, additional motivation for the “Negro’s” “savagery” on the streets was argued to come out of their rejection of formal education. As a consequence of economic poverty, these presumed self-hating “Negroes” were thought to experience a hard life that would not be offset by the “boredom” of high school. Kardiner and Ovesey’s (1951) study was the impetus for discussions on “Negro” self-hatred involving education (Clark, 1965/1989; Landreth & Johnson, 1953; Rainwater, 1966), aggression/hostility or street life (Allport, 1954; Clark, 1965/1989; Noel, 1964; Rainwater, 1966; Segal, 1964; Trent, 1957) and social class (Allport, 1954, Clark, 1965/1989; Landreth & Johnson, 1953; McDonald and Gythner, 1965; Noel, 1964;

Rainwater, 1966; Segal, 1964) in third period. Shortly after Kardiner and Ovesey's (1951) study was published, much of this inherently racist and supremacist work was used to win the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown Vs the Topeka Board of Education*, which led to the desegregation of all schools in the United States.

In closing, the increasing public attention of street life oriented U. S. born African men (largely a result of the Civil Rights Movement) during this third period ultimately prompted or forced the federal government to deeply examine what was going on inside these inner city communities. The socio-economic and political activities particularly after World War II were enough to raise the eyebrows of the federal government to respond. The following activities: (1) the Northern migration, (2) vast economic poverty, (3) prevalence of street life activities, (4) the continued breakdown of the family, (5) lack of access to quality schools as well as (6) the inhumane living and health conditions all proved to be the antecedents to a government based report on the conditions of low-income U. S. born Africans. Specifically, the federal government hired Daniel Patrick Moynihan to conduct a study on these conditions. The Moynihan report ultimately would turn out to be an overwhelmingly controversial but nonetheless major study on the conditions of these inner city communities. In short, the study concluded the street life condition in these communities were the result of fatherless homes and very little economic and educational opportunity.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the social structural systems of the United States throughout all three periods played a major role in producing and shaping the development of the street life orientation in low-income U. S. born African men. One of the major theses of this chapter has been to document how the socio-economic, political

and educational systems across time and space have nurtured, cultivated and guided the development of his street life orientation. The first period (1619-1865), largely characterized by physical bondage or slavery, generally entailed all together no socio-economic, political or educational rights for U. S. born Africans. Also, it is in this period that the origins of a police and prison system can be noted. The second period (1866 – 1929) is largely characterized by these same socio-economic and political conditions, however now the experience would increasingly, as result of the Civil War and Northern migration, become more urbanized. The second period also would bring the smaller period of “Black” Reconstruction which resulted in the formation of a U. S. born African middle class, as well as up until this period of so-called Reconstruction, unprecedented educational, political and religious facilities. The third period (1930 – 1965), largely characterized by these same conditions, distinguishes itself with such events as the Great Depression, New Deal and Civil Rights movement. According to Anyon (1997):

“... every 20 to 30 years during this century, Americans have responded to social distress and unrestrained corporate expansion and profiteering with a flowering of egalitarian ideals. After the massive, unregulated global flow of capital and industrial exploitation at home in the late nineteenth century, came the Progressive Era and the popular expansion of the American Socialist Party. After the untrammelled corporate spending and expansion of the 1920s came the New Deal and the growth of the labor movement and of the U. S. Communist Party. After the quiescent 1950’s and the alleged entrenchment of a “corporate mentality” in all our psyches came the turbulent and egalitarian 1960s” (186).

CHAPTER III
CONTEMPORARY STREET LIFE LITERATURES
AS DISCUSSED ON THE LOW-INCOME
U. S. BORN AFRICAN MALE EXPERIENCE

1965 - PRESENT

The following text explores notions of resiliency in contemporary literatures developed on and presumably for, street life oriented U. S. born African men. I will present the dominant discourses throughout the literatures while weaving throughout the chapter, a counter or alternative position on these men. More specifically, I will take the reader through a review of the traditional and non-traditional literatures on these men around the notion of resiliency as a way of providing more of a holistic portrayal of these men in the current literature. It is important to note that street life, at large, has been ignored in the social psychological literature. Although other disciplines have been more dedicated to this literature (i. e. sociology, anthropology, history, and criminology) scholarly literatures overall have fallen short in developing dominant and vibrant discourses as well as empirically tested theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations of street life particularly in low-income U. S. born Africans. To illustrate the assumptions that constitute these literatures, I will draw from a variety of research studies that exemplify a particular dynamic of theory or method. This *selection* process should not be read as an attempt to classify researchers as traditional or non-traditional but to signify, instead, the ways in which psychological research has reinforced stereotypic notions about street life oriented U. S. born African men (traditional) and the ways in which psychological research has challenged and broadened our understandings of these men. It would be possible, in fact, for the same researcher to pop up in the traditional and the

non-traditional segments of this paper. The choice of research *exemplars* is simply to illustrate, not to vilify. It is further important to note that the demarcation of the literatures never fit as nicely as they appear in our invented criteria. Researchers vacillate, thus, rarely maintaining any one permanent position in any one clear direction. However, the demarcation of the work on this topic will primarily be based on the general argument posed in the research.

Furthermore, I will briefly describe for the reader the socio-economic and political stage that extended for approximately twenty years between the late 1960's until the late 1980's before presenting a detailed review of the street life literatures for the fourth period. This stage is presented to the reader as a way of providing an alternative theoretical lens to unearth, examine and better yet understand the rationales for the sharp concentration of street life activities within recent times in low-income U. S. born African communities.

The Socio-Economic and Political Foundation for the Fourth Period: 1966 – 1988

The indefatigable efforts of the Civil Rights Movement had been so successful that it played a key role in influencing the socio-economic and political policies of the 1950's and 1960's. Although there was a real presence of economic poverty and street life activities throughout this period in the U. S. born African community, economic and educational opportunities were clearly more available. Specifically, the late 1950's and 1960's would prove to be a period of substantial economic gain. Social programs and/or research on the conditions of low-income U. S. born Africans received unprecedented support by the federal government under the Kennedy, Johnson and Carter presidential administrations. According to Lemann (1991), Robert Kennedy framed a napkin he

found with the words “poverty” scribbled several times on it by his brother John F. Kennedy not long after his assassination. This napkin represented for these men the need to remain committed to the social concerns of those U. S. citizens who were economically impoverished. In 1964 Johnson declared “unconditional war on poverty in America” (Lemann, 1991). These men’s efforts gave birth to what was referred to as the *Great Society* and/or *War on Poverty* under the Johnson administration. This federal intervention on issues of social injustice eventually resulted in arguably the most rapid socio-economic and political overhaul the U. S. born African community positively ever experienced in a single period. The efforts of the Civil Rights Movement and these liberal administrations produced *affirmative action* policies that greatly benefited or increased the livelihood of a small segment of U. S. born Africans. This deepened socioeconomic splitting of this community pitted the community against each other—resulting in the increased tension between the two groups (Gibbs, 1988; MacLeod, 1987/1995). Tension between the two groups has arguably been at an unprecedented level since the late 1960’s. It is important to note that this segment, although relatively small, had been the largest segment of U. S. born Africans ever assisted at one time or during a single period by federal quarters of this government. This segment had the opportunity of taking advantage of a number of quality privileges. Specifically, it is in 1965 where the first stable U. S. born African middle class is formed (Cross, 1995). Up until this historical point, employed U. S. born Africans, for the most part, had been relinquished to the ranks of working class or blue collar employment. Eighty percent of all U. S. born Africans with PhD’s came after 1960 (Smitherman, 1991). Further, middle income U. S. born Africans, given their newly acquired financial status, were in a

position to purchase property in the suburbs. As they moved by the tens of thousands into the suburbs they inadvertently took with them precious socio-economic and political capital. This ultimately led to the rapid deterioration of inner city communities in the 1970's where the majority of U. S. born Africans still resided. It was estimated that by 1970, 81% of U. S. born Africans lived in an urban environment (Wilson, 1978/1980).

The glorious sixties would succumb to the severe economic recession of the 1970's (Larson, 1988; MacLeod, 1987/1995; Major & Billson, 1992; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001; Rose, 1994b; Wilson, 1978). This recession was noted to be the worst since the Great Depression particularly for low-income U. S. born Africans residing in the inner city. We experienced in the 1970's a massive restructuring of the U. S. economy, i. e. a shift from labor to a service or technology based market. Meaningful economic opportunity had virtually vanished particularly within inner city communities. When we take a look at employment rates during this period we can clearly see a sharp decline in employment particularly for low-income U. S. born African men. Specifically, 8.1% of these men were unemployed in 1965 and by 1975 these men experienced a 14.7% rate of unemployment (Marable, 1983/2000). Joblessness increased by 140% among U. S. born Africans between 1972 and 1982 (Majors & Billson, 1992).

In addition to economic troubles, the country was sharply divided at this time as a function of the Vietnam War, the burgeoning Middle East troubles particularly around issues of oil or energy as well as our eternal achilles heel, racism. Elements of the Civil Rights Movement and Nation of Islam eventually evolved into the "Black" Power Movement and Black Army in the 1970's. Covert agencies or what was referred to as COINTELPRO in the federal government eventually in large numbers imprisoned and/or

assassinated key figures (i. e. Fred Hampton) in this new U. S. born African political movement. By the late 1970's and early 1980's these men and women, their organizations as well as inner city communities were illegally infiltrated by government factions who would flood these entities with illegal narcotics (i. e. primarily heroin) and guns as way to suppress as well as profit from this "militant" uprising (Brown, 1969). Although there was an independent street life population that blended or overlapped with the revolutionaries and vice versa throughout this period, more of our men with the loss of the "Black" Power Movement and in desperate economic need eventually turned in greater numbers to the streets. More U. S. born African men died from homicide in 1977 than in all ten years in Vietnam combined (Wilson, 1990). The increase concentration of street life practices, "Black" Power Movement and COINTELPRO activities in the 1970's ultimately all worked to engender a heavy presence of surveillance that has to this day remained in inner city communities.

Prison rates spiked during the 1970's with increased incarceration of U. S. born African men (May & Pitts, 2000; Perkins, 1987; Rideau & Wikberg, 1992; Venkatesh, 2000; Young, 2004). Consequently, organized gangs began to thrive again amongst these men, which in concentrated numbers spilled back into the community. It is during this period where gangs first begin to engage in narcotics (i. e. heroin and powder cocaine) as a primarily hustle. The style of the prisons in the 1970's grew to become popular and trendy in the inner cities. Their baggy pants and cool swagger even until today has left an indelible mark on our society. It was not long before the image of gangs or street life oriented U. S. born African men was commodified in commercial markets. Middle America, through magazines, fictional books, music, sports and film was flooded for the

first time with an *image* of the streets. Writers like *Donald Goines* or an *Iceberg Slim* as well as *Blackexploitation* film stars Dolemite or Foxy Brown extensively wrote and performed to the amazement of millions about the tales of inner city communities in the 1970's. Such figures are still celebrated by the current Hip-Hop generation and/or considered "hood" icons. Two of Donald Goines fictional books have been recently turned into movies. *Crime Partner* was released in 2001 while *Never Die Alone* was recently released in 2004.

The socio-economic problems of the 1970's would worsen during the 1980's under President Ronald Reagan. His conservative policies snatched critical funding from welfare recipients, mental institutions as well as other vital social programs used by low-income citizens. This resulted in the continued dilapidation of our communities and a rapid increase in the homeless population. His inhumane policies were regarded as *Reaganomics*. According to Marable (1983/2000) Reaganomics represents the socio-economic and political spirit of the 1970's. Conservative scholars prevailed under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. In fact, conservative theories on why economic poverty existed dominated with little opposition from liberal scholars (Katz, 1995).

Conservatives had taken advantage of the white liberals' deemphasis on race and culture in exchange for a universal or multicultural *human* model (Feagin & Vera, 1995). This atmosphere considerably weakened the liberal position and opened the door for conservatives to challenge the mental and/or intellectual aptitude of low-income non-white populations devoid of a cultural framework. Liberals were caught on their heels as it became obvious that they had not developed a compelling intellectual argument to

challenge the conservative's position(s). The result was the theoretical slaughter of low-income non-white and particularly U. S. born African peoples.

Joblessness in the 1980's specifically impacted low-income U. S. born African men. In 1982, 54% of U. S. born African men were unemployed between the ages of 18-29 (Massey & Denton, 1993). The conditions of the community, a severe joblessness rate and the release of prisoners from the 1970's ultimately produced the infamous *crack era* in the 1980's. Crack-cocaine is a more addictive, cheaper and hardened form of the more expensive powder cocaine. The crack era of the 1980's generated three basic results for street life oriented U. S. born African men: (1) death, (2) incarceration and (3) unprecedented levels of money. Murder rates spiked drastically during this period for street life oriented U. S. born African men (Blumstein, 2000; Sparks, 2003). Homicide accounted for 42% of all death of these men between 1978 – 1988 (Sparks, 2003). By the mid eighties, the Prison Industrial Complex had developed into a multibillion dollar corporate entity (May & Pitts, 2000; Rideau & Wikberg, 1992). Some interpret the devastating economic conditions of the 1970's and 1980's as a political backlash by Republicans to the Kennedy, Johnson and Carter Administrations (Gibbs, 1988).

Contemporary Research on Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men

According to governmental or more conservative standards, 31 – 38 million persons in the United States currently live in economic poverty (Anderton, Barrett & Bogue, 1997). However, "alternative definitions of poverty" or more liberal estimates of current U. S. poverty rates reveal to date, a growing population of at least 50 million people, approximately 1 out of every 5 persons who reside in economic poverty (Anderton, Barrett & Bogue, 1997). Even more distressing, at least 15 million of those

who are economically impoverished are estimated to live in what the federal government term, “extreme poverty” (Anderton, et al, 1997).

Poverty rates show that U. S. born Africans are approximately three times more likely than whites, to live in economic poverty (Anderton, et al, 1997; U. S. Department of Justice, 1996). The U. S. born African unemployment rate by 1982 had reached such dire proportions that it was the “highest ever recorded in post-World War II history; black unemployment reached 18.9 percent as compared to 8.6 percent for whites” (Majors & Billson, 1992). More recently, it has been reported that in a number of inner city communities, 1 in 4 adults are employed at any one time (Wilson, 1996) and approximately 33% of all U. S. born African men are incarcerated, on parole, or on probation (Franklin, 1999; Stevenson, 1998). The reported numbers on children are more grotesque. Nearly 50% of U. S. born African children under the age of 18 or approximately half of this ethnic group’s babies live in economic poverty (Anderton, et al., 1997; Garmezzy, 1991; Harris, 1992). With the exception of the indigenous persons of this land no other ethnic group in the United States can attest to this rate or concentration of economic poverty. The infant mortality rate found in the U. S. born African community are almost twice that of white infant mortality rates (Simon, 1995/1998). We have possibly entered a fifth period with George Bush Jr. outdoing his predecessors Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and his father George Bush Sr. The economy is officially in the worst shape since the Great Depression. Under George Bush Jr, 8.6 million are unemployed; there is a 1.2 million net job lost from the economy since 2001; and 56.6% of reemployed workers had to take lower—paying jobs.

Let's now turn our attention to the scholarly literatures, by first exploring traditional arguments on these men to subsequently be followed up with a review on the non-traditional arguments developed on these same men. It is after World War II where considerable research is first conducted on this population and particularly in what I declare as the fourth period in 1965 after the Moynihan report. Although psychology at large has been resistant to examining this social phenomenon there is wide interdisciplinary interest in this area of inquiry. It is important to note that most research on this population is more or less grounded in a traditional stance. Traditional notions represent the dominant discourse throughout both conservative and liberal literatures.

Review of Traditional Literatures

Traditional theories used to understand notions of coping and resiliency in street life-oriented U. S. born African males (Bowman, 1989; Freitas & Downey, 1998; Mancini, 1980; Nettles & Pleck, 1994; Poussaint, 1983; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000; Spencer, 1995; Stevenson, 1997; Wilson, 1990; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles & Maton, 1999) have incorporated in them a number of problematic assumptions. Such models often lack in providing a meaningful approach to thinking about context in relation to notions of resiliency. That is, in most cases these theoretical frameworks or conceptualizations allow researchers no real way of analyzing patterns of resiliency across time in the individual and group as understood in relation to the physical space or environment occupied by the person. The history of the person, group and environment are extremely important in understanding present patterns of resiliency in street life oriented U. S. born African men (Payne & Brown, in press).

Moreover, traditional arguments tend to *dichotomize* resiliency as resilient or non-resilient. As Payne and Brown (in press) note, this dichotomization is a fundamental flaw in the conceptualization of the construct. Most persons demonstrate a clear resilient capacity in that they are seeking some means to continue surviving in life. Therefore, resiliency should be understood in relation to the scope of the persons' or groups' reality (Taylor, 1976). So this means that perhaps for an upper-middle class white male, resiliency is and should rest on his academic performance or employment and financial status. However, for other persons who may be less privileged such as street life oriented U. S. born African males, resiliency may mean figuring innovative ways to eat from one day to the next. Let's review one traditional theoretical model proposed to analyze issues of coping and resiliency in these men.

Janet Mancini's (1980) book, *Strategic Styles: Coping in the Inner City*, advances a theoretical model that reflects many of the same assumptions noted above. Based on a secondary analysis of a 1966 data set consisting of 61 U. S. born African adolescents from Roxbury, Massachusetts, Mancini (1980) developed a very detailed theoretical model for researchers to better understand contemporary issues of coping and resiliency in U. S. born African adolescents particularly as it relates to issues of "deviance" in inner city communities. Mancini (1980) notes that a strategic style is a way of coping that allows inner city U. S. born African adolescents to successfully negotiate relationships and/or experiences throughout their community. According to Mancini (1980) these coping strategies are socio-culturally based. That is, U. S. born African adolescents will find strategic styles to cope, however, their style of choice will be directly connected to the culture, society and community in which they reside. Also, it is through this form of

coping that the adolescent male will develop his personal value system. Mancini (1980) says:

“Strategic style is the way a person deals with definitions prevailing in the cultures most salient to him. It includes the way in which he defines situations in his own right, and by the information about himself he expresses or “gives off”. It includes values, attitudes, assumptions, and feelings about self and others, as they are expressed in a composite behavioral pattern: It is characteristic personal adaptation to, and management of, the conflict between self and others, internal and external pressures” (p. 23)

When using her theoretical model, Mancini (1980) says it is important to check for the “primary style” used out of the strategic style typology she developed. Mancini’s (1980) elaborately and creatively termed typology consists of five strategic styles with each style containing two subtypes. (1) The Cool Guy: the together guy and supercool cat (2) The Conformist: the all right guy and the too good guy (3) The Tough Guy: the real tough guy, the troublemaker (4) The Actor, the put-on, the con artist and (5) The Retreater, the withdrawn kid, the loner.

Mancini (1980) developed her theoretical model from a symbolic interactionist approach. She argues that this approach allows for the exploration of connections between “individual psychology and social structures through the investigation of how people interact with each other”. An explicit assumption of the model is that it allows for the phenomenology or standpoint of the adolescent to be given fair voice in a researchers’ analysis particularly in relation to immediate or salient social structures. Although, Mancini (1980) presumes her approach allows the young men’s voices and experiences to shape the analysis of their behavior, she nonetheless, throughout the text defines the behavior for them. For instance, in regard to the troublemaker, she refers to him as a

“delinquent”. She goes as far as to say that the tough guy “seeks conflict and confrontation with others in a violent and aggressive manner, often for no apparent reason.... His aggression is often off target, nonideological in intent, and likely to be considered by the society as a whole as deviant or illegal rather than revolutionary” (p. 91). It is difficult to imagine that in 1966 adolescent boys from Roxbury, Massachusetts would frame their behavior in ways that corroborated this kind of analysis. I am sure that these young boys would be able to provide a clear description of why they do what they do in particular instances as opposed to what Mancini (1980) ultimately suggests—that these young men to some significant degree support the analysis that they operate as “deviant” for “no apparent reason” behaving in aggressive ways that are “often off target, nonideological in intent...”

Mancini (1980) further states:

“The search for change, freedom, action, risk, excitement is paramount....but is usually enmeshed in a tightly knit peer group that provides an outlet for dangerous and impulsive behavior. He seems to get caught frequently, and to swing between periods of high-energy, high-risk activity (forays) and periods of listlessness, apathy, and extensive sleep (almost hibernation). Much of his behavior occurs on impulse (‘I just felt like it’)...” (91)

For Mancini (1980) to develop and present a model in 1980 based on 1966 data and perhaps a inappropriate symbolic interactionist theoretical framework⁴, presumably for a research and activist community dedicated to servicing a street life oriented U. S.

⁴ Cooley’s “Looking Glass Self Theory” and Mead’s (1934) theoretical work would greatly influence the initial shaping of the literature on the U. S. born African experience. Cooley (1902) and Mead’s (1934) theoretical framework would be used in large measure to demonstrate the presumed prevalent rates of U. S. born African self-hatred. It was assumed, as argued in Cooley (1902) and Mead’s (1934) work from a generic sense, that most U. S. born Africans developed their identity and overall self-worth from that of the perceptions of larger and whiter America. Given that larger America during early part of the 20th century was publicly racist, it was expected that the U. S. born Africans would largely be unhappy with themselves, thus mired in a sense of perpetual self-hatred. See William E. Cross, Jr.’s (1991) *Shades of Black*.

born African male population, is in some respects is troubling. Mancini's (1980) theoretical model emerged in the literature just a few short years before the crack era was in full swing or at its peak in terms of profits, homicide and unprecedented devastation of inner city communities across the country. According to Spark's (2003) between the mid 1980's and early 1990's homicide rates particularly increased amongst inner city youth (15 – 19) by 103%. Street life oriented U. S. born African men had a 1 and 21 chance of being killed before reaching 25. Mancini's (1980) model, although well intentioned, was inadequate at providing ways to think about and handle the vicious impact the crack era had on largely inner city U. S. born Africans in the 1980's.

It is important for researchers in the 21st century, interested in seriously engaging in work involving street life U. S. born African men, to resist the temptation of pushing analysis that are grounded in pathology. Traditional researchers have commonly regarded these men's involvement in such activities as ultimately rooted in the hatred of themselves and their ethnic group. Specifically, traditional based researchers have typically diagnosed these men with "Black" Self Hatred. Let us us look more deeply at this concern of self and/or image in the next section.

"Black" Self-Hatred

"Black" self-hatred is generally assumed to be a precursor and/or causal factor to the development of a street life orientation. (Brown, 2000; Evans & Taylor, 1995; Grambs, 1972; Harris, 1992; Kardiner & Ovessy, 1951; Oliver, 1989; Poussaint, 1983, 2000; Rainwater, 1966; Stevenson, 1997; West, 1992; Wilson, 1990). Social scientific analysis of street life and "Black" self-hatred, more or less, uses a *linear* analysis to gather evidence in support of the thesis. Although, traditional theorists often pose an

individualistic critique of the men, these theorists tend to concurrently hold a macro-structural critique as well, which better illustrates the linear analysis they employ. For instance, macro-structural injustices such as institutional racism are thought to develop in some men a disposition for a negative self-concept and/or “Black” self-hatred. As a consequence of the onset of this self-hatred, many men are then thought to be vulnerable to embracing and engaging in the activities of street life. It would be unusual to find in the literature discussions of street life activities as causing Black self-hatred or occurring amongst *some* street life oriented men.

Moreover, when describing street life oriented U. S. born African men through an analysis of “Black” self-hatred, traditional theorists tend to hold at least four other assumptions in their arguments. The assumptions generally are that these men maintain: a.) a fractured ethnic identity b.) non-resilience c.) low self-esteem d.) and a racially induced misguided rage.

Examples of these assumptions are found in earlier periods of the literature (Clark, 1965/1989; Kardiner & Ovessey, 1951; Rainwater, 1966), which suggests that these assumptions not only have a vibrant contemporary presence but have maintained a historical presence as well. Although the following excerpt, by contemporary standards, is in many respects a crude and anachronistic description of the origins of street life oriented U. S. born African men—the example, nonetheless, illustrates how earlier traditional theorists discussed the relationship between street life and “Black” self-hatred.

“That is, in lower class culture human nature is conceived of as essentially bad, destructive, immoral. This is the nature of things. Therefore any one child must be inherently bad unless his parents are very lucky indeed. ...

This means that in the identity development of the child he is constantly exposed to identity labeling by his parents as a bad person. Since as he grows up he does not experience his world as particularly gratifying, it is very easy for him

to conclude that this lack of gratification is due to the fact that something is wrong with him. ... In this way the Negro slum child learns his culture's conception of being-in-the-world, a conception that emphasizes inherent evil in a chaotic, hostile, destructive world" (Rainwater, 1966, p. 204).

These analyses were key in assisting how street life oriented U. S. born African men would be framed in the latter part of the 20th century. When putting their work into perspective, it is evident that their contributions to the "Black" self-hatred thesis, while short sighted, were enormously influential. Debate on this thesis would not only loudly reverberate within the boundaries of psychology, but this discussion was instrumental in igniting a nationally embraced dialogue within social sciences in general.

A new cadre of researchers emerged in the early 1970's who began to empirically dismiss the assertion that most U. S. born Africans suffered from "Black" self-hatred. These young scholars continued to challenge traditional arguments around the "Black" self-hatred thesis and as the century closed, few arguments emerged that explicitly supported the notion that this psychological construct or phenomenon could be found amongst most U. S. born Africans (Cross, 1991). However, there was still interest left in the "Black" self-hatred thesis. Interest remained, by and large, because most theorists, regardless of what position they held, never disputed whether "Black" self-hatred *existed* just in the proportion that it did. The concern or argument by these young scholars, more so, was that it was not present in a widespread fashion as argued by traditional proponents of the thesis (Clark & Clark, 1947; Clark, 1965/1989; Kardiner & Ovessey, 1951; Rainwater, 1966). Contemporary scholars reframed the "Black" self-hatred thesis so that it would be applied only to particular populations within the U. S. born African community. A number of researchers interested in questions on street life oriented U. S.

born African men began to make, primarily theoretical connections, between many of the activities these men engaged in and “Black” self-hatred (Brown, 2000; Oliver, 1989; Poussaint, 1983; Poussaint, 2000; Stevenson, 1997; West, 1992; Wilson, 1990).

Two popular areas of discussion within the topics of street life and “Black” self-hatred literature are: (1) the development of negative self-concepts out of racially induced feelings of “hopelessness” and “shame” (Oliver, 1989; Poussaint, 1983; Poussaint, 2000; Wright, 1984); and (2) how street life directly reinforces the ethos of white supremacy (Brown, 2000; Wilson, 1990; Wright, 1984). Put another way, “Black” self-hatred is represented as so lethal that it creates U. S. born African men who feel so “hopeless” and “shameful” that they become agents or soldiers for white supremacy.

Harvard psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint (1983, 2000) asserts that the increase in homicides amongst U. S. born African men, is the result of unconscious and conscious suicidal tendencies. According to Poussaint (1983, 2000) negative self-concepts, which result from “Black” self-hatred, increase the likelihood of street life oriented U. S. born African men committing homicide, particularly in life-jeopardizing manners, in hopes to ultimately fulfill a suicidal death wish. For instance, he argues that drive-by shootings, where the shooter has a chance of being shot back at by adversaries, reflect U. S. born African men who are preoccupied by suicidal tendencies.

Language and/or the use of the word “nigga” by street life oriented U. S. born African men has been noted in a number of discussions as evidence of “Black” self-hatred (Hutchinson, 1994; Rainwater, 1966). Rainwater (1966) found the word nigga to serve as a quasi reaction formation for “Negroes” suffering from “Black” self-hatred. Specifically, he believed that U. S. born Africans used the word nigga to “mask” the

eternal pain and shame brought on by the white oppressive “enemy”. Ultimately he notes that the “ghettoization” of U. S. born Africans has caused them to develop interpersonal relationships through a social reality of “Black” self-hatred. He argues that the use of derogatory terms by “slum Negroes” to greet one another, is evidence of the facilitation of interpersonal relationships through a process of “Black” self-hatred.

Traditional descriptions of street life oriented U. S. born African men tend to pose an over-simplistic linear or causal analysis rooted in a “Black” self-hatred thesis. This kind of analysis oftentimes homogenizes these men’s experiences. As you will see in the next section of this paper, there is a growing non-traditional debate among some scholars as well as some factions of the Hip-Hop community who proffer alternative, competing and/or contradicting ways to theorize the logic behind the experience of street-life oriented U. S. born African men.

Non-Traditional Conceptualizations of Street Life

As noted earlier in this text, non-traditional conceptualizations of street life, simply mean that researchers of this vein generally present analysis that are more socially and economically based and more genuinely positioned from the participants’ perspective (often in collaboration with the researcher). Further, these literatures are more likely to include discussions on ways to service low-income or economically impoverished persons as opposed to discourses that resist going beyond just *studying* the participant and their condition. Two tasks will be accomplished in this section of the chapter. First, I will review a set of common themes and arguments that cut across several non-traditional conceptualizations. Second, I will present a number of arguments that present

alternative ways of thinking about how and why low-income U. S. born African men use street life as a site of resiliency.

Review of Non-traditional literatures

It is necessary to bring to the center of an analysis, interpretations that move through or extends from the value systems of these men, to more adequately explain or interpret beyond the “deviant” or “non-conforming” moment. In not more explicitly offering analysis that extends beyond the “deviant” moment, we as theorists collude in silencing the oppression being experienced by these men. In small pockets across disciplines, more researchers are beginning to redefine, challenge and/or expand traditional theories of resiliency (Blankenship, 1998; Burton, et al., 1996; Fine, 1983-84; Franklin, 1999, 2000, 2004; Gordon & Song, 1994; Kelley, 1994, 1997; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Payne & Brown, in press; Wilson, 1996) particularly as understood in relation to the lower-income U. S. born African experience. These conceptualizations resist the more rigid structuring of a framework and instead advance a more fluid, less static or more dynamic kind of theoretical approach. Non-traditional perspectives generally argue or conceptualize inner city U. S. born African men engaged in street life activities as persons who are employing a necessary strategic coping and resiliency mechanism in a racist society to function in the face of minimal economic and educational opportunity.

There are a number of discussions in the non-traditional literature that explore various dimensions of the availability of structurally based opportunities for low income U. S. born African men (Anderson, 1994; Dawson, 1994; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Evans & Taylor, 1995; Fagan, 1989; 1990; Fine & Weis, 1998; Fox, 1985; Gordon, et al., 1995; Gordon & Song, 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Spencer, 1995; Tolleson, 1997;

Valentine, 1978; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Patton, 1998; Peterson, 1998; Kelley, 1994; Wilson, 1996). Consistent themes riding within this topical area are the attitudes toward and actual experiences with: (1) limited access to legitimate or legal employment, (2) the prominent effects of a job ceiling if employed, (3) minimal access to quality educational opportunities and the (4) prevalence of under resourced school districts.

Evans & Taylor (1995) report that a stratum of low-income U. S. born African men engage in street life activities for the economic opportunities they provide. Specifically, their study explores issues of violence among “core members of earlier (N = 18) and contemporary (N= 30) gangs” from California. According to Evans & Taylor (1995) “contemporary” street life oriented U. S. born African men are more apt in comparison to “earlier” street life oriented U. S. born African men to engage in such activities to access economic resources. In fact, Evans & Taylor (1995) refer to street life oriented activities as the “new opportunity structure”.

“... we must have economic policies that create jobs for youths of our inner cities. Gangs provide career and income opportunities according to respondents of contemporary gangs. With the current rate of Black youth unemployment approximating 50% in inner cities, it would appear that gangs have become the ‘new opportunity structure’ for many. The need is urgent, then, to establish economic policies that provide employment opportunities for our youth” (1995, p. 80).

Caught within the vice of U. S. 21st century capitalism and racism, a number of these men receive and/or benefit from relatively few economic and educational opportunities (Anyon, 1997; Fine and Weis, 1998; Marable, 1983/2000; Payne, 2001; Payne & Brown, in press, Payne & Roberts, 2001; Gordon et al., 1995; Gordon and Song, 1994; Ogbu, 1991; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). Gordon and Song (1994) in their references to the intersection of capitalism and resiliency in the lived experiences of these

men, in sum asked, how can society at large logically expect these men to use traditional procedures, approaches and/or routes to produce the same kind of educational and economical outcomes generated for larger society. Gordon and Song (1994) write:

“Some behavior and conditions appear to enable individuals to compete more efficiently than others. However, competition to succeed may be the insurmountable problem, since if a competition has winners there must also be losers. Seeking to better understand how some members of the population at high risk of failure succeed despite the odds, and examining what has worked for them, may not provide meaningful solutions to the broader problem of mass underdevelopment and failure in the low-status populations of society. Many African-Americans are struggling to succeed, and failing, but many are struggling only to survive. Moreover, in a society such as ours, structured so that many must fail in order that a few succeed, even orchestrating the life conditions and experiences of all persons to improve the likelihood of success would not eliminate failure. There is not room at the top of society for everyone” (Gordon & Song, 1994, p. 41-42).

Wilson (1996) proposes that a number of low-income U. S. born Africans employ what he terms, “ghetto modes of adaptation” to economically survive. Modes can include such acts as selling narcotics, armed robbery, number running, and the like. According to Wilson (1996), while not representative of the community’s overall or foundational value system, residents oftentimes concurrently understand and condemn the illegal activities conducted by street life oriented U. S. born African men. Put simply, this behavior is in part condoned by the community because community members deeply understand the socio-economic realities these young men are forced to live within.

Physical sites of resiliency can easily be seen in the hustles demonstrated by these men. Hustles often have a particular history attached to them in which a number of these men often extend out of. It is more likely for the street life oriented U. S. born African male to select a hustle that has been used inter-generationally within his family as

opposed to him picking up a hustle on some random account. For instance, it is more likely that number runners come from families that have in some significant ways been attached to such a hustle (e. g. illegal gambling, etc.). Also, it is important to note that particular hustles carry with them a particular kind of reality which to a degree has its own set of rules and negotiations that fall under an overall street life ideology as understood by the men. It is through these particular realities where researchers can more clearly begin to identify how these men are engaging in resilient behavior.

The various *hustles* employed or used as a source of economic survival by street-life oriented U. S. born African men, has been an emerging discussion among non-traditional theorists (Anderson, 1990; Bourgois, 1995, 2000; Bowman, 1989; Brown, 1965; Burton, Obeiedallah & Allison, 1996; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Fagan, 1989; Franklin, 1999; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Kelley, 1997; Krisberg, 1974; Lemann, 1991; Majors & Billson, 1992; Miller, 1958; Patton, 1998; Payne, in press; Payne & Brown, in press; Peterson, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000; Valentine, 1978; Weddle & McKenry, 1995; Wilson, 1996). In particular, discussions of street life as an economic source of survival have included: sales of narcotics (Bourgois, 1995, 2000; Brown, 1965; Fagan, 1989; Kelley, 1997; Weddle & McKenry, 1995), stealing (Fagan, 1989), using this lifestyle for emotional male based bonding (Franklin, 1999; Miller, 1958; Patton, 1998; Payne & Brown, in press; Payne, in press; Peterson, 1998; Weddle & Mckenry, 1995) as well as other various street life activities (Curry & Spergel, 1992; Fagan, 1989, 1990; Gottfredson, McNeil, Gottfredson, 1991; Krisberg, 1974; Wilson, 1996). Surprisingly, Lee Rainwater (1966) who is by most accounts a theorist whom I would classify as traditional, explicitly acknowledged

that his research has led him to conclude that street life is an “expressive lifestyle” that has in part been used by low-income U. S. born Africans as “strategies for living” or “strategies for survival”.

Risk Factors

There are a number of risk factors associated with not knowing or being competent in one’s “strategies for living” or “strategies for survival” on the street. Some risk factors that may result that are particular to the U. S. born African male experience are: (1) incarceration/prison, (2) police brutality, (3) physical assaults and/or (4) death. Put simply, these factors emerge as legitimate risk factors when positioned from the standpoint of these men. Success or resiliency in part depends on how well they negotiate their interactions with these prevalent or omni-present risk factors. In the context of their lives—lives that sit within a sphere of economic oppression, police, for instance, are often not seen as legitimate help or persons in support of the betterment of this population. Consequently, from the position of these men resiliency in part depends on the negotiation of a process around authoritative or punitive figures, such as police, because they are seen as a risk factor.

It is common for low-income U. S. born African men to learn as a result of their socialization process to be aware of the social dynamics that effectively (or ineffectively) play in the “militarization” or policing of their communities (Kelley, 1997; M 1, 2000; Nettles & Pleck, 1994). The better one learns these social dynamics the greater chance he has to avoid police brutality as a risk factor within his domain of life. Anderson (1990) in the following excerpt offers a detailed example of code switching by Black men when among police.

“Young black males often are particularly deferential toward the police even when they are completely within their rights and have done nothing wrong. Most often this is not out of blind acceptance or respect for the “law,” but because they know the police can cause them hardship. When confronted or arrested, they adopt a particular style of behavior to get on the policeman’s good side. Some simply “go limp” or politely ask, “What seems to be the trouble, officer?” This pose requires a deference that is in sharp contrast with the youth’s more usual image, but many seem to take it in stride or not even to realize it. Because they are concerned primarily with staying out of trouble, and because they perceive the police as arbitrary in their use of power, many defer in an equally arbitrary way. Because of these pressures, however, black youths tend to be especially mindful of the police and, when they are around, to watch their own behavior in public (Anderson, p.196).

She warns the reader that young U. S. born Africans are understood by larger and more assimilated society as having the ability and/or seeking to disrupt the “order” of the existing power structures. Bourgois (1995, 2000) argues that police have enforced a U. S. version of “apartheid” in inner city communities of color through their participation within a “culture of terror”. By this he means that street level police officers actively play a role in setting up communal boundaries with regard to who belongs in the inner city and who does not. According to Bourgois (1995, 2000) police typically drew off of the same stereotypical logic larger society used in thinking about these inner city communities. Bourgois (1995, 2000) notes how this kind of thinking on the part of police officers tended to develop into a kind of street level based racial profiling that often resulted in instances of blatant police brutality. Black men are often used as examples by police officers in broad daylight for the community to watch what happens when persons of these communities get out of hand. An interviewee by the name of Ceaser in Bourgois’ (1995) study poignantly noted this point. Caesar says:

“Then the cops came and caught the muggers and beat them down. There was at least twenty cops stomping out them two niggas because they resisted. And they should never have attempted that shit because they got

the beat-down of their lives. The cops had a circus with the black kid's face. Hell yeah! They were trying to kill that kid. That's why they needed two ambulances.... I could feel the pain they was feeling 'cause I know what it is to be beat down by cops. They don't let up; they be trying to kill you, man! They do it with pleasure {grinning}. That's stress management right there. That's release of tension. ... That's terrorism with a badge. That's what it is. The cops look forward to that. They get up in the morning and go, 'Yeah, Ah'm'a' gonna kick some minority ass today... I don't even know why they have human police officers. They should just put animals out there patrolling the streets. Word up! 'Cause they're worse than animals. It's like they're animals with a mind (p. 36-37).

It is through these experiences of legally enforced humiliation and systematic control that low-income U. S. born African men logically develop "hostile" attitudes towards police (Anderson, 1990; Bourgois, 1995, 2000; Fine, Freudberg, Payne, Perkins, Smith & Wanzer, in press; Fine & Weis, 1998; Miller, 1958; Patton, 1998; Rose, 1994).

In his ethnography of 50 male U. S. born African gang members, Patton (1998) notes:

"Without exception, these African-American males felt exiled from mainstream society and denied a fair chance to succeed in a system dominated by whites. Because of these feelings, they had turned toward another means of support: gang membership. They viewed the police not as an agency that would protect them, but as an extension of the existing system intent on keeping them oppressed (p.60).

Rose (1994) asserts that police and the control of low-income non-white populations and in particular low-income U. S. born Africans has been a part of the inherent design of our communities since slavery. She says:

"During the centuries-long period of Western slavery, there were elaborate rules and laws designed to control slave populations. Constraining the mobility of slaves, especially at night and in groups, was of special concern; slave masters reasoned that revolts could be organized by blacks who moved too freely and without surveillance. Slave masters were rightfully confident that blacks had good reason to escape, revolt, and retaliate. Contemporary laws and practices curtailing and constraining black mobility in urban America function in much the same way and for similar reasons. Large groups of African-Americans, especially teenagers, represent a threat to the social order of oppression. Albeit more

sophisticated and more difficult to trace, contemporary policing of African Americans resonates with the legacy of slavery” (Rose, 1994, 143-144).

According to Gordon et al, (1995) “The economic woes of Black males.. parallel... those of the Black community in general” (517). They poignantly reported that 23% of U. S. born African families, 44% of U. S. born African children under 18 and a whopping 85% of all U. S. born African children who lived in single parent homes resided in economic poverty in 1990. Further they argue that the economic crisis of our community becomes even more revealing when comparing our conditions to that of white Americans. Gordon et al., (1995) assert that in 1985 U. S. born Africans only accounted for 23% of the mean net worth of whites. U. S. born African males in particular, throughout the 1980’s, accounted for only three quarters of the median income of their white male counterparts. Kelley (1997) traces the activities of these men ultimately to capitalism or to the larger social structural economic system of the United States. Specifically, he argues that the recent concentrated economic poverty noted in these inner city communities can be largely attributed to the greed of corporate America as well as to particular federal and political factions within our government. Kelley (1997) discusses how these social structural elements have socially crippled, financially strangled and physically transformed for the worse the communities and legal opportunity structures of low-income U. S. born Africans in exchange for physical control of the land and the seizing of enormous economic wealth for a few. According to Kelley (1997) our corporations as well as larger economic system has essentially returned to (or never left) the corporate traditions or ethics of slavocracy noted in the first period in that these corporations have become more interested in turning an economic profit at the brutal

expense of the people as opposed to providing equitable and rewarding economic opportunities to the masses.

“For the past sixteen years, at least, we have witnessed a greater concentration of wealth while the living conditions of working people deteriorate—textbook laissez-faire capitalism, to be sure. Certainly the Reagan/Bush revolution ushered in a new era of corporate wealth and callous disregard for the poor. Income inequality is staggering: the richest 1 percent of American families have nearly as much wealth as the bottom 95 percent; between 1980 and 1993, salaries for American CEOs increased by 514 percent while workers’ wages rose by 68 percent—well behind inflation. In 1992 the average CEO earned 157 times what the average factory worker earned. And as a result of changes in the tax laws, average workers are paying more to the government while CEOs and their companies are paying less. Sweatshops and the slave labor conditions that accompany them are on the rise again. Corporate profits are reaching record highs, while ‘downsizing’ and capital flight have left millions unemployed. Between 1979 and 1992, the Fortune 500 companies’ total labor force dropped from 16.2 million world-wide to 11.8 million. Yet in 1993, these companies recorded profits of \$62.6 billion” (Kelley, 1997; 7-8).

There are several arguments made by others that are positioned in the same theoretical vein as Kelley (1997) who also challenge as well as specifically charge the larger social structural economic system for ultimately engendering illegal street life activities (Anyon, 1997; Drake & Clayton, 1945/1993; DuBois, 1899/1967; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1970/2000; Gordon et al, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Liston, 1990; Marable, 1983/2000; Marx & Engels, 1848/1998; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Patterson, 1998; Payne, 2001; Payne & Robert, 2001; Payne & Brown, in press; Rideau & Wikberg, 1992; Valentine, 1978; Woodson, 1933/1990). According to Marable (1983/2000) in his classic book, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society*, the economic institution of capitalism has always been responsible for the vast economic impoverishment of U. S. born African communities. Marable (1983/2000) specifically asserts that middle America’s wealth and privilege largely rest on the

continued inhumane economic impoverishment of these communities. Marable

(1983/2000) profoundly notes:

“(There are) a thousand different acts of brutality that take place across the face of Black America everyday, in relative isolation and in broad daylight. These collective acts form the bars which imprison every individual member of the Black working class, every Black poor and unemployed person, and every Black woman... Each oppressed person under capitalism must come to the realization that his/her death is a *requirement* for the continued *life of the system*. Corporate economics requires the existence of an undernourished, half-educated working class; millions of persons caught in perpetual penury, filth and disease; hundreds of thousands imprisoned, and millions more arrested annually; the development of the periphery, and the systematic elimination of the weak, the young, and the homeless (129-30).

There are several studies that have recently brought explicit attention to the dire need for economic employment as a way to address the grave socio-economic concerns of these men specifically as well as the concerns and conditions of the larger community (Anyon, 1997; Barrett, 1993; Dance, 2002; Dawsey, 1996; Dunier, 1992/1994; Fine & Weis, (1998); Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Jones & Newman, 1997; Marable, 1983/2000; Noguera, 2003; Valentine, 1978; Wilson, 1996, 1987). According to Noguera (2003) low-income U. S. born African men are typically the last to be considered for positions of quality employment as well as the most likely to be unemployed. Valentine (1978) explicitly argues that the “economic and political forces” of the United States are directly responsible for the grave and vast economic poverty found in these low-income U. S. born African communities. She concluded in her ethnography that the average inner city resident or participant in her study had to creatively string at least three components together to economically survive on a minimal or basic level: (1) welfare or public assistance, (2) minimum wage employment along

with (3) illegal hustling activities. Valentine (1978) convincingly argues that the frightening socio-economic conditions of Blackstone, the fictional name for the inner city community she conducted her study out of, could only be addressed through a massive social-structural overhaul.

“The problems of employment, education, health care, housing, welfare—of making the system work—are structural and institutional issues whose solutions are beyond the individual. Their resolution must involve massive change in society.

The American economic system as it is currently organized leaves a significant portion of the population periodically or permanently unemployed. Because of racism, most of the men and women in Blackstone who are able to find work are limited to marginal, fluctuating, low-paid work. At the same time they are required to pay high rents for substandard housing and inflated prices for low-quality food and consumer goods” (132).

Two teenage boys, LeAlan Jones & Lloyd Newman (1997) under the tutelage of author and radio broadcaster David Isay conducted a groundbreaking ethnography of their community in the South Side of Chicago. These two boys in their book, *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago*, specifically take you through the delicate complexity of death, undereducation, poor health care, and dilapidated housing in the Ida B. Wells housing projects. Jones and Newman (1997) argue that many of the problems attributed to this section of the South Side of Chicago can be attributed to the huge job loss in their community within recent times. According to Jones and Newman (1997) the exodus of factory based manufacturing work in the 1970's and early 1980's specifically led to the increasing economic poverty in this section of Chicago.

The opportunities available to these men typically are low-wage or menial work at best (Liebow, 1967; O'Connor, 1998; Valentine, 1978; Wilson, 1996, Young, 2004). It is important to note that these jobs usually are the lowest or most demeaning of blue-collar

work. These jobs generally manifest into such positions as butler, house servant, janitor, non-union construction position, stock boy, as well as a cashier, cook and/or waiter to name a few menial positions. Access to only these kinds of jobs or economic opportunity has across time and space greatly affected the psychology of these men. In most instances, these positions are not designed for the employee to professionally grow. The work oftentimes is tedious, unchallenging and exceptionally draining.

Liebow (1967) asserts:

“Both employee and employer are contemptuous of the job. The employee shows his contempt by his reluctance to accept it or keep it, the employer by paying less than is required to support a family. Nor does the low-wage job offer prestige, respect, interesting work, opportunity for learning or advancement, or any other compensation. With few exceptions, jobs filled by the streetcorner men are at the bottom of the employment ladder in every respect, from wage level to prestige. Typically, they are hard, dirty, uninteresting and underpaid. The rest of society (whatever its ideal values regarding the dignity of labor) holds the job of the dishwasher or janitor or unskilled laborer in low esteem if not outright contempt. So does the streetcorner man. He cannot do otherwise. He cannot draw from a job those social values which other people do not put into it” (58).

Specifically, blocked economic opportunity, demeaning employment with no options for advancement, combined with the frustration and anger of witnessing the local community, friends and loved ones immersed in concentrated economic poverty with no adequate spiritual and cultural guidance to handle such distressing experiences oftentimes results in the development of a street life orientation particularly in the men (Barret, 1993; Bourgois, 1995; Goodwille, 1993; Kelley, 1994, 1997; Liebow, 1967; Perkins, 1987; Valentine, 1978; Venkatesh, 2000; Williams, 1989; Wilson, 1996; Young, 2004). Terry Williams (1989) in his classic ethnographic study, *The Cocaine Kids: The Inside Story of a Teenage Drug Ring*, provides solid empirical evidence of this position.

Williams (1989), between 1982 – 1986, was able to spend extensive time with a crew of 8 young cocaine drug dealers in New York City. Some of their activities included spending time in cocaine bars, parties, the club, restaurants, crack houses, on the “streets” or “block” as well as in the homes of the dealer’s family. Williams (1989) spent most of his time with this crew in the Harlem, Bronx and Washington Heights sections of New York City. Williams (1989) argues that the communities he frequented were physically decimated by the lack of economic employment and community resources. He specifically, argues that this level of economic poverty juxtaposed against an extremely profitable cocaine and crack trade led to the development of a hardcore street life orientation in his study’s participants. Susan Goodwille (1993) in her edited volume, *Voice From the Future: Our Children Tell Us About Violence in America*, takes the notion of standpoint and phenomenology seriously. Specifically, Goodwille (1993) collected a number of small essays cutting across several themes from street life oriented teenagers throughout the United States. She allows them with integrity to explain and frame their experiences with respect to why they engage in illegal activities. The edited volume takes up such hard issues as incarceration, gangs, homelessness and the family. Alford A. Young Jr. (2004) in his book, *The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances*, extensively interviewed 26 economically impoverished U. S. born African men in the Near West Side of Chicago. This study hones in on how these men think about notions of opportunity—specifically how they frame a “good job” or “good life” and their chances with regard to them attaining these notions. In the face of extreme socio-economic conditions, Young (2004) concluded that although a number of them engage regularly in street life activities the

men in his study thought seriously about providing for themselves, their family and local community. Barret (1993) argues that social policies should take better account of how socio-economic inequality leads to the development of street life activities. He asserts that in thinking about the economic poverty of these communities social, political and spiritual leaders should be more willing to explicitly provide social structural mechanisms or solutions to address the inevitable outcome of street life activities that results from concentrated economic poverty.

Barrett (1993) notes:

“... the problem of socioeconomic inequities must be addressed. Indeed, such inequities create conditions of poverty and social stress that place the poor and underprivileged at greater risk of criminal violence. Social policies that do not address issues of inequity cannot reduce crime... In many instances, unskilled and unemployable ethnic minorities in urban America are being excluded from the legitimate economy. All too often, increasing numbers of younger people are finding a window of opportunity in the illegitimate economy...”

Now let us review non-traditional literatures on a specific social structural site—a site that has historically underserved low-income U. S. born Africans. Turning from a discussion on the streets, economic opportunity and the importance of a social structural analysis we will now explore the literatures on street life oriented U. S. born African men or boys in a particular social structural site—the high school. *What has the experience been like for the streets and one of this country's oldest institution?*

Street Life Oriented U. S. born African Boys in High School

It is important to note as we transition into a discussion on the high school experience of these men that the opportunity construct in relation to this population generally has been understood in the literature in terms of the economic and educational

aspects of the broader notion of opportunity (Anyon, 1997; Caplan, 1977; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Dance, 2002; Garnezy, 1991; Gibbs, 1988; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Kozol, 1991; MacCleod, 1987; O'Connor, 1997, 1998; Young, 2004). For obvious reasons it has been these particular notions of opportunity that have been most relevant to his experience in the United States and most discussed in the literature. These two notions are inextricably linked especially in discussions of resiliency. Simply, money matters! The economic background of the student is strongly predictive of the type of educational experience the student will receive in the United States. For so long conservative and liberal as well as U. S. born African, white and other scholars have downplayed the importance of money or economic background as a key variable in the learning process. By allowing the tax base of a community to determine the quality of public education ensures the rigid socio-economic class divisions of our country—it firmly perpetuates the concentrated economic poverty in inner city communities which pretty much guarantees the development of low resourced or poor quality high school facilities (Method, 2003). It is impossible for public schools in economic impoverished communities to compete with the tax base or school resources produced in wealthy communities. It could be argued that what is happening in many of our low-income large public schools is not only inhumane but in fact illegal (Fine, Burns, Payne & Torre, 2004). These men have been betrayed and abandoned by those academics that dismiss, downplay and/or argue that the economic background of the student's family and community are not critical variables to be considered in the learning process.

O'Conner (1998) explicitly argues economic background to be strongly predictive of student achievement. The data in O'Connor's (1998) study challenges traditional

arguments in the literature developed on inner-city U. S. born African students around issues of employment and academic achievement. According to O'Connor (1998) the students overwhelmingly demonstrated a strong will to work and learn, and viewed employment as vital component to the learning process. The students framed quality or "good" employment as work that was (1) consistent, (2) above minimum wage and (3) employment where employees received basic levels of respect. Specifically, her participants demonstrated a desire or aspiration for middle and upper middle class jobs.

"During the past 30 years sociologists and educational researchers... have identified social background characteristics which correlate significantly with poor academics performance and early school leaving. With social class acting as the most reliable predictor of educational achievement and attainment, research reveals that being born into poverty substantially increases the individual's chances of experiencing school failure" (O'Conner, 1998, p. 51).

Further, O'Connor argues that (1) ethnic minority status, (2) living in a single headed household, (3) having parents who did not academically excel in school, and living in communities of concentrated economic poverty are the key variables necessary to understand the prevalence of low academic achievement inside low-income U. S. born African communities. In his classic book, *Savage Inequalities: Children In America's Schools*, Jonathan Kozol (1991) argues that low quality curriculums with an emphasis on vocational work are being prepared for low-income U. S. born African students in high schools across the country. In response to the community and student's call for increased economic opportunity and more relevant or practical course work, schools have opted to organize more job or vocational based curriculums that include the following courses: (1) auto shop, (2) cosmetology, (3) construction, or (4) culinary. Kozol (1991) notes that the problem with vocational education is that such curriculums are not recognized by most

colleges or quality employment sites upon graduation. Vocational education under the guise of social help or increased economic opportunity typically sets the student up for false expectations upon completion of the curriculum. Ultimately, this results in a large number of these students being geared toward and/or placed in a trajectory of blue-collar work with no real opportunity for advancement. According to Kozol (1991):

“Job-specific courses such as “cosmetology” which would be viewed as insults by suburban parents, are a common item in the segregated high schools and are seen as realistic preparation for the adult roles that 16 year-old black girls may expect to fill.

Inevitably this thinking must diminish the horizons and the aspirations of poor children, locking them at very early age into the slots that are regarded as appropriate to their societal position. On its darkest side, it also leads to greater willingness to write off certain children” (76).

The “delinquent” behavior and poor academic performance or achievement of low-income U. S. born African boys in high school has had a rich legacy in the social science literatures. Theoretical and/or empirical work in this area of inquiry primarily extends out of the educational, anthropological, sociological, criminal justice as well as some counseling and social psychological literatures. The non-traditional literatures address issues such as *school violence* (Dawsey, 1996; Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Gonen, Hays, & Katz, 2004; Hill, 1992; Jones & Newman, 1997; Katz & Williams, 2004; Larson, 1988; Majors & Billson, 1992; Patton, 1998; Payne & Roberts, 2001; Sparks, 2003; Williams, 2004; Young, 2004), *academic achievement* (Bowman, 1989; Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Dawsey, 1996; Foley, 1983; Gibbs, 1988; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Hochschild, 2003; MaCleod, 1987/1995; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001; Method, 2003; Noguera, 2003; O’ Connor, 1997, 1998; Ogbu, 1991, 1985; Payne & Roberts, 2001; Peterson, 1998; Reed, 1988; Smith, 2002; White & Johnson, 1991), inadequate school

resources (Fine, Burns, Payne & Torre, 2004; Gonen, et al., 2004; Katz & Williams, 2004; Payne & Roberts, 2001), *school surveillance and discipline* (Ayers, Dohrn & Ayers, 2001; Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Fine et al., 2003; Foley, 1983; Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Gonen, et al., 2004; Latif & Latif, 1994; Major & Billson, 1992; Noguera, 2003; Payne and Roberts, 2001; Peterson, 1998) as well as the educational system's pressing or strong encouragement of the *indoctrination, assimilation* or *socialization* of the students to that of a white mainstream value system (Brown, 1969; Burton et al, 1996; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Dance, 2002; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Latif & Latif, 1994; Lott, 2001; Marable, 1983/2000; MacLeod, 1987/1995; Merton, 1968; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Peterson, 1998; Smith, 2002; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000; White & Johnson, 1991).

All too often, the community's educational system is what is most affected when a community is sustained in economic poverty. Caught in a catch- 22, it becomes difficult or impossible for an economically impoverished community to economically and politically revitalize itself, if it is in no realistic position to muster the necessary resources to adequately educate itself. One of the repercussions or reactions to dire economic conditions found in these communities, is so-called "delinquent", violent, street life or gang related behavior within these high schools as well as the community overall. Research has revealed, that a number of low income U. S. born African young men see high school as an institution that fosters or facilitates conditions conducive to using street life as a site of resiliency as opposed to a facility that adequately respects, guides, nurtures and provides them with quality educational opportunities (Anyon, 1997; Dance, 2002; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Ferguson, 2000; Gordon & Song; Gordon, et al, 1995;

MacLeod, 1987; Payne & Roberts, 2001; Patton, 1998; Peterson, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). Morgan Peterson (1998) in a book chapter entitled, Street Gangs: Coping with Violence in School argues that inner city school systems have to be more aggressive at creating school curricula, faculties and districts that are “relevant” or connected to the lived experiences of these young men. Peterson (1998) also notes that it is very necessary for faculty to demonstrate genuine “care” for the students, for a sustained relationship between the institution and young men to develop. Stanton-Salazar & Spina (2000) comment on how social structures play a direct role in shaping and negotiating how low-income non-white students formulate resilient strategies within these institutions. Stanton-Salazar & Spina (2000) say:

“Our emphasis on social structures specific to institutional contexts is key, we believe, if we are to better understand the connection between socialization processes within a particular site and a young individual’s relational style and help-seeking orientation (within that site) may have more to do with enduring social structures and ideologies, rather than with some lasting of fixed psychological trait in the individual” (p. 237).

Investigators have made considerable comments regarding the generally strained rapport between street life oriented U. S. born African boys in high school and teachers specifically (Anyon, 1997; Brown, 1969; Burton, Obeidallah & Allison, 1996; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Dance, 2002; Dawsey, 1996; Fine et. al., 2003; Foley, 1983; Garmezy, 1991; Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Hare & Castenell, 1985; Hoschild, 2003; Jones & Newman, 1997; Lott, 2001; MacLeod, 1987; Noguera, 2003; O’Connor, 1998; Patton, 1998; Rainwater, 1966; White & Johnson, 1991). Patton (1998) argues that, in part, the break down between these young men and teachers can be attributed to the fact that these schools are simply in dire need of more adequate non-

white educators. Patton (1998) asserts that these young men would benefit more from school if they were in addition to white middle class educators, connected to more adequate non-white educators and mentors preferably from their community to better relate the curriculum to the daily experiences of these young men. Patton (1998) notes that 85% of teachers in our country are white and middle class and that by 2010 30-40% of all high school students will be non-white. His question paraphrased is, given this, *what amends will secondary education make to handle the cultural disconnect that will soon deepen between teaching staffs and these young men?* White & Johnson (1991) challenge all fundamentally acculturistic or assimilationist learning models as a means to teach U. S. born African children. According to these researchers, teachers ultimately increase the void or their ineffectiveness to reach these students when gauging them in relation to a proscribed set of white middle class assumptions or value system. In other words, when we position these children against white America's standards we ultimately set the children up for failure. White & Johnson (1991) call for the development of a curriculum developed specifically for and through the cultural standpoint of U. S. born African students. Dance (2002) in her book, *Tough Fronts: The Impact of Street Culture on Schooling*, outlines three key dimensions that she feels are important to take note of when addressing issues related to street life oriented U. S. born African teenage men in high school: (1) lift up and note the assumptions of scholars and other authorities regarding these young men in high school; (2) more seriously incorporate phenomenological testimonies of these street life oriented students in analysis and, (3) provide better social structural solutions for these young men.

Furthermore, Burton et al. (1996), assert that high schools do a terrible injustice, consciously or inadvertently, by imposing mainstream socialization practices on these boys as the standard and/or outcome of good learning. Burton et al. (1996) argue that there is significant ethnographic evidence revealing a general expectation by school systems for U. S. born African adolescence to firmly “adhere to mainstream educational aspirations, adult monitored activities, and academic protocols” (p. 403). Burton, et al. (1996) further note, that it is this expectation, whether inadvertent or otherwise, that significantly contributes to the development of a friction based relationship between these young men and school institutions. Lott (2001) passionately asserts that low-income school systems are designed to under prepare its students by covertly socializing them into permanently participating in a labor-based “underclass”. Lott (2001) says:

“... assuming, first that we care about the achievement of low-income children as much as we do about that of children who are more affluent. Such an assumption is not always valid. There are those who argue that our educational system fulfills its covert purpose with respect to low-income children to work in the secondary labor market of low wages, no benefits, and no job advancement” (p. 255).

Hare & Castenell (1985) remark, “... the school plays a unique role in allocating people to different positions in the occupational system through routing and grading practices” (211). Put simply, Hare & Castenell (1985) assert that a number of low income U. S. born African young men are being conditioned and prepared to some extent by under resourced inner city high schools to lead either an illegal lifestyle or to participate permanently as an employee in a blue collar low wage market. Gordon et al., (1995) push into the academic discourse their uneasiness, concern and suspicion that an alternative purpose is being served through the mass incarceration of low income U. S. born African men. Gordon et al. (1995) note, “... the number of African-Americans

incarcerated in the U. S. exceeds the number enrolled in its institutions of higher education and costs the nation's taxpayers an estimated \$8.9 billion per year" (p. 513). In fact, in 1999 while 603, 000 U. S. born African men were enrolled in some form of higher education, an overwhelming 757, 000 U. S. born African men were incarcerated either in federal, state or local prisons in the United States (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). Given the fact that it would considerably be less expensive to educate as opposed to incarcerate these men, *whose and what purpose is being served by socializing these young men for a lifestyle of imprisonment through placing them in a educational system that is inherently designed to not recognize or acknowledge their intellectual capacity?*

Several arguments have framed the behavior of street life oriented U. S. born African young men in high schools as an "oppositional identity" developed and used as a coping response to the mainstream socialization practices of inner city high schools (Anderson, 1990; Brown; 2000; Ferguson, 2000; Harris, 1992; Nettles & Pleck, 1996; Ogbu, 1991). Investigators assert that many of these young men interpret such socialization practices as ultimately disrespect, thus, causing general feelings of alienation and disdain between these young men and the institution. Ann Arnett Ferguson's (2000) in her book, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity, discusses an ethnography she conducted on a crew of street life oriented U. S. born African boys in high school that ran by the name, Niggers For Life (NFL). Ferguson (2000) remarked considerably about how differential value systems ultimately engendered an unproductive relationship between the members of NFL and the school at large. Specifically, she noted that academic resiliency is dependent more so on the

mastery of a White middle and upper middle class value system as opposed to the school's curriculum. The quicker low-income students of color acquire skills to navigate through a school entrenched in a White middle and upper middle class value system, the more possible and easier it becomes for them to excel academically. Ferguson (2000), says language is a key variable that can capture or clearly illustrate the effects of differential value systems. According to Ferguson (2000) it is through language that investigators are more able to see how the intersection of culture, generation, gender and social class distinctions format the blueprints used to develop particular value systems. Unfortunately, schools districts and curricula are based on the assumption that the influence of value systems has minimal effects in the learning process. Simply, school districts cannot see how their curriculums moves from a distinct cultural value system that is largely white and upper middle class. For instance, English and especially math classes are typically thought of by teachers to be independent of culture. Ferguson's (2000) text helps to demystify this notion by discussing how it is not possible to educate without the influence of culturally and class based value systems.

Ferguson (2000) says:

“... success and social mobility, from this perspective, is dependent on the mastery of middle class linguistic codes, lifestyles, disciplinary modes, and relational manners; that schools reflect the familial and neighborhood practices of upper- and middle-class students who fit smoothly into its forms of communication and social organization. These youth do not have to make the kind of profound adjustments made by children from working-class and poor families. Black youth are pointing out a similar institutional relationship in the context of a racialized culture when they point out that “acting white” is a prerequisite for fitting in at school and is absolutely basic to any kind of success. This requirement ruthlessly excludes African-American cultural modes as relevant and meaningful knowledge practices.

Language use is an excellent example of how the power to determine the standard operates to enforce white middle-class cultural forms as a prerequisite for school success and to present African-American kids, especially Black males, with difficult dilemmas of identification” (p. 204-205).

Later in the text, Ferguson (2000) provides an analysis that demonstrates how differential class based value systems often prevent middle and upper middle class U. S. born African teachers from productively connecting with street life oriented U. S. born African male high school students. In fact, Ferguson (2000) notes that these young students often regard middle and upper middle class U. S. born African teachers as “racist”. According to Ferguson (2000) these young men as a coping and/or resiliency strategy, often do not view these teachers as persons that are able to understand or identify with their life perspective. U. S. born African teachers are thought to have fully assimilated to white upper middle class value systems, so much so, that they are interpreted and observed by the young men as threatening and untrustworthy.

Some non-traditional investigators have specifically taken up the issue of motivation to better illustrate the dire need to reframe traditional interpretations of these young men in school (Foley, 1983; Ogbu, 1991). It is principally argued that it is an assumption at best that these young men are academically un-motivated. Perhaps what may be observed by authority figures, as an academically un-motivated child simply be a coping response to an oppressive learning experience? What sense would it make for street life oriented U. S. born African young men to be excited about a learning experience that does not recognize their academic contributions as legitimate or intelligent? It is common for these young men to be stereotyped within and without these secondary learning institutions as completely ignorant, undisciplined and lazy (Dance,

2002). In addition, these young men outside of school are incessantly faced with socially navigating through a number of social issues related or inherent to inner economic poverty. However, in lieu of all of this, school officials expect these young men to comply strictly with all traditionally based guidelines and expectations.

Foley says:

“Is not anti-motivation a word with negative emotional overtones... Why is it not more useful to explore motivation problems as a possible expression of the distance and rejection felt by teachers and their students from the slums with each other, a gap both teachers and students find difficult to understand” (Foley, 1983, p. 7).

Foley (1983) makes a powerful argument that forces investigators to think more critically about the relationship of the middle class teacher and low-income student. Specifically, he argues that there is a “knowledge gap” that prevents school officials from being capable of noting where exactly the relationship with their students degenerate. Further, it is this “knowledge gap” that ultimately all too often results in low income non-white students, particularly U. S. born African males, becoming and feeling academically marginalized and alienated leading to disproportionate rates of these young men failing courses, being placed in special education as well as dropping-out of school. Foley (1983) suggests, “An important step in increasing positive relationships would seem to be for teachers to acquire an increased understanding of the children with whom they work with; understanding differences and similarities. It seems that there is a knowledge gap about children of poor neighborhoods. What attention has this gap in knowledge received” (p. 7)? Ogbu (1991) refers to the lack of academic motivation by inner city U. S. born Africans as “low effort syndrome”. White & Johnson (1991) assert that “low achievement motivation” oftentimes is a careless mischaracterization of urban U. S. born

African children, given that, "... first, the assumption is made that a standard of excellence is embedded in urban schools and that black children and youth are not motivated to compete with these standards. Second, the problem is defined in terms of child-failure while little or no attention is given to the fact that agents of urban schools fail to recognize the nature and meet the needs of black children and youth (409-418).

Given the fact, that these students are "byproducts" of economic and political exploitation, a number of investigators have begun to reframe the behavior of these young men as a legitimate form of coping and/or resiliency implemented to literally survive in high school (Ferguson, 2000; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Payne & Roberts, 2001; Peterson, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). Specifically, street life can function within a high school context to bring about protection, respect and economic opportunities. A number of street life oriented U. S. born African young men in high school are extremely economically impoverished which often leads to feelings of insecurity and embarrassment, particularly over issues like not having enough clothes to make it through the week, being able to buy minimal school resources (book bag, pens/pencil, notebooks, etc.) or not having the opportunity to sometimes participate in school clubs or teams (e. g. basketball, theater, football, baseball, chess, etc.) due to the need for them to figure out ways to economically survive outside of school. Ogbu (1991) in his theoretical essay, *Minority Coping Responses and School Experience*, brings light to this issue in his distinction between coping responses of low and middle income U. S. born African students. In his subsection, entitled: Educational Consequences of Coping Responses he notes the "alternative" or "survival strategies" employed by inner city U. S. born African adolescents to excel in high school: (1) competition and conflict, (2)

collective struggle, (3) clientship or uncle tomming and (4) hustling. Ogbu (1991) asserts that there are at least three aspects to the hustling dimension that can describe street life oriented U. S. born African male high school students: (1) a refusal to work for white teachers because they represent an extension of white economic and political oppression; (2) students who too often seize social opportunities to manipulate people for personal gain; and (3) those students who come from a strata of the inner city or low-income background that is so economically impoverished that street life activities are ultimately the only viable means of survival. U. S. born African males in the latter category often are students who possess a strong likelihood for dropping out of high school.

The blatant under resourcing of large public inner city schools has significantly impacted student achievement in these communities. The physical infrastructures of these buildings oftentimes are in desperate need of major renovations. School facilities typically are in great need of quality desks, bathrooms, appropriate class sizes as well as school supplies such as books, team uniforms, musical instruments and science equipment. According to Williams (2004) the No Child Left Behind act has had very little effect for low-income non-white students in New York City. Williams (2004) argues 713 or 20% of the student body of Franklin K. Lane High School in Cypress Hill, Brooklyn - dropped out or transferred from the school this year as a result of the prevalence of school violence, overcrowded class rooms and heightened surveillance practices such as random searches, increase presence of school security and police as well as metal detectors. Franklin K. Lane only has 27.5% graduation rate and is New York's third worst high school with respect to drop out rates.

It is important to note, that Franklin K. Lane in many respects is not an isolated school facility but in fact it is representative or a microcosm of how low-income non-white students are generally educated throughout the country. These injurious conditions across time and space ultimately work to support the development of a street life orientation and activities in the actual school, thus negatively impacting the learning process. Several researchers have recently brought specific attention to the increasing concentration of *school violence* (Dawsey, 1996; Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Gonen, et al., 2004; Hill, 1992; Jones & Newman, 1997; Katz & Williams, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Majors & Billson, 1992; Patton, 1998; Payne & Roberts, 2001; Sparks, 2003; Volpe & Jones-Brown, 2003; Williams, 2004; Young, 2004). This issue, while not largely being addressed from a proactive approach has nonetheless, received considerable political attention. According to Gonen, Hays, & Katz (2004) 17 students were arrested by police on January 13th as a result of an aggressive initiative backed by mayor Bloomberg to “crackdown” on school violence in New York City. The pictures of two U. S. born African boys being escorted in handcuffs from their schools were smeared on the pages of the Daily News as salient examples of what would happen to other so-called violent students. Although, interpersonal school violence occurs for the most part between students, it is important to note that student violence can at times involve or include school officials as well, ranging from teachers, school security or administrative figures. According to Sparks (2003) 28, 200 students are physically attacked each year. She asserts that 32% - 37% of U. S. born African students has fought at school and anywhere between 19% - 30% of these students have brought a weapon with them to school at least one time.

Given that a number of inner city high schools contend with issues such as weapons control, assault, street life or gang related behavior, it is imperative that more rigorous and sophisticated social psychological research is conducted to assist in making sense out of this issue. The prevalence of street life activities and in particular school violence has led to an increasing vigilance around school safety. Investigators have noted a heightened interest by schools in such issues as *school surveillance and discipline* (Akom, 2001; Ayers, Dohrn & Ayers, 2001; Conchas & Nogeura, 2004; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Fine, et al., 2003; Foley, 1983; Gibbs, 1988; Goodwille, 1993; Gonen, et al., 2004; Latif & Latif, 1994; Major & Billson, 1992; Noguera, 2003; Payne and Roberts, 2001; Peterson, 1998). Within recent years surveillance practices in schools have dramatically increased (Fine et al., 2003; Ruck & Wortley, 2002). Specifically, more and more inner city school districts have decided to invest in surveillance equipment (i. e. metal detectors, cameras, etc.) and personnel (i. e., security guards, police officers, stricter school punitive guidelines, etc.) to presumably ensure students' safety and access to adequate educational opportunities. Although demographic or epidemiological data can be very revealing, it is difficult to ascertain from these kind of data the relationship between the young men and the institution. *Is the prevalence of school violence attributed directly to the young men who bring this behavior to the space or is it in reaction to a generally alienating and under resourced institution besieged by increased surveillance practices?* It is at this point where there is an innovative opportunity for investigators to play a critical or key role in placing rigorous science under this relationship or question.

The response by schools to these young men simply has been harsh. Hardened school discipline, vis-à-vis, in or out of school suspension as well as expulsion has largely been the school's response to the activities of street life oriented U. S. born African boys. The consequences for not acquiescing, accepting their socialization, or properly adopting mainstream values as a function of their school experience has ultimately been heavy for street life oriented boys. These young men have been suspended and disciplined at a far greater rate than other high school students from other ethnic groups. Curry & Spergel (1992) found in their survey study of nearly 450 non-white male students across four Chicago inner-city schools, U. S born African male students to significantly be more likely than other ethnic groups to have a school discipline record and to have been arrested by police. According to Reed (1988), U. S. born African students are suspended three times as more frequently than white students. Reed (1988) further argues that while U. S. born African male students account for 25% of the national school population they account for nearly 40% of all school suspensions. He also notes that U. S. born African boys are more apt to be suspended for longer periods of times and are repeatedly suspended more often in comparison to other students. Within recent times, "zero tolerance" policies have mostly won the favor of school districts located in inner city communities as an effective response to school violence (Ayers, et al., 2001). Starting out as a policy to reduce the carrying and trafficking of guns by youth, such a policy has evolved into a concretized system mandated to issue harsh penalties that ultimately suspend or expel all students perceived to be incorrigible. According to Ayers, et al. (2001) 90 children, mostly U. S. born African and Latino, are expelled a week from Chicago high schools mostly for non-

violent deeds. Ayers, Dohrn & Ayers (2001), the editors of, *Zero Tolerance: Resisting The Drive For Punishment In Our schools*, say:

“Schools everywhere—public, private, urban, suburban, rural, and parochial—are turning into fortresses where electronic searches, locked doors, armed police, surveillance cameras, patrolled cafeterias, and weighty rule books define the landscape. Ironically, elaborate security hardware fails to create school safety. Recent research indicates that as schools become more militarized they become less safe, in large part because the first casualty is the central, critical relationship between teacher and student, a relationship that is now being damaged or broken in favor of tough-sounding, impersonal, uniform procedures” (xii).

Akom’s (2001) who contributed an essay to this edited volume, argues that resistance or the street life activities observed in U. S. born African students stems mainly from being educated in a space not conducive, attentive or geared toward his cultural and and/or socio-economic standpoint. Akom (2001) asserts that the learning space even in inner city communities is designed primarily from the perspective of Eurocentric assumptions on education. Given the insidiousness of this issue in the learning process for these boys, they oftentimes misrepresent their feelings in the classroom as a result of their overwhelming sentiments of “frustration”, “alienation” and disrespect regarding their educational experience.

Akom (2001) says:

“... because of the invisible nature of these processes, students are often unable to articulate their frustrations and alienation effectively and being inexperienced with the practice of collective action, most discipline-tracked students settle for individual resistance. That is, they engage in random acts of rebellion, posturing, psychic withdrawal, physical withdrawal, and attend and participate in only those classes that interest them.

Such daily battles in educational spaces have enormous implications for the study of African-American opposition and resistance. For, contrary to the experiences of white students, for who educational space has been a sort of democratic space, a place where people of

different class backgrounds could come and share a common social and cultural assimilation experience as well as enjoy a modicum of social mobility, black students experience these white dominated educational spaces as undemocratic, difficult to assimilate into and more often than not, dangerous to negotiate.

Filthy and dilapidated educational facilities, white police officers, and racial epithets have been some of the visual reminders of the semicolonial status of black people in their quest for equal access to education..." (p. 54).

As Akom (2001) suggests in his essay all of these very complicated factors generally lead to the tracking of these boys into remedial, low-level courses and/or special education (Conchas & Noguera, 2004; Davis , 2003; Fine, Roberts & Torre, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, & Payne, 2004; Jones & Newman, 1997; Kozol, 1991; Noguera, 2003; Oaks, 1985; Smith, 2002; White Johnson, 1991). The placement of these boys in this track oftentimes completes the cycle of learning generally meted out for these young men: (1) difficult relationship with teachers and other school officials, (2) suspension/expulsion and (3) tracked into a remedial course (es) or special education.

In closing, street life at large and particularly within the U. S. born African male high school experience has historically been a difficult issue for the social sciences to address. In general, traditional assumptions have dominated the literature. Specifically, these young men are typically rendered non-resilient, maladaptive, defiantly troubled and/or characterized from a negative perspective. The story needs to be better contextualized. Given the prevalence of street life school related issues (e. g. school safety, metal detectors, gang violence, school searches, etc.) among inner city low income boys, more non-traditional research is in greater demand to improve a largely theoretically based traditional literature. Social psychological analysis would be an appropriate field for critically exploring this phenomenon within school confines. Non-

traditional investigators as noted at the top of this essay tend to recognize at least one of four structural/conditions that affect personal levels of resiliency: (1) the impact of race and racism, (2) socio-historical patterns or trends, (3) the intersection of capitalism and resiliency (e. g. unemployment rates, poverty rates, etc.), and (4) the importance of phenomenologically-based analyses. Given social structural factors greatly impact the learning experience, process and patterns of academic resiliency in low – income U. S. born African males (Anyon, 1997; Fine, 1991; Gordon & Song, 1994; Gutman & McLyod, 2000; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Patton, 1998; Peterson, 1998), school districts, perhaps inadvertently, have corroborated with engendering educational spaces that have poignantly become fertile grounds in many instances, for street life activities.

CHAPTER IV: HIP-HOP LITERATURE REVIEW

The seemingly inexhaustible spirit of the streets through the manifestation of Hip-Hop currently is suffocating the four corners of the United States if not the world over. Hip-Hop has coined itself, as it represents to the world, a symbolization of a culture that loudly echoes the sounds of oppression for the 21st century. Hip-Hop culture initially developed by and for street life oriented U. S. born African men is used by these men as a way to respond to the perverse prevalence of social injustice in their communities. Interestingly enough, economic avenues and educational spaces have always been and continue to be spaces that generally are intolerant of the perspectives and concerns illustrated by these men in their music. Given the socio-economic and political conditions of his community—how this legacy has worked to systematically route him out of the opportunity structures of the United States, these men through their art of Hip-Hop have developed an unrelenting space where they can creatively and loudly articulate their concerns to the world. From a raw and authentic street perspective, these men oftentimes use Hip-Hop as a cathartic space to discuss issues related to economic and educational inequity. Specifically, it is in their music where you will hear vivid discussions or attention given to such issues as economic poverty, community and family as well as issues related to the crude tales of street wars, police brutality or prison and death.

Hip-Hop culture in many respects represents the life blood or pulsating spirit of the streets. His raw lyrics critically reveal an expose of his complicated lifestyle. It is in the culture of Hip-hop and particularly in the music that you can find and feel his deepest

passions and hear his most sincere cries. Hip-Hop culture and in particular Hip-Hop music has specifically operated as a site of resiliency for street life oriented U. S. born African men. Hip-hop has become a space where many of these men, who freely and unguardedly voice their concerns, legitimately are recognized as well as locate economic opportunity. Through rhyme and reason these men negotiate the spirit of the North American African Diaspora, and in particular the tales of the street life oriented U. S. born African man, to the amazement of millions across the planet. They often use their music as a way to communicate to other hoods or inner city communities, just as the slaves did through their musical and spiritual ceremonies, to connect and provide hope to other street life oriented U. S. born African men through their stories.

Through the likes of such musical artists as a Tupac Shakur, Jadakiss, DMX, Dead Prez, Scarface or a Cam'ron, you will hear them in the most volcanic way deliver their souls to the listeners of the music by pouring out their deepest fears as well as coveted aspirations. It is in their music where you can observe these men's dreams, insecurities or confusions—his loves; his concerns; his pains. It is important to note, that these street life oriented Hip-Hip musical artists even with their differences or diversity, at the end of the day, just want someone to listen and respond to the socio-economic and political tragedies so glaringly obvious in their communities in which they rap in rage about. Their songs often depict the crude reality of the communities these men reside in and how these communities are riddled with conditions found or prevalent in third world communities (Lipsitz, 1994). These rappers unabashedly give the listener their lives—they unflinchingly speak for the world to hear. Their songs are immersed with discussions or testimonies of why they engage in street life activities as well as salient

notions of their humanity and commitment to family and community. Their music is a genuine cry or plea to respectively be heard.

The following dissertation chapter on Hip-Hop will be separated into two parts. The first part of the chapter will consist of an analytic review of the literatures on street life oriented Hip-Hop music or what some scholars may refer to as “gangsta rap”. The second part of this chapter will involve a critical review of Hip-Hop lyrics to illustrate the phenomenological perspective of street life oriented U. S. born African men. The lyrics chosen for this text theoretically move, from a site of resiliency analysis. These lyrics through the phenomenology or lived experiences of these men, like the alternative literatures, highlight the pressing concerns demonstrated in many of the realities of street life oriented persons.

The Men And Their Musical Art

Hip-Hop culture and music is a descendant of the musical expressions of the Griots of West Africa which by way of the transatlantic African slave trade made its way to the slave quarters located throughout the Southern regions of the United States (Aldridge & Carlin, 1993; Blassingame, 1972/1979; Maultsby, 1990; Zillman, Aust, Hoffman, Love, Ordman, Pope & Seigler, 1995). African slaves used their musical spirituals as a coping mechanism to establish their resiliency in an obviously trying experience. The slaves sung some of the most enthralling songs on the cotton field, living quarters and especially on Sundays—the allotted day of worship. The contrast of song and dance juxtaposed against one of the most brutal forms of physical bondage, known in human history, simply was mesmerizing in many respects. The African slaves employed the Western African techniques of call and response as well as improvisation

to the amazement of the slaveholders. Such a site of harmonic profundity oftentimes was too troubling, as is the case presently, for the *rational* or *logical* rudiments of Western psychology to comprehend. The slaveholders upon witnessing what they perceived as a mind boggling feat eventually gave in to their dance and musical interest. The slave plantations across the South employed an informal policy that allowed the slaves to, within reason or at the discretion of the slaveholder, participate in spiritual expressions. The slaveholders only sanctioned the slaves' participation because he figured such activity ultimately would serve his interest. Slaveholders virtually were convinced that the increased participation in their musical and spiritual expressions would work to make the slaves more docile and submissive. These approved spiritual activities were also not seen as threatening given these activities paralleled the moral interest of the slaveholder. Interestingly enough, the slaveholders genuinely believed in God and to some significant extent religious or spiritual persons.

It was common for slaves on Sundays to enter a designated site or clearing in the woods for spiritual worship on Sundays. It is important to note that throughout slavery and there after, low-income U. S. born Africans in particular employed musical and dance expressions as a way to cope with social injustice in their lives. After slavery the low-income U. S. born Africans demonstrated a lot of their pain in musical form throughout the juke joints, small taverns and churches of the South. The major Northern migration of low-income U. S. born Africans that began in the late 1800's was responsible for filling the Northern bars, taverns, clubs and street corners as well as churches and some political arenas with some of the richest musical expressions of its time (Keyes, 2002). The Harlem Renaissance which reached its peak throughout the

roaring 1920's is a popular example of this notion (Huggins, 1971). It was in the 1920's in the streets of Chicago that a commodifiable way of speaking and entertaining called *jive talk* was created (Keyes, 2002). Jive talk, a crafty street slang or speech, operates according to a set of impromptu rules that organizes words from a staccato and rhyme sequenced pattern. Jive talk evolved on the street corners of Northern inner cities to what is referred to by scholars as signifying, toasting and playing the dozens (Dixon & Brooks, 2002). Nevertheless, economically well off white people came in droves to see and hear the musical and dance expressions of low-income U. S. born Africans in the bars and clubs strewn throughout the Northern inner cities. The musical and dance styles of the streets continued to persistently evolve in the low-income U. S. born African experience for decades to come. Specifically, evolved states of his style were captured in later forms noted as Bee Bop, Blues and Jazz (Aldridge & Carlin, 1993; Zillman et al., 1995). According to Perkins (1996) rap music is directly influenced by the singing and dance styles of low-income U. S. born Africans from the 1940's and 1950's in combination with the technology of the 1970's.

A radical new African creation, in the form of Hip-Hop, would be given birth to in the streets of South Bronx, New York in the mid 1970's (Aldridge & Carlin, 1993; Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Dyson, 1996; Gardstrom, 1999; Maultsby, 1990; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994a, 1994b). The specific and recognized notions of Hip-Hop that anchor the culture are break dancing, graffiti and rap music (Rose, 1994). Graffiti and break dancing were more salient forms of expressions during the beginning of Hip-Hop. Rapping within recent times, nonetheless, has been the primary mode of the art form. Perkins (1996) argues that it is in 1979 where rap music can specifically be noted as

becoming the focal point in Hip-Hop culture particularly with its increasing popularity in the night clubs at this time.

Further, The Dead Poets with "*When the Revolution Comes*" or Gil Scott-Heron with "*The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*", played a significant role in setting the stage for street life oriented Hip-Hop music. These poems passionately stirred the hearts and spirits of low-income U. S. born Africans throughout the country. However, the poetic art form grounded in the spirit and concerns of the streets still needed more time to develop to mobilize the masses. Sugar Hill Gang Records' release of the single "*Rappers Delight*", in 1979 is credited as the first formal recording and widely acclaimed single that birthed what we understand contemporarily as Hip-Hop music. This unprecedented song set the tone for the Hip-Hop force that eventually would come roaring. "*Rappers Delight*" is responsible for rap music's commercial opening. According to Perkins (1996), this single was the number one selling single upon its release. The single reached number 36 on the Billboard charts. Although most in the music industry as well as persons in popular media and larger society were dismissive of the music and predicted an early end (Dyson, 1987; Keyes, 2002; Rose, 1994a), this single nonetheless, attracted strong corporate interest (Perkins, 1996).

The *Message*, *Message II* (1982) and *White Lines* (1983) by Grandmaster Melle Mel would be a set of extremely influential single that would directly contribute to the emergence of street life oriented Hip-Hop music. While "*Rappers Delight*" high lighted the social, bonding or party aspect of a street life orientation, "*The Message*" was the first rap song that directly addressed the illegal aspects of street life involving such issues as police brutality, sales of narcotics and imprisonment (Keyes, 2002; Kriegel, 1997).

Other artist that played a key role during the inception of Hip-Hop music was Kurtis Blow, Afrika Bambaataa and Kool DJ Herc. aataa (Perkins, 1996; Kriegel, 1997). It would be decades later before the founders of Hip-Hop music would fully grasp or comprehend the impact Hip-Hop music was to have in this country let alone across the world.

It is important to note that rap music centrally is a composition of U. S. born African and Afro-Caribbean musical expressions that is grounded in the ethos and style of street life oriented U. S. born African men (Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994a). To this day, it is the style and spirit of street life oriented U. S. born African men that is the life blood of Hip-Hop culture. Although other ethnic groups have significantly contributed to the development of Hip-Hop culture their contributions at best are respectfully secondary. Any other group can come and go throughout the life course of Hip-Hop with the exception of the streets. The streets are so influential to the flourishing of Hip-Hop music that if the streets decided against supporting the art form, Hip-Hop music and culture would cease to exist. For this reason and primarily for this reason alone the streets ultimately retain ownership or claim birthing rights over this culture and musical expression.

It is important to note that Hip-Hop culture was created by low-income U. S. born African men in response to the severe economic recession of the 1970's. While the 1960's was an economically prosperous time, the 1970's was filled with war, The U. S. born African (Black) Power Movement, and some of the worst forms of economic poverty this country had experienced since the Great Depression. Low-income U. S. born Africans found an even deeper concentration of these conditions in the 1980's

especially with the ushering in of the crack era. The dismal sentiment of the people was reflected in the shift of the music. The popularity of happy-go-lucky disco music of the late 1960's and 1970's waned in the clubs in favor of the more rhythmic and realistic form of Hip-Hop music. Maultsby (1990) says:

“The era of soul music reawakened the consciousness of an African past. It sanctioned the new thrust for African exploration and simultaneously gave credence to an obscured heritage. This profound era also established new directions in Black popular music that would continue to merge African expressions into new forms. The decade of the 1970s heralded this music....

Blacks responded to the realities of the 1970's and 1980's in diverse ways and with mixed feelings. Many assessed progress toward social, economic, and political equality as illusory at best. Some felt conditions had worsened, though a few privileged blacks believed the situation had improved. The ambivalent feelings about social progress for blacks found its expression in new and diverse forms of black popular music—funk, disco, rap music, and personalized or trademark forms. ... It injected a new spirit of life into black communities and became a major unifying force for a core of African-Americans” (203–204).

According to Perkins (1996), it is not until the second wave of Hip-Hop culture, developed in the mid 1980's, that it is possible to see the strong emergence of a street life oriented variant of the music. It is important to note that until the second wave Hip-Hop was principally a party music. The prominent themes of these rappers include street tales of resiliency centered on economic survival or making it in the streets to eat. Other salient themes of this second wave of rappers generally include specific discussions about the police, the U. S. born African middle class, and notions of identity.

The integrity of street life oriented Hip-Hop music has been challenged since its inception by virtually all quarters of power and influence in the United States. These men and their music have been largely characterized as violent and over sexualized. (Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Dyson, 2001, 2000; 1987; Epstein, Pratto & Skipper, 1990;

Fried, 1999; Gardstrom, 1999; Hansen, 1995; Henderson, 1996; Kelley, 1994; Keyes, 2002; Johnson, Jackson & Gatto, 1995; Jones, 1997; Lipsitz, 1994; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1991, 1994; Zillman, Aust, Hoffman, Love, Ordman, Pope & Seigler, 1995). The socioeconomic and political concerns these men express generally are dismissed or regarded as inarticulate. According to some researchers the messages raised in their music are perceived as daunting and seen as a fundamentally threatening to the existence of the larger social structural systems. Simply, the image of these men and their musical art has been defiled and misconstrued in favor for a cruder and more menacing portrayal of them. Perkins (1996) says, "Young black men are viewed as nihilistic, prone to anarchic violence, misogynistic, and greedy for the lucre associated with the trade in crack cocaine. This has made black men targets and scapegoats for... the police..." (16). Lipsitz (1994) asserts that the socio-political assault on Hip-Hop music is largely the work of neo-conservatives. He argues that right wing power brokers target street life oriented Hip-Hop music as a means to subvert the veracity of the sentiments expressed by these men through their art. Lipsitz (1994) explicitly notes that the undermining of these men's music allows neoconservative to continue pushing low-income non-white populations further to the margins of society thus resulting in substantially more power and wealth for the neoconservative.

"Demonized images of inner-city youths serve the strategic purposes of neoconservatives who have fashioned a countersubversive electoral coalition against affirmative action, enforcement of civil rights laws and help for the poor..."

Young people and their culture play a particularly important role in the neoconservative strategy. Images of 'gang members' and 'unwed mothers' mistake the effects of poverty for its causes, and discursively create a middle class absolved of responsibility for the systematic redistribution of wealth and life chances over the past two decades. By presenting the inner-city urban poor as a threat to the middle-class family,

neoconservatives win support for even greater repression, segregation and privatization. Middle-class young people increasingly face illegal searches, invasions of privacy, suppression of free speech and suspensions of civil liberties, all in the name of protecting them from bad influences” (Lipsitz, 1994, p. 19).

These men and their music are greatly feared, when they simply and literately in significant numbers are dying in these streets hoping that someone with power and influence would be brave enough to sincerely listen to and act on their words (Rose, 1991, 1994). Their breath taking testimonies are mostly shunned by the larger power structures, regarded as trivial or exploited by these same larger power structures instead of harnessed and positioned for the world to earnestly observe. I would argue that the demonization of these men is supported by more than just the neo-conservatives. The depiction of these men extends deeply into the liberal sectors as well and cuts hard across non-white *and* white populations. Tricia Rose (1991) notes in her revolutionary journal article, “*Fear of a Black Planet*”: *Rap Music and Black Cultural Politics in the 1990’s*, that since these men are actively redefining their identity this act is ultimately judged as rebellious or evidence of incorrigibility. Rose (1994) in her acclaimed book *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, describes how these men’s street attitude, although revered and economically exploited by larger America, is seen as something that is singularly in opposition to the greater power structure. The title of her journal article is a play on the pro-African Hip-Hop group Public Enemy’s (1990) multi-platinum album entitled, “Fear of a Black Planet”. This album like their other work calls for the recognition and redemption of low-income U. S. born Africans and the African Diaspora in general. It makes the listener truly ponder the notion of a “Black” or African planet and everything that this notion would truly entail in a contemporary

setting. Public Enemy on this album, with words, crafts for the listener the drastic shift in perspective and increase in fear by virtually all whites not just conservatives, regarding losing control over the dominant social structures of the world in favor of an African value system. Just think about it. *What would it really mean or entail if the social structures across the globe returned to a “Black” or African ethos? What would our world look and act like? How would this make people really feel?* When you think about it from this perspective it makes it so much easier to understand the anxiety noted by Public Enemy, Tricia Rose and others regarding these men’s art form—it is much easier to understand why persons in authority would deem their music as a threat. Rose (1991) argues:

“The public school system, the police, and the popular media perceive and construct them as a dangerous internal element in urban America—an element that if allowed to roam about freely will threaten the social order, an element that if allowed to roam about freely will threaten the social order, an element that must be policed. The social construction of rap and rap-related violence is fundamentally linked to the social discourse on Black containment and fears of a Black planet. In this light arena security forces are the metaphorical foot-soldiers in the war to contain African-Americans’ public presence and public pleasure. The paramilitary posture of concert guards is a surface manifestation of a complex network of ideological and economic processes that attempt to justify the policing of rap music Black youth, and African Americans generally” (279).

Further, researchers have argued that the surveillance of the music and activities related to the music is implemented as a way to economically and politically control as well as profit from these men and their art (Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Dyson, 1996, 1987; Henderson, 1996; McClary, 1994; Rose, 1994). According to McClary (1994), the economic exploitation, surveillance and control of low-income U. S. born African’s music began when Okeh Records released the legendary Mamie Smith’s song “You

Can't Keep a Good Man Down" recorded in 1920. Henderson (1996) in the same theoretical spirit remarks on how more influential powers across racial boundaries and political ideologies are seeking to suppress the rapid and aggressive development of the Hip-Hop movement. Henderson (1996) points out how the economic or financial underpinnings of the Hip-Hop industry will be challenged thus greatly affecting the stability and potential of the industry. His paper speaks directly to the streets and calls for the development of "Nation Conscious Rap" an evolved or more militant form of Hip-Hop that focuses less on the criminal dimensions of low-income U. S. born African communities as a way to address this larger assault on the music. Henderson (1996) argues that Hip-Hop is the eternal resounding sound specifically of U. S. born African oppression. According to Henderson (1996):

"As the White media and its Black surrogates began to paint hip-hop as inherently violent, the unifying force of a perceived alien enemy galvanized the rap audience. It seemed as though hip-hop would be attacked, that concerts, bookings, and dollars would be lost under the guise of preventing the violence that hip-hop 'naturally' spawned. It seemed as if, in the final analysis, it was hip-hop against the world. And that meant Black folks against the world" (321-322).

At large, the industry has been condemned for its will to define itself. The resiliency of the industry to remain lucrative and endure the foray of negative criticisms is evidence of the strength of the spirit of the music and more so the people that support it. Specifically, the lyrics and videos of the music have been heavily focused on as particular sites that harbor what some perceive as gratuitous aggression (Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Fried, 1999; Gardstrom, 1999; Hansen, 1995; Johnson, et al., 1995; Jones, 1997; Zillman et al., 1995). Since there is a recognized literature on the effects of violent television on its viewers, it makes it that much easier for opposing investigators to posit

the visual images and lyrical content contained in Hip-Hop music as something harmful to its listeners (Dixon & Brooks, 2002).

It is important to note that these men often rhyme or tell stories other than the violent travails of a street life reality. Their songs are concurrently filled with lyrics written about their mothers, children or community for instance. Also, these men often talk about the love and loyalty they have for their friends. Further, it is not uncommon to hear some of the most extreme street life oriented U. S. born male rappers passionately giving thanks and praise through the form of prayer to God in their songs (e. g. Tupac, DMX, Pastor Troy, etc). It is the position of this dissertation that these men in most respects are extremely moral. Many of these rappers give back, represent and maintain real or direct connections with their communities of origin far greater than the middle and upper middle class professionals hired to do the same activities (Claffey, Fenner & Siemaszko, 1997; Carter, S. 2003; Coleman, Claffey, George & McFarland, 1997; Keyes, 2002; Maultsby, 1990; Rose, 1991, 1994). A number of these Hip-Hop artists contribute to local churches and community centers. They give real jobs to the community, sponsor community events such as block parties and organize free concerts as well as sponsor clothing, toy and food drives for the community. Put simply, many of these Hip-Hop artists provide hope to the youth in that they demonstrate above and beyond the call of duty how to survive through inhumane levels of economic poverty. According to Dyson (2000):

“Moral ambiguity is at the heart of the hard-core rap’s struggle with evil. When it comes to dealing with that idea, hard-core rappers are treated far differently by critics than are the creators or gangster films. In *The Godfather*, for example, Francis Ford Coppola’s characters pay lip service to a code of respect, loyalty, and honor. Still, they are ruthless murderers. Coppola is considered a brilliant artist and his characters

memorable creations. The hard-core rapper and his work are rarely credited with such moral complexity. Either his creations are taken literally and their artistic status denied, or he is viewed as being incapable of examining the moral landscape. It is frightening for many to concede hard-core rap's moral complexity" (185).

The perpetual insidious notions of racism and prejudice that have become so common—so embedded in our thinking regarding these men—*even and especially by liberal quarters of the academy* have prevented society at large from properly observing the humanity in these men's lived experiences. Street life oriented rappers much to the surprise of Middle America employs this art form largely as a way to unearth and playback to the world the crude forms of social injustice that they and residents of their communities endure regularly. *But whose is really listening!* Although huge profit margins are garnered by a mostly white controlled and/or owned Hip-Hop industry (Dixon & Brooks, 2002; Dyson, 2000; McClary, 1994; Rose & Ross, 1994; Powell, 1991), typically it is the streets who are harshly ridiculed for the industry's projected sensationalism. These men inhale and exhale some of the deepest pain known to the human experience oftentimes consciously to the economic and political exploitation of their lives. Their suffering has been commodified in exchange for increased power and profit. Their music in many respects represents an affidavit or recorded testimony of their experiences in their communities. *What would society do if it did in larger numbers take the words and experiences of these men as something that is true?; what would people in our country, especially the whiter and wealthier members of our nation, do with this onus on their lap?; to what degree would they respond to these very vivid and graphic testimonies of human suffering?* Larger society has a tendency to solely cast these men or treat their stories as one might exocitize the characters of a comic book or a

movie character. Generally, these men are framed as essential human shells devoid of any meaningful experiences or characteristics to be educated about. Street life oriented rappers, in many instances, are *literally* caught between a vice of death and a hard place. However, Middle America generally regards their music as sensational. It is important to note that some of the music is sensational and inauthentic, however, a good portion of the sensationalized music is done so or consciously recorded by authentic street rappers as a way to get profit. Nevertheless, there are significant amounts of authentic street Hip-Hop music on the underground as well as on the mainstream venues. The authentic street music that is out there clearly represents the pain of the inner city from a street perspective. These specific songs will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Much of what these men rap about or what oppressed people across the globe have sung about across space and time actually is true. As hard as it may be to conceive that people, particularly in the United States, actually live under these gruesome conditions, the fact of the matter is it is true in alarmingly concentrated numbers or pockets of communities across the country. Their rap stories about the police, politicians, their high schools, teachers, economic poverty, U. S. born African on African violence in their communities and the like in many instances are not exaggerated.

Some non-traditional scholars have boldly argued that the rapper's lyrics are genuinely the resultant views and honest expressions of the conditions they and their loved ones live in (Dyson, 2000; Hansen, 1995; Johnson, et al., 1995; Powell, 1991; Rose, 1994; Zillmann, et al., 1995). Hansen (1995) asserts that, "members of the white establishment" are offended and ultimately dismissive of these honest expressions given that much of the music is specifically targeted towards them. Hansen (1995) also notes

that significant amounts of the music, although to a lesser degree, is directed toward professional or middle class U. S. born African leaders and social organizations presumably set up to address the educational, socio-economic and political concerns of low income U. S. born Africans (Dyson, 2000, 1996, 1987; Kelley, 1994; Keyes, 2002; Marable, 2002; Rose, 1994, 1991). Allen (1996) asserts that “rap music has become one of the principle vehicles by which young African Americans express their views of the world...”. Allen (1996) argues that the music is specifically used to organize some level of understanding or make coherent the tragedies known to the experience of the inner community. Powell (1991) in the same theoretical vein comments that Hip-Hop music specifically represents the sentiments of low-income U. S. born Africans ranging from “hopes” or “aspirations” to the struggles of the people. Although songs capture particular themes that are more popular or salient in the music at different times, Powell (1991) argues that the music is ultimately a reflection of the totality of the full experience of low-income U. S. born Africans as opposed to representative of one particular notion of the experience. Rose (1994) uses the work of James Scott’s (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* to help her theorize the sentiments or lyrics advanced by street life oriented Hip-Hop music. Scott (1990) argues that rebellious or resistant behavior across space and time throughout the human experience typically has manifested into two forms: (1) hidden transcripts and (2) public transcripts. Scott (1990) asserts *hidden transcripts* represent the socio-cultural secret codes of the marginalized or resistant group. It is in the hidden transcripts of the lyrics where the richness of the streets or their oppression can best be observed. *Public transcripts* represent the values of the status quo and are employed by the resistant group as a way to obscure the hidden beliefs or intentions for

the larger social structural order. It is important to note that the culture of the people drives how the hidden transcript is used. Hidden transcripts essentially are employed to exonerate the people from their disenfranchisement. The hidden elements of the community or code of the streets ultimately allow the people to organize and network in such a way so that their collective concerns are harnessed in one direction. According to Rose (1994) while other venues represent the public transcript of the people, Hip-Hop music has been strongly representative of the hidden transcripts of low-income U. S. born Africans. She says:

“Rap music is, in many ways, a hidden transcript. Among other things, it uses cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities. Not all rap transcripts directly critique all forms of domination; nonetheless, a large and significant element in rap’s discursive territory is engaged in symbolic and ideological warfare with institutions and groups that symbolically, ideologically, and materially oppress African Americans. In this way, rap music is a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless. On this stage, rappers act out inversions of status hierarchies, tell alternative stories of contact with dominant groups in which the hidden transcript inverts/subverts the public, dominant transcripts. Often rendering a nagging critique of various manifestations of power via jokes, stories, gestures, and song, rap’s social commentary enacts ideological insubordination (100 - 101).

The police and the burgeoning prison industrial complex has been one specific theme that has been prevalent throughout the course of street life oriented Hip-Hop music (Aldridge & Carlin, 1993; Allen, 1996; Decker, 1994; Dyson, 2000; Hansen, 1995; Hoye & Ali, 2003; Kelley, 1996; Kunjufu, 1993; Rose, 1994). Street life oriented rappers often discuss the treatment or physical brutality experienced by police in the communities in their songs. Some of these narratives include how, as children, these rappers remember police searching their homes or arresting their fathers as well as the pain associated with

having the police degrade, physically brutalize and arrest them in their homes in front of their own children. Rappers often speak out to the conditions that fashion a street life orientation arguing that the economic and educational system as well as the policing and prison industrial complex are nothing more than institutions set up to literally reproduce this type of lifestyle. In most instances these street life oriented men are in no position to legally challenge the police in a court of law and as a result concede to the treatment experienced by police. Kelley (1996) asserts:

“Like the economy and the city itself, the criminal-justice system changed just when hip-hop was born. Prisons are not designed to discipline but to corral bodies labeled menaces to society; policing is not designed to stop or reduce crime in inner-city communities but to manage it. Moreover, economic restructuring resulting in massive unemployment *has* created criminal out of Black youth, which is what gangsta rappers acknowledge. But rather than apologize or preach, they attempt to rationalize and explain. Most gangsta rappers write lyrics attacking law-enforcement agencies, the denial of their unfettered access to public space, and the media’s complicity in making black youth out to be criminals. Yet these very stereotypes of the ghetto as ‘war zone’ and the Black youth as ‘criminal,’ as well as their (often adolescent) struggles with notions of masculinity and sexuality, also structure and constrain their efforts to create a counternarrative of life in the inner city (118).

Artists that have received attention from scholars in the Hip-Hop literature generally have included rappers from the late eighties to mid 1990’s: Ice T, KRS-One, Public Enemy, Niggas With Attitude (NWA), Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls for instance. Songs that caught the interests of academic and political circles have included such tunes as *Cop Killer* (1992) by Ice T, *Fuck the Police* (1989) by NWA, *Who Protects Us From You* (1988) by KRS-One or *Fight the Power* (1990) by Public Enemy. These songs unflinchingly express the sentiments of the streets regarding the police.

It is important to note that in most instances, street life oriented U. S. born African men oftentimes come to Hip-Hop not only as a means to demonstrate their vigilance for

social concerns in their community but also as a means to establish their resiliency through acquiring economic opportunity (Carter, 2003; Dyson, 2001, 1996, 1987; Henderson, 1996; Hoye & Ali, 2003, Keyes, 2002; Rose, 1994; Ross, 1994). Hip-Hop is a viable site of resiliency for the streets. Hip-Hop music as well as the larger Hip-Hop culture has been one of the few legal avenues that have opened up for street life oriented U. S. born African men. Consequently, these men pour out of the streets and prisons in droves desperately seeking to secure their economic futures through the Hip-Hop industry. Point and fact, a number of street life oriented Hip-Hop rappers actually abhor the dirtiness, trickery and ultimately exploitation of the entertainment business. It is common to find or hear narratives in their songs, sometimes coded through street slang sometimes not, that challenge the business structure of Hip-Hop music. Hip-Hop artists often liken the rules of the “crack game” to that of the “rap game”. The industry ultimately is controlled and owned by the great white corporate profiteer as is the case with narcotics or other forms of illegal trade and products. Further, the street life Hip-Hop music industry in particular, has a rapidly increasing concentration of rappers that have developed life threatening feuds with other rival street life Hip-Hop crews. In fact, this line of behavior indirectly is endorsed by executives of the larger music industry who sign and shell out multimillion dollar contracts to these artists. Artists and their entourages frequently carry guns as well as other weaponry, or are accompanied by hired body guards or security teams. Rappers are oftentimes frustrated with the dangerous lifestyle of the music business but stay the course because this new perilous adventure sadly enough is ultimately their best economic shot when viewing their options. There is a serious physical and emotional risk in acquiring success in the rap game. Although

most street life oriented rappers respect and enjoy the art of Hip-Hop music, the industry nonetheless is typically seen as an inimical space. Nonetheless, street life rappers oftentimes ideologically compare their trek to that of a sacrificial lamb, in that they are willing to participate in the Hip-Hop game with all its risk given the dangers in rap music are usually similar to that in their personal lives (the physical danger actually is probably less in the rap game) and at least they are in a position to produce and leave behind some kind of economic purse for their family and loved ones if circumstances should end up awry. Rappers commonly utter lyrics that challenge the ethos of the music business some of which include, "I hate rap" by the multi-platinum artist Cam'ron or from Jadakiss on his hit single *Why* (2004), "Why is the industry designed to keep the artist in debt?". Nevertheless, these men urgently through the inherent trickery and travails of the Hip-Hop industry risk their emotional and physical health to locate economic opportunity to not only provide for themselves but for loved ones and the local community.

Within recent years a number of street life rappers took the initiative to form their own Hip-Hop music companies. Such new and thriving companies include: Roc-a-Fella Records, Diplomat Records, Blood Line, D-Block, The New No Limit and Murder Inc. These new companies led by the streets have aggressively worked to incorporate a new line of corporate ethics which has lead to increased popularity of these newer companies in the community. More specifically, the newer Hip-Hop companies typically are more community based, better understand the needs of the artists, and often seek to give more creative control and economic opportunity to the artist as well as members of the local community through other forms of employment (e. g. promotional teams, talent scouts, etc.). Darrin Dean, one of the CEO's of Ruff Ryders Recordings says in a documentary:

“We try and do independent shit so other people can get jobs—so we can hire niggas and give them jobs. And don’t have to worry about the white man trying to give us jobs cause he is going to limit us. So we got to give jobs back to the people where we grew up at, you know what I’m saying, in the hood. Everybody here is willing to work! You know, but they just don’t get the opportunity... so we got to create opportunities. Se we got to take it there, win or lose, fuck it, we try our hand. Who would you want to give a job to? They giving jobs to they people (whites), who the fuck they know, they kids and they sons and the people they grew up with. So we going to do the same... I’m at least give a motherfucker a chance. Wouldn’t you give your son a chance or your friends? Well that’s the same thing I’m going to do”.

According to Mr. Dean, it is apart of the mission of his music company to provide significant numbers of jobs to street life oriented U. S. born African men. Dean notes in the documentary how life ultimately has been stacked from the beginning against these street life oriented men. Life for the streets is a “rough ride”, hence the name of the successful multi-million dollar company, Ruff Ryders. According to Dean, it is necessary for the mission or ideology of the company to fundamentally be geared toward the people given that “the white man” is not creating economic opportunity and only seeking to package and profit off of the pain laced in these men’s art. Kris Ex (2002) writes for Double XXL magazine, “Ruff Ryder music is ghetto... The sound is primal.. Their music theory is simple: Make it loud and make it threatening, then turn up the volume and cuss some more. The philosophy has taken hip-hop back to an essence where it is all about the downtrodden, a way for the have-nots to level the playing field” (103). N. O. R. E. short for Norega and/or Niggas On the Run Eating, and member of the acclaimed street Hip-Hop group CNN or Capone and Norega, explains in an interview in The Street Bible—Don Diva magazine that his work speaks to this same spirit (2001). He notes that the message behind his new single, “*Grimey*” off of the album, “*God’s Favorite*” (2002) salutes the economic struggle endemic to the streets. N. O. R. E. wants

the streets to specifically know that their pain has not been forgotten and will forever be represented in his music. N. O. R. E. says,

“ ‘Grimey... God’s favorite’ represents all the hood niggas. All the down-low, dirty, foul hood niggas that never got recognized but was tryin’ to get money. See there’s a difference between bein’ a dirty nigga and a grimey nigga. A grimey nigga is a nigga who you can see he don’t got a haircut, but he try to look nice, you know what I mean. It’s not that he’s dirty it’s that he’s strugglin’... I represent that nigga, feel me?” (54).

Rapper and Hip-Hop mogul Jay Z’s Hip-Hop career is a testimony to how Hip-Hop is pursued as a site of resiliency by street life oriented U. S. born Africans. The admitted former cocaine drug dealer has developed one of the most successful music business empires known to not only Hip-Hop but the music business in general. Caught up in a number of life threatening feuds throughout his illustrious rap career, Mr. Carter has managed to develop with his partners Damon Dash and Kareem “Biggs” Burke, a multi-million dollar enterprise entitled Roc-A-Fella Records. Incorporated in the mission of the company is a vision to provide real economic opportunities to the inner city and particularly street life oriented U. S. born African men. Unfortunately, the sensationalism of the industry oftentimes obscures these community based acts of such companies.

According to Mr. Carter (2003):

“There is something I’m proud of that never gets written about: My company provides a lot of job opportunities. I employ so many people at Roc-A-Fella Records, Rocawear, Roc-A-Films, and Armadale Vodka-young black women and men with little to no experience in the music business. I donated money to the Columbine effort, World Trade Center relief, Thanksgiving drives, the Jay-Z Santa Claus Toy Drive, Team Roc, and the Shawn Carter Scholarship Fund. I never give to get props (attention). I give because I can, because it’s from my heart, and because I was raised right” (84).

Beanie Sigel a successful street life oriented rapper on Roc-A-Fella Records discusses at length in an interview for *Double XXL* magazine how he has used Hip-Hop

music as a site of resiliency (2002). Specifically, Beans makes mention of how Roc-A-Fella Records has sharpened his business skills and mentored his professional development in the music industry. Beanie uses the economic fortunes garnered from his music to take care of his family and other love ones from his community. He notes in his interview that he pays at least \$16,000 a month in bills between his personal expenses as well as his mother and sister's car and home expenses. He says:

“About a year ago Jay invited me to his house for this thing he does every week called *Soul Food Sunday*, and that changed the way I handled business. Every Sunday Jay invites all his family, his personal friends, the Roc-A-Fella staff, even some interns, over to his house for a soul food dinner. The males cook and the women do the dishes. They (the women) ain't even allowed in the kitchen” (110).

The proclaimed General of Roc-A-Fella Records, Beanie Siegel under the auspices of this company has established his own record company, *Criminal Records*, as well as a very successful clothing line called *State Property*. Further, he has recruited and had signed to the parent company Roc-A-Fella Records an entourage of rappers called *State Property* as well who have rapidly become popular within the streets and throughout the commercial airwaves of the United States. *State Property* is made up of rappers from his Philadelphia hometown community who include: Freeway, Chris & Neef as well as Oschino & Sparks. In an effort one evening to mentor the rap collective *State Property*, Siegal makes mention:

“This ain't about jewelry it's about building something and takin' as many of your people out the hood as you can. Even if it's just the six of us and our family and friends, that's damn near 100 people out the hood in Philly. Each one of those people are gonna have kids that don't ever have to go through the shit we went through, and then after that, if those kids' kids'll be able to achieve anything that they want. I'm putting two of my cousins through college to get degrees in child psychology so we can open up a day care center in the hood! I wanna build hospitals and orphanages and shit” (114).

The economic opportunity produced ironically by this generation's street life oriented U. S. born African men, has been unmatched by any other segment of U. S. born Africans in this country (e. g. political, religious, corporate, etc.). Put another way, no other group of U. S. born Africans, contemporarily or historically, have been willing or able to develop a-for-profit economic infrastructure that has served low-income U. S. born Africans to the degree or in the capacity that street life oriented rappers have. In addition to garnering corporate interest and the attention of virtually all professional sectors of the United States these men have used Hip-Hop not only to develop capital but also and perhaps more importantly to define their identity as men (Jones, 1997; Marable, 2002; Rose, 1994a, 1994b). One of the driving forces behind the streets and in particular street life oriented Hip-Hop music is the opportunity to develop one's identity. It is the whole point of it all. From a street perspective, it is more than worth it to experience and endure the inimical forces of the Hip-Hop industry in exchange for the opportunity to be in a position to completely define their selves. A rapper's legacy is built from his identity. His identity and how it is judged by his community prior, during and after his rap career is extremely valuable to the development of his success. Throughout the given course of a rapper's career as is the case in the streets, it is not uncommon for these men's rap or street names to turnover several times. The style of a street life oriented U. S. born African is extremely important for his reputation. He pays close attention to his style or what is referred to as *his swagger* by making sure the style adapts across time and space. In the streets it is necessary to stay several steps ahead of the status quo. It is simply adaptive for these men to move like this given their involvement in illegal activities. It is common in the inner cities to hear tales, even decades after the fact, about

the style and swagger of successful street hustlers. Rappers in many respects move in the same spirit. Given that rappers are aware that inner city fans in particular are always in search of the personal signature of the artist, rappers generally make sure to market their identity in their music projects. Style or personal identity can include the choice of the rapper's Hip-Hop name, sound or beats, delivery of his lyrics, lyrical content, stage performance, clothing, hair, the color he associates with, for instance, as well as how his personal character sews all of these identity markers together. Rose (1994) says:

“Hip Hop culture emerged as source of alternative identity formation and social status for youth in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with large sectors of its built environment. Alternative local identities were forged in fashions and language, street names and most importantly, in establishing neighborhood crew or posses. The crew, a local source of identity, group affiliation and support system, appears in virtually all rap lyrics and cassette dedications, music video performances and media interviews with artists. Identity in Hip-Hop is deeply rooted in the specific, the local experience and one's attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family. These crews are new kinds of families forged with intercultural bonds which, like the social formation of gangs, provide insulation and support in a complex and unyielding environment and may, in fact, contribute to the community-building networks which serve as the basis for new social movements” (78).

Ultimately, the rappers personal signature is connected to and a reflection of his community. To be successful as a rapper, one has to allow their efforts in the industry and personal character to be measured by the ethics of their local community and the larger Hip-Hop community. Rappers generally are considered successful if they are able to survive any scrutiny or criticism that may result from such an investigation. The judgment of these men typically consists of how closely the rapper's personal character parallel that of his lyrical messages and other activities in the Hip-Hop industry. Hip-Hop artists have been known to encounter life threatening situations if the things they rap

about and the image they portray are not supported or endorsed by the standards of the people they presumably represent. Specifically, these men are graded on a self imposed criteria often referred to as “keeping it real” (Dyson, 2001, 2000, 1987; Keyes, 2002; Perkins, 1996). Keepin’ it real, a value system that has followed U. S. born Africans from West Africa simply refers to how genuine, true or well a rapper is able to maintain his identity within the throes of a corporate reality. It is often discussed within the streets how the inherent greed of corporate America has infiltrated the borders of Hip-Hop, thus, transforming and warping the personal integrity of many of the street life oriented artist in its grip (Carter, 2003).

The Hip-Hop industry for better or for worse has afforded street life oriented U. S. born African men the opportunity to better define their selves as men or as Kings. According to DMX on his song, “King” off of the movie soundtrack, *Never Die Alone* (2003), the drive that sits in the belly of every man in the streets is an unconscious passionate drive to reclaim and/or satisfy their thirst to be a King. Firmly directing his words to the streets, DMX specifically argues in the opening of the song that with respect to street status or identity, essentially it is not in and of it self about being the best drug dealer, pimp or any other street role, according to DMX the goal for the street oriented U. S. born African man in particular is, “... about being a motherfucking KING”. Ultimately, DMX (2003) wants the streets to understand that their motivation to be the *man* would be better understood by the streets on a personal or individual level if they framed their masculinity under notion of being a King.

In better understanding the phenomenology of street life oriented U. S. born African men, researchers may find it useful to turn to the impassioned lyrics found in

Hip-Hop music. The second task of this chapter will involve a detailed discussion on the scholarly and intellectual implications behind a set of Hip-Hop lyrics to present views from a “non-scholarly” source. An examination of Hip-Hop lyrics will provide the reader with a rare but often ignored voice that can be used as an important source of phenomenological evidence or data in understanding the lived experience of street life U. S. born African men.

Hip-Hop’s Testimonies of Street Life as a Site of Resiliency

Although largely ignored, explanations for non-traditional conceptualizations of street life, particularly as they relate to low-income street life oriented U. S. born African males, have been posited from a number of rap artists for some time. It is important to note that there has always been a segment of artists genuinely dedicated to vibrantly representing the voices of many of these men from a non-traditional perspective. Within this subsection, a number of Hip-Hop lyrics will be presented as reference points. Many of the lyrics presented will, in part, illustrate the more violent and/or illegal aspects of street life. Such evidence is being presented to demonstrate why some low-income U. S. born African men choose to lead a street life. Put simply, the lyrics argue how the social, economical, political and racial back drop of oppression work to produce street life. However, my analysis should not be confused with representing a holistic depiction of these men. What the lyrics will not largely or directly represent in this text is the love, camaraderie, fraternal brotherhood, family appeal, and enhanced personal levels of self-esteem that also run concurrent and independent of the violent and/or illegal aspects of street life.

Many of their arguments position by rappers seek to present rationales for the increasing disconnect between low-income U. S. born African men and more privileged communities as well as institutions. For instance, many of these artists raise concerns about the warehousing of these men in prisons. *Krayzie Bone* (2000) of *Bones, Thugs and Harmony*, in particular, argues this point in his lyrics.

Nigga ain't seen daylight (daylight)
 they got me caged like (caged like)—running wild
 just for trying to feed myself (provide a economic means to live)
 the state act like we ain't even there
 So I say (I say), I've done no wrong
 I want to go home now.....

I guess I am paying the dues of a real true soldier (or a street life oriented U. S. born African man)

Chorus

.... I am shackled up from my head to my shoes
 I am so caught up—I don't know what to do

Krayzie Bone (2000) is presenting a scenario where he is imprisoned. He is arguing that “the state” uses mechanisms of inhumanity (or keeps them “caged-like”) toward one trying to economically survive (or “feed himself”) within the throes of an inner city reality. *Krayzie Bone* (2000) understands very clearly that he is imprisoned for engaging in illegal street life activities. However, he is arguing that society at large, and the judicial system in particular, understands that his imprisonment is unjust when considering his personal experience in an inner city environment through a race and class analysis. Moreover, *Krayzie Bone* (2000) notes that “the state” has no vested interest in understanding why he and others like him are imprisoned (“the state act like we ain't even there”). Consequently, *Krayzie Bone* (2000) feels that he just wants to be released and “go home”. However, he rationalizes his incarceration by arguing that this form of

social injustice is prevalent in his community. Although frustrated he finds some resolve in recognizing that he is, "... paying the dues of a real true soldier" (or a street life oriented U. S. born African male.

Ja Rule (2000), also, sharply demonstrates a non-traditional race and class analysis on the resilient nature of these men. Ja Rule (2000) off of the album entitled *Rule 3:36* reinforces this argument in the lines, "... struggling always provokes the hustling... (poverty often leads persons to engage in illegal or criminal activity) ...to this we accustomed..". In these lines Ja Rule is providing a rationale to the listener in how or why some U. S. born African men resort to using illegal street life activities. He is trying to drive home the point that inner city economic poverty or "struggling" is a social recipe for creating street life or "the hustling". Ja Rule (2000) through rhyme and rhythm argues that these men engage in sales of narcotics to survive within their economic hardships. His position is that since these men are provided with little opportunities for first rate or efficient education and employment, a number of them will instead locate socially undesirable methods to "successfully" or resiliently live.

Cam'ron (2000) on his album entitled *S. D. E.* opens with introductory remarks to the song "Killer" that exemplify street life as a site of resiliency for U. s. born African men. Specifically, Cam 'ron (2000), in his introductory remarks, sarcastically notes some of the key social ingredients that produces the streets. Cam'ron (2000) says:

"I am not going to sit here and watch this go on any longer. You know they put my food in the dark and then expect me to look for my plate on some Mr. Mc Goo shit. What the fuck I look like. I am not going to watch this go on any longer."

Cam'ron's (2000) underlying message is that he refuses to function in life by using traditional middle class standards to do so or behave "on some Mr. McGoo shit". He finds it nonsensical to move from a traditional value system in an environment or inner city that divests the streets of key socio-economic advantages. Specifically, Cam'ron (2000) calls attention to a society that has insidiously "put (his) food in the dark" or frozen opportunities for social, political and economic advancement. Consequently, what this young man would be able to professionally accomplish (e.g. education, sufficient legal income) for instance, would require him to work harder and perhaps risk more in comparison to more privileged persons living outside of his inner city environment. Cam'ron not (2000) only sees this as an insult to his intelligence, but he also refuses to continue being taken advantage of by institutional, social, political and economical practices, "I am not going to watch this any longer". Implicit in the introductory words is the fact that street life will be used to redress Cam'ron's (2000) newfound reality. After he ends with his introductory remarks, falsetto voices rhythmically chant the word "killer". The arrangement of the introductory words followed up by the singing of the word "killer" was a conscious act by Cam'ron (2000). Cam'ron (2000) is trying to highlight through his rhythmic arrangement that inner city socio-economic circumstances often work to produce conditions necessary for the development of street life oriented U. S. born African men or "Killers". Cam'ron (2000) is more explicit about the resilient aspects found in street life later on in the album. Specifically, he makes mention of the various kinds of resilient acts street life oriented Black men employ in his (Cam'ron's) neighborhood or "block" in Harlem. Also, Cam'ron makes mention of how undercover cops are periodically so widespread in his

community that it causes the streets to be more innovative in selling drugs in a community where hope and “pain” remain present but usually at opposite ends of each other mostly with “pain” having the edge. Cam’ron (2000) says:

“... listen hear me out
 I’m from a cocaine block
 With some plain clothes cops
 And the sun don’t rise cause the rain don’t stop
 The pain don’t stop but my brain don’t stop
 And no lock outs—the game don’t stop
 Every month you change your locks—change your spot (where you sell drugs)
 Get a little smart want to change your tops (tops or caps on the vials of crack)-rearrange
 your rocks (crack)...”

Tupac Amaru Shakur was one of Hip-Hop culture’s most outspoken musical artists when it came to discussions of the resilient factors of street life oriented U. S. born men. It was common to hear lines from Tupac like “mama sent me to go play with the drug dealers” (1995). Such a line reveals the complexity behind the socialization process of how Black men become street life oriented. It was obvious to Tupac that his mother did not literally ask nor want him to play with drug dealers as a youth. However, he is arguing that many of the children he played with, ultimately would become many of the future drug dealers in his community. Tupac (1995) like the above Hip-Hop musical artists raises this point to alert the listener to how inner city socio-economic factors engender street life oriented U. S. born African men.

Furthermore, it was common for Tupac to bring light to the resilience and innovative tenacity street life oriented men have. On the *Thug Life* album, Tupac (1994) expresses how he embodied this tenacity when he partook in street life. Put simply, his message was that he would be “balling” (tenaciously living and negotiating the codes of street life) or living the life of a “baller” as a consequence of street life. However, his

resilient will to do well within the culture of street life left Tupac with only one concern—that his mother not cry if he prematurely dies in the streets as a result of using street life oriented activities to economically survive.

“They say, how do you survive weighing 165
in the city where the skinny niggas die.
Tell mama don’t cry, even if they kill me,
They can never take the game from a young G (young street life oriented
Black man) I’m straight ballin’!”

It is important to note that Tupac (1994) was not trying to necessarily glorify the successful triumphs of street life. On the contrary, implicit in Tupac’s (1994) message was that these aggressive means of street life activities is necessary if one is to “... survive weighing 165 in the city where the skinny niggas die”. Although critics often lumped all of Tupac’s music under the label “gangstas rap”, proponents of Tupac saw his music as representative of the revolutionary resilient spirit and frustrations found among inner city economically impoverished U. S. born African men. Tupac often liken the experiences of the streets to that of the struggle of militant or nationalist U. S. born African revolutionaries (i. e. Geronimo Pratt, Matulu Shakur, Louis Farakhan, etc.).

Tupac (1996) says:

“Gutter ways, my mentality is ghetto,
a gorilla in this criminal war, we all rebels
Death before dishonor bet I bomb on them first
Niggas new we came for murder pulling up in a hearst
Westside was the war cry, busting off (shooting) freely,
screaming FUCK ALL YOU NIGGAS in Swahili”

Moreover, Tupac often explicitly regarded the inner city byproducts of social class and racism or young inner city street life oriented U. S. born African men as “American made”. Tupac essentially felt the United States was in part a breeding ground

that consciously created the conditions for inner cities, and in particular inner city U. S. born African men for economic gain. Specifically, he felt there was a direct link between the U. S. economy and the current concentration of street life activities.

Interestingly, one of the entourages Tupac frequently recorded with was entitled, T. H. U. G. L. I. F. E. Tupac was very public, in terms of demonstrating his allegiance to T. H. U. G. L. I. F. E. In fact, in large bold letters Tupac had the words T. H. U. G. L. I. F. E. tattooed on his stomach. Although, critics would largely respond to his tattoo as a symbolic example of the “deviant” and “brutish” behavior found in street life oriented U. S. born African men, Tupac would all along argue that the tattoo was deeply misunderstood by his critics. His tattoo is simply a profound acronym. It stands for: *The Hate You (or U) Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone*. In other words, his tattoo which is congruent with many of the messages in his recordings, is arguing that if you by way of social, economical, political and racial oppression fill a child with “Hate”, then society should not be surprised when a generation of infants eventually grows to engage in street life activities (or “Fuck Everyone”) with the intent of surviving within their oppressive reality.

Shyne (2000), a Hip-Hop musical artist, picks up on this notion argued by Tupac.

Shyne (2000) in his introductory remarks to his self-entitled album says:

“Dear America-
 I am only what you made me
 Young, Black and fucking crazy
 Please save me-
 I’m dying inside
 Can’t you see it in my eyes
 I am hopeless
 Fearless on the outside—gun on my side
 Maybe if ya’ll niggas (the powers that be; e. g. society at large or White America) build schools instead of prisons

I'd stop living the way I'm living
 Probably not
 I'm so used to serving rocks (selling crack) and burning (shooting up) blocks
 I ain't never going to stop
 I've been doing this shit all my life...
 I am a lost cause
 What about the rest, don't them suckers deserve a chance
 Something better than shoot outs, liquor stores and food stamps
 Maybe if ya'll teach them niggas a craft and a trade
 They wouldn't have to play that corner (sell drugs on the street corner)
 You know, serving that yea (cocaine)
 America you got a fucking problem
 And I ain't never going away
 There's about 20 million other motherfuckers (street oriented young Black men) just like me..."

Shyne (2000) continues echoing the sentiments of Tupac in an interlude on this same album. Here he graphically explores the psychology of street life, by specifically noting the frustration of being raised in and constantly surrounded by economic poverty as well as the "fear" of remaining economically poor or "being broke" later on in life. Shyne (2000) picks up on the resilient aspects of street life when discussing how socio-economic circumstances engenders "gangsters" who sell "coke" on the street corner.

"The lord is my Shepard,
 let's get this coke (cocaine) measured
 Yeah tho' I walk through the valley of the shadows of gangsters.
 I fears nothing but God and being broke.
 Lets stack paper (money) and float fast cars in the presence of my enemies.
 Niggas waiting for me to break, ain't nothing folding but my money. Niggas with big guns... afraid of being broke so we shit bricks (a "brick" is a street term use to refer to a large measurement of cocaine. E.g "A brick of cocaine"). This thing of ours, can't never be devoured. Bad boys, we move in silence..."

Wu Tang Clan's song, *I Can't Go to Sleep* (2000), which features Isaacs Hayes, depicts the very racialized and gendered experiences found within an economically, politically and socially oppressive reality. Wu Tang (2000) is essentially arguing that these experiences across time and context have worked to shape the complex dynamics of

streets. Ghostface, of the Wu-Tang Clan, in the song's first verse phenomenologically captures, by way of rhyme the interplay of these complex factors.

Ghostface (2000):

... havoc on the streets of Staten (inner city Staten Island, New York)

Snitches (community citizens who alert the police of illegal activity),
house niggas, children watch as they produce the same pattern
Somebody (White America) raped our women, murdered our babies
Hit us with the cracks (crack-cocaine) and guns in the early eighties...

What the fuck is going on, I can't go to sleep
Feds (FBI) jumping out their jeeps, I can't go to sleep
Babies with flies on their cheeks, it's hard to go to sleep...

Then pass the cheeba spot (place to purchase marijuana), then pass the
leak spot (slang for another kind of illicit drug),
Don't pass ya'll niggas—niggas, he took a cheap shot
Not knowing what's fucking with me, ya'll get your meat chopped (or
physically harmed)
You thought we fell on our face, you think the beef (a serious unresolved
conflict) stopped
... call on an ambulance

Specifically, Ghostface (2000) opens up by outlining for the listener how the people in the inner city of Staten Island, New York have been divided and pitted against each other as a function of historical and contemporary white supremacy. He notes this by discussing the tension between street life oriented persons who engage in illegal activities and “snitches” as well as “house niggas”. When listening to the verse and placing it in context with the rest of the song and album, it becomes clear that Ghostface (2000) understands how the illegal activities of street life can affect a community. However, he is arguing that street life oriented young Black men, in part, engage in these activities out of economic and social necessity. Ghostface gets at the intergenerational and contemporary patterns of white supremacy by noting how the children of these

communities “watch and produce the same pattern”. He develops this point further by highlighting how U. S. born African women were “raped” and our “babies” murdered throughout time. He uses the example of how U. S. born African inner cities were filled with “cracks and guns in the early eighties” as evidence to assert how white supremacy has continued its reign among persons of direct African descent by secretly placing crack-cocaine and guns in the inner city communities in the 1980’s. Ghostface (2000) moves from this argument by raising how it is common to walk down an inner city street (particularly as a street life oriented U. S. born African man) and “pass the cheeba spot”; “pass the leak spot”; to finally walk into an altercation. Ghostface (2000) through a phenomenological analysis is trying to summarize and demonstrate how a multitude of racialized, gendered and classed factors can lead to a physical altercation. He says, “Not knowing what’s fucking with me, ya’ll get your meat chopped... .. call on an ambulance”. Within these lines he is trying to capture how as a young inner city street life oriented U. S. born African man, he has a number of frustrating and pressing concerns on his mind. For Ghostface, “not knowing” or understanding the frustrations of a young U. S. born African man’s mind can possibly result in an undesirable outcome or in this case a homicide, “call on an ambulance”.

More specifically, his point is that low resourced inner city communities are explicitly replete with harmful agents such as liquor stores, substance abuse, drugs, “beef”, corrupt police and the like. Such an experience on some level becomes embodied and normalized across the life span due to its consistent presence in the community. For these men, the embodiment of these agents result in the participation of a street life culture.

My next example of a Hip-Hop text that provides evidence of how street life is used in part as a site of resiliency is a song entitled “In the Event of My Demise” which is by the group, *Outlaws*, featuring *Geronimo Ji Jaga* (2000). The *Outlaws* is a group that worked closely with Tupac before his untimely death. Within the song they can be found calling attention to the complexity of street life. They articulate how street life is serving a resilient purpose while concurrently noting that street life is claiming our country’s young African male promise. Caught in a social catch-22, the Outlaws argue that as street life oriented young men who “feel the shadows of deaths”, they rather lead a street life as opposed to living according to strict traditional mores in an economically impoverished environment that is not conducive to such mores.

Introductory words by Geronimo Ji Jaga

“In the event of my demise when my heart can beat no more,
 I hope I die for a principle or a belief that I had lived for
 I will die before my time, because I feel the shadows of death
 So *much*, I wanted to accomplish before I reached my death
 I have come to grips with the possibility
 And wiped the last tear from my eye
 I love all who was positive
 In the event of my demise”

Young Noble of the Outlaws

1st verse

“In the event of my demise don’t shed no tears
 I share my wisdom with the world, they’ll know I was here,
 know I was clear, and everything I said I meant
 an outlaw (thug or street oriented Black man), when I was born
 They prepared my ditch (grave)
 Said I won’t live long—statistics show
 I’m trying to pass 24—a realistic goal
 Listen though, you got to stay as cold (tough) as I
 That’s what I tell myself when I feel alone sometimes
 But I can’t cry, I don’t care no more
 I love God, so death I don’t fear no more...

We was raised in concrete (an inner city or what is sometimes referred to as a *Concrete Jungle*) and grew as a rose
 Still I rise but never get a chance to fly
 Mama please don't cry in the event of my demise

Chorus

In the event of my demise, I can't breathe no more
 I hope I die for a principle something I lived for
 Dying before my time, feel the shadows of death
 Trying to fulfill all my dreams before I reached my death
 Came to grips with the possibility the world's killing me
 And my soldiers (friends who also carry a street-oriented/Outlaw philosophy) die young
 with no sympathy
 I wiped the last the tear from my eyes
 I love all who stayed strong in the event of my demise"

Tupac (2001) moves from his personal phenomenological position to discuss with the listener how he as a street life oriented young Black male as well as others, were affected by a "supreme ideology" that worked to under-develop his U. S. born African inner-city community. He points out that larger society has wrongly and unjustly endorsed a "supreme ideology" that ultimately blames the marginalized for their plight.

Tupac (2001):

"Supreme ideology you claim to hold
 Claiming that we all drug dealers with empty souls...
 ... thoughts I throw, it remains in your brain
 and of course it grows—maybe
 Even your babies (White privileged children) can produce and rise
 Picture a life where Black babies can survive pass five...
 'But we must have hope', quoting the reverend from the pulpit
 But *refuse* to turn the other cheek,
 we must defeat the evil cobra (elite White America)
 Lace me with words of destruction and I'll explode
 Or supply me with the will to survive and watch the world grow
 They say I talk about problems, I bring solutions
 Where's the restitution, stipulated through the constitution
 You violated now I am back to haunt your nights
 Listen to the screams of the lives you sacrificed
 And in case you don't know
 Ghetto born Black seeds (children) still grow
 And we coming back, for everything you owe"

This text by Tupac (2001) is extremely multi-layered, however, in short he has made mention of the effects of capitalism (“picture a life where Black babies can survive pass five”), the ineffective ideology by larger society (“supreme ideology you claim to hold”) and the “socialistic bourgeoisie” (“quoting the reverend from the pulpit, refuse to turn the other cheek”) as well as the risk that larger society is taking in keeping “Black seeds (children)” oppressed (we must defeat the evil cobra... .. and we coming back, for everything you owe). Ultimately, he wants the listener to understand that larger society is slowly but surely rearing a people who will evolve to a point of revolution. Tupac (2001) wants persons in power to recognize the direction our society is turning in with the intent of avoiding a tragic and tumultuous end. He genuinely calls for persons in power to provide past due social, political and economical “restitutions” to U. S. born Africans. He feels this is the only solution to prevent future U. S. born African generations from enrolling in and employing a street life orientation. We are at a crossroad and Tupac (2001) is asking power structures to choose a path of peace or falter in revolution, “lace me with words of destruction and I’ll explode/or supply me with the will to survive and watch the world grow”.

In closing, it is important to quickly revisit the caveat noted earlier, that street life goes beyond a set of violent and illegal activities. Hip-Hop musical artists provide testimonies of how street life is also rooted in a fraternal relationship where men genuinely bond, develop trust and enhance personal levels of resiliency. I do not want the lyrics to create the false impression that these men solely maintain resilient agendas that are simply concerned with violent aspects of street life (e. g. homicide, physical

assaults, selling drugs). Hip-Hop culture has been one of the few social mechanisms that has allowed a vibrant space for discussions involving the totality of the lifestyle of street-life oriented U. S. born African men. These songs essentially provide a recognized platform for these men to respond to the criticisms raised against the streets. Their arguments, through rhyme and reason, often support theoretical notions of street life as serving as a site of resiliency by revealing discourses that often incorporate critiques of how race and social class insidiously work to produce and sustain a culture of economic poverty. The saturation of a racist white supremacist ideology in virtually every social structural system constructed in the United States has caused contemporary figures in public authority across the political spectrum to consciously and/or unconsciously regard him as insolent for acting on perceived notions of social injustice. If one wanted to hear what oppression sounds like in the United States, to hear the purest form of human suffering in this country, all they would have to do is listen to the closest street life oriented Hip-Hop song available.

Level of Analysis

Social psychology is a field sufficiently appropriate to conduct and provide a reframing of this issue as well as the general looming question in which this project addresses: *To what extent can research begin to help us better understand the structural and individual based relationship between economic and educational opportunity and street life oriented U. S. born African men?*

This exploratory comparative study is a phenomenologically based quantitative and qualitative social psychological examination of street life oriented U. S. born African men's attitudes toward the streets as a function of their actual and perceived educational

and economic opportunities. Specifically, this study is interested in comparing the *intergenerational attitudes* toward opportunity held by a high school as well as community sample of older men. Juxtaposing the attitudes of street life oriented boys in high school against those attitudes of street life oriented men no longer in high school helps us better understand how men in the street think about access to educational and economic opportunity across time.

This proposal calls for a phenomenologically based investigation that examines the experiences of these young men within school confines; an exploratory study that critically evaluates why these young men have engaged in these activities. More specifically, this exploratory project will provide three levels of analysis. The *first level of analysis* will include looking at these men's attitudes towards economic and educational opportunities. This study is very interested in exploring how these men think about access to economic and educational opportunities, at large, to get a deeper sense of how such attitudes affect their commitment to school, community and larger society. Other analysis in this general first level of analysis will include measuring these men's attitudes toward their educators or teachers as well as their high school.

The *second level of analysis* will explore how these two generations of U. S. born African men share a particular street life value system that essentially grounds an overall street life ideology (Keiser, 1969; Payne & Brown, in press). Movement toward a street life orientation is typically accompanied by the person finding increased value and meaning in the overall ideology and/or code of the streets. Consequently, in this project it is predicted that both in-school and out-of school samples will share an awareness of the street life ideology that has three key components: (1) such an ideology has been

passed on by an older street life oriented U. S. born African male generation; (2) the more connected to the code or the better a person understands the ideology, the more resilient a person is considered and thus the ideology is centrally employed for economic and personal survival. This perceived notion of resiliency and/or connection to the street code is noted not only by the individual but also by the community; and (3) it is hypothesized that the men will organize their notions of the ideology into *general* and *localized* systems as noted earlier in the text. The *third level of analysis* includes the examination of issues of coping and resiliency among these two generations of street life oriented U. S. born African men. Particularly, this level of analysis will involve the exploration of the psychological and physical properties that work to create a site of resiliency. This level of analysis will help to provide a deeper sense of why these men use street life as a site of resiliency and how the site cuts across a high school and out of high school context.

Research Questions

Below are four research questions that this project investigates.

Economic and Educational Attitudes

1. How have attitudes toward educational and economic opportunities shifted across generations for street life oriented U. S. born African men?

Street Life Ideology

2. How do street life oriented U. S. born African men frame essential notions of street life?
3. How do the social psychological tenets of a street life value system or ideology shift across a high school and community sample of street life oriented U. S. born

African men?

Coping and Resiliency

4. To what extent can we begin to identify the more prominent or actual psychological and physical sites of resiliency used by street life oriented U. S. born African men?

This exploratory comparative study is a phenomenologically based quantitative and qualitative social psychological examination of street life oriented U. S. born African men's attitudes toward the streets as a function of their actual and perceived educational and economic opportunities. Specifically, this study is interested in comparing the intergenerational attitudes toward opportunity held by a high school as well as community sample of men. Examining the attitudes of street life oriented boys in high school against those attitudes of street life oriented men no longer in high school helps us better understand how men in the street think about access to educational and economic opportunity across time. It is important to note before taking you through the sample of this study that there is both a totality and wide variation, found amongst these men. The experience of the street life oriented U. S. born African male is much bigger than the sensational image of the young thug on the corner selling crack—the image normally pushed through various media outlets. As represented in this study's sample, the young corner thug is one of many street perspectives expressed through the low income U. S. born African male experience. There are different grades or degrees of a street life orientation. A wide range of experiences, variations and/or styles can be found in the streets, which oftentimes does not parallel the commercial and homogenized imagery projected with regard to these men. In the streets the low-income U. S. born African

male experience can cut across elderly men who control the “block” or who simply share space on the block at a low ranking level (small time hustling), to that of high and low-ranking teenage youth. These men come to the streets as a function of different stories, thus, affecting to what degree these men engage in street life activities. Some use the streets to supplement their income—some use the streets as their principal income. Street life is much bigger than the corner or block—this is only one space where illegal and male bonding activities take place. The nature of the hustle, geographical location, as well as the salient political and socioeconomic influences of the local area will have a lot to do with how the streets manifest in a particular community. For instance, low-income street life oriented U. S. born African men in the South (e. g. Florida, Alabama, or Georgia) or the West (e. g. California, Arkansas, or Utah) move differently than let’s say the Northeast (New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, or Washington). The local customs, street slang, ways of hustling and/or bonding activities all will vary as a function of the geographical space. Although these areas hold authentic street life populations and/or communities, these areas clearly maintain their own distinct stamp on the street game.

Furthermore, when trying to understand a street life sample it is important to take into account that this population oftentimes is comprised of a fleeting and unstable group of men. Many of these men are frequently on the move given survival is contingent on the fluid conditions of the hustle. Wherever the work is, the men will move to. Between prison, death, being on the run from the police, other guys coming in the area and the youth coming up in the community—the personality of the block or streets rapidly adapts and turns over in a given low-income community. All of these factors significantly inform any street life oriented sample.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Survey and interview data were collected primarily out of street communities in Harlem, New York City as well as in Paterson, New Jersey. Other areas, to a much lesser degree included Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens of New York City as well as Ossining, New York State, Newark, New Jersey and Prince George County, Maryland. Street life oriented U. S. born African male participants in this study had to meet the following criteria: (1) self-identify as street life oriented, (2) self-identify as U. S. born African (Black or African-American), (3) participated within the last year in street life activities to survive physically (gang activity, fighting/assault, etc.) or economically (selling narcotics, number running, etc.), and (4) by federal standards live in an economically impoverished position. Most participants in this study clearly were engaged in criminal activity as recently as minutes before filling out a survey.

Initial data collection resulted in 412 participants surveyed. Out of this original or initial sample, 41 participants were removed from the data set for reasons including: (1) wrong race/ethnicity—7; (2) was considered not to be street life oriented—8; (3) under 16 years of age—11; (4) gender—2; (5) incomplete survey—1; as well as 6 participants' surveys were removed given they were determined to be under the age of 16 and by their own admission were not street life oriented. Two other participant's surveys were removed given the participants were both under age of 16 and did not identify as U. S. born African. Specifically, the final participant count consists of 156 young men in high school over the age of 16 as well as survey data from 215 men not in high school to bring the total survey sample to a count of 371 participants. It is important to note that while I

do not have an exact refusal rate for this study, survey data was not collected through traditional methods whereby such a count could be determined. In most instances, the men approached the research team within a specified location inside their communities making it extremely difficult to figure out an attrition or refusal rate.

22 individual interviews were conducted, 11 with street life oriented high school students and 11 with street life oriented men from the community. Results from the individual interviews are not the focus of this dissertation and will seldom be mentioned.

Finally, seven individuals participated in two group interviews. It is important to note that the four young men who participated in the high school group interview consisted of people *not* known to me or the principal investigator of this study. **Killer (17, 10 grade)** was introduced to me through my professional network. More specifically, at the time of this dissertation, I was concurrently organizing a Participatory Action Research team of students in John F. Kennedy high school for Dr. Michelle Fine's Opportunity Gap study. Upon the closing of that project, an Academy Director in the high school who operated as a point person between the school and the larger Opportunity Gap Project, introduced me to **Killer (17, 10th grade)**. The director allowed me to speak more in detail with the young man about my interest as a researcher. My request was received well from the young man. I was then allowed to conduct an individual interview with him in the school after school hours. At the completion on this interview we made an additional appointment where he came back with three of his friends for a group interview. However, of the three men from the community who took part in the group interview, one participant was my brother and the two other men were known to me as well.

Sample Grid

Sample	Opportunity Gap Survey	Group Interview	Individual Interview
Community Sub-Sample	215	3 persons	11 persons
High School Sub-Sample	156	4 persons	11 persons

Age

Age for the total sample ranges from 16 – 65. The age of high school participant's ranged from 16 – 20, while the age range for the men from the community was 17-65. The total survey sample for descriptive and more complex quantitative analysis was separated into three groups to better understand how age cuts across the sample: (1) 16-24 – 49.6%, (2) 25-44 – 14.3% and (3) 45-65 – 14.6% as well as (4) missing – 21.6%. Age brackets determined for this sample were drawn from how rates are typically reported on this population in the literature (Gibbs, 1988; Stevenson, 1997).

High School Sample

Originally, 184 high school students participated in the survey end of this study. Twenty-eight surveys were expunged, nonetheless. Reasons for removal included: (1) race/ethnicity—4, (2) considered not to be street life oriented—8, (3) under the age of 16—9 and (4) did not complete the survey—1. In addition, 4 surveys were removed given the participants were both under 16 and considered not to be street life oriented as well as 2 participants were under the age of 16 and determined not to be U. S. born African. This reduced the original or initial high school survey sample from a total count

of 184 to a sample of 156. Sixty-five percent of the high school surveys were collected in New York City while 32.1% of these surveys were collected in New Jersey.

All interviews with high school students were carried out in Paterson, New Jersey. These men ranged in age between 16 and 17. Two of the high school students were enrolled in 11th grade, one in 10th grade and one in 9th grade.

Community Sample

228 men from the community participated in the survey end of the study. It was determined by the research team to remove 13 of the older men's surveys from the larger survey sample. Reasons for removal included: (1) race/ethnicity—3, (2) considered not to be street life oriented—4, (3) age or currently enrolled in high school—2 and (4) surveys were completed by women—2. In addition, 2 surveys were removed given participants were both enrolled in high school and considered not to be street life oriented. This reduced the original or initial survey sample from a total count of 228 to a sample of 215. Further, 47.1% of the community sample's surveys were collected in New York City while 35.1% of the surveys were collected in New Jersey.

The age range of the men who completed the surveys spanned from 17 – 65. It is important to note, that 40% of the older men did not answer the question *how old are you?* Nonetheless, the age groups for the men who made up the community sample broke down in the following manner: (1) 17 – 24 – 12.4%, (2) 25 - 44 – 23.6% and (3) 45 - 65 – 24%.

The community group interview consisted of three older men from New Jersey. At the time of the interview, two of the men in the group interview were 29 years old while the third was 43 years old. The age range of the community interviews spanned

from 22 – 65. More specifically, at the time of the interview: (1) three men were over sixty, (2) one man was forty-four, (3) two of the men were in their thirties, (4) and five men were in their twenties.

Instrumentation

Attitudes Toward Opportunity Scale [ATO]: Under direction of Dr. Michelle Fine, a survey of nearly 3,000 high school students was conducted for the purpose of interrogating the “achievement” or opportunity gap between non-white and white students. Altogether the Opportunity Gap Project engaged a consortium of 13 high schools in New York and New Jersey (Fine, Roberts, Torre, Bloom, Chajet, Guishard & Payne, 2004). For the Opportunity Gap Project, a 142 item survey was designed to assess high school students’ opinions about school and opportunities in the United States. This survey instrument can be separated into three sub-sections and six scales none of which are relevant to the current study.

Given that the purpose of the current study is to explore the educational and economic attitudes of street life oriented U. S. born African males, an *Attitudes Toward Opportunity Measure* was derived from the *Opportunity Gap Survey*. The principal investigator and lead research assistant examined the 142 items *Opportunity Gap Survey* and selected items that appeared to have face validity for the purposes of the street life study. A total of 29 items were selected to create a smaller scale entitled the *Attitudes Toward Opportunity Scale*. This measure is made up of two subscales. The Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity Sub-scale consists of 8 items and sample items include, “My school has prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States”, “My teachers really know (knew) and understand (understood) me”, or “Most

students in special education get (got) the help they need”. The second sub-scale, called Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity, consisted of 21 items and sample items include, “My school has prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States”, “My teachers really know (knew) and understand (understood) me”, or “Most students in special education get (got) the help they need”. The response format was a four-point Likert scale (1-4/Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree as well as (1) None, (2) Few, (3) Most and (4) All. High scores for all scales indicate a more positive attitude toward that particular construct while lesser scores indicate more of a negative attitude.

ATO Measure and Conceptual Equivalency of Forms A & B:

It is important to note that the wording of the 29 items presupposes that the respondent is currently enrolled in high school. However, most of the respondents from the community sample were well beyond school age and a small cluster consisted of school age drop outs. In order to tap the attitudes held by the older community respondents that were conceptually equivalent to the attitudes held by the high school respondents, two versions of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Scale* were created and the exact wording for each item on each of the two forms or versions is reproduced in Table 4. The items for Form-A of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Survey* precede the modified item that is used on Form-B. For example, items # 8 in section 6 on Form-A is worded exactly as found on the Opportunity Gap Survey: “I care a lot about my grades”. Moving from the item above to its adapted counterpart right below on Table 4 the same item is shown only now re-worded to better suite administration to the older out of school respondents: “I cared a lot about my grades in high school.” To note the distinctions in

the surveys more closely or review them both in their original form, please see Table 4. It is important to note that many of the items remained the same or unaltered.

The next step was to test and demonstrate the conceptual equivalency of the two forms through the application of factor analytic procedures and internal reliability statistics. Given the statistical characteristics of the items from each form can be shown to tap the similar if not identical constructs, credence is thus given to interpretations that stress parallel meanings for the two forms. As will be demonstrated below, the two forms generally overlap with regards to educational and economic attitudes, but the match for economic attitudes was less successful.

A three-part strategy was used to test the conceptual equivalency of items and subscales for Form-A and Form-B of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Survey*. Step one involved a factor analysis of data from the larger study to determine whether a two factor structure (that is economic and educational attitudes) can be derived from scores produced by the entire sample of high school students [n=2,970]. Starting out with a 29 item measure, step one of the data reduction strategy resulted in a 22 item measure. Step two involved a factor analysis of the remaining 22 items, this time using only the data associated with the current study [n= 338]. Step two reduced the number of items to 19. In the third step, the internal reliabilities for the two factors are reported, as derived from the street life high school students on Form-A and the community participants on Form-B. What follows is a detailed discussion of each step.

Step One: The 29 items from the Opportunity Gap Survey were subjected to factor analysis, using survey scores from the entire sample of nearly 3,000 students. I employed a factor analysis that restricted, forced or constrained two factors (economic

and educational opportunity) with a Varimax rotation. A principal components analysis using a Varimax rotation resulted in the successful loading of two components or factor solutions (economic and educational opportunity). A scree plot suggests two factors at eigenvalues \geq greater than or equal to one. A Varimax rotation was decided upon because many latent variables or factors tend to be correlated. Consequently, such a rotation renders more of a conservative result. The total amount of variance explained by the solution was 44%. Component one or the 21 item educational factor explained 19% of the variance. Component two or the eight-item economic opportunity factor explained 25% of the variance. Note that in this analysis, a criteria loading of .3 was chosen for the selected items (see Table 1). Of the total 29 items, 7 items were lost as a consequence of this initial constrained or forced exploratory factory analysis. Specifically, the 7 items did not meet the minimum loading criteria of .30. The loading for the remaining 22 items ranged from .302 - .670. The factor loadings on the first factor solution, Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity, ranged from .323 - .670, while the factor loadings on the second factor solution, Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity, ranged from .302 - .60.

In summary, 29 of the 142 items from the larger study were factor analyzed, using the larger sample of nearly 3000 student surveys as the data base, and the results showed a two factor interpretation was warranted. Seven items dropped from the analysis because each loaded below the criteria of .30. Thus only 22 of the original 29 items were carried over to the factor analysis to be reported next, with 15 loading on the educational attitudes factor and 7 loading on the economic attitudes factor.

Step Two: A second factor analysis was conducted on the 22 items derived from the discussion above, only this time the analysis was confined to the survey scores recorded for the street life oriented high school and community participants. I employed an exploratory factor analysis whereby I forced or constrained two factors with a Varimax rotation. A principal components analysis revealed the successful loadings of two factor solutions (economic and educational opportunity). A scree plot suggests two factors at eigenvalues \geq greater than or equal to one. The total amount of variance explained accounted for by the two components dropped to 28%. Component one explained the most variance out of the two factors with 20.4%. The first factor solution which loaded on 15 items represented the subscale, Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity. Component two explained the least variance with 7.3%. The second factor solution, which loaded on it 7 items, represented the subscale, Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity. Overall, a total of 3 items were lost as a consequence of this forced exploratory analysis. Specifically, 2 items did not meet the minimum loading criteria while one item conceptually did not meet standards of the measure. This means that 15 items went into the scoring for Factor 1 and 4 items into the scoring for Factor 2, and added together these 19 items constituted the “total” score for the Attitude Toward Opportunity. The factor loadings on the first solution, Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity, ranged from .397 - .627 while the loadings on the second factor solution, Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity, ranged from .346 - .629 (See Table 2).

Step Three: Next I looked at the internal reliabilities for the three scales (attitudes toward overall opportunity, attitudes toward economic opportunity and attitudes toward educational opportunity), using (1) Dr. Fine’s larger Opportunity Gap Study’s data set;

(2) the total sample from the dissertation data set; (3) the street life oriented high school sample on Form-A; (4) and the street life community sample on Form-B.

Attitudes Toward Opportunity

This scale was created to assess general attitudes toward overall opportunity as centered on notions of educational and economic opportunities. This scale consists of 19 items and provided three measures: (1) an aggregate score across all 19 items; (2) a score that specifically taps into attitudes towards education derived from 15 items; and (3) and a score regarding attitudes toward economic opportunity derived from 4 items. Total scores of this measure were obtained by summing the scores from the 19 items. Scores ranged from 19-76. The internal consistency reliability coefficient found for this scale on the *larger Opportunity Gap study* was an alpha of .82 (N = 2, 682). The internal reliability coefficient determined for the *total sample of this dissertation* was an alpha of .80 (N = 318) cases. The alpha determined for the *high school sample of this dissertation* was .76 (N = 137) while the *out of high school sample's* alpha coefficient was .81 (N = 181).

Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity:

This sub-scale was created to specifically assess thoughts about accessing quality educational opportunities. Specifically, this is a sub-scale of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity* scale consisting of 15 of its 19 items. Total scores of this measure were obtained by summing the scores from the 15 items. Scores range from 15-60.

The internal consistency reliability coefficient found for this sub-scale on the larger Opportunity Gap study was an alpha of .83 (N = 2, 970). The internal reliability coefficient determined for the total sample of this dissertation was an alpha of .80

(N=334). The alpha determined for the high school sample was .75 (N = 138) while the community sub-sample's alpha coefficient was .81 (N =196).

Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity: This sub-scale was created to specifically assess perceptions and/or experiences with accessing quality economic opportunities in the United States. Specifically, this is a sub-scale of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity* scale consisting of 4 of its 19 items. Total scores of this measure were obtained by summing the scores from the 4 items. Scores range from 4 – 16.

The internal consistency reliability coefficient found for this sub-scale on the larger Opportunity Gap study was an alpha of .52 (N = 3, 267). The internal reliability coefficient determined for the total sample of this study was an alpha of .44 (N = 350). The alpha determined for the high school sample was .35 (N = 152) while the community sub-sample's alpha coefficient was .50 (N = 181).

All analysis conducted in this dissertation using these scales were done so only using scales based on the total sample of the dissertation. All alpha coefficients can be clearly observed in Table 3. As can be seen, the pattern is the same, whether the focus is on results from Dr. Fine's Opportunity Gap study; the total sample; the high school sample or the community (out of high school) sample. Acceptable alpha coefficients are recorded for the Attitudes Toward Overall Opportunity and Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity but not necessarily for Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity. Since this dissertation is, in part, an exploratory study, and despite the low alpha value across all the samples, Factor-2 or the Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity variable will be entered into a number of analyses that follow. Further, the men's attitudes toward economic opportunity are well supported with the extensive

qualitative data collected in this study, which suggests there is more of an issue with the psychometric properties of this particular sub-scale as opposed to a purely conceptual issue regarding the authenticity of the construct.

In summary, the results of factor analytic procedures and internal reliability calculations support the overall conceptual equivalency of Form-A and Form-B of the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Measure* because the factor structure and item loadings for both forms were similar. Nevertheless, given the alpha coefficient regarding the Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity sub-scale for the total sample of this study (.44) is weak, any findings recorded in the results section of this dissertation that incorporates Factor-2 or the Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity sub-scale into the analysis must be approached with caution. On the other hand, alpha coefficient results related to the Attitudes Toward Overall Opportunity scale, as well as Factor 1, the Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity sub-scale, can be discussed with confidence, as it seems to apply to or cuts well across the (1) larger Opportunity Gap High School sample; (2) the total sample of the dissertation; (3) the street life high school sample; and (4) the older participants drawn from the community.

Individual Interview Schedule

Individual interviews involved a private and open-ended discussion with the principal investigator carried out in a private and secure location. Interview lengths ranged between 1-2 hours. Specifically, the interview consisted of an in-depth discussion on the issue or construct, street life. In addition to the notion of street life, the men were specifically queried regarding their attitudes toward economic and educational

opportunity. Please see Appendix II for the protocol or guiding questions for all individual interviews conducted in this study.

Group Interview Schedule

Focus Group Prime: The first hour of the *group interviews* centered around a discussion on the Hip-Hop song, *A Gangster and a Gentleman*, by the artist Styles P. This song is a phenomenological representation of a street life oriented U. S. born African man's (Styles P) thoughts about and response to opportunity made available in the inner city. Specifically, Styles P articulates that he employs street life tactics to economically survive within the throes of an inner city street life reality. All group participants were issued a copy of the lyrics or song. Participants were asked to read the lyrics to themselves and underline any set of lyrics that struck them or that they identified with in some fashion. As a group we listened to the 4:32 minute song played on a CD player twice. We then discussed at great length how the men felt about as well as identified with the song. Please take note of the lyrics of the song played for the men in this study below.

Prime used for Focus Group: Styles Pernerero from the LOX

Introductory words

Pay full attention
 This is for gangsters—this is for gentlemen
 There's two kind of people
 I happen to be the boss type
 I'm a product of my environment
 I bang the streets
 I am what they (the streets) made me

1st verse

My pops came from Bedstuy, my moms came from Africa
 I'm all nigga if you know what I mean
 They hooked up in the seventies when liquor and weed was heavy
 And had me in Corona, Queens

By the time I was seven my mom left my pop
 And we move to the south side of Yonkers, New York
 And then my mom remarried had my little brother Gary
 My sister a year later, let me gather my thoughts
 By the time I was nine I was out of mind
 My step pops didn't like me beat me out of my mind
 Ten and eleven the same, I never would change
 He still had to hit me, aggravated little nigga still wearing skippies
 God had Adidas and Pumas I could had a pair
 But mommy said wait until Christmas but I need them sooner
 If you heard I was broke dog, it wasn't a rumor

Chorus:

I said gangsters ride (ride with me)
 Gentlemen live your life (live it up)
 Cause Gangstas die (we all going to die)
 It's only a matter of time (the clocks' ticking)

2nd verse

It was 1986 and I was twelve years old
 That's right around the time when crack came out
 It was the best thing that happen to me
 I swear to god I was getting everything that I was asking about
 First we started off bagging up
 Me and god, then shit started adding up—we getting smart
 Now we on Broadway copping our own base (cheaper form of cocaine: free base)
 Bring it home put it in bottles, sit in sorrodles
 Drink an Old E (malt liquor) and scramble like it wasn't tomorrow
 I'm getting kick out of junior high thinking I'm grown
 God bust with the yellow rabbit
 And I had every colored Deltas (sneakers) we was getting it on
 I was out robbin' Mexicans, six in the morn'
 Mom said I had an F again, riff (argue) and I'm gone
 Nigga get a loot and he's grown
 Souped (arrogant) in the dome
 Fuck me up worse when I went to the group home

Chorus (2X):

3rd verse

I'm leaving out a lot of shit, nigga it's too real
 My alcoholic background and welfare motels
 Abuse that I had to take, struggles that my moms went through
 How the fuck I'm going to bond with you
 And the cases I got up to date
 Told you that I bust (shoot) the 8 (gun)
 I got niggas that I can't name out of state cause they fuck with weight
 Little brother gone, but I got a bigger angel
 You fucking with a dirty game don't let these niggas change you
 The present is what you get and the past is what make the man
 The future I can't tell you cause I ain't god or no superman
 No it ain't a S on my chest but it's a D on my Block

Cause in life the deepest lesson is death
 I'm determined and I'm disciplined and destined to rep
 I'm a gangster and a gentleman, Perno the best
 When I pass I'm like gas, motherfuckers
 Because I'm a leave a stink that you'll never forget

Chorus (3X):

-End-

Open Discussion: The second part of the group interview shifted to a rather open discussion on the general construct or notion of street life. Please see Appendix IIA for guiding questions for group interviews in this study. In addition, to their thoughts and opinions about street life as connected to low-income U. S. born African men, the opportunity was taken in the group interviews to more deeply explore these men's attitudes toward economic and educational opportunity. Such discussions often involved their personal experiences with authority figures in school as well as their personal observations of other men from similar lived experiences within a school context.

Qualitative Coding Scheme

The principal investigator, lead research assistant and one research assistant used a content analysis to generate codes for this study. This coding group met two times a week for approximately three weeks in a private classroom located in the Social-Personality Psychology program at the Graduate Center-City University of New York. Each coding session lasted for approximately two hours. At the beginning and end of each coding session the principal investigator reviewed with the men (1) grounded theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967) and (2) sites of resiliency (Payne & Brown, in press) as a way to reinforce or ingrain the prominent notions of these theories in these men as a way to have them more effectively code. In fact, the men were explicitly instructed to code in relation to the theories in the margins of the transcript. The men were presented clean or

unmarked transcripts of both group interviews with their names on the transcripts. The men were given a copy of codes generated by the principal investigator and ask to apply the codes where relevant in the margins of the transcripts. The men were also instructed to develop or add to the list of codes as well.

The coding scheme for this study was organized on three levels. First, we used an interplay between grounded theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967) and a sites of resiliency (Payne & Brown, in press) theoretical analysis to generate five overarching domains: (1) Education/School, (2) Socio-Economic, (3) Social Structural, (4) Attitudinal Affect and (5) Phenomenology/Positionality/Value System. Second, a number of dominant themes or finer codes were generated per domain. Third, several of the finer codes contained a subset of codes as well (Please see Table 4). In this study there were at least three dominant themes extensively discussed in the results section that each contained a subset of codes: (1) street masculinity, (2) student-teacher-interaction and (3) school-to-prison. With respect to the *masculinity* of street life oriented U. S. born African men, three sub-themes in relation to the notion of economic survival was generated: (1) attaining the role of provider, (2) receiving/being denied respect and (3) negotiating masculine identity. A subset of six codes emerged for the *student-teacher-interaction*: (1) (Dis) Respect, (2) Lack of Preparation, (3) Race/Culture, (4) Racism, (5) Inadequate Learning Resources and (6) Institutional Betrayal. And finally, the code *school-to-prison* generated a subset of 4 codes: (1) School as a Site of Economic Opportunity, (2) Physical Protection In School, (3) School Surveillance (i. e. police, security guards, etc.) and (4) Institutional Collusion. It is important to note that dominant content and/or themes discussed in the results

sections may not match identically or exactly to the terms or language used in the results section.

Procedure

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

A PAR design was implemented to methodologically house this phenomenologically based quantitative and qualitative study (Fine, M., Torre, M.E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., Martinez, M., “Missy,” Roberts, R.A., Smart, P. & Upegui, D., 2002; Fine, Freudenberg, Payne, Perkins, Smith & Wanzer, 2003; Torre, M.E., Fine, M., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., Martinez, M., Roberts, R.A., M., Rivera, M., Smart, P., & Upegui, D., 2001). It is important to note that this study specifically has implemented a *theoretically driven* PAR design as opposed to a grounded theoretical (Glaser & Straus, 1967) design. PAR research projects typically include a grounded theory approach. That is, principal investigators on PAR teams typically work very hard to generate a theory in concert with the PAR team’s conceptual and/or theoretical spirit regarding a particular area of scholarly inquiry (Fine, M., Torre, M.E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., Martinez, M., “Missy,” Roberts, R.A., Smart, P. & Upegui, D., 2002; Fine, Freudenberg, Payne, Perkins, Smith & Wanzer, 2003; Torre, M.E., Fine, M., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., Martinez, M., Roberts, R.A., M., Rivera, M., Smart, P., & Upegui, D., 2001). Although this approach is more ideal, grounded theory PAR projects oftentimes require more significant time, financing and/or other relevant resources than more traditional kinds of research. It is possible for a PAR project to move from a declared or formal theoretical framework. Given that, you are comfortable enough with the population of interest, the

researcher may have a sense of what formal theories are more likely not to be met with resistance. As noted in the first chapter, Payne and Brown's (in press) theoretical conceptualization on inner city U. S. born African men entitled, *sites of resiliency*, will theoretically guide this study.

PAR Research Team

Four street life oriented U. S. born African men from one of the central communities in which this study was conducted out of were selected to join this study's Participatory Action Research team. At the commencement of the study, the age range of the group spanned from 19 – 29. The principal investigator, a U. S. born African male at the beginning of this study was 27. Specifically, at the start two of the men were 19, another was 20 and the other was 29. In sum, this study's research team consisted of five U. S. born African men.

The development or organizing of the PAR team began by first separately training the lead research assistant for approximately one academic semester at the Graduate Center-City University of New York. One-on-one training initially involved tasks designed to develop basic library, data entry, reading and writing skills as solely connected to this study. However, in addition to developing skills on this study, the lead research assistant as well as one research assistant was extended an opportunity to work as research assistants on Dr. Michelle Fine's *Opportunity Gap Project* where they received \$10 an hour for their efforts and more importantly additional research experience. While working on this research project, these men had the very fortunate and extraordinary opportunity to (1) sit in on several research methods workshops sponsored by the larger project; (2) sit in on and comment during formal research meetings

comprised of professors and graduate students as well as in very real ways develop skills around (3) qualitative coding, (4) qualitative analysis, (5) data entry and (6) making formal or academic based presentations. In fact, the Street Life Project's research assistant Shantatine Stevens who worked on Dr. Fine's research project was eventually hired as a consultant to a dissertation project at Seton Hall University interested in exploring issues of ethnic identity or Africanity specifically in street life oriented U. S. born African men.

The second part of the lead research assistant's training was designed to develop his theoretical and conceptual understanding of research. This part of the training involved collaboratively designing this study as well as co-constructing and co-teaching a research methods class (for the rest of the research team). Activities included (1) preparing folders or files of relevant literature and paper work for the research team, (2) critically developing an agenda and set of activities for the research workshop, (3) selecting items from the Opportunity Gap Survey to develop relevant scales for our population of interest, (4) reviewing together once a day for a half an hour basic notions of theory as well as the theory of this project. The conceptual or theoretical training ran concurrent with the first set of activities.

Upon completion of one-on-one training, we conducted a research methods training consisting of 4 two hour classes for the rest of the research team at the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice (NJISJ) in Newark, New Jersey. More specifically, the research team's responsibilities for this project included: (1) data collection, (2) qualitative analysis, (3) literature reviews, (4) writing contributions and (5) presentations. All PAR researchers were monetarily compensated for all time contributed to this project

(Please see Appendix VIII et al: *Research Methods Training Agendas*). The first hour of the first workshop at NJISJ was centered around a discussion on all incentives, rewards, and/or monies to result from this study. Put another way, an explicit discussion of *whose getting what out of this project* was held in *real clear terms* during the 1st research workshop. All of the men were paid \$100 for their participation in the research workshop conducted out of NJISJ. Further, the lead research assistant was paid \$5,000 for his services to the project while the remaining three research assistants who had lesser responsibilities were paid \$500 for their efforts.

Data Collection Procedure: Recruitment and Community Connectivity

Quantitative (survey) and qualitative (group and individual interviews) data were collected using a snowball technique. The snowball technique is a methodological technique generally used to collect data from fringe, sparse and/or sensitive populations. Specifically, researchers interested in this method typically collect data through the participants. Upon data collection, participants were asked, where and how, to get at other persons who fit the sample criteria. The snowball technique implemented in this project adhered to a four-prong approach. The research team first collected data from: (1) family, (2) friends, (3) familiar places (e. g. barbershop, or particular blocks, street corners etc.), and (4) stationed places. Stationed places (e. g. store) are key locations within a street life reality that the men were able to go to or in and request a survey and/or the right to be interviewed. It is important to note, that there were at least three levels of assistance directly involved with data collection: (1) *research team*—the research team played the most direct and active role in overseeing or ensuring data collection; (2) *family*—family members (e. g. cousins, etc.) as well as very close friends

played a key role in the community in facilitating this study; and (3) *professional network*—with the assistance of school officials in particular as well as graduate students, academics, among others we were able to deepen data collection strategies as a research team.

All data were collected throughout the course of the day for the community sample and after school hours for the high school students. Participants were given an (1) informed consent form, (2) a list of fictional and non-fictional reading resources, (3) list of social organizations that may assist them, (4) a set of tips on employment opportunities, (5) a option to create and leave with the research team a street name to be highlighted in the Appendix section of the study as well as (6) \$10 for completing the Opportunity Gap Survey (See Appendixes V & VI). A majority of the surveys were filled out in the community or within the streets. Although in most instances surveys were completed in the actual streets of the community, a number of surveys were completed privately in the homes of these men or in some other personal location. Survey data for high school students were collected after school, several blocks from what would be considered a high school struggling with or challenged by street life concerns. High school students completed Form-A of the survey and older participants from the community filled out Form-B (see Table 4).

All interview data were collected in a private location as well at the discretion of the participant at an agreed upon date, time and place. Only four individual interviews were conducted in New York while the remaining 18 and group interviews were conducted in New Jersey. More specifically, interview spaces generally were difficult to characterize. These spaces ranged from a bedroom, car, school classroom, parks, within

a street life oriented place of business (i. e. number hole), among other spaces as well. Participants were also given an (1) informed consent form, (2) a list of fictional and non-fictional reading resources, (3) social organizations that may assist them, (4) a set of tips on employment opportunities, (5) a option to leave with the research team a street name and block or community to highlight in the Appendix section of the study as well as (6) \$20 for completing their interview. Individual and group interviews took approximately two hours to conduct.

CHAPTER VI:

RESULTS

“I’m from Brooklyn Vietnam, nigga I like beef (physical altercations)
 Within these murderous streets—double pipes (two guns)
 Living a trouble life
 Father was a jerk, Moms had to work
 Poppy (Latino drug dealer) had the work (powder cocaine)
 So I did what any real nigga would do
 Got in front of the stove (to cook crack cocaine), now I got this shit sowed
 Fuck you punk niggas... let the pump (shotgun) blast...”

Shyne Po (2004)

“Coolness applies to the *regal and majestic pride of West African kings* and the tough, hypermasculine attitudes of African-American gang members. As a result, “cool pose” becomes an intriguing but rather amorphous and elusive concept, a concept that may generate more questions than answers and policy implications...

.... Similar to the authors of *Cool Pose*, I present postures or fronts frequently assumed by urban teens who are usually, though not exclusively, *American males of African ancestry*. Instead of coolness, this posturing allows an urban teen to project a ‘hard’ or gangsterlike image that facilitates survival on tough urban streets”

L. Janelle Dance (2002)

Before delving into the four research questions, I think it would be important to briefly frame how the four research questions are organized. The first research question examines how the men in this study think about economic and educational opportunity. The next three research questions are framed in a fashion so as to give the reader an opportunity to understand the psychology of these men more deeply. Given this population’s (street life oriented U. S. born African men) psychology is largely understudied, or oftentimes discussed in a traditional and/or theoretically narrow way, I wanted to frame his psychology for the reader so as to better contextualize as well as inform his attitudes toward economic and educational opportunity.

More specifically, the first research question explores or targets those data that explicitly get at how these men frame notions of economic and educational opportunity. Extensive qualitative and quantitative data are presented for question one. Research question one is addressed through an array of descriptive, more advanced quantitative (6 one analysis of variances and 2 simple regressions) as well as qualitative analysis.

The second research question was designed to tap into the men's working conceptualizations of street life as a social phenomenon. Given the rampant exploitation of the streets and/or inner city communities especially by popular media and scholarly outlets, I thought it would be advantageous to capture how the men themselves define this lifestyle. In most instances, studies, reports and/or investigators define the streets not only for larger America but oftentimes for the very men themselves which is in and of itself dangerously condescending. Research question two consists of extensive descriptive demographic data from the Opportunity Gap Survey as well as two sets of qualitative data. The first set of qualitative data involved a review of an hour long group interview specifically geared at the men's reaction by sub-sample to Style P's *A Gangster and a Gentleman*. The second set of qualitative data involved a review of a portion of the group interview (1 hour) that focused on the men's general notions of the street.

The third research question focuses on the basic infrastructure of the value system, ideology and/or code of the streets. Specifically, I wanted to take the opportunity in this study to organize how the men frame the code. This research question lays out, through the phenomenology of the men, the rubric or basic rules of the streets as function of school status (in and out of high school). Data provided for this question are entirely qualitative.

The fourth and final research question focuses on those qualitative data that provide direct or explicit evidence for theoretical conceptualization of this study, “sites of resiliency” (Payne & Brown, in press). It is in this question where readers will be able to clearly review the men’s prominent and particular examples of the most used psychological and physical sites of resiliency as noted in the first chapter of this dissertation. Data provided for this question are entirely qualitative.

The last three research questions should be juxtaposed against research question one. It is important to note that while the last three research questions deal more with the relationship between *economic opportunity* and the streets and less so on the relationship between *educational opportunity* and the streets, these data should not overshadow the educational implications of the data. More specifically, these data or research questions are presented respectively so that the reader (i. e. educator, disciplinarian, superintendent, research investigator, etc.) has a better chance of understanding the psyche that walks into the classroom each morning. Professionals oftentimes have no real understanding of or relationship with the low-income non-white communities they conduct research out of. These analyses hopefully offer a way of not only understanding but articulating the very real and informative sentiments of the student who may be gang affiliated, constantly placed in in-school suspension or out of school suspension, enrolled in alternative schools, and/or is prone to school violence. Keep in mind, as noted in the methodology chapter, I have organized this study and in particular questions in relation to a sample of high school students to that of a community sample and/or a sample of non-high school students. So no matter which question you are reviewing, the reader should be able to walk away with valuable data to deeply inform the high school classroom. It is important

to note that all qualitative data in this study will draw off of the two group interviews and not the individual interviews as per the request of the primary dissertation committee.

Educational and Economic Attitudes

1. How have attitudes toward educational and economic opportunities shifted across generations for street life oriented U. S. born African men?

Survey and interview data revealed both generations of the men to generally exhibit pessimistic attitudes regarding *access* to adequate educational and economic resources. However, these men exhibited positive attitudes toward learning in and of it, self. They were able to clearly connect or equate quality economic and educational opportunities with successful functioning in U. S. society. More specifically, the men reported that their chance to participate fully and freely in the opportunity structures of the United States is severely limited, closed and/or blocked. Quantitative and qualitative results indicate that the older men in the study were more negative on average toward educational and economic opportunity.

Total Sample: Descriptive Analysis

While the men overall are critical of the educational process, they nonetheless, affirm a real desire to be educated. They offer cutting and forthright criticism regarding *access* to traditional opportunity structures. While other descriptive analysis of these men provide strong evidence of troubling interactions between as well as negative attitudes toward their instructors, it is important to highlight descriptive data that concurrently support these men's positive attitudes toward the overall experience of education. Specifically, descriptive analysis reveals 74.1 % of the men agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I care(d) a lot about my grades"(N=365); 56.6% of the men respond that most or all of, "My teachers know (knew) their subject matter well"

(N=368); 57.9% of the men feel that most or all, “Teachers believe that all students can achieve high levels if they try” (N=371); 54.5% of them note that they strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, “Sometimes I just can’t (couldn’t) relate to the curriculum that is (was) taught me” (N=370); and 71.4% of the men agree or strongly agree with the item, “In my school, all students can achieve if they try (tried) hard” (N=366). With respect to the last two descriptive items noted, it is necessary to highlight and contextualize these findings given that such exploratory results are pivotal in a full analysis on these men’s attitude toward learning. The men in regards to the item, “Sometimes I just can’t (couldn’t) relate to the curriculum that is (was) taught me” are clearly saying that they are able to understand or comprehend the information taught them through the curriculum as opposed to the notion that the curriculum is incomprehensible. The last item, “In my school, all students can achieve if they try (tried) hard” should not be observed as a meritocratic response for these men. When 71.4% of these men answered that they agree or strongly agree with this item they were not dismissing the enormous challenges prevalent to other students like them. In fact, these men are asserting that in spite of remarkably strident injustices in their school building, street life oriented U. S. born African boys in this study still feel capable enough to surmount, what would be for many, unimaginable odds and circumstances for academic achievement.

So the question or larger argument becomes, *if these men overall hold positive attitudes toward learning and have faith in the general competencies of their instructors, then why are they not faring better in school?* Descriptive data suggests that these men are not having difficulty with understanding the relevance or importance of learning but

their troubles generally stem from the overall *process* of education. Successful completion of the process typically involves access to basic resources (e. g. tutor(s), computer, private and readily accessible learning space, stable living environment, respectful and supportive school environment, etc.) which is argued in this study as significantly informing ones attitudes toward educational and economic opportunity. Given that successful learning or “achievement” is oftentimes contingent on the students’ location in the U. S. opportunity structure and that low-income U. S. born African male children are at the bottom rung of this structure, these descriptive data suggest that these men have difficulty contending with or compensating for the loss of basic resources; not that they harbor an attitudinal disposition against learning. Descriptive analysis on the very same Opportunity Gap Survey reveals that 77.3% of the men noted that they strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, “Basically people get fair treatment in the United States, no matter who they are (N=370); 74.1% of the men strongly disagree or disagree with the item, “In the United States a low income student has the same chance of a good education as a wealthy student” (N=370)”; 61.7% of the men strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, “We have the ability to change the government if we don’t like what it is doing” (N=366); and 57.7% of the men strongly disagree or disagree with the item, “Most students in low level classes are receiving an education equal to all others in the building (N=368).

Descriptive as well as other quantitative and qualitative analysis reveal a particular tension involving the *teacher* and *preparation* for future educational and economic opportunities from the standpoint of the participant. Sixty-seven percent of the participants reported that none or a few of, “My teachers really know (knew) and

understand (understood) me” (N=367) as well as 58.2% of the men noted none or a few, “Teachers care(d) about the students in my school” (N=364); 56.8% of the men feel none or a few teachers will give them “a second chance” (N=368); 62.3% of the men feel that a most or all, “Teachers treat students different in terms of their race/ethnicity” (N=365); and 61.4% of the men feel “A student’s wealth or poverty affects how teachers treat them” (N=370). When presented the statement, “My school has prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States” 56.6% of the men noted that they strongly disagreed or disagreed (N=366) while 57.7% of them noted that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the item, “most students in low level classes are receiving (received) an education equal to all others in the building (N=368). It is important to note that eleven percent of the total sample indicated they have attended between 2-3 high schools.

High School Sub-Sample—Descriptive Analysis

Survey data overall was proportionate across grade levels. As noted in the previous chapter on methodology, as per the Internal Review Board, we were not allowed to collect survey or interview data from students under 16 years of age. Consequently, only 5.1% of our high school surveys are by students in 9th grade. The other grade levels were more stratified: (1) 10th grade- 28.8%, (2) 11th grade- 28.8% and (3) 12th grade- 30.8%. With respect to academic level or track the young men primarily were enrolled in a mainstream track: (1) special ed- 3.8%, (2) remedial or basic- 8.3%, (3) regular/academic- 76.9%, (4) A. P. Honors- 9% and (5) there was missing data for 1.9% of the survey participants. Nearly 11% of the high school sample has attended more than one high school.

The younger men in comparison to the older men demonstrated a much more positive attitude with respect to notions of economic and educational opportunity. Although these men challenge fundamental elements (i. e. curriculum, disciplinarian procedures, etc.) of their school, survey responses indicate that these young men clearly reveal, for obvious reasons, a stronger investment in “the system”. In point of fact, these young men more strongly want and hope their school experience to work out. Specifically, they value traditional routes of opportunity such as college or “a good education” as well as quality employment. This is seen by these young men as acceptable and/or intelligent. Survey responses indicate that 75% of the young men agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I care a lot about my grades” (N=153); 75% agree or strongly agree with, “In my school, all students can achieve if they try hard” (N=154); 80.1 % of the men think that it is important or very important to be “going to a good school” (N=154); 84% think that it is important or very important to “be smart or intelligent” (N=155); 86% think that it is important or very important to “get a good education” (N=154); 82.1% think that it is important or very important to “have a secure job” (N=154). Further these young men value their relationship with the community and friends—78.2% noted that it is important or very important to “help improve the community” (N=154); and 72% think “having close friends” is important or very important as well (N=154). It is important to note, nonetheless, that 71.8% of these young men strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, “Basically people get fair treatment in the United States, no matter who they are” (N=155); and 67% these young men strongly disagree or disagree with “In the United States, a “low-income” student has the same chance of a good education as a “wealthy” student (N=155).

Community Sub-Sample—Descriptive Analysis

In response to the question, *Did You Graduate High School?*, 64% of the older men answered, *Yes*, while 25.3% said, *No*, and 10.7% of the responses resulted in missing data. Interestingly enough, 39.6% of these men acknowledged receiving a high school diploma and 17.3% noted they acquired a GED. It is important to note that 43.1% of the older men did not answer the question of how or what form they received their high school degree. In this sub-sample of 215 older men, 160 high schools are represented. Interestingly enough, only 8.4% of the men who made up the community sub-sample attended more than one high school during their secondary school experience. . As noted above, a full quarter of the older men admit not graduating from high school as well as 17% of the men acquired a GED while 43% did not answer this question at all. At the very least, these descriptive data suggest that these men's relationship with the school system is tenuous and/or strained at best.

Survey responses clearly indicate that the older men did not feel prepared to access traditional routes of economic and educational opportunity. The older men were clearly more pessimistic in comparison to the younger men about their potential to access quality economic and educational opportunities in the United States. More specifically, 77.4% of the older men strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, "Basically people get fair treatment in the United States, no matter who they are" (N=215) and 69.1% strongly disagree or disagree with, "The government doesn't really care what people like my family and I think" (N=212).

While 70.3% of the older men strongly agree or agree with the statement, "I cared a lot about my grades (N=212) and 52.9% of them strongly disagree or disagree with the

item, "Sometimes I just couldn't relate to the curriculum that was taught to me" (N=214), sadly enough 74% of these men strongly disagree or disagree with, "In the United States, a "low-income" student has the same chance of a good education as a "wealthy" student (N=215); 63.2 % of these men strongly disagree or disagree with, "My school prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States" (N=214); and 61.4% of the men strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, "Most students in low level classes received an education equal to all others in the building" (N=214).

Qualitative Analysis

Two key themes that capture the participants critical reflections of school personnel emerged in the data: (1) *Disruptive Teacher-Student-Interaction* and (2) *School-to-Prison*. The first theme symbolizes those data that clearly indicate a troubling and unruly experience between the student and teacher. Specially, the following sub-themes as noted in the opening of the results sections emerge under this code: (1) (Dis) Respect, (2) Lack of Preparation, (3) Race/Culture, (4) Racism, (5) Inadequate Learning Resources and (6) Institutional Betrayal. In general the men feel betrayed and alienated by all social systems existent in the United States and in particular within public learning institutions. A lack of adequate *preparation* for future aspirations looms within the minds and spirits of these men. Although, the young men in high school had not ironed out a specific plan regarding future aspirations, they all nonetheless, were able to articulate their general future interests. Specifically, all of them asserted that they wanted to pursue either vocational and/or undergraduate opportunities, however, they all felt that their high school experience deeply under prepared them for this educational endeavor.

High School Participants:

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Yeah, *they ain't preparing us for the world.* They see, like, after we get out of school, that diploma is going to mean nothing to nobody no more. Like a high school diploma is not going to be nothing. *Like us as Black people we need to go to college if we're going to be something higher in life than just this high school diploma. Because like what they're teaching us in here is basically nothing...* So it's like *we have like low budget (inadequate) computer classes and stuff like that in here. You feel me. Like we can't use the computer to like learn like new stuff on... and like basically what they're teaching us has nothing to do with what's outside in the world that we're going to have to go in if we get a job out there, or if we go to college like, no, we're not going to be prepared for college or nothing like that because of the classes we're taking here.* --Preparation

D-Black (16, 11th grade): I don't think (my high school) will have you ready for college, you know what I mean. Shit, I be doing in here... --Preparation

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): *Me, personally, when I leave (my high school), I know I ain't going to be able to go to college, because of what they taught here* and like basically what I did while I was here. So, me, personally, I want to be in something like lab technician, computer science, so when I leave here, I'm going to go to an institute like at DeVry or Citone or something like that..." --Preparation

Similar sentiments emerged when content analysis again revealed that the notion of *preparation* to access adequate opportunities for economic and educational mobility was of critical concern by the older men. Overall, in comparison to the high school students the older men were more likely to demonstrate a feeling of resentment regarding their high school experiences. The older men characterized their schools as playing role in incapacitating their opportunities for educational and economical mobility. Further, all three men noted that when they were in high school they were under the impression that the school had vested interest in seeing them achieve their career aspirations.

Community Participants:

Black Soul (29): I didn't know until I got out and looked at it (the effects of high school) from the outside in... you think it's what it is, especially when you're a kid growing up. Like me, you know what I'm saying? I got into special ed very early, you know what I'm saying, because *I could never connect to their way of learning*, you know what I'm saying? And *they made it like it's... you know, 'When you're in special ed, we're here to help you more to be more attentive', Naw, it wasn't! It was a big business scheme. Each child was like thirty, forty thousand dollars.* You know what I'm saying, and *they only teach you nothing.* They teach you three, four grades behind.... *And so I don't really believe in their education system. They're not helping us at all, and they're hurting us.*
 –Preparation

Tommy (29): *I can say it (educational system) don't work.* Like I am a high school graduate, *and my diploma ain't worth the motherfucking paper it's wrote on.* And *if you don't go to college and don't have some kind of training behind you, your diploma's worthless.* –Preparation

Slim (48): Well I'm like *Black Soul... when I was in school, I mean I thought it was helping. But when I got out and was able to look back, then, I see where, you know, we didn't have the books that the white school had.* They taught us what they wanted us to know. –Preparation

As noted throughout all modes of the data, all of the men feel deeply betrayed, alienated and disrespected by the social systems that they have experienced thus far. Academically, both groups of men feel under prepared to acquire or materialize their future aspirations; the older men exhibit a deeper feeling of disdain. Many of the men interviewed in this study noted the prevalence of racism and blatant forms of disrespect. These men also discussed the limited resources they were able to access in their schools. **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** explicitly notes, that he "... does not feel respected as a Black man in this school". The men unwaveringly discuss how their identity and value system or ways of thinking about the world and their personal realities as being significantly under recognized and devalued by the educational system at large. The high school men

talk of their current teachers as simply disrespectful and demeaning in their pedagogical approaches.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): *Especially in these schools, where its pack classes... it's almost like thirty people per class, and you're sitting there squished up together. ... like personally, me, I don't feel like too much respected from the teachers in the school... –Respect/Inadequate Learning Resources*

Yasser: *That's real brother, that's real.*

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): *You feel me. Like teachers in different races (who are not U. S. born African), like, yeah, sometimes I feel discriminated upon, because if I do something and another person do something of a different color than I am, they might get treated less harsh than what my punishment was. Yeah, I feel discriminated to that. I don't feel respected as a Black man in this school at all. But like at the same time, there's some teachers in here who try to do their job fairly and try to work with everybody. ... there's just some people (other teachers) who're still like on that racism. Shit like that... –Race/Racism*

The older men in this study are more explicit; they believe the educational system intends and/or designed to under educate persons in their community. One gentleman asserted that the purpose of high school, at least in his community, was "... to keep you like ignorant". Another gentleman argued that they were "... the cattle of America" and the current educational system is designed to perpetuate this cycle of under education.

Slim (48): *They don't want you to know the great things that the Black peoples have did and stuff like that ... It's something you said earlier... You know, they want to keep you like ignorant and stuff, you know, to the facts, you know. And they just all they want you to know what they want you to know. For they kids... so they kids can prosper [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... –Racism*

Black Soul (29): *We're the cattle, right now. (If) We learn (or was to know) what they (wealthy white America) learn they can't eat (continue to prosper) so they make sure of that (the streets remains in economic poverty)... –Racism*

Yasser: *Did your teachers respect you as people?*

Black Soul (29): *They didn't respect me. They never respected me. Like I said when I was in (school), I thought because they always smile around you. They talked to you a little bit, you know what I'm saying, give you just enough so you won't*

be mad. *But when I really look at it now, when I'm out there now, they never respected me.* If they did, they'd would see the things that I need. And they never came to me with those elements that I need. *—Respect*

Black Soul (29) speaks directly to his experience with teachers whom he perceived to be overwhelmingly disrespectful to him. Specifically, **Black Soul (29)** makes note of how the disrespect more than anything was inconspicuous in many regards. Although as long as he could remember he felt uncomfortable or was unable to “connect to their way of learning”, as a student he was not able to understand the full degree of how disingenuous and sarcastic many of his educators were. It was not until he was older that he could better frame the disrespect he experience as a child.

Many of the teaching styles and tones approved as adequate or professional, are often translated by low-income non-white residents as being phony. Consequently, many of the social structural institutions and the persons of authority in them largely are symbols of distrust and deep suspicion by the people of the surrounding community. With respect to schools, all teachers (white and non-white) were largely charged with promoting a white value system.

Critical Reflections by the Streets on School Personnel and Authority

The men in this study had a number of poignant remarks about their experiences with school personnel including teachers, disciplinarians, security and police officers. They characterize their relationship with such persons as mostly unproductive. Many of the men regard the school personnel as racist, phony, and ultimately an agent of assimilation hired to assimilate as opposed to enlightened them. Several of the men liken their personal experience in high school to that of “jail” or a prison system.

The second key theme that captures the participants' critical reflections of school personnel is *School-to-Prison*. This theme incorporates those data that clearly indicate attitudes or sentiments regarding how the high school experience has more so prepared and/or streamlined these men for a street life orientation if not prison. As noted in the opening of the results sections, the following sub-themes as emerged under this code are: (1) School as a Site of Economic Opportunity (2) Physical Protection In School, (3) School Surveillance (i. e. police, security guards, etc.) and (4) Institutional Collusion.

The young men in this study spoke at will of how their high school is used by many street life oriented students as a physical site or space of resiliency to conduct street life activities out of ranging from: fighting, gang recruitment and using as well as selling narcotics. It is important to note that they say not much more than marijuana is sold in the school although in some instances crack as well as other narcotics have been known to be used and sold by some students in the school. Further, the young men speak of how security guards and city police officers are strewn throughout the school property. Some of the men even note that the police officers can be extremely violent with the students.

High School Participants:

Icerberg (16, 9th grade): Like the cops in this school, the cops be on some ole o ther shit...

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): ... *Like they punch you in your face type shit.*

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): *Yeah, yeah on the sneak, you feel me, and then you can't do shit about it* because you hit them back then all the cops going to be there to witness that you punched that one cop in the face. You're going down for like eight months for defending yourself ...

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): And it's your word against theirs... Man believe me, I done got caught up in that shit. Like just recently, I got locked up for some bullshit. Niggas jumped some kid in the back of the school. You feel me. I didn't have nothing to do with it. But it's like they wanted me to rat. And I'm

like, no, I ain't going to tell. So they locked me up and shit. ... so I got locked up for basically doing nothing. For them to have so many cops around (the school) and all that, how could they even let something like that escalate so far? I'm like damn. So I don't think like they.. they ... ain't shit for this school. It ain't no positive changes for this school for a long time, I don't think. I think shit is going to go the same for a long time.

D-Black: Well, all that stuff they talking about, ain't really nothing going to change in (this high school)... Like this is my first year in (this high school). You know what I mean, to me, like, everythings – everything! Ain't nothing changed! Feel me. Yeah, this is every day living ... [LAUGHS]... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... Niggas be smoking (cigarettes and marijuana) in the bathroom. Sell smoke (marijuana) in the bathroom.

Iceberg: Sell weed in school. The only thing that don't really happen in (in this high school) is like the crack game.

Wah Benz: But there's some white kids in here that do the shit.

Community Participants:

Many of the comments of the older guys paralleled the comments of the high school students. All of these men attested to the prevalence of street activities in their schools. They spoke of a number experiences ranging from gambling, selling narcotics and fighting. These men spoke of how acquiring and/or engaging in a street life orientation inside their schools was adaptive in many of respects, “When there’s a lack of anything, the streets are going to kick in on you”.

Further, the older men were more likely to make links between the street activities in the school and the trek that many eventually would follow after they graduate. These men explicitly argued that the school nurtures the development of this orientation. They spoke of the violence they and their schools were immersed in, “it's like education, to me, and to a lot of people around (in high school), it was last. Because it was more about can you just survive there, to (be able to) learn something.”

Slim (48): *They don't want you to know nothing, you know.* And so.. so when you get out of school, they're supposed to be *preparing* you for the next step as a grown man, you know, you get out of school, where if you get out of school and you ain't got no education, you don't know what to do. *You got enough edu.. you got education, but.. not enough to get a decent job up here somewhere. So you go to the streets. And you started selling dope or hitting somebody in the head or robbing. Then, and that, you got money coming in.* Now you're excited. I can get this money this easy. Now you forget about the other stuff, you put it on the back burner, because it didn't do you no good. ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ...

Black Soul: Like I was saying, *it's like education, to me, and to a lot of people around, it was last. Because it was more about can you just survive there to learn something.* If you're getting your ass beat every day, you can't concentrate, because somebody's coming to you and beat your ass after.. beat you up after high school, you know, after school ends. You know what I'm saying? So, first, you got to develop a system where you can tell motherfuckers to leave you alone, you know what I'm saying? So you've got to deal with that. And you've got to deal with if there's a thing about females. You've got to have a female and if you don't then they're going to punk you on that. And then you got to deal with that. You know what I'm saying? You got to make sure you're wearing the right clothes. And if you don't, you've got to deal with that. And if you deal with all of those things, then you can deal with some education.

Tommy: Our *school was kind of like jail..* You come to our school new, you're going to have to whoop somebody's ass to prove yourself. Now once you done did that, you kind of get your respect, you might get tested every once in a while ...

Quantitative Analysis—Total Sample: Intergenerational Effect

More sophisticated quantitative analysis confirms an intergenerational main effect on attitudinal opportunity measures across the life span. Specifically, older men are far more pessimistic about educational and economic opportunities than youth still in school. Also, this result is important in that it provides empirical evidence of not only a consistently evolving attitude within a particular low-income male experience but this result concurrently provides empirical evidence of a street life oriented experience that extends beyond the stereotypical image of a reckless young street corner drug dealer. It is important to note that the street life oriented U. S. born African male perspective is

inclusive of tremendous range of variation. To provide empirical evidence for this notion, attitudes toward societal resources and/or overall economic and educational opportunity was explored in both sub-samples of men (high school and community sample). Specifically, three one-way analysis of variances were employed to assess if the men by generation or sub-sample (high school and community sample) significantly differed with regard to their attitudes toward opportunity and if so how or in what direction(s) were their attitudes shifting.

Main effects indicate that the two sub-samples scored significantly different on all three attitudinal opportunity measures. In fact, on all three measures the men no longer enrolled in high school significantly had more of a pessimistic attitude or outlook toward opportunity than the young men enrolled in high school. The first one-way analysis of variance employed revealed a difference by school status on the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Scale*: $F(1, 316)=10.6, p=.001$. As previously noted mean scores reveal the young men enrolled in high school to have demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes toward overall opportunity: (1.) High School Participants ($x=48.1$) and (2.) Community Participants ($x=45.2$) (See Tables 6 & 6A). The second one-way analysis of variance employed revealed a significant difference by school status and/or generation on the *Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity* subscale as well: $F(1, 332)=7.6, p=.006$. Consistent with the first one-way analysis of variance, mean scores reveal the boys to have demonstrated more positive attitudes toward their educational opportunity than the older men: (1.) High School Participants ($x=39.1$) and (2.) Community Participants ($x=37.2$) (See Tables 6 & 6B). A third and final one-way analysis of variance with respect to school status also revealed a significant group difference on the *Attitude*

Toward Economic Opportunity subscale: $F(1, 348)=9.1, p=.003$. Consistent with the two previous one-way analysis of variances mean scores reveal the boys to have again demonstrated more positive attitudes toward their economic opportunity than the older men: (1) High School Participants ($x=9.3$) and (2) Community Participants ($x=8.6$) (See Tables 6 & 6C).

Additional and more detailed empirical evidence was provided for the intergenerational effect of street life oriented U. S. born African men across the life span on the second or next round of one-way analysis of variances. The first set of one-way analysis of variances previously noted simply tested for significance between the two sub-samples (in and out of high school) across three attitudinal opportunity measures. Although these data are extremely useful, this finding is limited or blunted in that it tells us very little about the community sub-sample outside of the existent significant difference. This older heterogeneous sub-sample was compared to a more homogenous high school sub-sample. It was important for this study to tap into the heterogeneity of this generally older community sample.

More specifically, given the large age variation, I wanted to more closely explore attitudes in the community sub-sample whose ages range from 17-65. Simply, it is assumed that there is a lot more life experience or variation occurring inside the older sub-sample particularly in comparison to the younger sub-sample (16-20). This is extremely relevant to this analysis given that it is assumed by this study that such extensive life experience deeply informs notions or attitudes toward opportunity. Specifically, it was important for this study to capture *where in this community sub-sample were the attitudes shifting in the men?* To analyze how attitudes toward the

opportunity varied across the men in this study as opposed to simply exploring this notion in the two groups, a new age variable was created and the survey participants were separated into three age categories: (1) 16 – 24, (2) 25 – 44, and (3) 45 – 65.

A second round of three one-way analysis of variances were employed to assess if the men by age group significantly differed with regard to their attitudes toward opportunity. Findings indicate that the older age categories simply held more pessimistic attitudes toward opportunity. That is, these results strongly suggest that the men across their lifespan are increasingly developing more negative attitudes toward opportunity. The first one-way analysis of variance employed revealed significant group differences across the three age groups in this study on the *Attitude Toward Opportunity Scale*: $F(2, 242)=5.64, p=004$. Mean scores reveal older street life oriented U. S. born African men in this study to demonstrate more negative attitudes toward their overall opportunity: **1.** 16–24 ($x=48.2$), **2.** 25–44 ($x=47.5$) and **3.** 45–65 ($x=44$) (See Tables 7 & 7A). As noted through the mean scores in table 6, the differences particularly for the first two age groups (16 – 24/25 – 44) although significant, the difference is especially small. Specifically, the difference between the first two groups is only a matter of .7, not even a whole point. Nevertheless, when exploring the third age group in relation to the other two groups, the difference is more revealing. Interestingly enough, the point difference between the third and second group is a matter of 3.5 points. However, it is in the comparison between the first and third group where we can see the largest shift in attitudes out of the three groups with a total point difference of 4.2. That is, the older men (45 – 65) in comparison to the first group (16 – 24) have an extremely more negative disposition in relation to their notions or access to opportunity. Put another way, these

data strongly suggest that it is in the third group (45 – 65) where these men's attitudes toward opportunity are a lot more pessimistic. An LSD post hoc analysis supported this finding as well. More specifically, an LSD post hoc analysis revealed a significant difference between the first and third group (.001) and the second and third group (.032) but not the first and second group (.564) in regards to these men's attitudes toward overall opportunity in the United States.

The second one-way analysis of variance also revealed significant group differences across the three age groups on the *Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity Subscale*: $F(1, 332)=7.61, p.006$. Mean scores in this analysis also revealed that as the men got older their attitudes toward viable educational opportunities became more negative or pessimistic: 1. 16-24 ($x=40$), 2. 25-44 ($x=39$) and 3. 45-65 ($x=36.1$) (See Tables 7 & 7B). As noted in table 6, as was the case in the previous finding on the overall opportunity scale, although the overall one way analysis of variance result was significant the difference between the first two groups was very small. Mean scores clearly reveal that there is only a single point difference between group one (16 – 24) and group two (25 – 44). It is in the third group again where we can see the most striking difference. The mean score comparison between group three (45 – 65) and group two (25 – 44) reveals a difference of nearly three points. Nevertheless, it is in the mean score comparison between group three (45 – 65) and group one (16 – 24) where we can see the largest difference or shift in attitudes regarding educational opportunity. The mean score comparison between group one (16 – 24) and group three (45 – 65) reveals nearly a four point difference on the attitude toward education scale. That is, it is the oldest group (45 – 65) in this data set that holds the most negative or pessimistic attitudes toward

educational opportunity. A LSD post hoc analysis supported these mean score findings as well. More specifically, a LSD post hoc analysis only revealed significant group difference for group one and three (.007). Groups two and three closely approached significance (.058). However, this post hoc analysis clearly revealed no significant difference between groups one and two (.715)

Significance was achieved for a third and final one-way analysis of variance and results further support an age group difference on the *Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity Subscale*: $F(2, 269)=6.2, p=.002$. Mean scores reveal the men's attitude toward accessing viable economic opportunities in the United States also waned or became more negative, as they got older: **1.** 16-24 ($x=9.3$), **2.** 25-44 ($x=8.4$) and **3.** 45-65 ($x=8.3$) (see Tables 7 & 7C). Interestingly enough, unlike the previous two one way analysis findings, the point differences remained relatively small throughout all three age groups on the attitude toward economic scale although the overall finding was significant (.002). The largest group difference existed for group three and one at one full point. The difference between group one and two is .9 while the point difference between group 3 and 2 is only .1 point. A LSD post hoc analysis reveals age group significance between group one and two (.018) and groups one and three (.003). However, a LSD post hoc analysis was unable to find significant group difference between group two and three (.686) on the attitude toward economic subscale.

Given the qualitative data, and specifically the men's notions about economic survival and their bitter and in most instances unproductive educational experiences, a set of three simple regressions were conducted to assess or determine predictors of opportunity in a street life oriented U. S. born African male sample. The first simple

regression was employed to assess how predictive Attitudes Toward Economic opportunity were that of Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity. As argued throughout this dissertation there is an inherent relationship between attitudes toward economic opportunity to that of educational opportunity—that is economic resources, in many respects, represents a major pillar in any student’s successful academic experience. Results from the first simple regression indicated that *Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity* is significantly predictive of these men’s *Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity*: $F(1, 316) = 42, p = .000$. In fact, the Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity subscale accounted for at least 12% of the variance (standardized coefficients $\beta = .342$) in the Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity construct (See Tables 8 & 8A). Put another way, findings indicate that attitudes toward economic opportunity is a strong predictor of educational opportunity in this sample of street life oriented U. S. born African men. More specifically, as these men’s attitudes increasingly become more positive with regard to economic opportunity, their attitudes toward learning or educational opportunity increasingly become more positive as well. The second simple regression was employed to assess how predictive *Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity* was that of *Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity*. A significant regression equation was found in this simple regression employed, $F(1, 316) = 4196.44, p = 0.000$. The adjusted R square reported that Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity accounted for approximately 12% (standardized coefficients $\beta = .342$) of the variance on the Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity scale (See Tables 9 & 9A). This finding strongly suggests that attitudes toward economic

opportunity at least within a street life oriented U. S. born male population can be influenced through these men's attitudes toward educational opportunity.

I want to close this first research question with a cutting sentiment by **Black Soul (29)**. This provocative quote ultimately summarizes how the men in this study feel about institutions that presumably educate them as well as provide economic opportunity to their communities. Specifically, **Black Soul (29)** critically explains how the lack of key resources (i. e. economic and educational opportunity) inevitably will transform a number of the men who are mired in such conditions in that they will eventually search for ways to survive and/or provide for close loved ones and themselves. Further, he offers testimony that profoundly gets at how schools play a vital role in perpetuating a street life orientation particularly amongst low-income U. S. born African boys.

Black Soul (29): *When there's a lack of anything, the streets are going to kick in on you. Because you know it's not working. Something else got to support that, you know, so you can do something. So the streets will come in, the streets will make it so you can at least get half of that which you need, if you do it right, and you grinding... You understand? ... Teachers not doing nothing, principal's not doing nothing, the educational board not doing anything, and it's happening years after year. And you see enough older friends going through the same thing, we're (his generation) doing the same thing. We're seeing our classmates doing the same thing. It's everywhere. So we have to change or we get swallowed... You know what I'm saying. It's not going to work (engaging in street activities in the schools). And they know it's not going to work. They allow fights (in school) to happen. They allow this type of environment to be.. to be grown in the high school.*

Street Life Ideology

2. How Do Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men Frame Essential Notions of Street Life?

As noted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation street life is defined as an ideology centered on economic and personal survival. More specifically, the assumption

is that these men develop a street life orientation out of a function and/or willingness to establish personal levels of resiliency.

Several questions on the demographic page of this survey were developed to explore the degree and authenticity of a potential participant's street life orientation. In response to the question "*Would you consider yourself to be street life oriented?*", 80.1% answered Yes while 9.2% answered No. Nearly 11% of the responses were missing for this question. As noted in the criterion, these men had to self-identify as street life oriented to be included in the study. However, an exception was made for the 9.2% who answered No and 10.8% who did not answer the question at all. It was determined by the research team that these men were consciously misrepresenting themselves (incorrectly responding to the question) so they could not be linked to any criminal activities as per this study. For instance, some of the men upon engaging in criminal activities in front of us would fill out an Opportunity Gap Survey and then answer that they were not street life oriented. A popular example of such behavior, involved a number of the older men who assumed our definition of street life was centrally equivalent to the stereotypical example of low income U. S. born African men as gang bangers or who sell narcotics on the street corner. While these men were regularly known to congregate in the streets, in particular in or near the illegal gambling area, they nonetheless, did not associate themselves with that cut of the streets. Although the older men in several respects capture the entire range of a street life orientation, many of the older guys in this study I would argue resembled Mitchell Dunier's participants in his classic book, *Slim's Table* (1992/1994). It important to note, nevertheless, that several of the young men intentionally misrepresented their street life orientation as well—generally for different

reasons in comparison to the older guys. The younger men more so fit the stereotypical notions of street life. And given this kind of activity or particular involvement (e. g. selling narcotics, gang banging, etc.) in the streets, several of the young men answered incorrectly to the question, *Are You Street Life Oriented?* Although these men agreed to participate in the study several of them justifiably were cautious and/or skeptical of the study's overall intentions. All surveys were collected in the community and more specifically in their street life spaces (e. g. the "block", number hole, hanging out in large groups after high school, etc.). In many instances it was clearly obvious they were street life oriented particularly given a number of the men were engaged in illegal activities (e. g. selling drugs, etc.) while we were collecting data. It is important to note or highlight that the research team explicitly collected survey data where illegal activities were conducted. Although the participants were verbally informed and given an informed consent form that indicated all survey responses were confidential and anonymous, some participants who did not clearly know any members of the research team typically did not answer the demographic question correctly or willingly so as to avoid any written indication of their connections to illegal activity in the streets. All survey (not the demographic page) as well as interview questions focused on thoughts about economic and educational opportunity in the United States not their personal experiences in the streets. This allowed for greater participation and support of the study by the men.

Seventy-four percent of the sample answered No to the question *are you gang affiliated* which is very different than being street life oriented (Perkins, 1987). Participating in an organized gang is simply one way of organizing a street life orientation. This question was asked to get a sense of how far the gang phenomenon has

reached into the Northeast low-income urban communities in which this study was conducted out of (Harlem, New York City & Paterson, New Jersey). Gangs especially within recent times generally have been regarded as a West Coast and Midwest street life phenomenon at least in low-income U. S. born African communities. Results reveal relatively small participation in organized gang activity. Nineteen percent of the men answered *Yes* to this question, while 7% did not answer at all. The men were given the option in demographic section to note their specific gang affiliation which ranged from: (1) Bloods, (2) Crips, (3) AOB: All Out Brothers (4) LOC, (5) Dip Set, (6) Post Boys, (7) Dark Side, (8) Taliban Access, (9) D-Block, (10) Deceptions, (11) P. N. G., (12) Gangster Disciple: Folk Nation, (13) O. T. N., (14) G-Shine, (15) The Pound and (16) Ghost Town. In most instances these gangs are at best small crews or local community spaces (e. g. a particular block or housing complex, etc.) who have declared themselves a gang. In some instances, these cliques or gangs are smaller subsets of larger or more established gangs who have simply declared a unique niche in the larger gang. This kind of activity is common and oftentimes encouraged by higher ranking leadership (Keiser, 1969). However, others groups such as the Bloods, Crips or Gangster Disciples from the outset are more organized and numerous.

Further, the men were asked on the demographic page to note their primary hustle as a way to get at the degree of their street life orientation. It is important to note that the men more so thought of their hustle or street expertise as a matter of opportunity. In many instances the men in a given period engaged in a number of hustles to economically survive as opposed to one single hustle or method of illegal activities. The range of hustles noted by participants included: (1) selling narcotics, (2) gambling, (3) pimping,

(4) stealing, (5) illegally selling or trafficking alcohol, (6) illegally selling cigarettes, (7) Hip-Hop music, (8) street vendor or peddler, (9) street mechanic, (10) welfare, (11) SSI, (12) pan handling, (13) “the streets” or “anything”.

Street Life Orientation-Younger Men

Demographic data revealed that 81.4% of the young men surveyed identified themselves as street life oriented while 12.2% of them said No and for 6.4% of the surveys this item was unanswered. Interestingly enough, while 67.9% of the men said they were not gang affiliated and 7.1% did not answer the question 25% of the young men, however, acknowledge their affiliation to a gang.

Street Life Orientation-Older men

Demographic data revealed that 75.6% of the men surveyed identified themselves as street life oriented while 6.7% of them said No and for 17.8% of the surveys this item was unanswered. Upon exploring the question of gang affiliation in this sub-sample, results indicated that while 75.1% of the men said they were not gang affiliated and 11.1% did not answer the question, nearly 14% of the older men, however, acknowledged their affiliation to a gang.

To get at a fundamental understanding of street life through the phenomenology of the men, the first question asked during the group interviews was, *what does street life mean to you?* This very basic question was intentionally implemented in the interview protocol as an initial question. The simplicity of such a question profoundly places or renders authority of the interview to the participants. Specifically, the format of the interview was framed through their response to this initial question thus allowing the interview to move more genuinely through the participants' phenomenological and/or

theoretical spirit. As I noted in the interview with the men, given the vast exploitation of the streets and the larger inner city community by the academy, various media outlets and popular society, in addition to their thoughts about the exploitation I was interested in, *how they framed and defined the streets*. Oftentimes, it is investigators as well as other persons who have no real connection or personal experience in the streets or the larger inner city community who tend to hold positions of authority and so-called expertise in defining and framing the streets. It is not even all that uncommon in the literature or through out the halls of the academy for investigators to challenge the authenticity of a street life oriented men's identity's as well as their thinking or notions on the phenomenon. Given this travesty and/or mass intellectual injustice it was of paramount interest to hear how street life oriented U. S. born African men define and frame their own lifestyle.

Fundamental Notions of Street Life

The men revealed that there is a totality to a street life experience that can more or less be understood in terms of two social dimensions thus strongly supporting the proposed definition of street life for this study: (1) "street love" or male and communal bonding and (2) economic survival. Examples of *street love* ranged from spending quality time with your "homey" or "nigga" to organizing community events such as block parties or basketball tournaments. Examples extended for *economic survival* generally ranged from selling narcotics or generating income through illegal activities to engaging in physically harmful behavior such as assault or murder. With respect to the totality and variations of the experience, the men clearly speak of how there is no one kind of street image or figure to be considered with respect to street life oriented U. S.

born African men. The manifestations of a street life orientation are many. Variation or degree of a street life orientation can shift in a person or individual across the life span as well as in the group or generation. In other words, while most individuals will make attempts to ground themselves in a particular or foundational hustle, many men, across their lifespan, are involved in several permutations of the streets. His primary hustle (e. g. narcotics, arm robbery, murder, etc.) can and will adapt to the times. According to several of the men, depictions or analysis of their experience are often exaggerated, narrow in theoretical scope, misunderstood, exploited and/or misrepresented.

Surprising perhaps for most, however, in addition to their criminal lives, these men, are also grandfathers, fathers, sons, uncles, nephews, cousins, friends, lovers and/or human beings—men with full lives. And all of these traditional roles concurrently work to produce a wide variation of street life oriented U. S. born African men. There is no one type—no one pattern. For adaptive reasons, the types, patterns or characteristics of the streets particularly in these men rapidly evolve with new styles, slang, ways of hustling, physical spaces to hustle out of, among other aspects in an all out effort to secure their resiliency. It is just when Middle America closes in on pinning a pattern to these men's activities where one most likely can observe and note an adaptation in behavior. This adaptive feature has never failed in the experience of these men across space and time in the United States. What probably is more common or strings a wide variation of street life orientations together in the U. S. born African male experience are the sentiments expressed collectively by these men across space and time. As evidenced in the group interviews, the men overall feel the streets are filled with deep and cutting contradictions such as life, death, love, hate, hope, pain of the worst degree, respect,

disappointment, a place to create a valued identity, betrayal as well as a shot at having and losing some kind of semblance of a family. They assert that men come to the streets as a means to “hold it down” or economically provide for themselves and loved ones in desperate and trying economic times. Ultimately, many of these men feel the streets chose them—that literally, there were few other options in life to exercise.

Economic Survival

High School Participants:

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Street life to me *means like hustling* and everything. Like ...street life to me is like basically growing up in the streets. Feel me like they say, *it takes a whole community to raise a child. ... it's like having to go through everything. ... like having to really struggle to get what you need and to survive and to feed your kids* or for the bad shit you've got to do like selling drugs. That's what street life is to me..... but street life, God, basically, it's like.. I think it's going through all the motions of what you're having right then, like at being poor at once, at one moment, and like *you get up and every time you get up you might get knocked down. But you've got to keep doing it all over and over again. Be ready to fight. The strong survive. That's what street life is....* –economic survival

D-Black (17, 11th grade): Well, like me, growing up like going through different obstacles in life. Feel me. *Stuff you got to go through to be successful.* I mean, like ... *Some niggers got to sell drugs, feel me...* –economic survival

Killer (17, 10th grade): *It's like going through heaven and hell....* I mean, good times, bad times. *But you live by what you die by. Feel me,* like. You got to make money to live. *You got to eat and feed your kids. You got to eat to survive. But only the strong survive.* –economic and personal survival

These data are extremely revealing of the psychology of the streets. The high school participants' notions of the streets reflect a dual totality of “heaven and hell”. These men are clear with respect to the full experience that accompanies a street life reality. In the minds of these young men it makes sense to risk ones life or freedom in pursuit of necessary resources—it is noble to survive and provide at even extreme costs, “... only the strong survive”. Hardship in the “hood” although avoided if at all possible is

oftentimes seen as something that can potentially mold quality characteristics in the person. It is through hardship that a particular unrelenting will, street energy, or profound level of resiliency is produced. This will or new found strength to make it, as a function of the hardship can sometimes result in the adaptive transformation of a male in which the community ultimately needs to help that community. In the face of extreme economic poverty all of the men interviewed in this study felt it was logical if not intelligent to engage in criminal activities as a means to economically survive.

According to **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)**, "... it's like having to go through everything. ... like having to really struggle to get what you need and to *survive* and to feed your kids or for the bad shit you've got to do like selling drugs. That's what street life is to me..."

The participants clearly make reference to the need and obligation to provide for one's family and loved ones especially the "kids" or children of the family. These men speak of seemingly insurmountable bouts of economic poverty that ravage through their communities. Children according to the men are innocently caught in this unyielding economic oppression. Given the very real socio-economic circumstances in his community, **Killer (17, 10th grade)** asserts that it is all worth the risk to "die" in the streets to provide for children. To some significant extent, **Killer (17, 10th grade)** is ok or at peace with the possibility of death. This is clear when he notes that, "... you live by what you die by. Feel me.." **Killer (17, 10th grade)** emphasizes that, "only the strong survives" and it is in that will where you can find, locate or tap into the pulse of his resiliency, "You got to make money to live. You got to eat and feed your kids. You got to eat to survive. But only the strong survives". **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** argues that the streets are filled with disappointments or setbacks however one's character and/or

resiliency is ultimately defined by how he perseveres in the face of his troubles, "... street life... it's like.. I think it's going through all the motions of what you're having right then, like at being poor at once, at one moment, and like you get up and every time you get up you might get knocked down. But you've got to keep doing it all over and over again. Be ready to fight. The strong survives. That's what street life is...." According to **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** you have to be willing to experience all aspects of the streets; be willing to go "through all the motions" or not be afraid to fall or fail in the streets to succeed.

Economic Survival

Community Participants:

The older men had two basic kinds of responses to the question, *what does street life mean to you?* Although these men explicitly spoke to survivalist notions when asked to define or frame the streets, their explanations of the streets, nonetheless, were more theoretically based in comparison to the comments of the high school students. They voiced more of a developed and complicated view on the streets. Older street life oriented U. S. born African men were most likely to connect street life in their community to larger social structural systems that fail to afford them economic opportunities of dignity. These guys were more apt to connect the dots between the federal government and widespread economic poverty. Second, these men saw the core ideology or value system of the streets as being key to the vibrancy and will of the people in the street community, larger inner city community, larger U. S. born African ethnic community as well as larger America. Ironically, the men emphatically supported the notion that it is in the bare bone principles of the streets where genuine "truth" or

integrity can still be salvaged in the people of this country. According to these men, members of middle, larger and corporate society willfully forfeit their principles and overall character in exchange for ideal notions of success and/or upward mobility.

Community Participants:

Black Soul (29): *Streets is, to me, is truth.* You know what I'm saying? ... you know, *the school system, the education system doesn't work, the government,* you know what I'm saying? *We know from the gate (beginning) that their lies,* you know what I'm saying? ... *the streets is what it is. ... There's no lies. There is no deceptions...* you know what I'm saying, this is how people are living. *And so it's truth for me, you know what I'm saying?* -Truth

Slim (48): And when you're out on the streets and in the streets with other people that's in the streets, you know, they know they're out there and you know you're out there... *like you said, the truth, you know, at least you can be truthful with each other. Nobody's lying to you like these peoples. Like you (Black Soul) say, the government and politicians and all that stuff. They got it set up like that anyway for us to fall... And they try to push us out there in the streets so we can fall... It's hard to hold down a Black man, and we took it and turned it around. That's why we got the rappers and stuff like that.* The videos ... and stuff, you know, from the streets and stuff. And ACTUALLY, it's (street life oriented Hip-Hop music or "videos") about how we live.... - Truth/Resiliency

Black Soul (29): *We'll, we'll tell you 'I'm a thief. See, I'm a killer'.* See, what I'm saying? 'I sell drugs', you know. 'This is what I do, now.' You know what I'm saying? *And they'll (the streets) will show you why they did it.* - Truth

Group: Right, right...

Black Soul (29): *That's truth.* Now, would a politician say something like that? No, no.

Slim (48): He'd get up there and *tell a lie.*

Black Soul (29): *Tell a lie.* We'll feed you, just elect me.

Tommy (29): *He's going to tell a lie,* because he's got a lot to lose. That person (hypothetical street life oriented U. S. born African male) ain't got no shit, ain't got nothing to worry about. *Why not tell the truth?*

Black Soul (29): I'm already down here (in the depths of economic poverty). And it's like the streets is the only thing that we somewhat got left. You know what I'm saying? Out of that, we've been making something happen. But we still have to do a

lot of work because *the one's* (exploitive and manipulative elements of larger America) *out there, (are) seeing our potential. So that's why they come in and exploit us.* You know what I'm saying? *(They just) Take.. take it.* ... we made basketball. We made baseball, football, rapping, singing. We did all of these things, you know what I'm saying? Because the street gave us that motivation.
 –Resiliency

According to the men, members of status quo, professional and/or corporate sectors of the United States, liberal and conservative alike, are more likely to exhibit personality dispositions indicative of or rooted in a viciously judgmental, parasitic and/or manipulative nature. One older man without hesitation noted that professionals are more likely to “lie” or intentionally misrepresent themselves or their position because they, “... have a lot to lose”. These men make direct links to how the “lies”, greed and deceit of larger America and in particular the “government” oftentimes translate into increasing rates of criminal activities in their communities. Although, streamlined in the winds of oppression these men, nonetheless, assert that their baseline integrity and principles—their “truth”—their strident honesty and stubbornness reigns supreme to that of their oppressors. The men argue that this core value—“the truth”, grounds, frames and ultimately represents their street life orientation. **Slim (48)** explicitly argues that the bare and rugged “truth” of their orientation sets them apart from those like the “government” and “politicians” who lie and ultimately seek to sustain and perpetuate the conditions that foster criminal activities. He says, “like you said (Black Soul), *the truth*, you know, at least you can be truthful with each other. Nobody's lying to you like these peoples do. Like you say (Black Soul), the government and politicians and all that stuff. They got it set up like that anyway for us to fall... And they try to push us out there in the streets so we can fall...” **Slim (48)** goes on to argue that street life oriented U. S. born African men have stood honorably and resiliently across time and space. In fact, he highlights the

Hip-Hop movement as an example indicative of the will of the streets. **Slim (48)** says, “It’s hard to hold down a Black man, and we took it and turned it around. That’s why we got the rappers and stuff like that. The videos ... and stuff, you know, from the streets and stuff. And ACTUALLY, it’s about how we live....”

Street Energy

Slim (48) and **Black Soul (29)** argue that the special will, resiliency and/or collective energy of the streets can be easily observed in the Hip-Hop movement or in such sports as football or basketball. According to this gentleman, the will of the streets is so special that what ever its energy is properly channeled into, it ultimately will result in notable success—sports, entertainment or otherwise. He notes that if a member of the streets was given equal and quality opportunities to participate in reputable professional capacities, his will would go unmatched and eventually prevail against his competition. Thus, **Black Soul (29)** asserts that as a result the streets’ style and overall raw “potential”, it is oftentimes “exploited” by members who live outside of his community. **Black Soul (29)** urges members of the street to work harder at protecting the community by warding off outsiders who solely seek to manipulate and profit off of their core principles, style an/or “motivation”. He says, “... we still have to do a lot of work because *the one’s* (exploitive and manipulative elements of larger America) *out there, seeing our potential. So that's why they come in and exploit us.* You know what I'm saying? *(They just) Take.. take it.* Here's something we.. we made basketball. We made baseball, football, rapping, singing. We did all of these things, you know what I'm saying? Because the street gave us that motivation.”

Street Love

The term “street love” emerged as a theme part and parcel to the men’s fundamental understanding of the streets. Across both group interviews the men considered this term to be a defining dimension of the streets. There were few generational differences or nuances reflected in these data with respect to their understanding of the term street love. According to the men “*street love*” or bonding activities characterizes the nature and relationship of street life oriented U. S. born African men and their communities. Street love represents for the men the designing and organizing of activities, by the streets, to give back in positive ways to persons or individuals (i. e. close friends, immediate family members, or other loved ones) as well as the larger neighborhood in which these men reside in or come from. Examples of street love noted in the interviews included giving away free Christmas gifts, “free turkeys”, birthday gifts, school supplies, money, as well as offering jobs, protection and sponsoring local communal functions (e. g. block party, basketball tournament, etc.). It is important to note that street love can be seen on two levels: (1) individual-to-individual and (2) communally.

Black Soul (29): (street love is) When you give back. You know what I'm saying? You give to people that you know that need it. Not because you're going to benefit over something. No ties to it.

Slim (48): No ties to it...

Tommy (29): Street love to me is like a mutual respect, you know what I'm saying?... (it's) Not about what you can give or how much you can give, but just that.. that bond, you know, people have. Just that mutual respect for people, you know.

Slim (48): Like ahm, in New York. Block parties. ... that's street love, you know. I mean, everybody just cook and come out and just have a party ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... That's street love to me.

Yasser: What are some of the things you've seen, you know, block parties, what's some of the other things that you've seen in y'all experience on the streets, when love was given by the streets.

Black Soul (29): Like, for instance, like I was recently working in a number hole. So out of that we show love. Every year we give free turkeys away. Get like fifty turkeys, sixty turkeys, and we give it out to the ones that helped us through the years. You know what I'm saying. ...that's, to me, is like street love. We're showing you that we really respect you. We appreciate you, so here, you know what I'm saying. And also, like the block parties. ... when I go there (to block parties) it's like, you know, all the violence stops for that moment, you know what I'm saying. Kids running around having a good old time.... We eating and laughing and we playing cards, we getting drunk. You're just having a good time. All the kids, the adults, the grandmas, all together.

Group: Everybody ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... The Dogs, the Cats ... [LAUGHS] ... The rats, and we had some big ones ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... [LAUGHING] Everybody we all eating.

Black Soul (29): That's street love. If we can have more of that. As a collective. Look at what happens we come (together) as a collective.

The men, across generations, concurrently speak of individual or interpersonal forms of street love as well. Interpersonal notions of street love primarily occur between or amongst close friends or "homeys". These men note a number of male bonding activities that they engage in some of which include seeking each other out for advice, attending clubs and/or house parties, attending sporting events as well as playing sports with and against each other (i. e. basketball, flag football, paintball, etc.).

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Like sometimes we get into deep discussions like this to keep it real with you ... Like if like one of us ain't feeling too good, we would go by the park and chill out and just sit down and talk about the shit. You feel me. That's like..that's only bonding with your niggas, with your niggas, you feel me, other niggas might be like that's some old feminine shit to be able to talk to your niggas on some real shit. Nah, that only make ya'll stronger as a team... ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... - *Street Love/Bonding - 1st Level*

Tommy (29): Even just being around your boys, you know, your boys know you're down and out, so they know your pockets ain't right and they know you ain't doing too cool. But they still look out for you. "Oh, you need a cigarette, or you want a beer, or you want to smoke this weed with us," you know what I'm saying?

That's love right there... Nigga know your pockets not right, no you not doing good. ...come on in, you know. *That's love.* – *Street Love/Bonding – 1st Level*

When asked to share their understanding of the streets, these men expressed that their perspective of the streets is deeply informed by a particular kind of street love. It is important to note that a genuine and truthful level of community affection (i. e. street love) is concurrently found within and between the many complex folds of a street life reality. **Tommy (29)** talks of how friends or “your boys” are sought after and relied on to a significant degree by these men to make it day to day; that oftentimes when he thinks of the streets he ponders on that love or positive energy found in the streets. According to **Tommy (29)** it is only the street love of true friends that will walk with and support them during trying times. “... they (friends) know your pockets ain’t right and they (friends) know you ain’t doing too cool. But they still look out for you”.

The men also offer a number of communal examples of street love. All of the men in both group interviews attested to the countless numbers of community events they have observed and participated in that were sponsored by more established street life oriented U. S. born African men. **Tommy (29)** in a later part of the group interview notes, “I’ve seen a dope dealer come through... .. a truck full of toys and give it out or whatever, you know. I feel the same way they do, you know what I’m saying?” **Wah Benz’s (17, 11th grade)** raises a similar example in his group interview when he notes how hustlers in his community have sponsored “cook-outs” as well as “give back to the kids”. It is important to note, that in his response, this young gentleman emphasizes that it is important for the negative and *positive* of the streets to be considered when trying to define the streets, “If they know they’re doing wrong, they try to give back to the kids that’s growing up at least. So I see like street sometimes not always bad. It ain’t

something (that's always) bad to go through..". It is evident from the group interviews that the men seek as well as value or treasure communal notions of street love. These community events ultimately represent for these men a way to stay connected. For the successful hustler, it is almost expected of him by the local community as well as his self to take the initiative and sponsor quality local community events. The problems of the community are obvious and alarmingly blatant; it is these problems that have literally produced him. The overall inner city community generally feels that if anyone should understand and respond to the problems of the community—it should be the streets. And consequently, these men have been known to unwaveringly sponsor events for the “hood” in the name of street love.

What are some of the things that the older hustlers do for the community to show love?

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Like once a year, like two times a year, when the summer come around, they would throw a big cook-out for all the little kids. Block parties. Everything. Call up DJ's and stuff, have talent shows and shit for the little kids, and everything... yeah all that. Dance contests...

Killer (17, 10th grade): Every year they get the little basketball, youth little things...

D-Black (17, 11th grade): Yeah, basketball tournaments popping because for niggas who like to ball...

Yasser: What does activities like that, what does that do for a community when ...

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): ... like that keep us away from the negativity in the streets, feel me, you know what I mean, if you're having a basketball tournament for, and you're like my height, you're playing with big niggas and you drop twenty points, you like, “Damn, I really can go to the NBA.” I'm playing niggas that's twice my size, and I've dropped twenty (scored twenty points in a basketball game), imagine what I could do with people my own age. Feel me. So that haves you really focused..

Many of the men find their communities to be stripped of necessary basic resources that would significantly inform the vibrancy of a community. The men complain that there are few quality parks, recreational centers as well as playgrounds; that there are no places for the children to play, “there’s nothing to do.” So when the hustlers respond to such extreme community needs in the form of communal street love many of the residents are extremely appreciative and to some degree feel indebted to the gratitude of these men. **Iceberg (16, 9th grade)** makes mention of how such community events, “keep(s) us away from the negativity in the streets, feel me..”. He discusses how receiving constructive or positive reinforcement by the community in a basketball tournament organized for the local community often works to improve men in the streets’ confidence, self-esteem and/or motivation, “I’m playing niggas that’s twice my size, and I’ve dropped twenty (scored twenty points in a basketball game), imagine what I could do with people my own age. Feel me. So that haves you really focused..”.

Iceberg (16, 9th grade) in a later part of the group interview expands the notion of street love proposed in this study by providing an example of street love that merges the two dimensions of individual and communal love. This young man offers an example of how an honorary form of street love oftentimes is sincerely extended to those connected to men with status in the streets. Specifically, he discusses how it is typical for the son of a well-known or locally respected hustler to enjoy the benefits of street love. It is important to note that **Iceberg (16, 9th grade)** in his description of street love explicitly guards against romanticizing or glorifying the streets. In fact, none of the men make no bones about the difficulties or very real hardships in the streets as well as the larger inner city community. In fact, all of the men indicated that they seek upward mobility or a way

to move into a better-resourced community because of the prevalence of socio-economic problems in their own communities. Reconciliation of this tension is noted when **Iceberg (16, 9th grade)**, in thinking about the streets, argues that there is “good” and “bad” that work as the fundamental bedrock of the streets. This young man asserts that it is difficult for many to acknowledge that there is “a lot of love in the streets” in spite of the problems. For many of the men street love is the saving grace of their community. When **Black Soul (29)** remarks “the streets is all we got” he is saying although these men are experiencing one of the worst tragedies of human history—and although the forecast looks like the coming or perpetuation of more problems at least these men, if anything, can look forward to each other; at least they have and are able to share a special kind of “truth” and connection to a particular communal ideal; a periodic communal connection perhaps, but nonetheless a connection with humanity that most in our society secretly and desperately yearn for—an opportunity to participate in a genuinely satisfying and fulfilling social community. Let us take a closer look at the complexity of street love and how in particular **Iceberg (16, 9th grade)** notion of it expands this concept theoretically.

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): Street life it's ... feeling ... good, feeling bad. Whether you know it or not, there's *a lot of love in the streets* ... feel me... I mean, it just depends on who you mess around with that give you that *love*. Feel me. Like if you come from out there in a certain spot, you know what I mean? Say, your father's done something like sold drugs?. And he got, you know what I mean, his little clique. You know what I mean? Their little clique got their little clique, so wherever you go, people *show you love*, you know what I mean? If you don't got no money, if you come to me on a late night walking home. And one of your father's friends... I mean like “What's good? (How are you doing?)” “Say, you (his father's friend) got like five dollars so I can get something to eat right quick.” Boom they hit you off with ten (dollars)... Or you can look at the bad side. I mean, you just be in the wrong place at the wrong time. When you walk down the street, get locked up (by police). I mean, get stabbed up and shot up. I mean, but that just comes with the territory. If you live in the hood (inner city), I mean, stuff like that is going to happen. Your mother might

get laid off. You might even get evicted from your house. It's just something you got to look forward too. –*Street Love*

Street Masculinity

For many low income U. S. born African men, a street life orientation in part offers what is perceived as a valid opportunity to solidify or fulfill the needs of a masculine identity. The systematic marginalization of these men from traditional sources of economic and educational opportunity oftentimes prevents the development of a valued masculine identity. Consequently, it is in the streets where many of these men are able to secure that lost identity which deeply informs these men's notions of resiliency. A street life orientation can provide a sense of purpose and direction in that it offers the young man a role to function in life. These interview data reveal that the men's masculine identity is grounded in the two core aspects of street life, economic survival and street love.

The part of the group interview geared towards the men's interpretation of Styles P's, "*A Gangster and Gentleman*" revealed how fundamental a street life orientation is to the streets' masculine identity. A content analysis revealed three dominant themes to have emerged in the group interviews in relation to the notion of economic survival as connected to the masculinity of street life oriented U. S. born African men: (1) attaining the role of provider, (2) receiving/being denied respect and (3) negotiating masculine identity. Manhood, even in low income U. S. born African communities, is oftentimes gauged by how well a man can provide for himself and family. Minimum wage legal opportunities (e. g. McDonalds, Blockbuster, janitor, etc.) oftentimes present themselves as the brightest economic opportunities for these men. With *only* these kinds of

economic opportunities, the men are nonetheless still expected by their community to produce in the face of these socio-economic challenges. Consequently, these men seek out a street life orientation as way to “survive” and “eat” as a site of resiliency.

Street Masculinity: High School Participants

While all of the men described how the systematic blocking of economic and educational opportunities fundamentally challenges their manhood, an important distinction emerged in the data by age and generation. The high school participants’ responses challenge popular notions of why teenagers engage in a street life orientation. The high school participants asserted that a number of their peers engage such behaviors because they themselves need to make it through severe bouts of economic poverty. Despite deep and severe consequences of economic poverty, the young men feel dismissed, ignored and undervalued by persons in authority who are in a position to frame their activities such as educators, social workers, researchers, politicians, popular media outlets as well as other “professional people” . These men offered raw testimonies to the challenges that many of them contend with in their homes, communities and schools and how a street life orientation given their options makes the most sense to access. **Killer (17, 10th grade)** poignantly noted, “Like some niggas, they really do need it (the option of street life)... Couple of niggas I know, they really have nothing. Their mother and father is crack heads... ‘I’m a try to get some money’. I don’t feel like asking everybody for a dollar to get something to eat ... Or to buy me some sneakers.”

The high school students expressed a particular obligation to “stand up and be a man” with the intent of providing as well as holding together their home to the extent that they could, “... it’s people who really had to go out there (streets) and do that to survive

for their family. Like it's kids that's like thirteen or fourteen years old that got to be the man of their house, because their mother's on crack or whatever." This finding supports the findings reached by Burton et al. (1996), who argued that a number of low income U. S. born Africans in many respects bypass the formal stage of adolescence at least as understood within a middle class value system to aggressively assist their immediate family.

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): "You start selling drugs and you see all this money and stuff, you're like damn, now I've got it. Feel me. I don't got to ask nobody for nothing. You feel like a man. Feel me. Because you can support yourself. You can support anybody else. Feel me. You can do whatever you want to do with your money. You don't got to ask nobody, 'can I borrow fifty dollars and get some sneakers?', I mean, I don't even need groceries for my house, nothing like that. You got it all."

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): "... Sometimes everybody.. parents ain't able to raise their kids, so he (street life oriented U. S. born African boy) goes to the people on the street for help... So they got to pay the bills and stuff like that. So, they ain't got no choice but to go into that game (street life) because they can't get no real job at fourteen, fifteen years old. So that's what they got to do."

These economic survivalist notions of independence and responsibility more deeply revealed themselves as the men were asked to analyze the content of the song. Specifically, they resonated with "*A Gangster and a Gentleman's*" messages around inner city living conditions, unstable families or living with parents who are unable to take care of them financially as well as the pain and embarrassment associated with being economically poor. When I asked the high school students what lines most struck them, they passionately read in unison:

"He [Styles' step father] still had to hit me
Aggravated little nigga still wearing skippies [cheap or poor quality sneakers]
God [Styles childhood friends] had Adidas and pumas—I could had a pair
But mommy said wait to till Christmas but I needed them sooner
If you heard I was broke dog [his friend] it wasn't rumor"

When asked to explain Styles' notions of a "gangster" and a "gentleman", the young men distinguished the "gangster", the brute or all out criminal persona who engages in illegal activities to economically survive, and the "gentleman", a respectable and civil man.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): "To me, he's saying when gangsters ride that's like when you're on the block .. and you're struggling, then you got to go through something every day so like basically it's like beef... and gentlemen just "live your life" they got it easy to him (SP). They're like.. gangsters, they're living hard every day.... like it ain't as easy money as everybody thinks. They're still running from cops every day. They've got to watch their back and get money to feed their family. Or a gentleman, or whoever you're talking about... they basically living an easy life somehow, some way."

Killer (17, 10th grade): "... like most niggas from the block, you know, with a big dog (alpha or dominant) on the block... He's considered... He's going out hard... He's getting shot at. He's getting shot at or shot up. Stuff happens."

Community Participants: Street Masculinity

In contrast to these late adolescents, the older group tended to see gangster and a gentleman as integrated within the man. These men maintain that the status of one's masculinity improves in the streets when a man convincingly demonstrates that he can strike a respectable balance between the two personality extremes. This finding clearly suggests that as the men get older, their thinking around masculinity and a street life orientation evolves. Their street life orientation is not a simple static ideology, but one that adapts, shifts and evolves across the life span.

Slim (48): "... *I could identify with, 'back in the '70s when liquor and weed'-(Styles's Lyrics) and stuff like that 'was heavy'-(Stlyes's Lyrics), you know, right before I got out of school. I was like sixteen ... like in 1971 ... and I did it myself, sold weed, and stuff like that... But I think we were doing it because, well, it was hard. Times was hard back then, you know. And then, like a pair of Pumas (direct reference to Styles's lyrics) and Nikes and stuff like that... I didn't have what the other kids had, and I wanted it. So that made me go out and sell drugs*

and mess with, you know, other things like that. I have seen a lot of stuff, you know, happen to people... And I done did a lot a stuff. And.. you know.. *to make a man, it makes me strive harder...* you know, to become a man and do the right things than what I did in the past and what I had seen done, you know.”

Black Soul (29): “... *I understand poverty, you know what I'm saying? You live it long enough it'll make you angry. It will make you do what you have to do to eat. You know what I'm saying? Like.. like to be a 'gangster' (direct reference to Style's lyrics).* You know, it's like.. like that one door open for you to be something. You understand? to get out of it... I said (to myself), me, personally, if I would join a gang, ... if I go that road, *I would tell myself I will go that road enough so I can save something so I can do better.* Because we all know that *if you live it long enough, you're going to die. There's no career in that. There's no way of surviving that. You will die. That's a given. So, you.. try to do it enough, risk it, put everything on the table so you can at least live a better life.*”

Stlyes's song causes the men to reflect on how severe bouts of economic poverty can turn the mind to engage in criminal activities to subsist. All of the men interviewed were clearly aware of the potentially tragic consequences (e. g. prison, death, etc.) located in the streets. Although they were aware of the consequences in the streets, from their crude perspective of economic poverty as well as building “anger” it just made more sense to “risk” falling prey to the trappings of the streets in favor of possibly securing economic resources, “... I would tell myself I will go that road enough so I can save something so I can do better... if you live it long enough, you're going to die. There's no career in that. There's no way of surviving that. You will die. That's a given. So, you.. try to do it enough, risk it, put everything on the table so you can at least live a better life”. **Slim (48)** explains how times as a teenager in the seventies were nothing short of hard. He explicitly notes that he hit the streets directly as a function of economic poverty. **Slim (48)** discussed how Styles's reference to wanting and not being able to acquire “pumas” a popular sneaker during the seventies, caused him to reflect on how he

as a teenager during that same time period wanted but could not acquire those same sneakers. The unmet needs for basic resources in his life significantly played into him engaging in criminal activities on the street, “we were doing it because, well, it was hard. Times was hard back then, you know. And then, like a pair of Pumas (direct reference to Styles’s lyrics) and Nikes and stuff like that... I didn't have what the other kids had, and I wanted it. So that made me go out and sell drugs and mess with, you know, other things like that. I have seen a lot of stuff, you know, happen to people... And I done did a lot a stuff’.

Overall, the men in this study feel abandoned, betrayed, alienated and, disrespected among all ranks of society’s social systems. A number of the men in and out of high school target larger social systems (e. g. economy, education, religious institutions, political arenas, etc.) as playing a direct role in producing and reinforcing these pejorative sentiments. Several of the men, particularly those who made up the community sample, emphasized how garnering respect from self, immediate family, friends and community was vital to developing one’s masculinity, and difficult to attain. In fact, the community sub-sample of men were more likely to make a link between respect and developing a credible identity as a man.

Black Soul (29): “Well to me I mean, to me, I mean, *a Black male, you know what I'm saying? We've been going through the ringer.* You know, I mean, *the women, you know what I'm saying, the system, everybody around us, they don't respect us.* And we see that every day... You know what I'm saying? And it gets to us... you know what I'm saying?” --*Respect*

Tommy (29): “So you've got to *find that respect wherever* you can get it.” --

Respect

Black Soul (29): “Right. You know what I’m saying? *We'll do*

anything. That's the only way we can, like feel good, you know what I'm saying? Like we say, that's our manhood."

- 3. To what extent can we begin to identify the basic properties or tenets that form a street life value system or ideology in a high school and community samples of U. S. born African men? How do the social psychological tenets of a street life value system or ideology shift across street life oriented U. S. born African men in high school in comparison to those no longer enrolled in high school?**

As noted in the closing of chapter four, street life oriented U. S. born African men share an awareness of a street life ideology that typically has at least four key components: (1) such an ideology has been passed on by an older street life oriented U. S. born African male generation; (2) the more connected to the code or the better a person understands the ideology the more resilient a person is considered (by himself as well as his immediate community) and thus is employed primarily for economic and personal survival. In addition, it is important to note that the overall ideology separates into two broader categories: (1) general street life ideology and (2) localized street life ideology. Simply, the *General Street Ideology* is the more generic aspect of the code. The rules, code or ideology shifts according to the hustle, although every street hustle particularly amongst these men, are subsumed by a more general code.

How the Streets Frame the Code

The code of the streets represents the ideology of the streets. According to several of the men, this basic understanding works to produce an invaluable "foundational" survivalist philosophy. The code is considered to be the backbone of the streets, the final protection—the boundary that separates them from larger America. The code is not to be shared with those who are considered outsiders. In fact, the street community often shuns any fine expression or public translation of the code. *It is for that reason that any*

analysis rendered on the ideology or code of the street in this study will be done so from a general perspective. It is assumed by the streets that those who know or understand the code understand it because they are suppose to, while those who do not, are not suppose to. As noted in chapter two, the code actually goes back to the period of slavery as a communications survival technique that changes, evolves or adapts as a protective mechanism. The code has been observed in such activities as song, folk tales and humor. The streets often gauge persons on how connected they are with the community by how well they understand and use the code. According to the testimonies of these men, the code at an intensive pace rapidly shifts, adapts and evolves to stay ahead of the Middle and corporate American forces that seek to manipulate and control it. The code is ultimately responsible for the new styles of dress, street slang, rules for socialization as well as new ways of hustling that have been observed across space and time in the streets. Several gentlemen plainly note that some level of “order” has to be maintained in the streets so that business can be conducted. **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** discusses how the code represents for him a strategy or set of “rules” centered around a notion of economic survival that is ultimately grounded in the loyalty of his crew, friends and/or other members in the street that he is allied to.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): I see the code as, street code to me are rules that are made to be broken. Because everything that happens on the streets is basically illegal from everybody else's point of view, except for the kids who grow up on the street, you feel me.... like we don't look at it as just (simply) wrong doing, like you look at it, that's what niggas got to do to *survive*. Like the street code is basically you live with your niggas, you die with your niggas, you feel me... Like we all grew up together, it's like there ain't no splitting us up. You feel me. *We got to stick together for us to survive.* You feel me. Like no matter what, that's how we have to do it. That's what the code is to me. Like you just make what's due with the niggas around you. That's how you got to live. – *Resiliency*

First Dimension: Street Code Passed on From Older Street Generation

When asked how they learned and/or acquired an understanding of the code, all of the men supported this study's proposed first dimension of the ideology—that the code was passed on to them by an older generation of street persons. Specifically, they noted that given they were literally “born into the streets” or that they “grew up” in a street environment, in a “normal” kind of way, they absorbed the meanings of the code through their personal experience of the community.

Community Participants

Black Soul (29): It's like what you see around you. You know what I'm saying? I mean, and the code.. for an individual to develop cause is his environment. You know what I'm saying? *–Passed On*

Tommy (29): You look and learn.

Black Soul (29): You look and learn. You got to see what's going on. And then you got to develop that code for you, *so you can live to survive.* *–Passed On/Resiliency*

Slim (48): That, that, come along with growing up. Yeaah ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... Cause everybody don't have the same code, you know. People got different codes that they go by. *–Passed On*

High School Participants

Yasser: How were you all introduced to the code? Like how did you even come into it? Begin to understand it?

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): Because of where I live at. *–Passed On*

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Like we all done been around like all the drug dealing, everything's since we was little, you feel me. So, basically, like we get introduced to the code before you even realized you was introduced to the code. Like you just be, little playing about the shit. You feel me. Then you play with it. Then as you grow up, you tend to see like damn, “This shit is for real” [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... You start to open your eyes and look at it for what it really is. You feel me. So like damn you done grew up on this shit, that's all you know, so if all they know is the code. So you just live by the shit. You feel me. *–Passed On*

Second Dimension: Resiliency and the Code of the Streets

These data clearly supported the second dimension of the ideology proposed in this study in that the street code is implemented for economic survival and/or overall resiliency. The men note that the more one understands the code of the streets the more resilient he is generally considered.

Yasser: So do you think, so the code would be helpful if it was used? You think it would minimize the violence out there, minimize people getting locked up?

Tommy (29): It would create order. You know what I'm saying?

Slim (48): For the street. On the street, for the street order. Yeah, yeah.

Yasser: So, you think the better you know your code... the better you will survive out in the streets?

Group: Yeah, yeah, yup, yeah, right, right...

Slim (48): Yeah, if you know the street code.

Black Soul (29): It's the only way you are going to live. – *Resiliency*

Yasser: Do you think the streets would be safer, there'd be, for instance, less bodies (murder), less people getting locked up, if people had a better understanding of the code, or if the people used the code more often.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): *Hell, yeah. ... it'll be like less of a lot of things. Like because if everybody knew what they was getting into when they started the shit, like they probably wouldn't even mess with it, you feel me, because like a lot people wouldn't be messing with the drug game if they knew that shootings and killing and robbing and all that came with just hustling, you feel me. Because I don't think a lot of people would get involved.* –*resiliency*

Final Dimensions: Local Ideology vs General ideology

All of the men interviewed acknowledged that there were local and general

dimensions to the code of the streets. **Iceberg (16, 9th Grade)** compared and contrasted the hustling activities of Harlem, New York City to those of Paterson, New Jersey where he resides, as an example of the nuances of different street communities. He supposes that the drug dealing of the Harlem community is probably more aggressive than that of a Paterson. **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** who also resides in Paterson, New Jersey, tipped his hat off to Harlem but ultimately asserted that "... every ghetto is basically the same".

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Basically, *every ghetto is almost the same B, just everybody trying to live the easiest way they could just trying to get comfortable where they're at. That's like every ghetto...* So, I feel like yeah, that's what it is, like *every hood got a same code no matter which one it is ... you feel me* --General Ideology

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): *Like people in Harlem, like they're probably, you know what I mean, more aggressive to the shit...* say like if a custy come up to them and they want three bags, you know what I mean, and they're selling dimes (\$10 bags of narcotics, i. e. marijuana, "base", etc.), and they got like twenty-six dollars, feel me, they probably, you know what I mean, you'd probably get shot in Harlem over some shit like that. But niggas in Paterson, you come like yo, "Can I get three for twenty-five?" "Nah God (term of endearment), you got to get two more dollars" Feel me. You get that two more dollars, you've got it... --Local Ideology

Critical Reflections of the Streets by the Streets

It was apparent that critical reflections were part and parcel of the ideology of the streets. These men spoke almost as if they had an unconscious drive to tell the truth or be critical not only about such topics as racism, capitalism and the streets but also these men unguardedly posed sharp criticisms about themselves. Simply, they possessed an insatiable impulse, "to keep it real". It is important to note, that these men thought it was only fair for them or those who maintain a genuine relationship with the streets to pass judgment on the streets. These men also felt it was fair for them to critique segments of larger America (i. e. Middle America, corporate

America, white America, U. S. born African middle class, etc.) given their position of marginality.

There were at least two general criticisms by these men about themselves. The first, involved a discussion on what the men responded to as a growing “misguided” rage in the streets as a result of losing touch with the code. They felt with the increasing commercialization and/or popularization of the streets an influx of “wanna be’s” or “those who be frontin’” have come to the streets. One gentleman noted, “I mean some niggas, just do it, to do it. Feel me” while another said, “the grass sometimes is greener on the other side,” for those inauthentic persons who are attracted to the lifestyle.

Violating the Code: Community Participants

While the younger men recognized that the code is not being properly adhered to, the older men became impassioned when discussing how the code has not been appropriately upheld by many segments of the streets. They note how “snitching” or disloyalty has increased within recent times in their street communities. The older men raise concerns about what they perceive as a growing selfishness, an “it’s all about me” attitude in the younger segments of the streets. **Tommy (29)** notes how “violating code” or “snitching” on each other has led to the gratuitous incarceration and death of many men in the street community. According to both **Black Soul (29)** and **Tommy (29)** as a function of disloyalty adherence to the code is, “not as strong as it use to be”.

Yasser: ... How do you see the code?

Tommy (29): Not being stuck too, too damn good ... If they was sticking to it there would be a whole lot more brothers on the streets (and out of prison). *People violating the code running their mouth to the police send a whole bunch of people to jail. Running they mouth... breaking code gets a whole bunch of people killed.* But

beyond that, just the people don't.. *the real people that's out there (in the streets), they live by that. That's it. That's what they know.*

Black Soul (29): ... I don't think it's like strong....

Tommy (29): ... not as strong as it used to be....

Black Soul: like today, like it was in his day (Slim's) or my father's day, you know what I'm saying? Because, because *it (the code) was more of an understanding. We had more leaders out there to let the kids know what's going on. Since the leader's not there, the code hasn't been that strong. So if they (persons in the streets) get pissed with anything, "I'm telling. I ain't doing no twenty years for you. I ain't doing life for you"*.

Further, the older men speak of how teenagers in the streets have no real understanding of the code and how this lack of understanding has worsened the streets particularly amongst the younger populations. Specifically, it was noted that these younger men needed "more guidance".

Yasser: ... the younger like teenagers, high schoolers, you know, a lot of times people will say, you know, they get real wild. The younger crowd is a little bit more amp, you know what I'm saying? ... Do you think they are wilder than the older guys? ... Do you think they have a strong enough understanding of the code?

Slim (48): *Yeah, they got their own code now. They ain't got the code that we used to have when we was coming up, because as the world, the kids ain't like they used to be when I was coming up.* So they got their own different little codes and stuff now. Like this boy here (SP), stuff like, kids his age, I wouldn't know what the hell they be talking about when they be talking all that stuff. You know, they all have their little codes and stuff, you know.

Black Soul (29): I mean in a way it's like *they're adapting to an environment...*

Slim (48): Yeah.

Black Soul (29): ...but, *with no guidance.*

Slim (48): *With no guidance.*

Tommy (29): Yeah, because it's.. when I was coming up, you don't see an older lady in the street and disrespect her in any kind of way. But nowadays, you know what I'm saying, you see young kids out there doing shit that's just a hundred percent

disrespectful... It wasn't like that when I was coming up. *You don't disrespect your elders. But nowadays they don't have that good home training. Daddy is in prison. Mama is doing the best they can to do whatever. They just don't have it.*

The older men specifically note that the younger men are “wilder”, “angrier”, as well as more “ignorant” or reckless in the streets than they have been in some time.

According to **Black Soul (29)** there is “no one to tell them what’s up... no one is helping them”. Given the mass incarcerations and deepen inequality in the streets the presence of respected and insightful O. G.’s has dwindled.

Yasser: So would you agree that the younger guys are more wilder.. than some of the older guys?

Black Soul (29): Yeah. They’re *wilder, they’re angrier, and all that, because they have no guidance. ... No one to tell them what’s up... no one is helping them.*

Tommy (29): I wouldn't really consider it wilder. It's more like ignorance. Or they just don't know no better... I think it's just because the times.. *the times has changed, and you got to keep up with time*, you know. ... You know, *you got to take to the movie projector with no sound. And now you've got cam-corder with sound. So the time is moving on forward and see, you know, and the kids today it's moving on forward with the times.* So you just can't stop and stand still.

Family/Fathers: High School Participants-

A criticism particularly raised by the young men was the way the streets affected the role of the father or lack thereof in their own lives and other little boys’ lives, as well as other families. A number of the young men harbor a real resentment towards their fathers for not being in their lives. Specifically, many of the boys feel as that the streets is principally responsible for taking their fathers out of their lives. **D-Black’s (17, 11th grade)** description of the pain of a son whose father is street life oriented was emblematic of the sentiments of most of the men in this study. **D-Black (17, 11th grade)** talked about in the group interview how his only experience of his father was limited to him as a little boy observing his father go in and out of jail. He notes how this experience fostered a

severely strained relationship between the two of them. Several of the young men asserted that their fathers upon coming back into their lives expected if not “demanded” an authoritative role in their son’s lives. The young men resented this push of authority by fathers they did not know or recognize and ultimately felt their fathers had to “earn” the privilege of being authoritative. **Wah Benz (17, 11th grade)** speaks of the lack of respect that is granted to fathers who have abandoned or been separated from the family. He poignantly notes that, “A lot of fathers don’t get respect, right, because of their absence in their kid’s life. And you can’t just come into somebody’s life and try and be a father when they’re already.. they almost.. they could be father’s themselves, man.”

Iceberg (16, 11th grade) was the only young man to discuss his father in a positive light. The other three young men had negative criticisms about their fathers. Although **Iceberg (16, 11th grade)** noted that his father struggled financially, he asserted, however, that his father gave and did what ever he could do for him, “If I go to my father’s house, and I’d be like, ‘Daddy, I need ten dollars.’ If he ain’t got ten, but he got two, I got that two. Feel me. But if he only got fifty cent, I got that fifty cent. Whatever he got, he would give it to me, you know what I mean, just to make sure that I got something. You know what I mean?”

D-Black (17, 11th grade): ... *When I started to get older, feel me, he (his father) was like getting locked up back and forth? Feel me... I didn't really like see the nigga like that, feel me? I like just use to go with my mother to see him. Feel me. He came home and stay for a minute. I really wasn't close with that nigga, feel me. I was like how this nigga going to tell me what to do or some shit? ... you never did shit for me. How the fuck you going to tell me to do something?*

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): *A lot of fathers don't get respect, right, because of their absence in their kid's life. And you can't just come into somebody's life and try and be a father when they're already.. they almost.. they could be father's themselves, man.* Already went through puberty and everything. Now, the father just want to step into the limelight. Me, personally, *like I can't give my father as much respect as I'd*

would give him if he was there. Like when I was growing up in my different stages, like.. like my mother.. ... I never raise a hand to my mother, and she was there all my life. But like me and my father, we already got into it like two times because I feel like, damn, you wasn't there. You weren't watching me or nothing like that. I barely asked you for anything... I don't even have to ask my father for nothing, because he wasn't there when I was little. Feel me. I always tend to be like I'd go to my mother or whatever.

D-Black (17, 11 grade): To me, like *if you a father and missed his childhood... his child and stuff, you can't just come back to a relationship and like demand respect. You got, you know what I mean, to earn that. Feel me.* You can't just come back and get it. You're like sixteen, seventeen our mind is damn near set... Feel me. You're not going to come there and just change it like that.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Yeah, and we done been molded to what we're supposed to be when we grow up.

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): *Like me. I'd I always give my father respect, because like even when he wasn't there, whatever I asked him for, if he didn't had it, feel me?* Like he did something to get it for me. But like *he didn't just let me leave empty-handed. Feel me.* If I go to my father's house, and I'd be like, "Daddy, I need ten dollars." If he ain't got ten, but he got two, I got that two. Feel me. But if he only got fifty cent, I got that fifty cent. *Whatever he got, he would give it to me, you know what I mean, just to make sure that I got something.* You know what I mean? Like if my father would tell me to do anything, ... All right, you got that? ... *But like if he wasn't there, like he said, his father (D-Black & Wah Benz), then he could kiss my ass.*

Coping and Resiliency

4. To what extent can we begin to identify the more prominent or actual psychological and physical sites of resiliency used by street life oriented U. S. born African men?

The first two questions provided data indicating that low-income U. S. born African men in fact use or operationalize street life as a way to cope with the blocking of access to quality systems of opportunity. Whereas with the first two questions, data were more so ideological or theoretical in relation to the basic infrastructure of the streets, the third question, however, empirically targets the men's specific use of psychological and physical sites of resiliency. Put simply, *what and where are they?* It is important to note that it is the fusion of the psychological to that of the physical site whereby ultimate

resiliency can or will be established. It is imperative to remind the reader that the terms psychological and physical sites of resiliency represent the codified ideology and values taken by these men from physical site to physical site.

The men in this study offer several clear examples that demonstrate they in fact harbor particular psychological and physical spaces to make it day to day. They describe these designated spaces as the bedrock of a particular street brotherhood. These spaces are in fact what they control and have ownership over. These spaces represent their signature on the world. They are aware that others or outsiders want into their spaces, however, according to some of the men, passage through the streets is not given—it is earned.

Psychological Sites of Resiliency

Across both focus groups the men note they are using many of the same psychological codes as well as physical spaces as sites of resiliency. When asked to discuss their number one code of the streets, responses centered on notions of: (1) Masculinity (respect, economic and personal survival), (2), “Street Love”, (3) “No Snitching”, (4) “Keepin’ It Real” (honesty), (5) Loyalty, (6) The Community, (7) Family and (8) Dress Code.

It is clear from the interviews that the psychological site or code is more so understood and organized by the men through the mode of experience. The code of the streets is not necessarily understood by the men using the same conceptual logic as that of Middle or Upper Middle America. Literally, these men in many respects think about their realities very differently. Put simply, although it is a psychological site of resiliency its understanding and use is primarily experiential as opposed to some cognitive or other

kind of formal framing. Ironically, the psychological site itself can only be tapped into through the experience thus this provides a kind of boundary or border from outsiders. This notion or adaptive feature of the psychological site, in and of itself, is a testament to its resiliency. True understanding of the code or psychological space can only come through the experience not the articulation of its components.

It is important to note, that the use and experience of the psychological as well as physical spaces of resiliency are oftentimes deeply informed by the geographical location of the streets. Specifically, the activities that the men of this study engage in are deeply influenced by a particular North-Eastern low-income urban neighborhood way of doing things. Each region or community in the United States, street or otherwise, carries with it, its own political, judicial and socioeconomic opportunity systems. Such systems are extremely influential with regard to the manifestations of street life activities. The men often spoke about the uniqueness of where they reside—they themselves noted that they have their own way of doing things in the streets that is very different than other street life oriented U. S. born African communities in other parts of the country.

Contextualizing the men's responses from this geographical perspective will greatly inform the reader's logic. The men at great length discussed the importance of loyalty as a way of solidifying their resiliency.

“Snitching”, a man's honor and street love were among the more prominent codes or values endorsed by the men in this study. According to the men, telling the police on other street members is considered one of the most vile violations that could be committed in the streets. The men assert within recent times the streets have been riddled with a deeper concentration of “rats” and/or police informants. This is upsetting to the

men in that their code of ethics, their “foundation”, is more successfully being challenged and comprised in favor of the interests of larger power and opportunity structures. The men are clear with the notion that honor in the streets may require accepting serious consequences. According to one gentleman, you must be fully prepared to die with your “homey” if the opportunity should present itself. Ultimately, honor means that you will never forget; that you will always try your very best to assist your people or friends or those who were genuine to you. Dishonorable persons are often regarded as “sell outs” who are generally non-white former residents who have willingly relinquished their ties to the community in favor of personal gain.

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): Like if one persons out this group make it out the hood (inner city community), you feel me, and the other three still here and *that person that made it out don't come back and show them no love. He a sell out! Feel me. He like, not even of part of us no more.* And then, like another street code, you know what I mean, if you do something illegal, you know what I mean, with a group of people, and you're the only one that get caught, *you're not supposed to tell! But yet, there are people still getting locked up and a lot of people running their mouth. Feel me. Niggas calling cops, on their right hand man knowing he got bricks (large quantities of heroin or cocaine) ... stashed in his house or something, feel me.* What you going to call the cops on your man for and you all making money together, because he got a Benz and you got a Civic. *–Loyalty/Snitching*

Let's take a closer look at how the men organize a particular psychological site that is grounded in the values or intersections of street love, respect and community. These seemingly separate constructs in fact all work to produce a particular psychological site or code in the men. It is important to note, this particular psychological site was foundational in how the men thought about the streets and their specific role in the streets. Specifically, the men in this study largely used this intersectional psychological site as their guiding philosophy in the streets. One gentleman talked of how this particular site ensures respect of the people and “creates... community”. According to

Slim (48) there are many in the streets who are experiencing some of the most egregious forms economic poverty. The signs of hardship are so apparent. You can see suffering in the people's skin; in the tint of their eyes or teeth; in the gestures or movements of their bodies all the way to the clothing on their weary bodies. **Slim (48)** asserts the street code forces you hold on to mores—it even makes you respect those who are “raggedy and tore up” or economically struggling. He raises this point to inform the interviewer and larger audience that there are a lot of reasons to make fun of someone residing in the low rungs of the streets. Their conditions in many instances are truly that bad. However, the streets overall and the men in this study frown on such behavior and instead promote notions of street love, respect and community.

Black Soul (29): ... that code it's like, it's like the root I would say, you know what I'm saying, if you stick to it long enough, it will grow. It'll become a foundation. And then, from there, it creates like *a small community*. You know, keeps growing and growing to our own thing. You know what I'm saying, but if *that code is tampered with in any way eventually it's going to just... it's fragile, it's going to go left to the right. Somebody's got to stay there and protect it. Make sure it eats. You know what I'm saying?* But nobody's there. So, this is what's happened. This is the effect. It's all about me right now. I got to eat right now... forget everybody else. The code is not like that. I don't think the code is like that. —*Community/Street Love*

Slim (48): *And respect of other people is something and it's out in the streets. You know, like me, I walk out there as though I respect everybody out there. That's street love.* That's my love I'm giving back to the.. I'm not going to look at you because you're raggedy and tore up and you know, and stuff like that, you know. I'm still going to respect you ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... you just might be going through a problem or a stage of life or something like that. You just got to stick yourself together, you know, and if I could help you I will help you. And I ain't got nothing either, you know, but ... [SEVERAL PEOPLE SPEAKING] ... —*Respect/Street Love*

Black Soul (29): ... *and not going to see you differently cause you ain't got nothing.* That's what's so important about *street love*. You know what I'm saying. *So I respect you. For you. For your mind, for who you are. Not for what you got.* —*Street Love*

For these men their code or the way they analyze the world is of great value to them. It is this code that strings and connects these men communally. It gives them a baseline understanding of each other and their overall circumstances. According to **Black Soul (29)** this code, at all costs, has to be preserved, “nurture it and protect it”. He is very clear of the value that it has for him and others like him. He clearly notes that the code offers the advantage of a “small community”. He is, as well as all of the men to varying degrees are specifically concerned that the honor or integrity of the code is being dishonored by the streets.

Physical Sites of Resiliency

The psychological notions or sites of resiliency previously noted theoretically drives or guides the practical manifestations observed in these physical spaces. Put another way, places like “the block” or the barbershop are spaces guided by particular philosophies or ideologies. The data clearly reveal that their activities and where they choose to manifest those activities are consciously thought out and sought after. These physical spaces are deeply informed by the philosophies carried within them just as the philosophy is equally informed by the physical space. The two sites (psychological and physical) work and play off of one another to produce a kind of fusion or site of resiliency. When asked to note the physical spaces in which the streets could be found responses included: (1) “The crib” or inside someone’s home, (2) the “block” or street corner, (3) “number hole” (illegal gambling facility), (4) local bar, (5) prison, (6) the club, (7) block parties, (8) the larger community, (9) school, (10) basketball court, (11) summer basketball tournament (e. g. Rucker tournament of Harlem), (12) local house parties, (13) barbecues or cook-outs, (14)

talent shows, (15) the local park as well as (16) the church or Mosque. These physical spaces serve a number of different functions for the men. It is clear that there is no single use for any one of the spaces. The participants in this study use these particular physical spaces for at least four reasons: (1) private, (2) social, (3) economic and (4) communal interests.

Interestingly enough, street life oriented men in this study extended examples of spiritual sites as key physical spaces to find street life oriented U. S. born African men. It is important to note that these men in general as well as several of the men interviewed for this study regard spiritual centers as sites of growth and development. Two of the young gentlemen from high school offer a profound example of the intersection of “the block” and the church.

Yasser: Well, what are some of the things that people from the churches, what are they doing out there (on the block)?...

Killer (17, 10th grade): One time they came out there *on the block...*

Iceberg (16, 9th grade): *They had like church services. Feel me. With the microphones and streets blocked up, and they had the preacher and he just stood up there and giving a sermon for like four or five hours. Feel me. Everybody was just sitting around, talking about the lord.*

Yasser: Were the hustlers on the block... listening?

Killer (17, 10th grade): *A lot of hustlers, they respect it!* You know what I mean. Hustlers from the hood be like, “I’m going to give this man his respect or this lady her respect to say what she got to say”.

Wah Benz (17, 11th grade): Like me, personally, *everybody who hang out on the block knows I go to church every Sunday, you feel me. Like me I go to church every Sunday still. I do it myself, you feel me, but like I ain't been baptized yet. I'm not going to.. me, personally, I refuse to get baptized till I stop doing wrong and until I do right. But I still go to church and I praise God... I might come out and do the same bad shit, but like I'm trying. I'm trying.*

This passage points out how persons from the church understood how physical space is vital to the basic dynamics of the streets. According to the young men, the church persons were able to successfully take over their physical space temporarily given that their intentions were genuine. Ultimately, the church's intentions were not about removing and/or stopping the guys from their activities. Not that the church condones these men's behavior, but the church as any other person in the local community clearly understands why the men engage in criminal activities. It is not difficult to understand that most of these men are strikingly economically impoverished and for that reason they engage in street life activities. According to the young men in the group interview, it was on this day that an understanding between the church and the guys on the block was struck. Specifically, this understanding involved a seed in the form of prayer to be placed not only in the men on the block but also a prayer to be placed in their physical space so as to literally bless a space imbued with wicked or evil intentions.

CHAPTER VII: DISCUSSION

“We invite you to, somethin epic, y'all know?
 Well we hustle out of a sense of, hopelessness
 Sort of a desperation—
 Through that desperation, we 'come addicted
 Sorta like the fiends (substance abusers) we accustomed to servin' (sell illegal drugs to)
 But we feel we have nothin' to lose
 So we offer you, well, we offer our lives, right,
 What do you (larger or middle America) bring to the table?”

Jay Z (1996)
“Can I Live”

“... the U. S. educational system works to justify economic inequality and to produce a labor force whose capacities, credentials, and consciousness are dictated in substantial measure by the requirements of profitable employment in the capitalist economy... An understanding of U. S. education, however, requires that we know more than the dominant economic effects of schooling and the structural mechanisms which produce these effects.” *Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis (1976)*

African men, and in particular low-income U. S. born African men, have historically as well as presently been grossly feared and overpathologized. This fear and pathologization of U. S. born African men heightens when the public at large and academic circles consider their behavior in relation to street life. Because of the very complicated set of social circumstances in which these men sit, they have found a space called street life that works to shape a vibrant sense of resiliency. More specifically, street life is a space of resistance, comfort and fortitude developed by U. S. born African men to move and negotiate through the throes of a racialized twenty first century form of capitalistic slavery.

It is imperative that we seek unconventional means to address the various issues present in street life; means that focus on the redistribution of our nation's social, political and economic resources as opposed to the pathology of the person. Fortunately,

there have been *some* scholars dedicated to producing these non-conventional explanations in the literature, connecting theory and research with social change. However, these arguments are few and far between.

The tale of the street life oriented U. S. born African male continues to be a popular platform not only throughout Middle America but also throughout the halls of the Academy. The streets are a draw for intellectuals—they have always been, especially those parts of the streets walked by low-income U. S. born African men. Whoever can tell this story—whoever can convincingly control his epistemology essentially would control a major artery of social science research. Harnessing the greater story and mystique of these men simply is good collateral in corporate America. Think about it. What other population do you know who commands such great levels of disrespect and disdain from the same oppressors who oftentimes give equal attention to emulating these men and greater culture's identity, customs and/or practices (i. e. dress, style, music, tanning, etc.). The irony strewn throughout his story is enormous.

Put simply, this man in many respects is the physical and meta-physical embodiment of resiliency. He has learned how to survive in some of the most vicious circumstances imaginable. And through it all, his resiliency has taught him how to endure the relentless and inevitable impositions of disease, economic and educational poverty, prison and death—all intentionally designed to assassinate his image, mind, spirit and physical body. Four hundred years later, *we still find him here kicking and swinging—just as rebellious and non-compliant as he was on the slave ship and plantation.* Although caught in a frenetic competition over this man's epistemology,

social scientists in all their intellectual fervor and sophistication cannot still understand him and/or make quality recommendations that effectively work for this population.

This man's struggles for independence, freedom, equal opportunity are oftentimes dismissed or largely ignored by persons in position of authority. Instead he is left to survive amongst the ranks of homicide and squalid economic poverty in a community where half of the children are born into economic poverty and horrid health conditions. His best chance to cash in on an opportunity—to feed himself and family, sadly enough is not school or a traditional legal job but instead in the supposed land of the free—the land of opportunity his best options are Rap music, the greater entertainment industry, sports, the frontlines of the military and/or the streets. With all this death, confusion and chaos at the center of his life where does he turn? Throughout history this has been his story—his dismal rhythm in the United States.

As noted in Appendix I and Chapter 2 of this dissertation, the indomitable history of his street orientation can be observed in 3 distinct periods: (1) First Period: U. S. African Slavery 1619 - 1865, (2) Second Period: The 1st Phase of Urbanization for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men 1866 – 1929, and (3) Third Period: The 2nd Phase of Urbanization for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men - 1930 – 1965.

The third period between 1930-1964, is where we can witness the continued migration of these men into the Northern regions of the United States principally in search of economic opportunity during an extraordinarily tough economic period in U. S. history. Specifically, it is in the this period where we can observe the first wide spread organization of street life oriented U. S. born African men particularly as a function of such events as the Great Depression, World War II and the Civil Rights Movement. The

culmination of these three periods in combination with a controversial national report written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan on the state of low-income U. S. born African men and the larger family would usher the streets in riveting fashion into this current fourth era.

The streets during the 1970's largely were characterized as the cocaine and disco age. Also, many veterans were returning home from the infamous Vietnam War with serious heroin addictions, which inevitably contributed to increasing street activities and the rise in prison rates. Famous street authors of this period were such persons as Donald Goines and Iceberg Slim while the film industry, were inundated by the likes of Foxy Brown and Dolemite. The 1980's were a springboard for street life oriented Hip-Hop music, Reganomics, and a crack era that is still wielding a special kind of hell on inner city communities.

Sadly enough, many of our communities today look and act like our communities did in the late eighteen hundreds. Our communities today are struggling with the same economic and educational problems. Very little has changed in our schools. Just as they do today, schools during the second period struggled with resources, truancy, school violence and drop-out rates. Much of our historical experience in this country has been our contemporary experience. Today we can find just as much death, confusion and chaos as well as manipulation and corruption in our communities as we did in the first and second period. Consistent throughout the four eras is that a significant segment of low-income U. S. born African men have systematically and blatantly been dismissed, humiliated, disrespected, used as scapegoats, undereducated, immersed in economic poverty, forced to acquire a street life orientation and incarcerated. In the context of the

United States these men have always been a slave or as one man in the study refer to, “cattle”. The response and/or coping mechanism of a street life orientation by this segment of the African Diaspora has been just as consistent across space and time as the social structural problems these men are mired in. Whether in the form of a Maroon, the old gangs of Chicago and New York, Bloods, Crips, Vice Lords, Gangster Disciples, Black Panthers, The Nation of Islam or SNCC, the streets to varying degrees—for better or for worst has always visibly represented its identity.

Summary of Research Questions

Significant quantitative and qualitative evidence was provided for the first research question, *to what extent can we document the social psychological attitudes of U. S. born African men in and out of high school towards educational and economic opportunities in the United States?* Specifically, both data sets firmly supported an *intergenerational* trend that cuts across the street life oriented U. S. born African men in this study particularly on notions of opportunity. Overall the men in this study hold negative or pessimistic attitudes about accessing traditional sources of opportunity in the United States. These men clearly do not feel as if they are wanted to be willing participants in this democratic system. More specifically, the men feel as if they are closed off or blocked from traditional economic and educational sources of opportunity. Results demonstrate that the men overwhelmingly feel under-prepared for college or a quality job after high school. Many of the men interviewed in this study noted a particularly strained relationship between them and teachers or other school officials. The men interviewed noted in plain terms they are disrespected by teachers. In fact, the men commented that they more so feel their high school experience has prepared them

for a street life orientation or even prison than it has prepared them for traditional outlets. While the high school students were more optimistic about their overall opportunity, both sets of men were very suspicious of the purpose of school. Interestingly enough, quantitative results confirmed that positive attitudes toward economic opportunity or one's relationship to money is very predictive of positive attitudes toward learning. Money matters! For so long academics, conservative and liberal alike, have argued that academic motivation has very little to do with money or economic resources—that what we see in the schools in the inner cities has very little to do with resources than it has to do with the efforts of the individual child. This result strongly challenges that intellectual assertion. Further, as the men became older their attitudes toward opportunity increasingly became more negative. This in many respects makes sense given that it is usually the older guys in the streets that control, run, have more invested in the streets as well as have more seniority in the streets. It would make more sense that their attitudes are more pessimistic or realistic toward traditional sources of opportunity given that they generally have more of a stake in the streets. With regard to the second research question, *how do street life oriented U. S. born African men frame essential notions of street life*, the men's testimony strongly supported the notion that street life for low-income U. S. born African men represents an ideology centered around personal and economic survival. Personal or *emotional* survival emerged in the data as notions of "street love" or male and communal bonding. Examples of *street love* ranged from spending quality time with your "homey" or "nigga" to organizing community events such as block parties or basketball tournaments. Examples extended for *economic survival* generally ranged from selling narcotics or generating income through illegal

activities to engaging in physically harmful behavior such as assault or murder. Further, the men in defining or framing notions of street confirmed a totality to the experience. The manifestations of a street life orientation are many. Variation or degree of a street life orientation can shift in a person or individual across the life span as well as in the group.

The high school participants' notions of the streets reflect a dual totality of "heaven and hell". In the minds of these young men it makes sense to risk ones life or freedom in pursuit of necessary resources—it is noble to survive and provide at extreme costs. The older men saw street life more so as an ideological way of life. Specifically, the older men were more apt to speak of the integrity or morality ironically associated with the lifestyle. Nonetheless, In the face of extreme economic poverty all of the men interviewed in this study felt it was logical if not intelligent to engage in criminal activities as a means to economically survive.

Further, a particular kind of *street masculinity* emerged in the data. A content analysis revealed three dominant themes to have emerged in the focus groups in relation to the notion of economic survival as connected to the masculinity of street life oriented U. S. born African men: (1) attaining the role of provider, (2) receiving/being denied respect and (3) negotiating masculine identity. Notions of masculinity play an integral role in the construction of a street life orientation as a site of resiliency amongst low income U. S. born African men. Most of the men offered stories of how they craft or construct their masculinity in the face of blocked educational and economic opportunities. Feeling the pressure to produce for self and loved ones, a number of these men engage in street life activities to simply provide. It important to note, that all of the

men in this study have experienced grave bouts of economic poverty throughout their lifetime. According to them, broad social systems as well as local relationships widely alienate, exploit and exclude them from nearly all of its benefits. In contrast to the academic and popular focus on hyper-sexuality, it would behoove investigators and service providers to learn, acknowledge and recognize the assumptions of masculinity lived and narrated by these men. In developing a richer sense of the many biases of their masculinity, investigators and service providers will prove to be more successful in reaching them. To reach them, any level of analysis and intervention requires the incorporation of how they organize meaning around their notion of being a man or a “King”—a respected and recognized man in his community.

Significant evidence was provided for the third research question, *to what extent can we begin to identify the basic properties or tenets that form a street life value system or ideology in U. S. born African men in and out of high school?* All of the men interviewed in this study ultimately characterized or framed street life as an ideology. For many of the men, the ideology of the streets was “foundational” to the organizing capacity of the street community. Further, the proposed three components of the street ideology was supported in the data as well: (1) the code of the streets is inter-generationally passed on; (2) the deeper the understanding of the code the more resilient the man is considered; (3) there are *localized* and more *generalized* notions of the ideology.

It is important to note that the code of the streets represents the ideology of the streets. The men passionately spoke about how the code provides a particular kind of “order” and balance—that the ideology ultimately serves as a system of checks and balances in the streets. Specifically, the code is a survivalist philosophy considered to be

the backbone of the streets that separates them from larger America. The code is not to be shared with those who are considered outsiders.

Furthermore, it was apparent that critical reflections were part and parcel of the ideology of the streets. To be more specific, an additional ideological component that emerged in the data was the opportunity to be critical. The men in this study felt compelled to be truthful, boldly honest or critical about their conditions and/or orientation so much so that they even had staunch criticisms about the streets. It is important to note, that these men feel as if the streets or those closely allied or connected to the streets (e. g. loved ones, etc.) are the only persons that can justifiably critique the streets. Critique from this perspective is considered to be more genuine. Critique from outsiders are generally not received well and generally considered to be not constructive. Some concerns raised by the men about the streets included criticisms about the current fad or commercialization. Several of the men feel as if there is an influx of men into the lifestyle for the wrong reasons. Specifically, the men spoke of those who are “frontin’” and how this group of men generally makes the streets more difficult to operate in. Those street members who are considered not to be “real” generally are thought of as persons “who make the block hot” or who bring undue attention to the streets given that they are perceived to not have no understanding of the code. Further, many of the men feel the integrity of the streets is seriously being challenged. Two key issues were raised with respect to integrity. The first, “snitching” to the police, is considered by the men to have increased within recent years. Snitching was thought of by the participants in this study to be an extremely low or disloyal act. The second integrity based issue involved a concern by the men about street life oriented men taking better care of their children.

The older and younger men acknowledged how significant numbers of street life oriented U. S. born African men need to do a better job at being fathers. While the men noted that all street life oriented fathers are not negligent and the issues with these men is always complicated, they believed that more numbers of them, nonetheless, could be more effective at fatherhood.

Qualitative data supported the fourth and final question, to what extent can we begin to identify the more prominent or actual psychological and physical sites of resiliency used by street life oriented U. S. born African men? This question was more concerned with how, what and where the street life ideology is being used. More specifically, analysis revealed that the men were using street life as a site of resiliency. The men declared several distinct psychological and physical sites of resiliency. Across both focus groups the men note they are using many of the same psychological codes and physical spaces as sites of resiliency. When asked to discuss their number one code of the streets, responses centered on notions of: (1) Masculinity (respect, economic and personal survival), (2), "Street Love", (3) "No Snitching", (4) "Keepin' It Real" (honesty), (5) Loyalty, (6) The Community, (7) Family and (8) Dress Code. When asked to note the physical spaces in which the streets could be found responses included: (1) "The crib" or inside someone's home, (2) the "block" or street corner, (3) "number hole" (illegal gambling facility), (4) local bar, (5) prison, (6) the club, (7) block parties, (8) the larger community, (9) school, (10) basketball court, (11) summer basketball tournament (e. g. Rucker tournament of Harlem), (12) local house parties, (13) barbecues or cook-outs, (14) talent shows, (15) the local park as well as (16) the church or Mosque. These

physical spaces serve a number of different functions for the men. It is clear that there is no single use for any one of the spaces.

Future Directions

There were several limitations in this study, that could be addressed or some new directions pursued in future research interested in building on this study's theoretical, methodological and empirical findings. First, this study presents, what I believe is a great opportunity and call for much needed psychometric work. There should be a push for advanced psychometric work or scale development on a number of constructs geared towards and with these men. Specifically, a more developed opportunity scale for this population would make for a great contribution to this area of inquiry. One of the shortcomings of this study was that while the larger opportunity scale and educational subscale panned out strongly, the economic subscale rendered weaker results and thus was less reliable. Although results found in this study using the economic subscale is extremely informative, given the literature has very little to no studies that have actually observed this construct in survey form in an in vivo population, results based on this subscale, nonetheless, should be taken with caution. Second, more and deeper theory testing should be conducted using a sites of resiliency (Payne & Brown, in press) theoretical conceptualization. In fact, I would suggest future research agendas to pursue separate studies that solely focus either on the physical sites of resiliency or studies that strictly examine the psychological sites of resiliency. It would be of great value to the field if social scientists were to theoretically, methodologically and analytically figure out rigorous ways to get inside these two dimensions without being intrusive or invasive. For instance, it would be a nice contribution to this area of inquiry if future studies could

document more deeply, the contours of the block, crack house, dope house, basketball court, or barbershop to name a few spaces. Third, more research is needed on understanding the school-to-prison pathway noted by the men as well as a similar study on women and the streets. Fourth, future community studies should consider a larger design. Potential community designs, for instance, should consider pursuing a regional, city or state studies of inner city communities (i. e. North New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey or New Jersey inner city communities, etc.). The Street Life Project in many respects proved this “sensitive” population are willingly open to participate in research endeavors. In retrospect, it was determined that longer survey packages can and should be used even with this fleeting and/or very unstable population in a community setting. Another suggestion determined from this study is community researchers can get further with this population if they genuinely think out quality incentives for potential participants. Such incentives, in fact, go a long way to developing trust and repertoire with this particular variant of the inner city community. Fifth, methodological studies should be conducted specifically with inner city communities and/or with this population of the community. Multiple methodological strategies specifically should be empirically tested to gather in cooperation with the community a set of appropriate methodological strategies to conducting research in these communities. A number of the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study was done so with and from family, friends and loose associates. Ultimately, I would argue that it would be very difficult to collect the amount of quantitative and qualitative data this study did in an active community sample independent of knowing the people of that community. In other words, it would be next to impossible to collect serious levels of data from an authentic active street life

population without their being a firm understanding of the researchers' relationship to that community. It is important to note that while some might critique the results of this study given my relationship to many of the participants as well as the larger communities in which the study operated out of, it is important to note that the results of this work parallel many of the fundamental arguments found in the non-traditional literature (Anderson, 1994; Anyon, 1997; Dawson, 1994; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Evans & Taylor, 1995; Fagan, 1989; 1990; Ferguson, 2000; Fine & Weis, 1998; Fox, 1985; Gordon, et al., 1995; Gordon & Song, 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Spencer, 1995; Tolleson, 1997; Valentine, 1978; Ogbu, 1985, 1991; Patton, 1998; Peterson, 1998; Kelley, 1994; Wilson, 1996). Specifically, the findings in this study speaks back to Ogbu's (1985, 1991) and Tolleson (1997) notions of survival as well as Dance (2002) and Ferguson's (2000) framing of school based street violence in low-income U. S. born African boys. In addition, this dissertation is an extension of these non-traditional scholars work in that this study in part examines in street life oriented men the generational effects of a deindustrializing economy and federal retreat from anti-racist policies.

Methodological, Theoretical and Ethical Concerns for Studying, Writing and Creating Policy for the Streets

There has been, for some time, a dissenting but growing voice in the literature around issues of methodology and practical interventions as it relates to discussions of resiliency and coping on street life oriented U. S. born African men. Specifically, non-traditional researchers have begun to reframe explanations and methods for studying street life behavior. Alternative explanations and/or methodological suggestions include

better accounting of the influence of the developmental stage or age (Bowman, 1989; Burton et al., 1996; Gooden, 1989; Gordon & Song, 1994; Majors & Billson, 1992; Miller, 1958; Payne & Brown, in press; Pe-Pua, 1999; Twine, 2000; Watt & Stenson, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997) as well as the repositioning of street life behavior as, in part, evidence of resistance.

Furthermore, it is my firm position that investigators interested in the study of street life oriented U. S. born African men ground their efforts or work through explicitly addressing four core concerns that need to be considered when doing research or creating policy for these men: (1) *Variability*—it is imperative to account for within-group variation as opposed to assume the men to be a homogenized population. The street life experiences of U. S. born African men are complexly diverse. It is still too easy in the social science literature and popular media overall, for the term *street life oriented “Black” male* to conjure up one-dimensional impressions or stereotypical images of his lived experiences. There is extreme diversity with this population ranging from and between race/ethnicity, culture, status in the streets as well as local political climate, geographical location and/or street customs (Curry & Spergel, 1992; Fagan, 1989, 1990; Gottfredson, McNeil & Gottfredson, 1991); (2) *Phenomenology*—phenomenological approaches are extremely useful in exploring issues in street life oriented U. S. born African men. In a society that typically silences, ignores and/or renders the concerns expressed by these men as essentially unimportant, phenomenology then steps into allow the men’s portrayal of their own experiences to drive a study. One benefit from using such an approach is that the men will then observe that their ideas and experiences are genuinely respected. Respect or repertoire, is key in establishing a relationship with

persons who come from this perspective of life. Phenomenology joins Participatory Action Research (PAR) in that participants' perspectives shape the theoretical framework of the overall paper, study and/or project (Deiner, Sapyta & Suh, 1998; Fine, et al., 2001, 2002; Levitt, Selman & Richmond, 1991; Payne and Brown, in press); (3) *Research Positionality*—research positionality is inextricably linked to the phenomenological argument just noted. Simply, researchers have to do a better job at recognizing their positionality in a study and how that positionality directly and deeply influences theory, methodology, analysis, outcomes as well as programmatic/policy development (Diener, Sapyta & Suh, 1998; Dunier, 1992; Gordon & Song, 1994; hooks, 2000; Lykes, 1994; Massey, Cameron, Ouellette & Fine, 1998; Ouellette & DiPlacido, in press; Payne, 2001; Payne & Brown, in press; Taylor, 1976; Wilson, 1996; Woodson, 1933/1990).

Researchers often write and speak as if their positionality has relatively very little to do with what street life participants say in interviews or write on surveys.

It is important for scholars to better understand how the perspectives and value systems we carry in life influence the theoretical judgments we make in our research. The task for researchers is not to see this influence as something that will undermine the research enterprise but to instead see it as a natural function or limitation of the overall human perspective. At best, we are equipped to only think and interrogate through our perspectives. We cannot think independent of them; and (4) *Social Structural Analysis*—Non-traditional researchers in a search to provide better theoretical conceptualizations for this population have realized that theorists will at some point have to provide more rigorous analysis that better incorporates the affects of economic poverty in the lived experiences found in low-income U. S. born communities (Anyon, 1997; Austin, 1989;

Barret, 1993; Bourgois, 1995; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Dawson, 1994; Fine & Barreras, 2001; Ferguson, 2000; Gordon & Song, 1994; Gregory, 1994; Hare & Castnell, 1985; Jagers & Watts, 1997; Katz, 1995; Kelley, 1997; Krisberg, 1974; Marable, 1992, 1983/2000; Marx &Engles, 1884/1998; Myers, 2000; Payne & Brown, in press, Payne, 2001; Peterson, 1998; Summ & Fogg, 1990; Tolleson, 1997).

There are at least two levels to this particular methodological critique. The first, concerns researchers more explicitly incorporating a social structural analysis in theoretical and methodological formulations, even formulations that are phenomenological by design. The second is that researchers need to more aggressively develop social structural analysis to more effectively move toward social structural policy. Theorists need to more honestly speak and write about the effects of social structures and/or systems and advance the policy and social change implications of their work.

Studies's that intentionally or unintentionally ignore these four concerns do an extreme injustice to the men in the literature.

Giving Back

There are a number of ways that this dissertation intends on giving back to the communities in which this study was conducted out of. Specifically, giving back in this study should be understood on two levels. Giving back should be observed with respect to the men who worked on the study as well as the larger community. The first level thus far has included encouraging and directly assisting the men with developing their own research/book projects; actively developing as a research team or collective future research/book projects or agendas; actively pressing and assisting one of the men with his

autobiography; assisting the men with applying for college; SAT prep; resume development; searching for undergraduate scholarships; as well as linking them with work on other active research projects. We also intend on turning the dissertation into a book. The second level will include us as a research team organizing block parties, holiday parties, a community barbecue as well as community give-aways for the youth in local areas in Paterson, New Jersey and Harlem, New York. We would like to and intend on speaking about our work inside these communities particularly in the schools and community centers of the neighborhoods previously noted. Also, we are in the midst of trying to figure out how to organize an academic conference right in the middle of the “block” in these two communities.

In closing, these men’s story’s is very telling of what is happening on the international scene. When we look at the historical as well as present conditions of various parts of South America, Africa, Middle East, Asia, Australia or New Zealand we can observe the vibrancy of street life activities in these places as well. This is not simply a low-income U. S. born African male phenomenon. Street life dates back or is as old as the Torah, Bible or Koran.

Throughout time, the corporate powers of the United States, whose traditions descend from the early white rulers of this country who descend from the old Western authorities of the world (i. e. England, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Germany, etc.) have been in a race to control institutionally or otherwise the people of the world. Global corporate powers have simply across time and space, pitted the people of the planet against each other. Such crude corporate traditions have been impressed upon the people

so much so that this insidious system has made the masses of the planet willing participants in their corporate enslavement.

It is important to note that although street life consists of negative activities the men concurrently hold in their minds as well as amongst each other serious criticisms about the streets and often seek alternative or constructive avenues to such a lifestyle. Just as persons who live outside their lifestyle can see the glaring moral implications so can these men; they to, more than anyone else I would argue, fully understand what drugs and violence can do to a community. In many respects, it is commonsensical for most persons regardless of their lifestyle or orientation to understand what these factors can do to a community. As surprising as it might seem, street life oriented U. S. born African men typically seek what most would think are spaces or activities antithetical to their image. You can oftentimes find these men organizing community events as well as seeking counsel from the church or other spiritual sources, elders and their parents (Payne & Brown, in press). The better question for social and larger psychology is *given that they understand the ramifications and moral implications of street life practices why do they still participate in such activities?; Why has this been a consistent response for oppressed peoples across the globe as well as throughout significant parts of human history?*

When placing these illegal activities within a larger socio-economic context, the perspectives of these activities are deepened. Many of the communities these men grow up in are struggling with mind numbing bouts of economic poverty. I would argue that most U. S. citizens are largely naïve, socially blind and/or unknowledgeable to how bad significant segments of the U. S. population are actually living; they would be surprised

to find that the egregious conditions found in these low-income communities are among the worse living spaces found not only in this country but on the planet. When contextualizing these activities within this unrelenting socio-economic reality it does not justify the activities of these men but it does better frame what they do. Most low-income U. S. born African communities in terms of physical structures and landscapes are simply desolate. In some of these communities you will find the most squalid or egregious forms of living known to the human experience. The economic poverty in some of these communities is that great! In these communities it is common to find low quality food, poor educational resources and haphazard health care. The hospitals like many of the schools are understaffed, overworked and overcrowded. A better understanding of his psychology can be reached if his lived experience or personal biography is seriously taken into account. In many of these men's homes family members are oftentimes struggling with substance abuse issues; the homes are low on food, adequate clothing and learning resources. Significant numbers of these men can be found entering the correctional system as little boys (e. g. group home, detention/juvenile center, etc). Growing up in this cut throat society with no genuine guidance or supervision; without adequate instruction regarding your people, history or life's purpose; growing up without proper education; without proper instruction regarding religion, spirituality and/or God is a tailor made death sentence or formula for the development of a street life orientation. If any person was simply left to the throes of a mostly imbalanced reality that person too if he or she expects to survive will eventually absorb and adapt to the rules of that reality. Just imagine if you were raised in the same psychological and physical conditions that these men are —*what would you do if you*

*were given his circumstance? Would it really be so easy to calm your anger and process the imbalance that you were immersed in?; would you so readily employ middle class standards as an appropriate method to address your oppression in this context as a means to cope and survive? We cannot as a society continue to turn a blind eye to these very prevalent and blaring conditions by continuing to act as if it is ok for the economically poor to live in this manner. These men need jobs! They need the opportunity to demonstrate their self worth to themselves and community. A lack of quality economic opportunity has played a significant role in the concentrated development of street life activities within recent times in low income U. S. born African men. For many of these men, it is extremely difficult to watch their little daughter, younger brother or other loved one to struggle in some of the most unmerciful economically impoverished conditions and do nothing. In most instances to no avail, these men feel compelled and obligated to figure out a means to deliver their family members out of such a strenuous situation. This value is exceptionally important to the individual and collective psyches of these men. Regardless to how reckless, random and/or wild the lifestyle may appear from the outside it is important to note that these men in many instances demonstrate an overwhelming commitment or loyalty to their loved ones and local community. In some respects this is surprising considering the socio-economic and political conditions that they have grown up in. Given how the larger socio-economic structural system we live in strongly encourages notions of individualism which inevitably produces in the people insidious sentiments of greed, jealousy and competition, one might think greater number of these men might be more apt to abandon their communities solely in favor of personal survival. *What drives**

significant numbers of these men to be loyal to a situation or community that has perpetually fostered him varying degrees of pain and problems? Quite explicitly, persistent concentrated economic poverty has had a devastating or dismal effect on the physical, emotional and spiritual development of the people inside these communities across time and space. However, in the face of these conditions significant numbers of street life oriented U. S. born African men have stood firmly in the winds of social injustice and oftentimes from the standpoint of the community are among the most genuine, influential and recognized pillars of these communities. These men often throw charities events including summer basketball tournaments, barbecues, give away free school supplies to the children, organize free holiday parties to name a few activities. Largely these men represent and provide to these communities hope as well as a concrete indication that someone cares; that within a moment of hell exist genuine notions of civility as manifested through the so-called “deviant” U. S. born African male. All of this works to increase the morale, strength and cohesion of the community. Specifically, these men contribute to the furnishing of a *communal resiliency*, which significantly makes it easier for residents to survive the throes of economic devastation.

I think as a field and as a people we would get further by better understanding the societal agents and/or processes that work to produce a street life orientation in the people than condemning the individual for their behavior. What we are seeing in these inner city communities in street life oriented U. S. born African men is prevalent in every low-income neighborhood across the planet. The problem is bigger than these men and indicative of much larger social-structural, corporate and/or global forces. For academics interested in this area of inquiry, it is important to note that these men’s lives are much

bigger than a publication, or an opportunity to bolster one's image, or a shot at tenure. When we talk/write about these men always remember that we are talking about human beings. It is time that we recognize his voice—his concerns as legitimate as opposed to problematic or annoying. When will his concerns be our concerns because he is dieing a very interesting death. We have to do more than just simply document and profit off of his pain. As one participant noted in his interview, our efforts should begin to amount to “real help” or “help more than one or two persons”. Oftentimes research projects are generally considered by the community as cursory and/or temporary help that generally works to the grand benefit of the principal investigator.

It is time for us to *demand* real opportunity for the populations we presumably serve. We have entered the age where social justice has to be better or more than something that is convenient. It must be real thus meeting or matching the definitions and standards of the people we serve. Put simply, ***if our version(s) of social justice does not satisfy the standards of our populations of interest, then it is not social justice!!*** It is time for us to aggressively gear our research agendas in such a manner that it turns over into tangible justice. Those of us who conduct community research must begin entering these communities in much larger numbers to develop a sustained and real relationship with these communities, as well as begin to place these communities in credible positions to openly reject or accept our work—and if need be to boycott us from their physical space.

In addition to the men themselves on some level, it is important to note that as a larger society and in particular academics interested in this area of inquiry, that we all share responsibility for the ultimate manifestation of criminal activities in these

communities. Marx and Engles (1848/1998) profoundly remind us in their classic book, *Communist Manifesto*, that the “socialistic bourgeoisie” (e. g. intellectuals/scholars, social workers, service providers, etc.) play a real role, knowingly or unknowingly, in the oppression of the people they serve. We uphold with our work policies, laws and/or a recognized systems of rationalization to economically impoverish, criminalize, and imprison specifically low-income U. S. born African men.

Although there are a number of beautiful intellectual deeds wielded from the efforts of the Academy to say the least, there are things that we do that are simply immoral. We need a new form of checks and balances in particular for community or social justice researchers. Ultimately at the end of the day this is how serious we will have to address this issue if we genuinely want to reduce homicide or “delinquency” rates—if we really want the negative activities of the streets to dissipate.

Table 1

**Exploratory Factor Analysis of a High School Sample of Street Life Oriented
U. S. Born African Boys' Attitudes Toward Opportunity (N= 4, 015)**

Forced/Restrained 2 factor Varimax Solution

	Factor I (Alpha = .83; 19% Variance)	Factor II (Alpha = .52; 25% Variance)
	Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity	Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity
<u>Attitudes Toward Educational Opportunity</u>		
Item 1 - In the US, a low income student has the same chance of a good education as a wealthy student.	.323	---
Item 2 - Everybody at my school has an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.	.419	--
Item 3 - My school (has) prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States.	.486	--
Item 4 - I care(d) a lot about my grades.	.333	--
Item 5 - If I mess(ed) up, educators in my school give (gave) me a second chance.	.477	--
Item 6 - My teachers really know (knew) and understand (understood) me.	.599	--
Item 7 - Teachers care(d) about students in my school.	.670	--
Item 8 - My teachers know (knew) their subject matter well.	.594	--
Item 9 - My teachers teach (taught) well, so that students understand (understood) the material.	.643	--
Item 10 - Teachers believe that all students can achieve high levels if they try.	.608	--
Item 11 - Students are (were) encouraged to take leadership positions in the schools.	.431	--
Item 12 - Most students in low level classes are receiving (received) an education equal to all others in the building.	.433	--
Item 13 - I am (was) very encouraged by my		

courses.	.386	--
Item 14 - Honors and AP students get treated with the same level of respect as all other students in my school.	.470	--
Item 15 - Most students in special education get the help they need.	.439	--
Item 16 - In my school, all students can achieve if they try hard.	.538	--
<u>Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity</u>		
Item 1 - Basically, people get fair treatment in the US, no matter who they are.	--	.320
Item 2 - The government doesn't really care what people like my family and I think.	--	.302
Item 3 - A student's wealth or poverty affects how teachers treat them .	--	.566
Item 4 - Money might be a problem that keeps me from going to college.	--	.591
Item 5 - My parents/guardians have a hard time paying for what we need.	--	.552
Item 6 - My school is not as good as it should be in providing equal educational opportunities for students of color.	--	.546

Table 2
Exploratory Factor Analysis of a Community Sample of Street Life
Oriented U. S. Born African Men's Attitude Toward Opportunity (N= 371)

Forced/Restrained 2 factor Varimax Solution

	Factor I (Alpha = .80; 20.5% Variance)	Factor II (Alpha = .44; 7.3%)
Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity--Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity		
<u>Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity</u>		
Item 1 -Everybody at my school has (had) an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.	.499	--
Item 2 -My school has (did) prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States.	.422	--
Item 3 -I care(d) a lot about my grades.	.432	--
Item 4 -If I mess(ed) up, educators in my school give (gave) me a second chance.	.603	--
Item 5 -My teachers really know (knew) and understand (understood) me.	.598	--
Item 6 -Teachers care about the students in my school.	.627	--
Item 7 -My teachers know their subject matter well.	.577	--
Item 8 -My teachers teach (taught), so that students understand (understood) the material	.530	--
Item 9 -Teachers believe(d) that all students can achieve high levels if they try.	.556	--
Item 10 - Students are (were) encouraged to take leadership positions in the school.	.537	--
Item 11 -Most students in low level classes are receiving an education equal to all others in the building.	.388	--
Item 12 -I am (was) very challenged by my courses.	.373	--
Item 13 -Honors and AP students get treated with the same level of respect as all other students in my school.	.433	--

Item 14-Most students in special education
get the help they need. .546 --

Item 15 In my school, all students can
achieve if they try hard .397 --

Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity

Item 1-Basically people get fair treatment
in the United States, no matter
who they are. -- .346

Item 2-Money might be a problem that
keeps me from going to college. -- .629

Item 3-My parents/guardians have a hard
time paying for what we need. -- .512

Item 4-In the United States a low-income
student has the same chance of a good
education as a wealthy student. -- .492

Table 3
Alpha Coefficients

Source	Attitudes Toward Overall Opportunity	Attitudes Toward of Educational Opportunity	Attitudes Toward Economic Opportunity
Opportunity Gap Project	.82	.83	.52
Total Sample Of Dissertation	.80	.80	.44
Street Life High School Sample	.76	.75	.35
Street Life Community Sample	.81	.81	.50

Table 4

Original Survey Items Alongside Adapted Survey Items

YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT THE UNITED STATES AND YOUR HIGH SCHOOL

(A)— <i>Original Version</i> (A)— <i>Adapted Version</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) <i>Original Version</i> —Basically people get fair treatment in the United States, no matter who they are. (1) <i>Same Item as above On Adapted Form.</i>	1	2	3	4
(2) <i>Original Version</i> —In the United States, a “low-income” student has the same chance of a good education as a “wealthy” student. (2) <i>Same Item as above On Adapted Form.</i>	1	2	3	4
(3) <i>Original Version</i> —We have the ability to change the government if we don’t like what it is doing. (3) <i>Same Item as above On Adapted Form.</i>	1	2	3	4
(4) <i>Original Version</i> —The government doesn’t really care what people like my family and I think. (4) <i>Same Item as above on Adapted Form.</i>	1	2	3	4

	<i>Table 4 Cont'D</i>			
<p>(5) <i>Original Version</i>—Everybody at school has an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.</p> <p>(5) <i>Adapted Version</i>—When I was in high school, every student had an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(6) <i>Original Version</i>—My school is not as good as it should be in providing equal educational opportunities for students of color.</p> <p>(6) <i>Adapted Version</i>—My high school was not as good as it should have been in providing equal educational opportunities for students of color.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(7) <i>Original Version</i>—My school has prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States.</p> <p>(7) <i>Adapted Version</i>—My high school prepared as well for college as any other student in the United States.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(8) <i>Original Version</i>—I cared a lot about my clothes or how I was dressed in high school.</p> <p>(8) <i>Adapted Version</i>—<i>Same Item as above on Adapted Form.</i></p>	1	2	3	4

	<i>Table 4 Cont'D</i>			
<p>(9) <i>Original Version</i>—I cared a lot about grades in high school.</p> <p>(9) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Same Item as above on Adapted Form.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(10) <i>Original Version</i>—Sometimes I don't voice my opinion cause I worry that my friends or classmates will criticize me.</p> <p>(10) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Sometimes I didn't voice my opinion in high school because I worried that my friends or classmates would have criticized me.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(11) <i>Original Version</i>—People in my school are comfortable talking about race and inequality.</p> <p>(11) <i>Adapted Version</i>—People in my high school were comfortable talking about issues of race and inequality.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(12) <i>Original Version</i>—Sometimes I just can't relate to the curriculum that is taught to me.</p> <p>(12) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Sometimes I just couldn't relate or identify with the curriculum that was taught me.</p>	1	2	3	4

Table 4				
Cont'D				

Indicate if the following are true for none, a few, most, or all of the adults (teachers, counselors, and administrators) in your high school.

	None	A Few	Most	All
<p>(13) <i>Original Version</i>—If I mess up, educators in my school give me a second chance.</p> <p>(13) <i>Adapted Version</i>—If I messed up in high school teachers were willing enough to give me a second chance.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(14) <i>Original Version</i>—My teachers really know and understand me.</p> <p>(14) <i>Adapted Version</i>—My teachers really knew and understood me.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(15) <i>Original Version</i>—Teachers care about the students in my school.</p> <p>(15) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Teachers, in general, cared about the students in my high school.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(16) <i>Original Version</i>—My teachers know their subject matter well.</p> <p>(16) <i>Adapted Version</i>—My teachers knew their subject matter well.</p>	1	2	3	4
(17) <i>Original Version</i> —My teachers teach				

<p>well, so that students understand the material.</p> <p>(17) <i>Adapted Version</i>—My teachers taught well, so that students understood the material.</p>	1	2	3	4
	Table 4			
	Cont' D			
<p>(18) <i>Original Version</i>—Teachers treat students differently in terms of their race/ethnicity.</p> <p>(18) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Same item as above on Adapted form.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(19) <i>Original Version</i>—Teachers believe that all students can achieve high levels if they try.</p> <p>(19) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Same item as above on Adapted form.</p>	1	2	3	4
<p>(20) <i>Original Version</i>—A student's wealth or poverty affects how teachers treat them.</p> <p>(20) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Same item as above on Adapted form.</p>	1	2	3	4

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<p>(21) <i>Original Version</i>—Students are encouraged to take leadership in the school.</p> <p>(21) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Students were encouraged to take leadership positions in my high school (e. g. Class President)</p>	1	2	3	4

	Table 4 Cont'D			
(22) <i>Original Version</i> —Most students in low-level classes are receiving an education equal to all others in the building.	1	2	3	4
(22) <i>Adapted Version</i> —Most students in low level classes (e. g. special education) received an education equal to all other students in the building.				
(23) <i>Original Version</i> —Honors and Advance Placed students think they are smarter than other people.	1	2	3	4
(23) <i>Adapted Version</i> —Same item as above on Adapted Form.				
(24) <i>Original Version</i> —Most students in special education get the help they need.	1	2	3	4
(24) <i>Adapted Version</i> —Same item as above on Adapted Form.				

(25) <i>Original Version</i> —I am very challenged by my courses.	1	2	3	4
(25) <i>Adapted Version</i> —I was challenged in high school by my school work.				
(26) <i>Original Version</i> —Honors and AP students get treated with the same				

<p>level of respect as all other students in my school.</p> <p>(26) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Honors and Advanced Placed students got treated with the same level of respect as all other students in my high school.</p>	<p>1</p> <p><i>Table 4</i></p> <p><i>Cont'D</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>(27) <i>Original Version</i>—Money might be a problem that keeps me from going to college.</p> <p>(27) <i>Adapted Version</i>—A lack of money, prevented me from attending college.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>(28) <i>Original Version</i>—In my school all students can achieve if they try hard.</p> <p>(28) <i>Adapted Version</i>—In my high school, all students could have achieved if they tried hard.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>(29) <i>Original Version</i>—My parents/guardians had a hard time paying for what we need.</p> <p>(29) <i>Adapted Version</i>—Same item as above on the Adapted Form.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>

Table 5			
Qualitative Coding Scheme/Data Analysis Process			
1st Phase of Qualitative Coding <i>Broad Domains</i>	2nd Phase of Qualitative Coding <i>General Themes/Codes</i>	3rd Phase of Qualitative Coding <i>Finer Codes</i>	4th Phase of Qualitative Coding Text <i>Codes/Language/Themes</i>
I. Education/School	A. School Authority	(1) Teacher, School Security/Police, (2) Principal, School Personnel, (3) (Dis) Respect, (4) Lack of Preparation, (5) Race/Culture, (6) Racism, (7) Inadequate Learning Resources and (8) Institutional Betrayal	(1) Student-Teacher/Personnel-Interaction, (2) Academic Preparation, (3) Historical Trends or Patterns/Intergenerational Attitudes
	B. School-To-Prison	(1) Hustling Activities in School/Economic Survival, (2) School as Physical Site of Economic Opportunity, (3) Physical Protection in School, (4) School Surveillance, (5) Institutional Collusion, (6) School Security/Police, (7) In/Out of School Suspension, (8) School Expulsion, (9) School Violence	(1) School-To-Prison, (2) Institutional Collusion, (3) School Violence

		<i>Table 5 Cont'D</i>	
	C. Educational Opportunity	(1) Inadequate Learning Resources, (2) Academic Preparation, (3) Institutional Betrayal	(1) Educational Opportunity, (2) Inadequate Learning Resources, (3) Academic Preparation, (4) Institutional Betrayal
II. Socio-Economic (Economic)	A. Economic Opportunity B. Economic Poverty C. Capitalism	The "System", Institutionalization	(1) Economic Opportunity, (2) Lack of School Resources, (3) Economic Poverty, (4) Intergenerational Attitudes/Historical Trends, (5) Poor Health Care
III. Social-Structual (Socio-Historical)	A. Police	Police (Disrespect, Brutality, Corruption, Interrogation)	(1) Historical Trends and Patterns, (2) Intergenerational Attitudes/Historical Trends
	B. Surveillance	(1) School Disciplinarians, (2) School Security, (3) Police	(1) Metal Detectors, (2) School Security, (3) Local Police Present In and Outside of School
	C. History D. Race/Culture E. Help		Intergenerational Attitudes/Historical Trends
IV. Attitudinal Affect	A. Fear B. Anger C. Disappointment D. Respect	(1) Fear, (2) Anger, (3) Disappointment, (4) Respect	(1) Fear, (2) Anger, (3) Disappointment, (4) Respect
V. Phenomenology	A. Resiliency	(1) Economic Survival/Illegal Activity, (2)	(1) Fundamental Notions of Street Life, (2) Economic Opportunity, (3) Economic

		Resistance <i>[Table 5 Cont'D]</i>	Survival, (4) Street Love: 1 st Level (Individual/Interpersonal/Familial) & Second Level (Community), (5) Street Energy, (6) Street Masculinity, (7) Critical Reflections of the Streets by the Streets
	B. Physical Site of Resiliency		Physical Sites: (The Block, The Crib (inside of someone's home), Number Hole (illegal gambling facility), Local Bar, Prison, The Club, Block Parties, The Larger Community, School, Basketball Court, Summer Basketball Tournament, Local House Parties, Barbecues or Cookouts, Talent Shows, Local Park, The Church or Mosque)
	C. Psychological Site of Resiliency	(1) Street Code/Ideology, (2) Ghetto Fab, (3) Street Life Ideology (localized & generalized ideology)	(1) Street Code: 3 Dimensions (2) Street Life Ideology: Localized Ideology & Generalized Ideology (3) Street Code/Ideology: (No Snitching, Street Love, Keepin' It Real (honesty), Loyalty, The Community, Family & Dress Code) (4) Economic Survival/Illegal Activity
	D. Street Love	(1) Interpersonal/Individual (2) Community, (3) Help/Assistance	(1) Interpersonal/Individual, (2) Community, (3) Help/Assistance

	E. Masculinity	<p><i>[Table 5 Cont'D]</i></p> <p>(1) Economic Provider, (2) Economic Survival, (3) Receiving/Being Denied Respect, (4) Negotiating Masculine Identity, (5) Community, & (6) Street Love</p>	<p>(1) Street Masculinity, (2) Respect, (3) Street Love, (4) Community</p>
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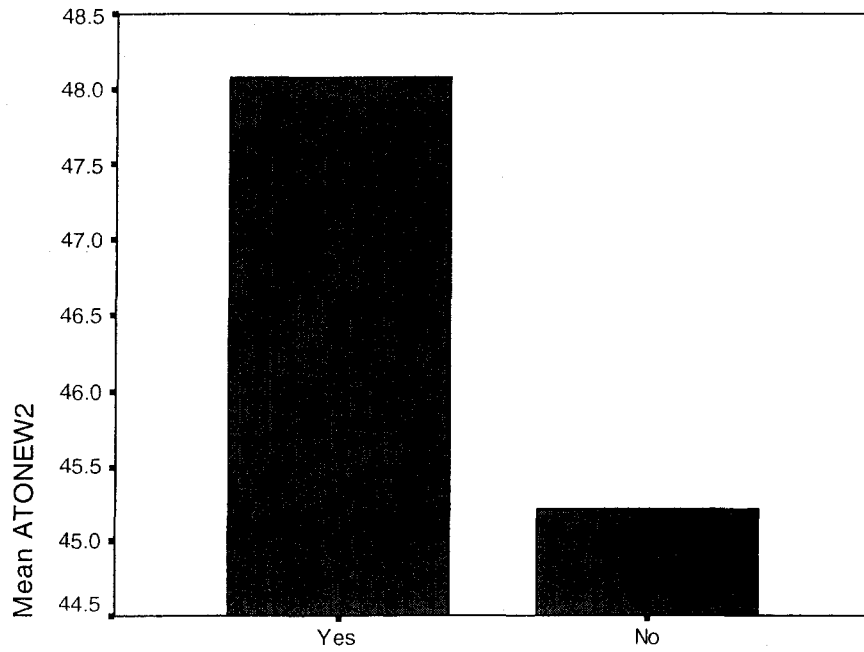
Table 6
A Series of Three One Way Analysis of Variance
Opportunity Scales Across Academic Status

Subscale	Potential Range	Academic Status				P Value
		Currently Enrolled In High School		No Longer Enrolled In High School		
		N = 156		N = 215		
		M	SD	M	SD	
Attitude Toward Opportunity	19 - 76	48.1	7.01	45.2	8.3	F (1, 316)=10.6 P=.001
Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity	15 - 60	39.0	6.1	37.1	7.1	F (1, 332)=7.61, P=.006
Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity	4 - 16	9.3	2.1	8.6	2.3	F (1, 348)=9.1, P=.003

Table 6A

Bar Chart

Academic Status and Attitude Toward Overall Opportunity

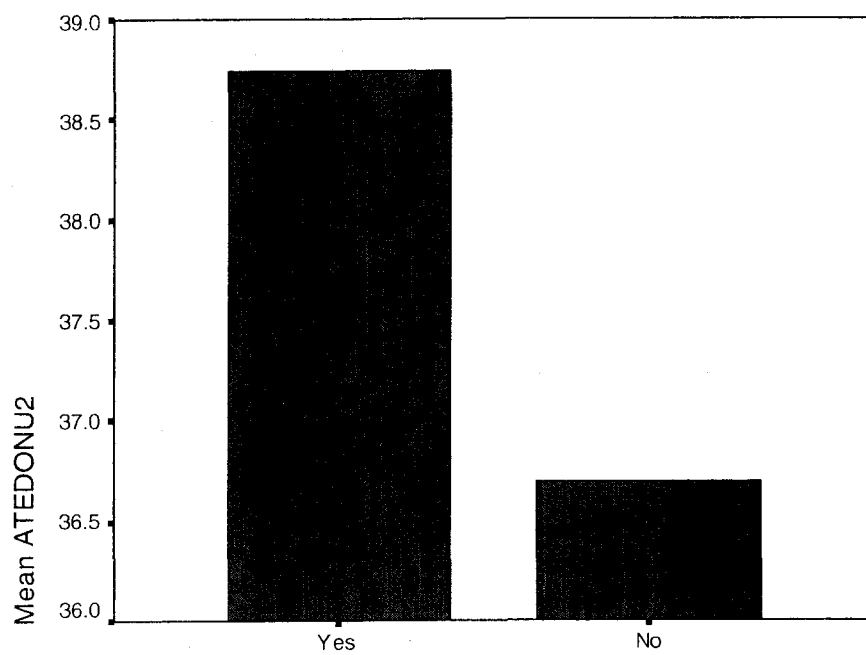


Are you currently enrolled in high school?

Table 6B

Bar Chart

Academic Status and Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity

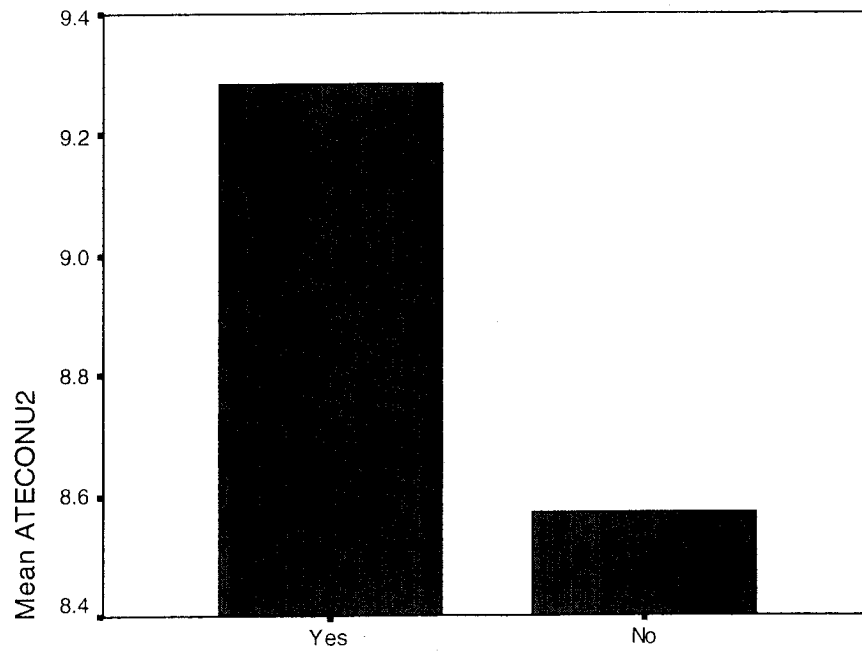


Are you currently enrolled in high school?

Table 6C

Bar Chart

Academic Status and Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity



Are you currently enrolled in high school?

Table 7
A Series of Three One-Way Analysis of Variance

Opportunity Scales Across Age Groups

Subscale	Potential Range	AGE						P Value
		16 - 24		25 - 44		45 - 65		
		N = 183		N = 53		N = 54		
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Attitude Toward Opportunity	19 - 76	48.2	7.5	47.5	9.0	44	5.8	F (2, 242)=5.6 P=.004
Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity	15 - 60	39.1	6.4	39.1	7.4	36.1	5.3	F (2, 260)=3.7 P=.026
Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity	4 - 16	9.3	2.0	8.4	3.0	8.3	2.0	F (2, 269)=6.2 P=.002

Table 7A

Bar Chart

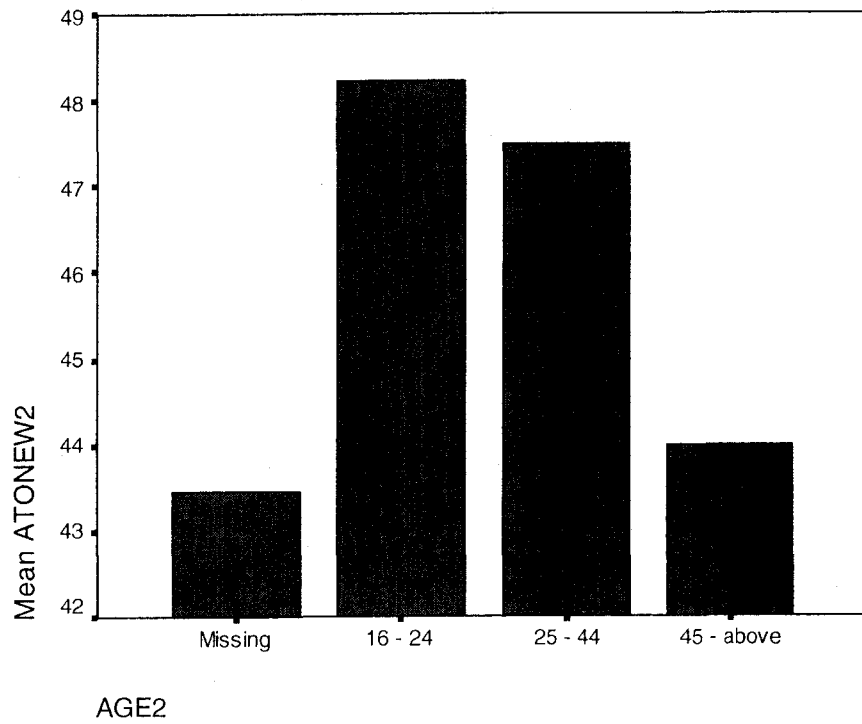
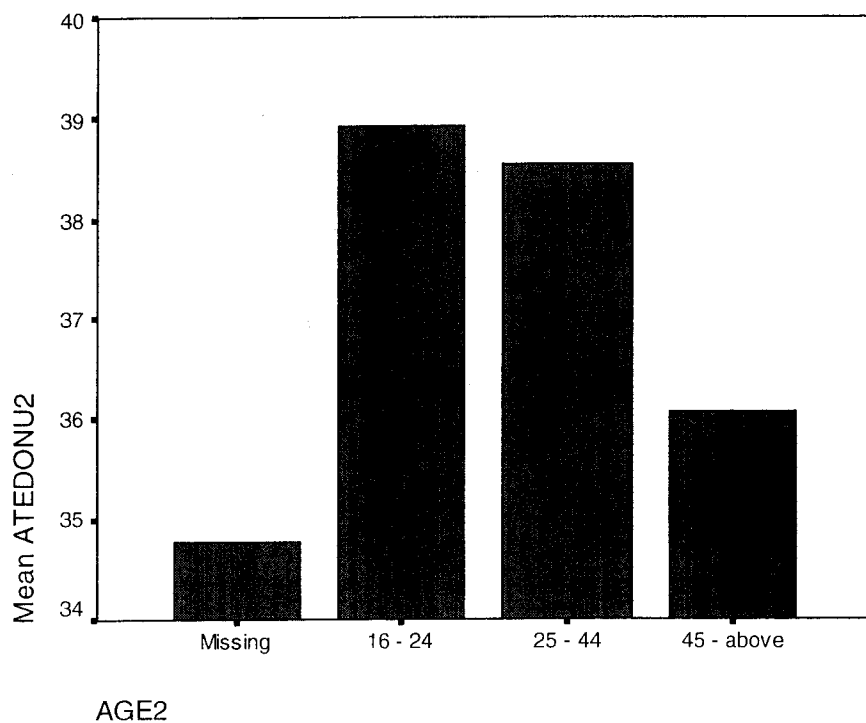
**Attitude Toward Overall Opportunity Across Age
One Way Analysis of Variance**

Table 7B

Bar Chart

**Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity Across Age
One Way Analysis of Variance**

AGE2

Table 7C

Bar Chart

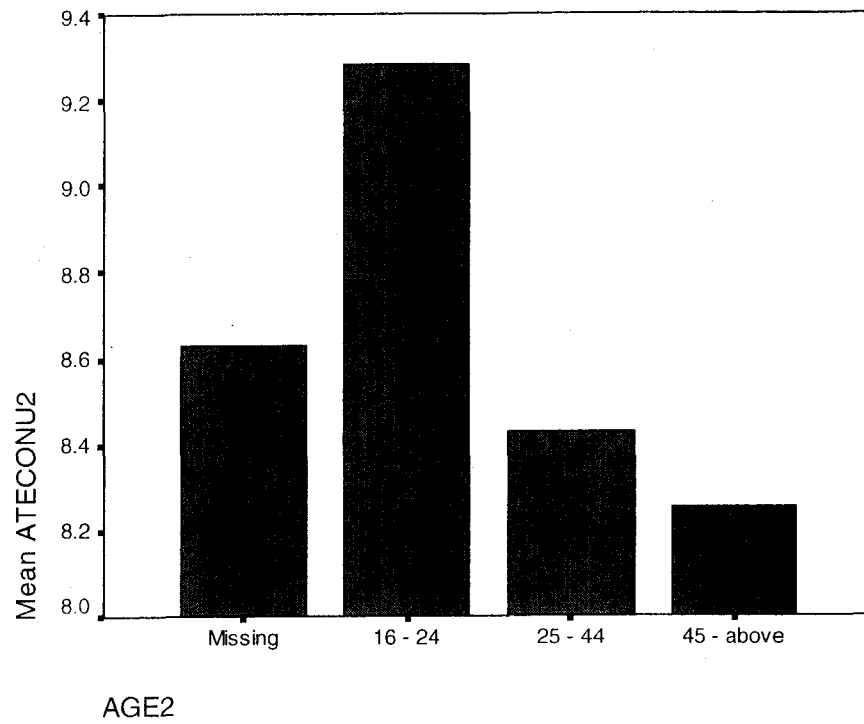
**Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity Across Age
One Way Analysis of Variance**

Table 8 – Simple Regression

Scale	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		DF	F Value	P Value	Adjusted R Square
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T				
Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity	1.055	.163	.342	6.48	(1, 316)	41.96	.000	.114
Constant	28.245	1.487		18.99			.000	

Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity

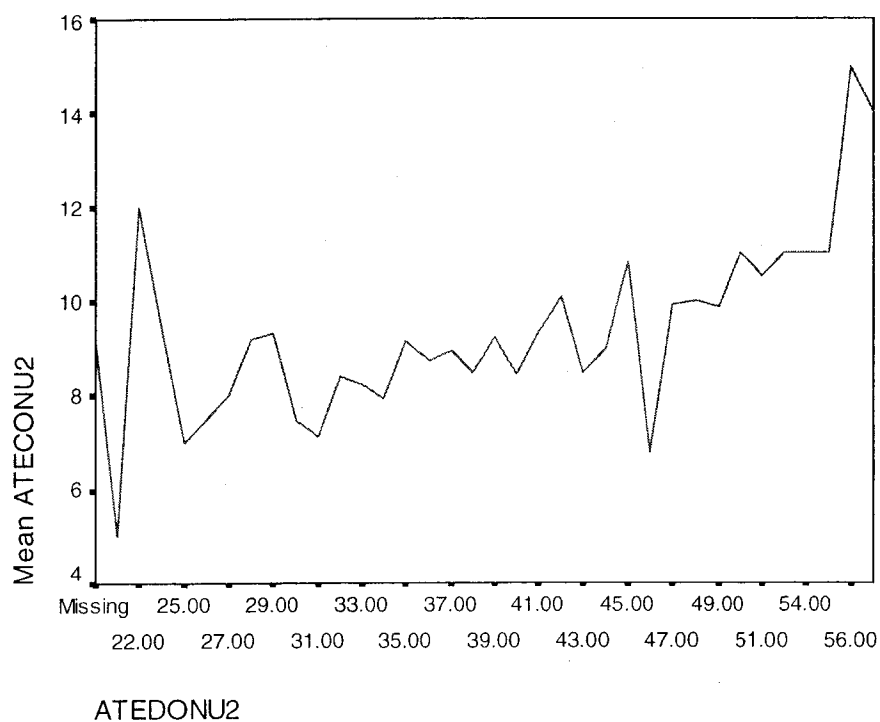
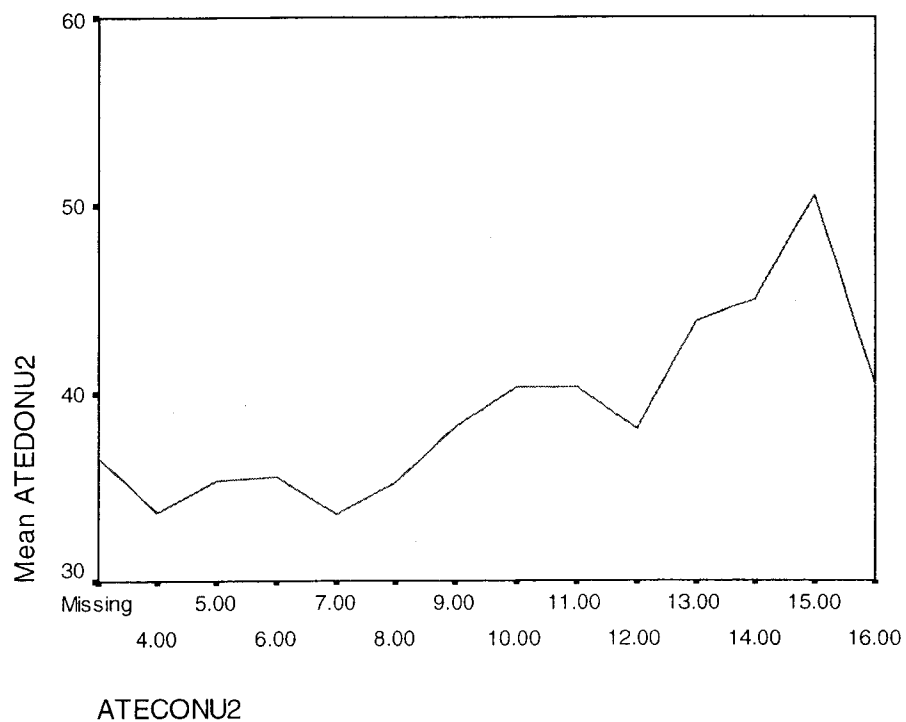
Table 8A**Line Graph**

Table 9 – Simple Regression

Scale	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		DF	F Value	P Value	Adjusted R Square
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T				
Attitude Toward Educational Opportunity	.111	.017	.342	6.5	(1, 316)	41.96	.000	.114
Constant	4.70	.66		7.15			.000	

Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Economic Opportunity

Table 9A**Line Graph**

Appendix I:
(Unabridged) Socio-Historical Development
of a Street Life Orientation
in the U. S. Born African Experience: Periods I & II
First Period: U. S. African Slavery 1619 – 1865

This period is not only the longest period of the three, but this particular time span is the *first* phase of U. S. African slavery. The system of African slavery played a significant role in how these men manifested their attitudes, activities or overall street life orientation. It is important to note that there were a number of variations of the street life oriented U. S. born African male experience during this period ranging from U. S. born African cowboys out in the Western portions of this country, to the more traditional hustling activities located in a Northern “free” population as well as the activities located within an enslaved Southern population. Even within an individual geographical location (e. g. West, North or South) the experience or role of the street life oriented male was diverse and in some instances extremely varied. However, what strings these moments together in a very real way during this first period was the fact that African slavery was legally instituted. Given this, the South played the most dominant role in how this phenomenon was being experience throughout the country. Specifically, the South during this period held more of a dominant socio-political and economic stronghold over the United States. What we consider the Western region of the United States (i. e. Sacramento, Utah, California, Nevada, etc.) in 2004 during this period was not officially or legally considered a part of this government. Given that there was no stable government in this region, this allowed a *cowboy* scenario to exist. There were no laws,

policies or government in place in this region that could legally prevent the “wild-wild west” from materializing. This land was considered by the United States as “unsettled” or a “new frontier”. It was not until the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the Dred-Scott decision in 1857 that slavery was opened to West under the federal protection of the United States (Wilson, 1978/1980). Soon after, slavery in terms of physical bondage, ended in 1865. Nonetheless, the slaves were concentrated in the South and represented the majority of U. S. born Africans in this country at that time. The experience of the African male slave in the South was so influential that the laws and policies of the South deeply influenced his stay everywhere else in the country. In fact, the experience of the Southern African male slave was so influential that it played the most significant role in terms of a single geographical location in affecting the attitudes and activities of contemporary street life oriented U. S. born African men seen across the country. Specifically, the socio-political climate of slavery is directly responsible for the regional nuances of street life orientations in the African experience noted throughout the United States. For instance, in the North, particularly if he was economically impoverished which most Africans men were, his stay was consistently unstable. Oftentimes he feared being intentionally smuggled down South or mistaken for an escaped slave and transported to the South to the same end. Although there were significant numbers of these men in the North during this first period, overall a number of these men were sparse and more so integrated in white street life oriented crews, gangs and/or syndicates (Massey & Denton, 1993/2001; Thrasher, 1927/1966). It is important to note that, the lifestyle or how the men chose to manifest their street life oriented activities whether in the historical or contemporary context is largely a consequence of the social structural

systems at play and their access to them. Social structural systems ultimately determine how we all choose to define or operationalize opportunity, which in turn influences how we choose to locate that opportunity. I argue that the dominant social structural systems of any of the periods noted in this text, ultimately has effected how these men have moved in their life consequently effecting the sites of resiliency and with respect to this study the particular street life hustles they have chosen across time and space to draw on.

Several scholars have advanced arguments that explicitly connect the street life activities contemporarily observed in low-income U. S. born African men specifically to the period of African colonization and enslavement in the United States (Bennett, 1961/1993; Blassingame, 1972/1979; Brown, 1969; Dance, 2002; DeGruy, Wade & Wyatt, 2004; DuBois, 1899/1967; Fagan, 1989; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; Harris, 1992; Hill, 1992; Lamb, 2004; Lane, 1986; Latif & Latif, 1994; Lemann, 1991; Majors & Billson, 1992; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Moynihan, 1967; Patterson, 1998; Rainwater, 1966; Rose, 1994; Tabb, 1973). Researchers have noted that the men's contemporary value system in many respects resembles the pattern and traits of a West African value system. Dance (2002) asserts, "Coolness applies to the regal and majestic pride of West African kings and the tough, hypermasculine attitudes of African-American gang members" (p. 33).

The transcontinental African holocaust transfigured as opposed to destroyed the traditional principals or value systems of West Africa. It is important to note that prior to the invasion of the African continent, Africans maintained an extremely rich, complex and delicate cultural and/or spiritual value system (DuBois, 1935/1998; Latif & Latif, 1994; Meir & Rudwick, 1966). The rich intellectual and cultural complexities of African

people at this time was by far the most sophisticated, developed and technologically advanced cultural systems the world has ever witnessed. This God driven culture was all destroyed in favor of creating the current home base of white supremacy—the United States of America.

In origin, the slaves represented everything African, although most of them originated on or near the West Coast. Yet among them appeared the great Bantu tribes from Sierra Leone to South Africa; the Sudanese, straight across the center of the continent, from the Atlantic to the Valley of the Nile; the Nilotic Negroes and the black and brown Hamites, allied with Egypt; the tribes of the great lakes; the Pygmies and Hottentots; and in addition to these distinct traces of both Berber and Arab blood. There is no doubt of the presence of all these various elements in the mass of 10, 000, 000 or more Negroes transported from Africa to the various Americas, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

... They brought with them their religion and rhythmic song, and some traces of their art and tribal customs. And after a lapse of two and one-half centuries, the Negroes became a settled working population, speaking English or French, professing Christianity, and used principally in agricultural toil. Moreover, they so mingled their blood with white and red America that today less than 25% of the Negro Americans are of unmixed African descent” (Dubois, 1935/1998, p. 3-4).

These diverse cultural and spiritual practices guided Africans through the first phase of African enslavement in the United States and in many respects still do so today. African slaves relied heavily on their notions of God or spirituality as well as their connectedness with their community to cope with their savage white slave holders and the so-called sympathetic Northern white liberals (Bennett, 1961/1993; Blassingame, 1972/1979; Dubois, 1935/1998; Meir & Rudwick, 1966). When examining contemporary inner city communities, our current African slave plantations, a number of low-income U. S. born African men can be witnessed utilizing core African principles of community and god to make it day to day (Payne & Brown, in press). It is actually ironic how a transfigured African core value system has served as a site of resiliency

specifically for the most downtrodden of slaves and their descendants to come for centuries (i. e. field slaves).

Africans commitment to church, family and community under this new white supremacist regime looked and moved differently in comparison to how it was experienced in West Africa. Under enslavement the men were regularly separated from their families and indigenous communities, so commitment to family members in this new scenario would obviously play out differently. In West Africa, for instance, commitment to family may include for these men such acts as guiding their children with their wives and larger community through a rites of passage ceremony. However, in this new white supremacist space, African men who asserted their male role were mercifully whipped, castrated, lynched and/or burned alive. Drove of African men lost their lives for trying to defend their wives, daughters and/or sons from being physically and/or sexually abused. A number of the men who were brave enough to stand up were also jailed or imprisoned for their actions (Benett, 1961/ 1988; Blassingame, 1972/1979; DuBois, 1935/1998; Ingley, 2000; Marable, 1983/2000; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Rideau & Wikberg, 1992). The genesis of what we know today as correctional department in the United States literally began during this first period of slavery. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the scenario above, demonstrates a valuable resiliency lesson from father to son and family. The father demonstrated that it is important to stand up in all extremely unjust situations even if it means your life. This African principle, for right or for wrong, has played out in these men even until today.

“It can be argued of course that the aspects of African culture which have survived in the United States are those which have had functional value; that the African family institutions were modified and

adapted to meet the exigencies of life for the slave and the freedman in America...

... Whether the unique cultural characteristics of the Negro subcommunity are viewed as due to African survivals or to functional adjustments to the specific situation in which American Negroes found themselves, this way of life is a subculture, a variety of the larger American culture... (Meir & Rudwick, 1966, p.20-21).

There are at least four defining activities that occur across two key moments or physical sites during this first period: (1) *Middle Passage* and (2) *Slave*

Plantation/Community.

1. Origins of the United States' Police System
2. Stealing, Drunkenness, Interpersonal Aggression/Violence Amongst The Slaves
3. Living/Health Conditions
4. Slave Revolts

These key activities help to in direct and significant ways shape his experiences during this first period. It is the study of these activities during this period where one can locate a wealth of information regarding the evolution of his contemporary street life experiences. It is important to note that the activities manifested by these men were extremely varied across time even within a particular physical site (e. g. slave plantation) during this first period.

Middle Passage

The Middle Passage represents the moment of the African enslavement process that specifically has to do with what occurred between the shores of West Africa and United States in the Atlantic Ocean (Burnside & Robotham, 1997). The Middle Passage played a critical role in how the enslavement process would evolve in the United States. This moment was extremely important to the development of the individual and collective psyches of the white colonizers and African slaves. The experience of the Middle Passage represented for the *enslaved* how brutal or inhumane their experience

would likely be as a slave, while for *white colonizers* this space represented the “middle leg of the system of triangular trading” (Meir & Rudwick, 1966). It was largely thought that the “successful” voyage of one slave ship across this space was enough to result in a lifetime of economic riches in the United States. The white colonizers regarded the “Middle Passage” as the most challenging point of the slavery process. It was at this point where the colonizers were most vulnerable to slave revolts as well as mass death of the slaves through disease, starvation or dehydration. Nonetheless, the white colonizers saw the potential troubles of the Middle Passage as worth it. Respectfully, the tragedies that occurred during the Middle Passage, alone, are unmatched by any human horror recorded in human history. It is imperative that the experiences of the ancestors during this period forever be recognized and honored. The Middle Passage was deeply influential in how the street life orientation would evolve in U. S. born African males during slavery and thereafter.

The average trip across the Atlantic Ocean took approximately three weeks to three months to complete (Blassingame, 1972/1979; Burnside & Robotham, 1997). The Africans were often packed tightly throughout the hull of the ship. In most instances they were literally packed on top of each other throughout the bottom portions of the ship. Men, women and children oftentimes died on top of each other. Conditions oftentimes were grossly unsanitary (DuBois, 1899/1967). The African slaves in their crudely chained and strapped state in addition to dieing oftentimes bleed, urinated and defecated on each other. The air the slaves were immersed in week in-week out, month in-month out was literally filled with noxious and toxic fumes vis-à-vis the stench of death. Such conditions produced significant numbers of psychologically imbalanced slaves. Slaves

were commonly reported to see hallucinations and/or speak to themselves. A number of the Africans committed suicide during the Middle Passage generally by jumping in the ocean to their death. If they did not die from drowning they were killed by the sharks that were known to frequently accompany the slave ships across the Middle Passage (Blassingame, 1972/1979). Anywhere between 30 to 100 million African slaves have been estimated to have lost their lives during the Middle Passage (Dubois, 1935/1998; Hill, 1992; Meir & Rudwick, 1966). According to Meir & Rudwick (1966),

“The mortality from the bloody flux or dysentery, smallpox, and other diseases could be considerable. There are cases on record where whole shiploads, including the entire crew, went blind from ophthalmia, first contracted by the slaves in their filthy and crowded conditions. Very sick Negroes were sometimes thrown overboard, as the underwriters would not pay for slaves who died on the ship. There were cases where two thirds and more of the slaves on a ship were dead by the time it arrived at the West Indies, and loss of half was not at all unusual” (33).

The general climate of the Middle Passage produced a particular adaptation amongst the slaves that did survive. The two dominant street life expressions noted in the introduction are revealed when evaluating the men’s resiliency patterns or how they consciously chose to respond or survive in this situation. African male slaves were known to express and cope with their frustration through interpersonal violence as well as outside of the group through violently revolting against their white captors (Blassingame, 1972/1979; Bennett, 1961/1993; Burnside & Robotham, 1997; Meir & Rudwick, 1966). Specifically, the slaves often stole, fought and killed each other in addition to stealing from, fighting and killing their white captors. Lerone Bennett, Jr. (1961/1993) in his classic work *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*, presents a holistic argument inclusive of these two dominant expressions.

“...the unfortunate slaves... were wedged immovably, in fact, and chained to the deck by the neck and legs—that the slaves not infrequently would go mad before dying or suffocating. In their frenzy some killed others in the hope of procuring more room to breathe. Men strangled those next to them, and women drove nails into each others brains” (49).

The white colonizers were very upset when they lost a cargo of slaves. A ship full of dead slaves was worthless to them and the time, energy and resources was by no means easy for most captains to reproduce. Given the extreme rates of death, several slave ships began allowing the slaves to come up 1 to 2 times a day to eat, stretch and/or pray. When the opportunity presented itself the slaves often directed their interpersonal aggression against their white captors. A number of the African men were successful at overthrowing the ships and securing their freedom. In support of the dominant outward expressions by African males Bennett (1961/1993) remarks:

“... many slaves revolted, brained the captain and crew and escaped to the shore. Rebellions on ships were so common that a new form of insurance, insurrection insurance, was introduced. Many slaves refused to eat when well and refused to take medicine when ill...

... This resistance—desperate, doomed definitive... continued throughout the slaving period”(54).

Slave trading across the Atlantic Ocean or Middle Passage was outlawed by England and the United States in 1807. Although it was outlawed, a number of colonizers and/or pirates worked diligently to illegally smuggle African slaves inside the United States up until at least 1820 (Dubois, 1935/1998). The governmental agencies, policies and laws of the United States were lenient and oftentimes did little to physically stop slaves from entering its borders given its lucrative possibilities. Nonetheless, more so by the efforts of England slavery was considerably slowed down after 1807.

Slave Plantation/Community

As the slave plantations became more routinized and the new white colonizers became more settled so were their ways or values. It is important to note that generally all of the initial colonizers who settled in the United States previously were European former war mongers or hardcore criminals, prisoners, indenture servants, refugees, homeless and/or street life oriented (DuBois, 1935/1992; Woodson, 1933/1990). These persons represented the initial authority or government of this country. As they settled here in the United States so did their ways of criminality settle as the dominant value system in the United States (DuBois, 1935/1998; Parker, 1996/1998; Wilson, 1990). Specifically, many of the new white settlers demonstrated a consistent will to engage in violent activities such as hand-to-hand fighting, knifing and/or shooting each other (Dubois, 1899/1967; DuBois, 1935/1998; Paker, 1996/1998). Larger cities like Pennsylvania or New York as well as a number of Midwestern and Southern cities developed prevalent rates of violence amongst its white settlers that resembled patterns of what we regard contemporarily as gang related behavior. According to Parker (1996/1998), a community known as Natchez located on the riverbanks between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh was commonly noted for its prevalence of violence:

“Natchez-under-the-hill was at its height of wickedness and killings. It was like Dodge city in later days, when the cowboy, buffalo hunter, and bank robbers were in their zenith. Of course, Natchez was a source of attraction to my companions and myself... The shacks along the riverbank that sheltered the riffraff of the river was indescribably.

They were wood, one story high, low-browed and dirty. All flatboatmen were dressed alike in flowing red flannel shirts opened at the neck. With a broad-brimmed hat, a handkerchief tied loosely around their neck, a pair of jeans trousers stuffed down in the broad tops of rawhide boots, sleeves rolled up to their elbows, they were as rough a crew as could be found in any part of the world. Instead of pistols, they carried knives, which were more dependable at that time than firearms.

For some reason I never could fathom, there was an intense hatred between the raftsmen and flatboatmen. They went in gangs ready to pounce on each other at any turn of the street. In these fist battles, there was no limit placed on biting, clawing, kicking, hitting, or gouging of eyes. While no weapons were used, it was a combat of strength and brutality, maiming and killing its victims remorselessly” (31 – 32).

The white colonizers during this period saturated the United States with alcohol, narcotics, gambling and brothels (DuBois, 1935/1998; Parker, 1996/1998). Although these were several of the vices specifically used to subdue the indigenous persons of the United States as well as imperialize every other indigenous culture on the planet, these vices were oftentimes the pastimes of the white colonizers themselves. These activities in many respects genuinely represented how the colonizers normally socialized.

Dubois (1935/1998) says:

“They (white slave holder) exploited labor in order that themselves should live more grandly and not mainly for increasing production. Their taste went to elaborate households, well furnished and hospitable; they had much to eat and drink; they consumed large quantities of liquor; they gambled and caroused and kept up the habit of dueling well down into the nineteenth century. Sexually they were lawless, protecting elaborately and elaborately and flattering the virginity of a small class of women of their social clan, and keeping at command millions of poor women of the two laboring groups of the South.

Sexual chaos was always the possibility of slavery, not always realized but always possible: polygamy through the concubinage of black women to white men...

In addition to their social activities (e. g. gambling, drinking and inordinate sexual activity) DuBois (1935/1992) noted how violent the southern white men could be not only with the slaves but with each other. According to Dubois (1935/1992) these white men were known to whip themselves in a frenzy of violence or irrational behavior:

“Certainly, the cursing, brawling, whoring gamblers who largely represented the South in the late fifties, evidenced the inevitable

deterioration that overtakes men when their desire for income and extravagance overwhelms their respect for human beings. Thus interstate slave trade grew and flourished and the demand for the African slave trade was rapidly becoming irresistible in the late fifties” (43).

Giving that the colonizers were novice at best in terms of knowing how to live in the “new world” many of the new settler communities and plantation owners lived in horrendous conditions themselves. Although there were exceptions, the white settlers oftentimes lived in or amongst the threat of death vis-à-vis disease, poor sanitation, unhealthy diets and/or slave revolts. In fact, many of the white settlers died as a consequence of these factors. Such factors, worked to produce a particular kind of economic and social value system grounded in a slave labor force as well as a heightened fear of that labor force amongst the white settlers. As a result, socializing in the capacities noted above was considerate normal given the survival issues they were struggling with.

Furthermore, the design of the slave plantation represented the first social structural systems that Africans were introduced to in the United States. Specifically, the plantation represents the first socio-economic and political systems Africans were indoctrinated into in this country. Also, these particular social structural systems were the method used by the colonizers to infuse their value system in a consistent way across time and space into the Africans. It is important to note, slavery was not only a physical experience but also it was equally being used as a platform for psychological warfare or a process of indoctrination (Latif & Latif, 1994). The system was deliberately designed to break them physically if need be but slaveholders were more so seeking to break the spirits and psychological stability of the slaves so that they could more easily control the slaves for their economic interests. According to Blassingame (1972/1979), the social

structural system of the slave community responsible for restructuring the physical and psychological stability generally consisted of five capacities:

- (1) Slaveholder/Owner: White colonizer of status who headed the plantation. Colonizers that were able to successfully organize large plantations, which was few and far between, generally were very wealthy men.
- (2) Overseer: He was hired by the slaveholder to closely manage the day-to-day activities of the plantations. He typically was a violent man and generally was feared by the slaves. The overseer and his staff generally guarded the plantation on horse with a whip and gun. He usually headed or accompanied hunting parties organized to track down runaway slaves.
- (3) Slave Elite: This slave experience, in many respects, was not generally representative of the overall slave experience. Although these slaves for the most part were house servants, a number of these slaves were selected to elite status given that they were skilled artisans. These slaves generally were selected by the slaveholder or his family members (e. g. wife, children, etc.). They were generally women, thought to be docile, assimilated and/or in support of the slaveholder. They were hired generally to tend to the basic services of the slaveholder's home (e. g. cooking, cleaning, rearing the children) as well as to satisfy the sexual desires of the slaveholder. Also, some white women within the slaves holder's family were known to place some African male slaves in precarious situations by pressuring them to engage in sexual practices with them. Many African male slaves lost their lives in this scenario. The slave elite typically ate, were clothed and slept in better living conditions than the field

slaves. Although it was illegal some elite slaves were given an opportunity to learn how to read and write. Although a number of these slaves sold out the field slaves to their peril it ironically was this class of slaves where major organizers of slave uprisings were most likely to come from.

- (4) Slave Driver: This position held by African male slaves generally enjoyed a number of the same privileges of the house slaves. However, the requirements of the slave driver were that he had to demonstrate he was a tough and physical person that commanded respect among the field slaves. Amongst some of the African slaves this was considerate a good job or position. Specifically, slave drivers were hired to manage, and physically discipline the slaves. He was considerate to be on the staff of the overseer. He oftentimes lived amongst slaves.
- (5) Field Slave: This slave experience, in many respects, was generally representative of the overall slave experience. This class of slaves was where the majority and the downtrodden of the slaves were located in the social structural systems of the slave plantation. These slave carried the bulk of the labor-intensive work on the plantations. They tirelessly work the fields on average between 12-15 hours a day. There was a vibrant tension that existed between this class of slaves and the house slaves.

The conditions of the slave quarters varied although usually these physical spaces were indescribably inhumane (Blassingame, 1972/1979; DuBois, 1899/1967, 1935/1998; Washington, 1901/199). These quarters typically were built of a cheap or poor quality wooden infrastructure. These quarters generally stood up mildly to poorly against the conditions of the weather. Generally, these premises were insect infested, filthy,

dilapidated with dirt or semi-dirt floors as well as were filled with makeshift wood based furniture. The slaves' diet typically was made up of extremely unhealthy foods, although, sometimes the slaves were extended privileges to grow some small vegetables (e. g. cabbage, collard greens, yams, beans, etc). With no indication of change no where in foreseeable future, these conditions consequently produced significant levels of verbal and physical interpersonal aggression amongst the slaves. When this aggressive energy was directed inside their communities, particularly amongst the men, a number of slaves argued, stole, fought and killed one another. According to Booker T. Washington (1901/1995) the slaves ironically could be observed demonstrated street life behaviors during the Christmas holiday period.

“During this first Christmas vacation I went some distance from the town to visit the people on one of the large plantations. In their poverty and ignorance it was pathetic to see their attempts to get joy out of the season that in most parts of the country is so sacred and so dear to the heart. In one cabin I noticed that all the five children had to remind them of the coming of Christ was a single bunch of firecrackers.... In still another cabin I found nothing but a new jug of cheap, mean whiskey, which the husband and wife were making free use of, notwithstanding the fact that the husband was one of the local ministers... In other homes some members of the family had bought a new pistol. In the majority of cases there was nothing to be seen in the cabin to remind one of the coming of the Saviour, except that the people had ceased work in the fields and were lounging about their homes. At night, during Christmas week, they usually had what they called a “frolic,” in some cabin on the plantation. This meant a kind of rough dance, where there might be some shooting or cutting with razors” (65).

The adult male field slave oftentimes relied upon their African notions of masculinity to make it through slavery (Blassingame, 1972/1979; Dance, 2002; Majors & Billson, 1992). It was important for him psychologically and the social psychology of the field slave at large to witness him standing up against the white slave holder. However,

this notion of masculinity oftentimes imploded within the slave community. Given the African male was mostly unsuccessful in challenging the slaveholder they typically brought that negative unprocessed energy back to the slave quarters. Standing up to the slaveholder when it was not plausible or wise often transformed into interpersonal aggression against other Africans. It is difficult to track the criminal or violent nature of slaves in any numerical sense given that the crude system of slavery did not allow for such information to be recorded in a reliable way (DuBois (1899/1967)). Nonetheless, significant evidence still remains that capture this aspect in these men.

“Of the graver crimes by Negroes we have only reports here and there which do not make it clear how frequently such crimes occurred. In 1706 slaves are arrested for setting fire to a dwelling in 1733; three Negroes are hanged in neighboring parts of New Jersey for poisoning people, while at Rocky Hill a slave is burned alive for killing a child and burning a barn” (DuBois, 1899/1967, 237).

According to DuBois (1899/1967) the Quakers virtually were the only organized group during the time of slavery that conducted quality reports on the violent, “delinquent” or criminal behavior of the slave. DuBois (1899/1967) asserts that although the United States Census office publicly appeared interested in the subject, the office never gave this phenomenon the empirical attention it deserved. This was odd given the propaganda promoted in the newspapers regarding the violent nature of the slave.

Blassingame (1972/1979), takes up the question of how the social structural systems of the slave plantation works to produce violent and/or resistant slave personalities, thus, he highlights the kinds of interpersonal aggression found within the slave community.

“Many slaves tried to drown their anger in the whiskey bottles, and if not drowned, the anger welling up was translated into many of the

forms. Sometimes the slave projected his aggression onto his fellow slaves: he might beat up, stab, or kill one of his fellow sufferers” (p.)

Field and house slaves, male and female, who demonstrated a street life orientation engaged in a number of activities to improve their lot or notions of resiliency as a slave: (1) stole food and other basic resources from the slaveholder; (2) slept with the slaveholder (male/female) or the female of the slave holder’s family (male/family); (3) drank and curried alcohol for the slave holder; (4) destroyed key resources of the slaveholder such as burning the property of the slaveholder; as well as (6) fought, shot and poisoned the slaveholder and his family.

Slaveholders often publicly noted these activities as the evidence to justify the barbaric enslavement of African people. Slaveholders often portrayed the African slave as a savage, violent, sexual impulsive, unintelligible, ignorant and unsanitary. It was rather easy for Southern powerbrokers to issue such propaganda out to larger white America. Given that most Southern whites did not maintain the capital to own slaves let alone have access to the observation of a slave plantation, it was relatively unproblematic to frame and sell the image of the slave as inherently savage to the larger white public who were generally raised to think of Africans as inferior to begin with. According to Meier and Rudwick (1966), “In the South in 1860 there were only 385, 000 slaveholders in a free population of 1, 500, 000 families, so that only one quarter of the Southern whites had a vested interest in preserving the institution of slavery” (56). These conniving and manipulative Southern powerbrokers were so successful at falsifying this image that in 1776 they were able write in the constitution that African slaves were at best three fifths of a human being (Franklin & Franklin, 2000). The Supreme Court

decision in 1857 regarding the Dred-Scott case further supported them as less than human by legally relegating the African slave as the physical property of white slaveholders.

Slave owners explicitly sought to stamp out any positive images of the African male. It was construed that better control could be acquired amongst the slaves through destroying or emasculating not only the African male slaves' humanity but in particular his masculinity (Patterson, 1998). A number of theorists have argued that the feteshsizing of African male sexuality currently has its origins in American slavery (Bennett, 1961/1993; Blassingame 1979; Dubois, 1935/1998; Lemman, 1991; Patterson, 1998). Lemman (1991) argues that the contemporary sexual mythology around U. S. born African men in particular was fashioned during the infamous African slave trade. To destroy the image of the African male, Lemman (1991) asserts that the sexual mythology of the U. S. born African male as sexually impulsive and perpetually lusting after the white woman was pushed by plantation owners, largely to obscure the all too common sexual violations of these white owners on African women as well as their overwhelming fear that African men possessed more capability to sexually satisfy white women. Patterson (1998) says:

“The idea of Afro-American men resisting and fighting against the outrages heaped upon them was as much an anathema as was the fantasy of Afro-American lusting after Euro-American women. Thus distorting emphasis on the charge of rape and attempted rape accomplished two goals of ‘racial’ oppression in one fell swoop. It promoted the image of the Afro-American male as a sexual fiend, and at the same time it denied all manhood to him” (225).

It cannot be underscored enough that this sexual notion was extremely important to garnering complete control over the African male's image. When portraying him as thirsting for white women it was tremendously easier if not ingenious to get support for

framing of the male slave as a heinous sexual creature. The white woman to begin with was held up in the imaginations and value systems of the whites as undeniably pristine or pure and in desperate need of protection.

Blassingame (1979) asserts:

“the idealization of white women and the pursuit of Black women by white males, convinced him the arms of a black paramour. The white male frequently resolved his love-hate complex by pursuing the allegedly passionate black woman. At the same time, he exaggerated the sexual prowess and desire of the black male for the liaisons with angelic white women and reacted with extreme cruelty to any challenge to his monopoly of white women” (268).

It was customary amongst most African nations for men to represent the dominant figures within the communities. Knowing that within the throes of chaos African slaves would naturally look to its men for direction, slave owners sought to undermine his masculinity as a way to sustain economic profits from their plantations. The slaveholder explicitly created sexualized propaganda that noted he was a sexual predator to undermine his masculinity (Patterson, 1998). According to the white slaveholder, his social structural system of slavocracy had to work—this system had to be profitable. In most instances it was either the plantation thrives or return to a living of penury. Morally it was not difficult for them choose enforcing slavery. In the eyes of the slaveholder, for this system to reap serious economic profits, the African male’s spirit had to be squashed in the minds of the larger slave community and more importantly in the minds of the men.

It was only within the slave quarters that the African male had any opportunity to “be a man” or demonstrate his masculinity (Blassingame, 1979). Specifically, it is in the slave quarters that he desperately sought to salvage and secure his manhood before the slave community and in particular his family. Here he spoke virulently against the white

enslavers and oftentimes organized slave escapes and revolts. However, in most instances, these efforts were moot. Although he tried to assure his community of his manhood; that he would protect and serve them he oftentimes in his eyes failed to provide the basic fundamental things to his family – thus he felt he failed them as a man. In addition to slave revolts and interpersonal aggression amongst the slaves, this caused a number of African males to commit suicide and/or become psychologically imbalanced (e. g. see hallucinations).

The chief social structural system during this period and especially there after was a crude form of capitalism. Several theorists have argued that the American slave system is the springboard or genesis for the current capitalist economic system in the United States (Dubois, 1899/1967; Dubois, 1935/1998 ; Latif & Latif, 1994; Liston, 1990; Marable, 1983/2000; Meier & Rudwick, 1966; Williams, 1944/1994). It is important to emphasize that the African slave experience is the foundation or bedrock of larger Americas' economic system. The infrastructure of this country was literally built off of the blood, sweat and tears of African slaves. The slave assumed every lowly rank this country had to offer. The African slaves worked the field; built the slaveholder's home; cooked for the slaveholder; cleaned the slaveholder's home; reared the slaveholder's children; among other lowly duties. Essentially, the slaves operated as an economic buffer necessary for the rest of larger America to stand on. Several theorists in other countries interested in the activities of socio-economically oppressed people, as in the case of U. S. born Africans, have linked capitalism to the "illegal" behavior of their citizens as well (Williams, 1944/1994; Fanon, 1963; Friere, 1970/2000; Marx, 1848/1998). According to Marable (1983/2000):

“The ordeal of slavery was responsible for accelerating the economic and political power of Europe and North America over the rest of the mostly nonwhite world. Since the demise of slavery and the emergence of modern capitalism, the process of Black underdevelopment has expanded and deepened.... Underdevelopment is not the absence of development; it is the inevitable product of an oppressed population’s integration into the world market economy and political system” (p. 7).

Blassingame’s (1972/1979) study as a function of the social structural system of the slave community notes the development of a particular code or way of things adhered to by field slaves. This code is comparable to what may be referred to contemporarily as the *code of the streets* adhered to by street life oriented U. S. born African men.

Developed from the salvageable vestiges of traditional West African cultural mannerisms, customs and language, the code represented a set of unwritten and informal adaptive rules developed by the slaves in relation to the formal regulations of the local plantation. The code provided a number of wide ranging adaptive capabilities for the field slave community. For instance, the code help the slaves to communicate to each other within and across the plantations as well as it help rebellious slaves to organize revolts against the white slaveholders. Also, the code helped to establish not only unity but also a way for the slaves to collectively think about their experiences. A slave’s competent demonstration of the code, in it of it self, signified that they could be trusted. Those slaves who revealed the secrets of the code or overall community often were physically assaulted and oftentimes killed in the slave quarters. House slaves typically were not “trusted” or made privy to the code developed by the field slave community:

“The code, of course, was not perfect, some blacks, especially house servants, could not be trusted. Those who violated the code, while currying the favor or their masters became outcasts in the quarters and faced retaliation from their fellows”(Blassingame, 1972/1979, 316).

In addition, Blassingame's (1972/1979) study pays attention to the outward aggressive expressions of the rebellious personality. According to Blassingame (1972, 1979) the social structural systems of the slave plantation produced three dominant as well as *competing* slave personalities that ultimately guided the two dominant expressions by Africans: (1) *Nat Personality*—In tribute to Nat Turner this personality signified the rebellious or incorrigible slave, (2) *Jack Personality*—the common slave and (3) *Sambo Personality*—the assimilated slave. Blassingame (1972/1979) notes the Maroon Community is a particular manifestation of the Nat personality that evolved during this first period. The Maroon Communities consisted of a group of former and escaped slaves who were extremely rebellious toward their former white slave holders (Blassingame, 1972/1979; Marable; 1983/2000). Maroon communities oftentimes were consciously located in the most difficult Southern landscapes imaginable, thus, making it very difficult for dogs or slave trackers to locate these clandestine communities. Maroon communities were typically located in places like swamps or rugged mountainous areas.

“The maroon communities represented one of the gravest threats to the planters. In the first place, these communities undermined the master's authority and emboldened other slaves to join them ...

..... The Maroon was a resourceful black man who, having obtained his freedom, challenged any white man to take it away from him. If his hideout was discovered, he was willing to die defending it”
(Blassingame, 1979, 209).

Members of the Maroon Communities often played a key role in organizing slave revolts as well as the Underground Railroad. It was common for Maroon members as well as other former African slaves who participated in the Underground Railroad to carry weapons such as guns and/or knives. Africans who were conductors or participants on the Underground Railroad were instructed to immediately kill white slave trackers if

detected and/or African slaves who had a change of heart about escaping slavery (Parker, 1996/1998). Although Africans who participated on the Underground Railroad were regarded for their intuition, discipline, intelligence and resiliency, they were also known for being extremely capable of being violent or aggressive. According to John Parker (1996/1998), a conductor on the Underground Railroad between 1845-1865 across the Ohio River, it was an extremely risky and violent job:

“There was a time, however, when fierce passions swept this little town (Ripley, Ohio), dividing its people into bitter factions. I never thought of going uptown without a pistol in my pocket, a knife in my belt, and a blackjack handy. Day or night I dare not walk on the sidewalks for fear someone might leap out of a narrow alley at me.

What I did the other men did, walked the streets armed. This was the period when men went armed with pistol and knife and used them on the least provocation. When under the cover of night the uncertain steps of slaves were heard quietly seeking their friends... when pursuers and pursued stood at bay in a narrow alley with pistols drawn ready for the assault; when angry men surrounded one of the houses referred to, kept up gunfire until late in the afternoon, endeavoring to break into it by force, in search of runaways. These were the days of passion and battle which turned father against son, and neighbor against neighbor. Visit it now to see the contrast of this picture of violence (84-85).

The hardcore rebellious slaves often were the descendants of African warriors. It is important to note that the resistant or incorrigible slave historically and contemporarily has represented one of the smaller variants of the U. S. born African community. His experiences are not necessarily characteristic of the overall slave community. Ironically, this personality type typically represented the more dominant and influential personalities found within the slave community (Benett, 1961/1988; Blassingame, 1972/1979; DuBois, 1935/1998; Marable, 1983/2000; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Parker, 1996/1998). When the “Nat’s” were sufficiently organized, they generally garnered significant levels of support

from the “Jacks”. This same social dynamic or rhythm also occurs within contemporary slave plantations or inner city communities. For instance, the participants of more contemporary inner city riots, such as the Watts or Rodney King riots ranged from residents who were deeply street life oriented to those who were working class.

Opportunity within these circumstances for the African male slave was operationalized, overall, as acquiring adaptive means or strategies that literally prevented him from being physically, lashed or whipped, assaulted, raped, lynched, castrated, burnt alive and/or imprisoned (Rainwater, 1966). However, the approach to this end was varied. Opportunity for the “Nat” oriented personality simply meant freedom. The “Jacks” pretty much shared or identified with the core sentiments of the “Nats”, however, on average the “Jack’s ” were less likely to engage in or lead what they would consider to be risky activities. The “Sambo” operationalized opportunity in the form of assimilation. However, it is important to note that it is the position of this document that all personalities can occur at any level of the slave hierarchy (e. g. “Sambo” or “Nat” house servant or a “Sambo” or “Nat” field slave).

Although there was limited access, traditional upward mobility within the social structures of the slave system did exist for some slaves. For instance, field slaves could be promoted to slave driver or house servant. Other opportunities existed for slaves to purchase or “earn” their freedom. One opportunity that drew a lot attention amongst the slaves was the chance to participate in the military (i. e. American Revolution, Civil War). Particularly, during the Civil War slaves saw the military as an opportunity to earn their freedom or at the very least earn a more privileged station on the plantation.

Interestingly enough, the desire to be educated or learn how to read and write was thought of as an ideal opportunity even by your most incorrigible slave (DuBois, 1899/1967; DuBois, 1935/1992; Katz, 1995; Washington, 1901/1995). Africans since the period of slavery have demonstrated a passionate and firm interest in being educated. However, in most instances, such aspirations have materialized to no avail. Scholars have estimated that 3% - 10% of slaves were literate upon exiting slavery (Benett, 1961/1988; Marable, 1983/2000; Bill's paper in class). White slaveholders thought educated slaves would inevitably undermine their order of white supremacy (Marable, 1983/2000). An educated African, especially an educated African male was seen as threatening. Slaves could be imprisoned, lashed and/or put to death for learning how to read and write (Katz, 1995). Nonetheless, extenuating opportunities to learn how to read and write presented themselves within these punitive parameters (Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Parker, 1996/1998). Toward the close of the 18th century and during the early to mid portions of the 19th century opportunity to be educated occurred typically with more congenial slaveholders. Learning how to read and write generally came in the form of studying the Christian Bible. Most slaveholders observed this as a non-threatening form of "Negro" education. Restricted learning experiences were generally granted to some house servants as well as slaves who purchased their freedom and desired to remain in the South. According to Meir and Rudwick (1966):

"The history of Negro education before the Civil War can be divided into three rather distinct, though, overlapping, stages: (1) white philanthropy, (2) Negro help, and (3) public support.... During the eighteenth century, religious organizations such as the Episcopal Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which worked in both North and South, and the Society of Friends had undertaken rudimentary education of slaves and free Negroes to enable them to read the Bible. Some antislavery societies formed during the Revolutionary era also, offered free Negroes

an opportunity for elementary education. The New York Manumission Society in 1787 opened the African Free School, which was so successful that six additional ones were added in the city by 1834. Ultimately they became part of the public school system.

Under the auspices of the Negro churches and mutual benefit societies emerging at the end of the eighteenth century, free Negroes maintained their own schools. Even where white philanthropic support was solicited, the initiative came from Negroes themselves" (84).

It is important to note that during the first period, access to education for the U. S. born African was obtainable primarily in the Northern states (Bennett, 1961/1993 ; Dubois, 1935/1998; Hershberg, 1981; Liston, 1990; Meir & Rudwick, 1966). Toward the end of the first period, the U. S. born African population began to significantly increase or concentrate in population in the Northern states signifying the beginning of a massive Northern migration that would last for approximately one hundred years (Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001). However, in these new Northern states access to legal economic opportunity was severely limited or not as available as they imagined and it was promoted. Hershberg (1981) notes that in 1847 "less than one-half of 1 percent" of U. S. born African males were employed in factory based jobs while only 5% of employed U. S. born African males were employed in better paying jobs such as "hod carrier" or "stevedore". As the statistics strongly suggest, many of the men and their families were relegated to severe positions of urban-based economic poverty. Street life oriented activities became more concentrated in this new urban context. These Northern communities for the most part during the first period were initially integrated (Blassingame, 1972/1979; DuBois, 1935/1992; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001), however, as these communities became more concentrated with U. S. born Africans looking for better opportunity in relation to what was available in the South so did the concentration of street life activities. Such activities were valued as being adaptive to accessing

opportunity in these new Northern communities. This new urban ghetto setting would become the new or evolved plantation for U. S. born Africans (Lemann, 1991; Tabb, 1973).

Second Period: The 1st Phase of Urbanization
for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men – 1865 - 1929

The Civil War played the most dominant role in shaping the initial street life identity or orientation acquired by U. S. born African men during this period. Although, the Civil War publicly was heralded by the North as a war for so-called “Negro freedom”, this war, essentially was a feud over which economic system would prevail: (1) slavocracy or (2) neo-capitalism. The only concern either side had towards the African was how and who would be able to use them for their economic end. The North and the South were very interested in securing the Western region of the United States to expand their socio-economic and political power base. The North grew impatient with the South and their dominant control of the United States’ political and economic system. It was clear to both sides that it was impossible for both systems to co-exist and still thrive. The systems inherently threaten the survivability of the other. Who ever secured the West had the best means to dominate the country. Consequently, civil war ensued.

Further, Southern whites were enraged with what they viewed as a hypercritical stance positioned by the Northerners. Southerners often equated Northern capitalism with that of the essential traditions of Southern slavocracy. More specifically, Southerners thought Northerners were extremely hypercritical about their so-called concern on human rights given the payment and inhumane work conditions found within the Northern factories. They did not see the Northern system as some how morally

superior to the standards of the South. The North would eventually win out, thus transforming the United States into the current social structural system that it represents.

There are at least four defining activities that occur across two key physical sites that deeply inform the experiences of street life oriented U. S. born African men during this second period: (1) *Sharecropping Communities* and (2) *Northern Urban Centers or Inner City Communities*.

1. U. S. Born African Reconstruction
2. Formal Organization of Street Life Activities (e. g. hustling, thievery, substance abuse, interpersonal violence, etc.)
3. Living/Health Conditions
4. Urban Race Riots

It is important to note, this second period essentially is the *second* phase of African slavery in the United States. Specifically, the second phase is a mutation and/or evolution of the American slavery process. What distinguishes this slavery process from the first, is that this form of slavery has now manifested itself in the form of the institutionalization of U. S. born African economic and educational inequality. In other words, given that physical enslavement has formally become illegal during this period, a more insidious form of bondage has evolved that includes the permanent prevention or blockage of access to opportunity for U. S. born Africans. This institutionalization has firmly remained in place since its commencement in 1865. Although access to a “free” market was heavily promoted then and thereafter to U. S. born Africans, the underpinnings of this society is contingent on having in place an economically impoverished group which makes it possible for the masses of the United States to enjoy their privileges. Low-income U. S. born Africans historically has represented the base of this economically impoverished group.

During the first half of this second period (1865 – 1900) U. S. born Africans entered what has commonly been referred to as “Black Reconstruction” (Bennett, 1961/1993; DuBois, 1935/1998; Marable, 1983/2000; Meri & Rudwick, 1966; Smith, 1972; Steinberg, 1981/1989; Washington, 1901/1995). Presumably, U. S. born African Reconstruction consisted of acclimating former slaves to the opportunity structures available in the United States. In retribution for being physically enslaved for nearly two hundred and fifty years this new U. S. government or Freedmen Bureau announced it would locate adequate employment, education and housing opportunities for the former slaves. In addition, former slaves were promised that all efforts would be made to reconnect them with lost family members as well as in some instances the option for repatriation.

More specifically, former slaves were publicly informed they would be allotted land or property in the form of “forty acres and a mule” (DuBois, 1935/1998; Marable, 1983/2000; Steinberg, 1981/1989). U. S. born Africans genuinely thought their opportunity for a fresh and equitable start was upon them. However, it was the Freedman Bureau that ironically set the former slaves up for a revisited form of slavery and/or sustained economic poverty (Steinberg, 1981/1989). Southern former slaveholders who headed the Freedmen’s Bureau were more so interested in creatively figuring out how to hold on to their cheap labor base. Former slaveholders by any means did not want to lose the lucrative profits garnered from the plantation. These plantations were innovatively reframed by Southerner powerbrokers as sharecropping fields. They schemed and plotted under the guise that they genuinely were offering viable economic opportunities to all former slaves. Members of the Freedom Bureau were aware that most former slaves

were not literate. Consequently, they used this opportunity to trick a number of the former slaves into signing contracts. In exchange for working the sharecropping fields and residing in the sharecropping communities the Freedmen's Bureau "promised" or "guaranteed" education, shelter, good work wages as well as property or land.

"Instead of effecting a land redistribution program, the Freedmen's Bureau became the chief instrument for organizing a system of contract labor that reduced the black population of the South to a state of virtual peonage. The bureau's strategy was to draw up model contracts, and to prevail upon planters alike to sign them.... Freedmen were guaranteed specific wages, or in lieu of wages, a share of the crop raised. In addition, their employers enjoined to provide shelter, food, and medical care for their employees. In return, employers received a binding obligation from their laborers to work for the duration for the contract. The bureau arrogated to itself the right to supervise the contracts and to adjudicate any disputes....

... Above all else, they (ex-slaves) were repelled by the idea of returning to work for their former masters. Furthermore, by signing the contracts, they were essentially surrendering their freedom to quit their jobs or to strike for higher wages, and would be bonded to their employers and subject to a regimentation, including the possibility of harsh punishment, that was not very different from slavery itself. Thus it is hardly surprising that freedmen balked at signing contracts, and jealously guarded their newly acquired freedom to choose the conditions of their own employment" (Steinberg, (1981/1989, 192-193).

Steinberg (1981/1989) asserts, given significant number of former slaves refused to sign these contracts, former white slave holders and all interested parties became more manipulative and persistent at devising ways to acquire the former slaves as cheap labor. Southern political figures implemented a set of laws entitled the "*Black*" Code. These codes were a set of legally binding rules more so or laws that gave Southern powerbrokers the means to organize former slaves as cheap labor. Given that all "promises" made during this period of reconstruction were moot at best, hundreds of thousands of former slaves were homeless. The "Black" Codes gave the South the ability to establish "vagrancy laws" which permitted any former slave to be incarcerated if he or

she were to be deemed “idle”, “vagrant”, homeless and/or immoral. Once incarcerated inmates were then forced to work the sharecropping fields presumably to pay off their punitive debt to society.

“Blacks who had sought refuge in government camps had been pushed to the brink of starvation by the very people to whom they had turned for protection. In a sense, it was the Freedmen’s Bureau that carried out the southern planters’ dictate, ‘Work, nigger, or starve.’

An equally oppressive device, specifically designed to force blacks to sign labor contracts, was the use of vagrancy laws and the threat of vagrancy arrest... Between 1865 and 1867 most southern states passed Black Codes which included vagrancy laws that not only provided for the arrest of “idle” blacks, but also provided that “vagrants” could be hired out at public auction for as long as a year” (Steinberg, 1981/1989, 195).

The former slaves’ trek for equal opportunity was extremely difficult to say the least. Although the slaves were “free”, *what were they free to do? Where were they expected to go? How exactly were they to be implemented as full participants and beneficiaries of this democracy?* White liberals in the North arrogantly reveled in their defeat over the South at the expense of the former slaves. The conditions that the former slaves would endure during this professed moment of reconstruction were appalling if not horrendous to put it lightly (Bennett, 1961/1993; DuBois, 1899/1967; DuBois, 1935/1998; Higgs and Margo, 1995; Lane, 1986; Latif & Latif, 1994; Steinberg, 1981/1989; Washington, 1901/1995). Slaves primarily traveled in throngs throughout the Southern and Northern portions of the United States seeking a fleeting notion by the name of “freedom” from 1865 to the late 1800’s. Hundreds of thousands former slaves left their plantations with no real goal or direction. The option to leave the plantation was good enough—so they thought. The streets were filled with droves of the lost. Most of these former slaves were subjected to widespread rates of poverty that often resulted in continued illiteracy, disease, homelessness, interpersonal conflict as well as substance

abuse. The former slaves took with them what ever they could literally pack on their backs when leaving the plantations. As a consequence of the brutal trek, healthcare needs developed in vast proportions. Significant former slaves became diseased and grew famished. Great numbers of ex-slaves' within the refugee camps were noted for the cuts and/or torn flesh on their bodies. Refugee camps or shelters oftentimes were crowded, unsanitary and largely under resourced. Death was frequent inside these camps. Those who were the worst off or the most vulnerable typically were children and the elderly. Given these conditions some former slaves opted to reside on the plantation.

Several researchers note that the conditions U. S. born Africans found themselves mired in after “emancipation” had tremendous effects on their social development as a people or community. Higgs and Margo (1995/1998) assert that these “abysmal conditions” primarily had two monumental effects on U. S. born Africans at this time. These conditions produced infectious diseases of an overwhelming magnitude as well as it quelled or snatched the building momentum to mount an organized revolt against the former slave holders or larger U. S. government. Bennett (1961/1993) notes the period of reconstruction was damaging to the fabric of the U. S. born African family—almost more so than slavery itself. The period that followed after the Civil War symbolized, to the former slaves, the permanent sealing off or restructuring of the African family. The former slaves, oftentimes to no avail, diligently sought after family members.

“Painfully, in fear and trembling, with almost every hand raised against them, they picked up the threads of a social life that had been shattered centuries before in Africa... Witnesses said the roads of the South were clogged in 1865 with black men and women searching for long-lost wives, husbands, children, brothers and sisters. Some of the searchers were successful, but many families were never reunited. In some instances, if we are to believe stories told afterwards by the freemen, certain blacks entered into marriages only to discover

later that they had accidentally married a brother or sister or some other close relative” (219).

DuBois (1935/1998) convincingly argues in *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860 – 1880* that former slaves in their horrid condition demonstrated a profound will, nonetheless, to endure their circumstance. They passionately and specifically called for educational opportunities as well as other basic opportunities open to “free” citizens of this society. Former slaveholders, nonetheless, persistently sought to reframe in their favor the egregious conditions of the ex-slaves during reconstruction. They publicly attributed the ex-slaves new found condition as clear evidence of their “laziness” in hopes of covering up their own inhumanity. According to Dubois (1935/1998):

“Slavery was not abolished even after the Thirteenth Amendment. There were four million and most of that they did before emancipation, except as their work had been interrupted and changed by the upheaval of war. Moreover, they were getting about the same wages and apparently were going to be subject to slave codes modified only in name. There were among them thousands of fugitives in the camps of soldiers or on the streets of the cities, homeless, sick and impoverished. They had been freed practically with no land nor money and, save in exceptional cases, without legal status, and without protection.

... they were neither vindictive nor cruel towards their former masters, although they were quite naturally widely accused of ‘laziness’ and ‘impudence,’ which are the only weapons of offense which a rising social class can easily use.

These black men wanted freedom; they wanted education; they wanted protection... Yet after the war they were still not free; they were still practically slaves, and how was their freedom to be made a fact?” (188-189).

Booker T. Washington (1901/1995) and his family were very fortunate compared to most former slaves. While Washington was a boy, he and his family had to relocate to what was considered a much improve refuge camp in West Virginia. Their experience here was very revealing or telling of how a street life orientation evolved during this

period in the African male experience. Washington's (1901/1995) portrayal of how he lived resembled not only the slave quarters of past but also it mirrored the troubling issues present in contemporary housing projects and/or inner city communities. These camps were notoriously known to struggle with issues such as space and sanitation as well as substance abuse and interpersonal violence.

“My stepfather had already secured a job at a salt-furnace, and he had also secured a little cabin for us to live in. Our new house was no better than the one we had left on the old plantation in Virginia. In fact, in one respect it was worse. Notwithstanding the poor condition of our plantation cabin, we were at all times sure of pure air. Our new home was in the midst of a cluster of cabins crowded closely together, and as there were no sanitary regulations, the filth about the cabins was often intolerable. Some of our neighbours were coloured people, and some were the poorest and most ignorant and degraded white people. It was a motely mixture. Drinking, gambling, quarrels, fights, and shockingly immoral practices were frequent” (Washington, 1901/1995, 13).

The U. S. born African male within these barbarous circumstances had to locate a means to survive. It is during this period that a deep concentration of street life activities developed at a rate comparable to contemporary standards (DuBois, 1899/1967; Perkins, 1987; Thrasher, 1927/1966; Woodson, 1933/1990). U. S. born African gangs or crime syndicates as well as participation in them began to develop rapidly. Particular hustles such as selling cocaine, moonshine, illegal gambling, prostitution or murder began to sharpen in U. S. born African communities throughout the South, in the North specifically in cities like New York and Philadelphia as well as in the Midwest particularly in Chicago. However, it is important to note that at large, U. S. born Africans adjusted to this second era in *multiple ways*. A street life orientation was only one of several adaptations U. S. born Africans employed in their new or evolved condition. According to Dubois (1935/1998):

“There was no one kind of Negro who was freed from slavery. The freedmen were not an undifferentiated group; there were those among them who were cowed and altogether bitter. There were the cowed who were humble; there were those openly bitter and defiant, but whipped into submission, or ready to run away. There were the debauched and the furtive, petty thieves and licentious scoundrels. There were the few who could read and write, and some even educated beyond that. There were the children and grandchildren of white masters; there were the house servants, trained in manners, and in servile respect for the upper classes. There were the ambitious, who sought by means of slavery to gain favor or even freedom; there were the artisans, who had a certain modicum of freedom in their work; were often hired out, and worked practically as free laborers. The impact of legal freedom upon these various classes differed in all sorts of ways” (125).

The most aspired traditional pursuit sought after by ex-slaves was education (Marable, 1983/2000; Washington, 1901/1995). Although one in twenty or less than 10% of ex-slaves were literate in 1865 by 1900 six out of 10 U. S. born Africans were able to read and write (Bennett, 1961/1993; Marable, 1983/2000; Lemann, 1991). According to Lemann (1991), the white power structure intentionally marketed U. S. born Africans as unintelligible or inherently ignorant in addition to creating conditions to keep the former slaves illiterate as a means to ensure a cheap labor base. The conditions of these schools were horrendous at best.

Although inhumane educational conditions prevailed within the U. S. Born African community it is important to quickly note that a new and smaller middle class group of U. S. born Africans were concurrently evolving in concentration toward the close of the century or at the end of reconstruction. The larger country towards the close of reconstruction had begun to develop its footing as a vibrant force on the world stage. A required standard education was relatively a new phenomenon not only for U. S. Born Africans but for the country as a whole (Anderson, 1988). A concerted effort, between 1880 – 1930, was made by state and local governments to open high schools to the larger

public and not simply the wealthy. Specifically, it was during this period that the notion of “public” schools developed at a rapid pace in relation to the private institutions that had previously existed for the wealthy. At the beginning of this period less than 3% of all high school age students across the country were enrolled in high school. A number of these public schools across ethnic lines struggled with issues of truancy and school violence (Anderson, 1988; DuBois, 1889/1967; Thrasher, 1927/1966). It was not until the early 1920’s where U. S. born Africans, at large, were in a position to access the benefits of a secondary education. The new or developing group of middle class U. S. born Africans, particularly as they merged with Northern white liberals, seized a key opportunity through this national education initiative to build an economic and political base. It was through this socio-economic and political collaboration that the opportunity for U. S. born Africans to develop resourced learning institutions in mass came. Once extended an opportunity to learn, those who could capitalized on it demonstrated an immense hunger to be educated, thus, refuting popular notions that U. S. born Africans were inherently ignorant or against education (Anderson, 1988; Bennett; 1961/1993; Lane, 1986; Marable, 1983/2000; Smith, 1972; Woodson, 1933/199). Although, middle class U. S. born Africans generally capitalized off of this new educational opportunity, it is important to note that the entire U. S. born African community (middle class – street life oriented) saw learning or education as a site of resiliency. Marable (1983/2000) says, “After the Civil War, Black women, men and children recognized that their lack of education permanently restricted them to a life of agricultural penury and economic exploitation... Primary, secondary and university-level education was viewed as a decisive means to end the vicious cycle of racial underdevelopment” (216). This

burgeoning middle class group would play a critical role in developing a number of monumental African post-secondary institutions or colleges during this period. Woodson (1933/1999) in his book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, discusses the advances made by this new middle class intelligentsia during this period. In addition, to highlighting or congratulating this new intelligentsia, he virulently charges the new “educated Negro” with suffering from a crude form of assimilation. Woodson (1993/1999) faults the schools and/or the educational system with the mainstream socialization or indoctrination of “Negroes”. Specifically, he argues that the “educated Negro” has developed the nasty habits of the white power structure. Woodson (1933/1999) asserts that as the “educated Negro” became more educated they increasingly became more “selfish”, competitive and less “human” as well as more apt to betray their community in favor of traditional success. He says:

“The Negroes thus placed in charge would be the products of the same system and would show no more conception of the task at hand than do the whites who have educated and shaped their minds as they would have them function. Negro educators of today may have more sympathy and interest in the race than the whites exploiting Negro institutions as educators, but the former have no more vision than their competitors. Taught from books of the same bias, trained by Caucasians of the same prejudices or by Negroes of enslaved minds, one generation of Negro teachers after another have served for no higher purpose than to do what they are told to do. In other words, a Negro teacher instructing Negro children is in many respects a white teacher thus engaged, for the program in each is about the same” (23).

Since the late 1800’s or at the close of reconstruction two divergent streams of educational experiences evolved within the U. S. born African community. Although most Africans who attended school had access to egregious school facilities, there was a growing number of middle class Africans who were able to receive more quality

educational opportunities. Specifically, low income Africans, which were the majority of Africans, attended elementary and secondary schools that were segregated, over crowded, and/or hugely under resourced (Anderson, 1988; Hershberg, 1981; Katz 1995; Lane, 1986; Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993; Smith, 1972). The widely marketed promise “the land of opportunity” was obscured and dismissed by these dilapidated educational facilities. Lane (1986) asserts that there were three reasons in the late 1870’s why U. S. born Africans educational development was negatively impacted. He notes that the systematic blockage or sealing off of opportunity in the African community was due to school segregation, not enough or poorly trained African teachers as well as standardized testing practices. Lane (1986) says, “The whole system was flawed and chronically under attack... The black directors could not by themselves make much difference. Although some progress was made in all three areas, the pace was slow, in part because the three objectives clashed with each other and in part because, in a test, the local boards themselves were virtually helpless” (69). Consequently, negative attitudes toward opportunity persisted in the students and larger community, thus playing a key role into accelerating the concentration of street life activities within the U. S. born African community. For some, if they were serious about economically surviving, it just made more sense to engage in street life practices. Street life activities developed and became more concentrated inside the schools as well (Bennett, 1961/1993; Marable, 1983/2000; Thrasher, 1927/1966). According to Thrasher (1927/1966) street life practices during this period was an overwhelming and prevalent issue occurring within the “slums” of Chicago across ethnic lines. Thrasher (1927/1966) concluded in his study how schools played a significant role in the development and conditioning of a street life

orientation in a number of its students. Thrasher (1927/1966) describes how schools in Chicago directly and regularly assisted the correctional system in having its “incorrigible” students incarcerated. Specifically, he notes how a number of schools struggled with street life issues such as truancy, drop-out rates, gambling as well as interpersonal violence. He also mentioned that more serious street life activities sometimes occurred directly outside of the school involving knives and guns.

“When it (truancy) recurs frequently the gang boy receives treatment at the hands of officials who seek to enforce their definition of the situation. If a truant, placed in an incorrigible room at school, does not standardize his conduct, he enjoys the first side trip of his career in being “put away” in the Chicago Parental School, maintained for the institutional care of chronic truants. He may be held first for a few days in the Juvenile Detention Home, which the gang boys call the “Juvenile County Jail.” This experience gives him great prestige with the other boys when he gets back into the gang and tells his story. Too often it is the first milestone in a course of personal disorganization, which often leads either to successful criminality or to prison...

Although ‘playing hookey’ seems innocuous to the casual observer, under city conditions of the gangland type it contains the germs of later delinquencies. Boys in truant gangs soon learn to sleep away from home and eventually they may absent themselves for weeks or months at a time” (258 - 259).

Thrasher (1927/1966) cites an excerpt from a report developed by a social agency interested in evaluating street life practices within a particular school in Chicago. This excerpt is very revealing of the concentrated degree of the problem of street life activities inside the schools especially given that the excerpt is a notation regarding the activities of middle school students. Specifically, this report is based on interviews with twenty-four eighth-grade boys from twelve to sixteen years old. Twelve of the boys were members of gangs.

“Twelve boys belonged to gangs. According to the principal, there is extreme need of constructive action in this section: the streets and even school yards are infested with gangs, the activities of which are destructive of property and character. The influence of these gangs over younger

boys is most demoralizing. One tough gang operates near the school and is a menace to discipline and normal life even within the school. A public-school center conducted five nights a week would prove of incalculable value to the neighborhood” (261).

Given that millions of displaced Africans had no place to go during Reconstruction an evolved street life expression manifested within the resistant or rebellious variant of the community. According to scholars of this time period, street life activities within the U. S. born African community grew to become a national epidemic (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Dubois, 1899/1967; Lane, 1986; Thrashers, 1927/1966; Woodson, 1933/1990). It is during the second half of this period where street life activities become more centered. A more developed system manifested within the community in terms of how the activities were going to work in an organized or consistent basis. In the context of this second period the street life oriented U. S. born African male simply became better aware of how to work inconjunction with other crews in his neighborhood as well as the police and white mafia. It is in this period where stability or structure is given to his street life orientation.

I will now briefly but more closely examine the street life activities of U. S. born African men specifically in relation to the two spaces they generally occupied during this time period: (1) Southern sharecropping community and (2) Northern urban or inner city community. Put another way, a lack of economic opportunity or mobility specifically led many former slaves to engage in street life practices primarily within Southern sharecropping communities as well as in Northern inner city communities (i. e. New York, Philadelphia or Chicago).

Sharecropping Communities

The sharecropping system was developed by slaveholders during the Civil War or between 1861-1862 as means to reform or salvage their economic system of slavocracy (Meier & Rudwick, 1966). Although a northern U. S. African born migration took place immediately after slavery, the bulk of former slaves remained in the south where many of them entered the sharecropping community as a way to secure economic opportunity (Bennett, 1961/1993; Lemann, 1991; Marable, 1983/2000; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001; Meir & Rudwick, 1966; Smith, 1972; Steinberg, 1981/1989). The sharecropping system outwardly had the appearance of decent or fair employment. However, the former slaves would come to find out upon being manipulated and deceptively lured to the sharecropping fields that this form of employment greatly resembled slavery. Former slaveholders in most instances issued or leased out plots of land to all field hands under a particular arrangement. In most cases, although the contracts were legally binding they were bogus in many respects given that they were blatantly designed to keep the field hand in debt given the outrageous fees stipulated in the contract. Thus, legally obligating the slave to work for the slaveholder. In addition, workers were regularly abused on the sharecropping fields. The wages they received ensured members of the sharecropping community to live in an endless cycle of utter poverty literally with no way out of the system. The living and health conditions were horrendous within the sharecropping communities. These communities resembled or had the make up of some of our most notorious contemporary housing projects or inner city communities. These communities simply and literally were a crude evolution of the slave quarters (Lemann, 1991; Massey & Denton, 1993/2001). Massey & Denton (1993/2001)

assert: “In 1870, 80% of black Americans still lived in the rural south, where they were exploited by a sharecropping system that was created by white landowners to replace slavery; they were terrorized by physical violence and mired in an institutionalized cycle of ignorance and poverty” (18).

The schools developed within the sharecropping communities often were the equivalent of a larger room generally within a church or a barn. This space generally housed all of the grades of the school. Sharecropper owners were known to stop classes or schools whenever they figured it interrupted the agricultural responsibilities of the farm. In many respects the conditions of the school were a mockery of the craft of learning. Upon creating the conditions for academic failure, former slaveholders held the academic inefficiencies of the students or former slaves as evidence of their inherent inferiority. These abysmal sites of learning or schools were a way to ensure the former slaves to work the fields given they were not prepared or in no position to be prepared to access any other opportunities. Lemann (1991) asserts, “... whites created a spectacularly poor school system for blacks that was designed to produce graduates who were only marginally literate; then whites would point to blacks’ deficiencies in speaking and writing standard English as proof that blacks were ineducable” (26). The sharecropping community in particular as well as the larger southern community was commonly known for its overwhelming rates of illiteracy as well as substance abuse (i. e. moonshine) and interpersonal violence ranging from physical fighting, knifing and shootings. A number of the men who were incarcerated from such activities were placed on the chain gang or convict leasing another brutal form of legal slavery. Marable (1983/2000) poignantly notes how former slaves were unjustly betrayed the United

States, “In Reconstruction, the masses demanded universal education and forty acres and a mule; they received instead political leadership of an uneven quality and sharecropping and convict leasing” (136).

Although most former slaves remained in the South, reconstruction spawned a migration of U. S. born Africans to the northern states that lasted for approximately one hundred years. It is important to note that significant numbers of Africans were already present in the North and Midwest; however, given emancipation a greater concentration of Africans would now develop in these areas as a result of reconstruction.

Northern Urban Centers

In search of economic opportunity, former slaves came up North by the tens of thousands primarily to inner cities like New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Given the success of the Civil War as well as the heavy promotion of economic opportunities being available in the Northern factories, former slaves were led to believe they would have a solid shot at quality employment (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; DuBois, 1935/1998). Former slaves desperately desired the opportunity to live and work in conditions more hospitable than the conditions in South. However, it soon became clear that the widely publicized northern working and living opportunities were greatly misleading (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; DuBois, 1899/1967; Lane, 1986; Woodson, 1933/1990; Thrasher, 1927/1966; other). The work and living conditions encountered in the North in many respects were equivalent to the heinous conditions of the South. It eventually became apparent to the former slaves that the northern powerbrokers were more interested in securing a cheap labor force for their factories to capitalize off the lucrative Industrial Revolution as opposed to providing quality work experience for the sake of humanitarian

efforts. In fact, the U. S. born Africans of the South were specifically being recruited to undercut the influx of European immigrants (Italians, Irish, Polish as well as Russian and German Jews) given that the former slaves in many instances unknowingly worked for cheaper. These immigrants like the former slaves lived in utter economic squalor within these northern cities (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Katz, 1995; Thrasher, 1927/1966). In fact, street life activities was more concentrated and organized in white urban communities than it was for U. S. born African urban communities during this period (Dubois, 1935/1998; Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Lane, 1986; Perkins, 1987; Suttles, 1968/1974; Thrasher, 1927/1966; Whyte, 1943/1973). Nonetheless, since the former slaves were use to working hard under the foulest of conditions, in most instances they more willing to work longer and harder than many of the Northern whites and European immigrants. Given that a number of these immigrants were fleeing poverty, disease and persecution themselves, engaged in street life activities in mass proportion and desperately seeking economic opportunity in the United States some of the most brutal race riots this country has experienced would occur during this time period as a result of former slaves seeking and accepting employment in Northern factories. Once it was clear that the heralded economic opportunity in the North was a farce a number of U. S. born Africans as opposed to returning down South to the sharecropping communities, instead engaged in street life practices in their new Northern home as a means to secure economic opportunity (Cayton & Drake, 1945/191993; DuBois, 1899/1967; Lane, 1986; Perkins, 1987; Steinberg, 1981/1989; Thrasher, 1927/1966). In this unforeseen scenario, engaging in street life practices just seem to be more logical given the circumstance they were mired in.

Dubois (1899/1967) asserts:

“It cannot be denied the main results of the development of the Philadelphia Negro since the war have on the whole disappointed well-wishers. They do not pretend that he has not made great advance in certain lines or even that in general he is even better off today than formerly... there is a widespread feeling that more might reasonably have been expected in the line of social and moral development than apparently has been accomplished... an abnormal and growing amount of crime and poverty can justly be charged to the Negro; he is not a large taxpayer, holds no conspicuous place in the business world or the world of letters, and even as a working man seems to be losing ground... And this local problem is after all but a small manifestation of the larger and similar Negro problems throughout the land” (43).

It is during this second period and particularly within this Northern and Midwestern urbanized space where the evolution of his street life orientation is most pronounced. Given the vast options for illegal hustles in these Northern and Midwestern states, his street life identity in these spaces would develop searing credibility. With little available legal economic opportunity, living in some of the most egregious circumstances known to the human experience as well as the multi-varied option to profit from illegal activities all lead to the deep concentration of these activities primarily within Midwestern and Northern states. Also, the introduction of the handgun during the late 1800's and allowing for them to be widely accessible facilitated the extensive criminal activities noted in these states (Lane, 1986). The craftiness and ingenuity of these handguns simply made for a more evolved criminal. With respect to the varied hustles or options for illegal employment available during this second period Lane (1986) writes:

“In the period following the Civil War, the world of urban professional crime was highly specialized and roughly graded in several tiers. Forgers and counterfeiters rated at or near the top, as pairs, could bring in large amounts of cash when working the right territory. Hotel thieves or sneaks were not the same as second-story men. Among burglars, safeblowers outranked safebursters in the recognized hierarchy, and safebursters in turn outranked safebreakers. Afro-Americans, however, were confined largely to the simplest, most direct and least

rewarding of crimes by the very nature of the business. The most successful crooks, whatever their individual talents or specialties, were all in some sense confidence men, skillful actors, in a way that no black could" (p. 97).

Chicago (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993; Perkins, 1987; Suttles, 1968/1974; Thrasher, 1927/1966; Wilson, 1987) and Philadelphia (Anderson, 1990; DuBois, 1899/1967, 1935/1998; Hershberg, 1981; Lane, 1986; U. S. Kerner Commission, 1988) are two big cities with a documented legacy of this social phenomenon specifically involving its U. S. born African male population. These cities and the work written on them is simply some of the most profound evidence of not only the Northern and MidWestern urbanized experience of street life, but this work is evidence that this social phenomenon, at least as we understand it today, has vibrantly been at play within the U. S. born African community for well over one hundred years.

Useni Eugene Perkins in his book, *Explosion of Chicago's Black Street Gangs: 1900 to Present*, traces the history of Chicago gangs as strikingly noted in the title to 1900. Perkins (1987) shrewdly distinguishes between activities that are "gang-oriented" or "gang-conspired" versus "individually" initiated crime to make his argument regarding the concentration of street life activity in Chicago. He asserts while the organized system of a gang as we understand it contemporarily did not have an explosion in Chicago in the U. S. born African community until the 1940's, this does not dismiss the concentration of "individual" based or more sparse criminal activity in this same community. Perkins (1987) argues that "gang oriented" behavior between 1900 – 1930 developed in the U. S. born African community as a result of four reasons: (1) Midwestern migration to mostly undeveloped, unhealthy and overcrowded living areas, (2) subsequent decline of African values, (3) major and bloody Race Riot of 1919 where U. S. born African men explicitly

organized themselves into gangs to defend their communities against “white hoodlums”, (4) inadequate city agencies that were presumably set up to assist economically impoverished U. S. born African families and youth as well as (5) overwhelming street idleness as a result of poor quality employment which oftentimes turned over into the participation of illegal activities. Thrasher (1927/1966) in his classic study, *The Gang: A Study of 1, 313 Gangs in Chicago*, discusses what was referred to as the “Black” Belt of Chicago as being notoriously known for its criminal activity by street life oriented U. S. born African men. The “Black” Belt was formed as a result of the “Great Chicago Fire” in 1871 (Drake & Cayton, 1945/1993). The fire was so destructive to the city that it was responsible for at a least \$ 200 million worth damage. It left 100, 000 people homeless. Interestingly enough, the fire destroyed the homes and businesses primarily of white citizens. White citizens in mass temporarily relocated themselves in the “Black” Belt of Chicago while their homes and businesses were being rebuilt. Organized crime elements during their stay in the “Black” Belt used the chance to organize operations within this section of town. Given the increased economic poverty and overcrowdedness in the “Black” Belt from the influx of Southern U. S. born Africans, white mobsters seized their opportunity to establish serious organized elements of prostitution and gambling. A deep concentration of street life activities in the low-income U. S. born African communities of Chicago has remained ever since. Thrasher’s (1927/1966) study gets underneath the richness of street life activities present in the “Black” Belt during this second period.

“... the ‘Black Belt,’ Chicago’s most extensive Negro area which stretches southward with varying breadth to Sixty-third Street, a distance of about six miles... Gangs are most numerous in the poorer sections and especially in the so-called ‘crime spots’ where gambling, robbery, and murder are prevalent. The gangs of the Black Belt include: those for whom a pool hall serves as a clubroom and center of interest; gangs of mixed membership, like the ‘Dirty Sheiks’ and

‘Wailing Shebas’; and at least one group which specializes in dope peddling. The ‘Wolves,’ ‘Twiggles,’ and ‘Royal Eclipse’ are well known in the area” (14).

W. E. B. DuBois’s, (1899/1967) *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, is a multi-method sociological exploration of the living and health conditions of low income U. S. born Africans in the seventh ward of Philadelphia. The seventh ward of Philadelphia was well known for its concentration of economic poverty and criminal activity during the second period. DuBois and his research team implemented survey, interview and observational techniques to examine this social phenomenon. Specifically, DuBois’s (1899/1967) study documented the prevalent rates of illegal gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, interpersonal violence of all sorts as well as the deep concentration of economic poverty generally manifested in the seventh wards extensive struggles with homelessness, dilapidated buildings and poor health conditions. DuBois (1899/1967) vehemently argues that criminal activity in the seventh ward of Philadelphia was simply the result of a lack of economic opportunity.

“Notwithstanding all this, most Negroes would patiently await the effect of time and commonsense on such prejudice did it not to-day touch them in matters of life and death; threaten their homes, their food, their children, their hopes. And the result of this is bound to be increased crime, inefficiency and bitterness.

It would, of course be idle to assert that most of the Negro crime was caused by prejudice; the violent economic and social changes which the last fifty years have brought to the American Negro, the sad social history that preceded these changes, have all contributed to unsettle morals and pervert talents... Certainly a great amount of crime can be without doubt be traced to the discrimination against Negro boys and girls in the matter of employment...

... The social environment of excuse, listless despair, careless indulgence and lack of inspiration to work is the growing force that turns black boys and girls into gamblers, prostitutes and rascals. And this social environment has been built up slowly out of the disappointments of deserving men and the sloth of the unawakened” (350-351).

Given the drastic effects of World War I, a floundering economy and the prevalence of street life activities in virtually every low-income community, our country would hit its first “great” economic downfall, the Great Depression in 1929. The Great Depression along with a host of other factors would send the street life oriented African male into his next evolution state the *Third Period: 2nd Phase of Urbanization for Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men* (See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a continued discussion on the socio-historical development of these men).

In closing of Appendix I, the streets as experienced and understood through the low income U. S. born African male, can be traced to the slave ships during the Middle Passage where some scholars estimate a 100 million Africans to have died. We would again see this street energy in the South on the slave plantation and in the slave quarters; we also saw him during this same time period in the Northern and Western regions of the United States where he held vibrant street life orientations until the end of the Civil War. It is during the second period 1866-1929 where we see the first major metamorphous or adaptation of his orientation. Specifically, it is during this period where his orientation, mainly as a function of his migration from the South to the North and Midwest, increasingly becomes more urbanized particularly in places like New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

Appendix II

Individual Interview Protocol

Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Boys

1. What does street life mean to you?
2. Why do you think some boys involve themselves in street life activities in high school?
3. What disadvantages does street life activities have to offer in and out of high school?
4. Do you feel that you are respected by your teachers and the school overall?
5. Do you think having sufficient financial resources is important to getting a good education?
6. Do you think you have the same kinds of chances to excel in this society as other high students throughout larger America?
7. Where do you see yourself after high school? What is your dream career?

Street Life Oriented U. S. Born African Men – Community Sample

1. What does street life mean to you?
2. Why do you think some boys involve themselves in street life activities in high school?
3. What disadvantages does street life activities have to offer in and out of high school?
4. Do you feel U. S. born African boys in general from your community are respected by their teachers and the school overall?

5. Given that you are out of high school, what do you think would have to be in place for someone like you to completely benefit from high school?

6. Do you think you have the same kinds of chances to excel in this society as other high students throughout larger America?

7. What is your dream career?

Appendix IIA

Group Interview Protocol

Street Life Oriented U. S. born African Boys

1. What do you think Styles is trying to communicate to the listener?
2. Which lines in the song stand out for you? What do you think is trying to say in the chorus?
3. Why do you think some boys involve themselves in street life activities in high school?
4. What disadvantages does street life activities have to offer in and out of high school?
5. Do you think you have the same kinds of chances to excel in this society as other high students throughout larger America?

Street Life Oriented U. S. born African Men

1. What do you think Styles is trying to communicate to the listener?
2. Which lines in the song stand out for you? What do you think is trying to say in the chorus?

3. Why do you think some boys involve themselves in street life activities in high school as well as outside of high school?
4. What disadvantages does street life activities have to offer out of high school?
5. Do you think you have the same kinds of chances to excel in this society as other men throughout larger America?

Appendix III

INFORMATION PAGE (High School Participant Survey)

***Informed Consent/Assent Form for CUNY
Research Project***

My name is Yasser Payne and I am a doctoral student in the Social-Personality Psychology Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and Principal Investigator of this project entitled, "The Resilient Stories of Street-Life Oriented-Black-Men in and out of High School."

Black men who participate in this study need to meet the following description: (1) self-identify as being street-life oriented, (2) self-identify as African-American, (3) currently attend high school, (4) within the last year participated in street life activities to survive physically (gang activity, fighting/assault, etc.) or economically (selling narcotics, number running, etc.) and (5) by government standards live in an economically impoverished position.

I would like your permission to survey you about your experiences. This survey will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions or end answering the survey at any time. For your time I will pay you \$10. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the confidentiality of information obtained.

I would like to know how you think about your opportunities, and why some young Black men resort to engaging in street life activities. This study may provide educators and policymakers with information that has not been available to them before. It is important to note that in exploring your street-life activities, it's possible that some feelings of anxiety may arise as a result of talking how poverty impacts you in your daily experiences as a young man. You will be given a list of nearby counseling services, social workers and community program developed for African-American men and boys that you may wish to contact. However, you may also find it helpful to explore thinking and talking about your experiences.

All information gathered will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the Graduate Center, which only I, and my advisor, will have access. I plan to publish results of this study, but names of people or any identifying characteristics will be not used in ay of the publications If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you are under 18 years of age, you will be given a written explanation of this study for your parents or guardians.

If you have any questions you may contact me at the Graduate Center at (212) 817-1897 or email address. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710 or mfine@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, (212) 817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will give you this form to take with you.

Sincerely,

Yasser A Payne

Appendix IIIA

**INFORMATION PAGE (High School
Participant Interview)**

My name is Yasser Payne and I am a doctoral student in the Social-Personality Psychology Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and Principal Investigator of this project entitled, "The Resilient Stories of Street-Life Oriented-Black-Men in and out of High School."

Black men who participate in this study need to meet the following description: (1) self-identify as being street-life oriented, (2) self-identify as African-American, (3) currently attend high school, (4) within the last year participated in street life activities to survive physically (gang activity, fighting/assault, etc.) or economically (selling narcotics, number running, etc.) and (5) by government standards live in an economically impoverished position.

I would like your permission to interview you about your experiences. The interview will take approximately an hour and a half. With your permission I would like to audio-tape this interview. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions or end the interview at any time. For your time I will pay you \$20. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the confidentiality of information obtained.

I would like to know how you think about your opportunities, and why some young Black men resort to engaging in street life activities. This study may provide educators and policymakers with information that has not been available to them before. It is important to note that in exploring your street-life activities, it's possible that some feelings of anxiety may arise as a result of talking how poverty impacts you in your daily experiences as a young man. You will be given a list of nearby counseling services, social workers and community program developed for African-American men and boys that you may wish to contact. However, you may also find it helpful to explore thinking and talking about your experiences.

All information gathered will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the Graduate Center, which only I, and my advisor, will have access. I plan to publish results of this study, but names of people or any identifying characteristics will be not used in any of the

publications If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you are under 18 years of age, you will be given a written explanation of this study for your parents or guardians.

If you have any questions you may contact me at the Graduate Center at (212) 817-1897 or email address. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710 or mfine@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, (212) 817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will give you this form to take with you.

Sincerely,

Yasser A Payne

Appendix IIB

Written Explanation of Research Study For Relevant Parent or Guardian

-High School Participants

My name is Yasser Payne and I am a student in the Social-Personality Psychology Program at the Graduate Center-City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled: *The Resilient Stories of Street Life Oriented Black Men in and out of High School.*

Your child has voluntarily expressed an interest to be participate in this research study. Given the fact that your son is under 18 we are obligated to give this written explanation of the project to your child with the intent of him forwarding it to you.

Specifically, your son has voluntarily participated in a study that is exploring how street life oriented young Black men think about their overall opportunities in this society. The larger goal of this research project is to scientifically document why some young Black men resort to engaging in street life activities. Connecting science with the contemporary street life oriented Black male experience opens up the story to very influential academic and policymaking audiences.

The study is a two-part study involving a set of interviews as well as the completion of an anonymous survey. No identifying information that can connect your son with his interview and/or survey will be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

Participants who completed the survey received \$10 while participants who completed an interview received \$20. *All survey and interview data will be stored in a locked or secured file cabinet at the Graduate Center-City University of New York.*

It is important to note that in exploring issues related to street life activities, it is very possible that some feelings of anxiety may arise as a result of exploring how poverty impacts you in your day-to-day experiences as a young man. All participants will be given a set of phone numbers listing nearby counseling, social workers and community programs developed for African-American men. Further, such a project can provide a kind of catharsis by allowing persons to speak and think out aloud through the details of your experiences.

I will publish results of this study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future. I understand that if I have any other questions or concerns I can call Yasser A. Payne in the Department of

Psychology at the Graduate Center—City University of New York at 212-817-1907 or my advisor, Dr. Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710 or email her at mfine@gc.cuny.edu.

I also understand that if I have any concerns or questions or would like to speak with a representative of the governing body who authorized this project, I can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center-City University of New York, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you,

Yasser A. Payne
Doctorial Candidate
Social-Personality Psychology
Graduate Center-City University of New York
212-817-1897
ypayne@gc.cuny.edu

Appendix IIIC

INFORMATION PAGE (Out of High School Participant Survey)

My name is Yasser Payne and I am a doctoral student in the Social-Personality Psychology Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and Principal Investigator of this project entitled, "The Resilient Stories of Street-Life Oriented-Black-Men in and out of High School."

Black men who participate in this study need to meet the following description: (1) self-identify as being street-life oriented, (2) self-identify as African-American, (3) out of Ohigh school, (4) within the last year participated in street life activities to survive physically (gang activity, fighting/assault, etc.) or economically (selling narcotics, number running, etc.) and (5) by government standards live in an economically impoverished position.

I would like your permission to survey you about your experiences. The survey will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions or end answering the survey at any time. For your time I will pay you \$10. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the confidentiality of information obtained.

I would like to know how you think about your opportunities, and why some young Black men resort to engaging in street life activities. This study may provide educators and policymakers with information that has not been available to them before. It is important to note that in exploring your street-life activities, it's possible that some feelings of anxiety may arise as a result of talking how poverty impacts you in your daily experiences as a young man. You will be given a list of nearby counseling services, social workers and community program developed for African-American men and boys that you may wish to contact. However, you may also find it helpful to explore thinking and talking about your experiences.

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this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, (212) 817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will give you this form to take with you.

Sincerely,

Yasser A Payne
Graduate Student
Social-Personality Psychology
Graduate Center-City University of New York
212-817-1897
ypayne@gc.cuny.edu

Appendix III

INFORMATION PAGE (Out of High School Participant Interview)

Informed Consent/Assent Form for CUNY

Research Project

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I would like your permission to interview you about your experiences. The interview will take approximately one hour and a half to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions or end the interview at any time. For your time I will pay you \$20. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the confidentiality of information obtained.

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If you have any questions you may contact me at the Graduate Center at (212) 817-1897 or email address. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Michelle Fine at (212) 817-8710 or mfine@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, (212) 817-7523 or hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will give you this form to take with you.

Sincerely,

Yasser A Payne
Graduate Student
Social-Personality Psychology
Graduate Center-City University of New York
212-817-1897
ypayne@gc.cuny.edu

Appendix IV**BUDGET****I. Youth Researchers:**

Per Person

Research Methods Training: 4 sessions (2hrs each)
(4 people: \$150 per person)

*Subtotal: \$600***Ia. Compensation:****Lead Research Assistant (1 person)**

1. **\$5,000.00:** Completing the agreed upon task for the research project.
- Co-teach/Co-design Research Methods Training
 - Collect 125 street surveys
 - Assistance with collecting in-school surveys
 - Supervise survey data collection
 - Data entry
 - Data analysis
 - Fulfill Required Readings (2 books and a set of papers)
 - Writing Contributions

*Subtotal: \$5,000.00***Research Assistant (3 persons)**

1. **\$500.00:** Completing the agreed upon task for the research project.
- 25 street surveys
 - 25 in-school surveys
 - Data entry
 - Fulfilling Required Reading (1 book)

*Subtotal: \$1,500.00***II. Data Collection:*****Survey Collection***

400 surveys: (200 surveys per sample: street life oriented
U. S. born African boys and men)

Subtotal: = \$ 4, 000

Qualitative

Group Interviews: 16 people (8 people per sample)
\$20 per interview

Subtotal: = \$420

Individual Interviews: 20 people (10 people per sample)
\$20 per interview

Subtotal: = \$200

TOTAL COSTS: \$11, 720.00

Appendix V -- Opportunity Gap Survey

ID
Grade
School



YOUR OPINIONS about America and your School

We want to know how **you** think about America and your school.

A research team of high school students from New York and New Jersey (some in the photo) and researchers from the Graduate Center, City University, are surveying over 7,000 students from 13 districts in New York City, New Jersey and New York State about your opinions of our country and your schools.

Why?

Because educators, the government, the media and other students need to hear from **students**, not just from politicians, how you feel about the country and your schools.

This is a survey, not a test.

Your name is not on the survey. Nothing will connect your answers to you! There are no right or wrong answers and you don't get a score at the end. Your participation is voluntary. Even though you don't have to answer any of the following questions if you don't feel like answering them, we hope you do, because it's important that people begin to listen to what students think.

Opinions about America

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. People have different opinions about America. Circle the number next to the statement to show how you feel.				
Basically people get fair treatment in America, no matter who they are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the United States, a "low income" student has the same chance of a good education as a "wealthy" student.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have the ability to change the government if we don't like what it is doing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racism is no longer a problem in America.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government doesn't really care what people like my family and I think.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

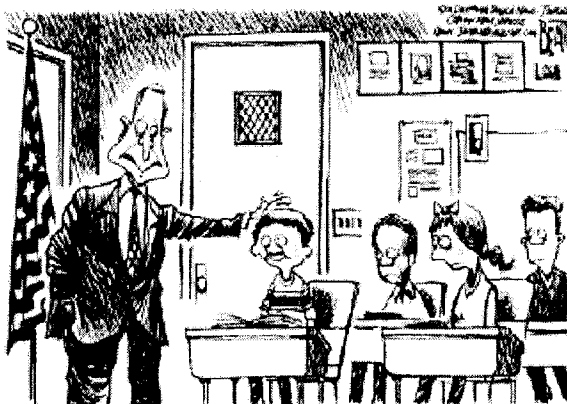
2. How important do you think the following factors are for helping people succeed in America?

Please place a number that describes how you feel on each line below.

1 Not at all Important	2 Not Important	3 Important	4 Very Important
..... Born into a wealthy family	..... Being a good, caring person	..... Being a male	
..... Going to a good school	..... Being a member of a racial minority group	..... Speaking English	
..... Being smart or intelligent	..... Living in a suburban area	..... Being white	
..... Having the right connections	..... Staying away from a bad crowd	..... Studying hard	
..... Being talented in sports	..... Getting some help from the government	..... Living in the city	
..... Managing money well	..... Having enough jobs in their community	..... Being female	
..... Staying out of trouble	..... Being bilingual	..... Working hard	
..... Being an immigrant	..... Being talented in music or art		

3. When you think about your future, how important is each of the following for you?

..... Being close to my family	..... Living in a neighborhood with people like me	..... Getting the job I want
..... Getting a good education	..... Creating a healthy environment	..... Having nice clothes
..... Helping my country	..... Having a safe place to raise my kids	..... Having close friends
..... Ending racism	..... Getting out of the community I live in now	..... Having a secure job
..... Earning a lot of money	..... Helping those who are less fortunate	..... Helping to improve my community
..... Having a position of authority	..... Having an influence on other people	..... Having a family
..... Going to college	..... Changing how this country is run	



"I'm here to emphasize values. Remember...work hard, aim high and always use your parents' connections."

4. What do you think this comic is trying to communicate?

.....

.....

.....

5. How true do you think this comic's message is in your school?

.....

.....

.....

Your School Experiences

6. Students have a variety of experiences in school. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree ▼	Disagree ▼	Agree ▼	Strongly Agree ▼
My culture is respected in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everybody at my school has an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My school is not as good as it should be in providing equal educational opportunities for students of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standardized tests like the Regents or the HSPT test are a good measure of what I have learned in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand most of the material I am asked to read for school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My school has prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I care a lot about my clothes and how I dress in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I care a lot about my grades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes I don't voice my opinion because I worry that my friends or classmates will criticize me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is okay to talk about race and inequality in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think a lesbian or gay student would feel comfortable and equal in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry that standardized tests, like the Regents or the HSPT, could prevent me from graduating from high school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers encourage me to do my best.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes I just can't relate to the curriculum that is taught to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Indicate if the following are true for none, a few, most, or all of the adults (teachers, counselors, and administrators) in your school.

	NONE ▼	A FEW ▼	MOST ▼	ALL ▼
Educators in this school listen to my parents / guardians.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I mess up, educators in my school give me a second chance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My teachers really know and understand me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers care about the students in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My teachers really know how to teach their subject matter well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers treat kids differently in terms of their race / ethnicity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers believe that everyone can achieve high levels if they try.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A student's wealth or poverty affects how teachers treat them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Think of the ladder below as representing the kind of school experience students have at your school. At the top of the ladder are students who have the best possible experience in your school, while the bottom those who have the worst possible experience.

Circle where on this ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time.

10 (or best)
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0 (or worst)

9. Describe what you imagine "the best possible school experience" to be for yourself.

10. Describe what you imagine "the worst possible school experience" to be for yourself.

11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<u>In my school.</u>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most students take pride in our school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are encouraged to take leadership in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most students in low level classes are receiving an education equal to all others in the building.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am very challenged by my courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honors and AP students get treated with the same level of respect as all other students in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most students in special education get the help they need.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honors and AP students think they are smarter than other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is an achievement gap between the races at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money might be a problem that keeps me from going to college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In my school, anyone can achieve if they try hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If you have a problem in school, how do you get help?

13. What is one thing that a teacher has ever said or done that most affected your academic achievement, either positively or negatively?

14. How likely is it that you will pursue the following academic degrees or training after high school?

	Definitely Won't ▼	Probably Won't ▼	Probably Will ▼	Definitely Will ▼
An Associates degree (Community College, or 2 year degree)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Bachelors degree (a 4 year college degree)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Masters degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Professional degree (lawyer, dentist, doctor, engineer, or a Ph.D.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational training (such as mechanics or construction) or Certificate programs (such as computer training or beauty school)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. In many high schools, there seems to be a pattern that more White or Asian students, and fewer African Americans or Latinos, are in Honors / AP classes. is this true in your school?

Please Explain:

16. Look at the chart below, and explain why you think that there is a national "achievement gap" between White, African American, Latino, and Asian American students.

Percentage of Students who Graduate College Graduates by age 24	
Young people from rich families	48%
Young people from poor families	7%
<small>Source: Tom M. Stinson, Research Summary on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity in Post-Secondary, 1997</small>	
Asian Americans	51%
Whites	28%
African Americans	16%
Latinos / Hispanics	10%
<small>Source: US Census Bureau, (1998), Educational Attainment Detailed Tables, October 1998</small>	

Tell us a few things about yourself

17. During the school year, do you ever do paid work?

(for example, in a store, restaurant, or babysitting)

No

Yes

If Yes, Hours per Week _____

18. Describe any responsibilities you have at home.

(for example, taking care of younger brothers or sisters, grandparents, cooking, daily chores, etc.)

19. In high school have you been involved in any of the following? (check all that apply)

College prep courses

Vocational Education

Student Government

Internship

Gifted education

Bilingual education

Tutoring other students

Honors/AP Classes

Special education

English as 2nd Language

Community Service

In/out of school suspension

PSAT/SAT Prep

20. Are you: Male

Female

21. How old are you? _____

22. Many students have conditions that are considered disabilities, like learning disabilities, being blind, deaf, mobility impairments, cerebral palsy, etc. Do you have any conditions that would be considered a disability? Please explain.

23. Students from your school come from families with different resources. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each statement below?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My parents / guardians can afford whatever they want.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents / guardians have a hard time paying for what we need.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. What's the highest grade your parents / guardians completed? ▼

Place a check mark that describes your mother/guardian on the left and your father/guardian on the right

<u>Mother/Guardian</u>		<u>Father/Guardian</u>
.....	9 th grade	.....
.....	10 th grade	.....
.....	11 th grade	.....
.....	GED	.....
.....	High school diploma	.....
.....	Got some training after high school	.....
.....	Got a Bachelor's (4-year college) degree	.....
.....	Beyond a Bachelor's degree	.....

25. People in the United States come from different cultures. Some of these are listed below.

Check all that describe your family's ancestry.

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African - American
- African - Caribbean
- Latino or Hispanic
- White or Caucasian
- Other (Please specify):

26. What is your ZIP Code?

27. Most of the students in my classes are: (Please check one)

- AP / Honors / I.B. level
- Regular / academic
- Remedial
- In special education

28. Think of this ladder representing the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder the worst possible life. Choose the number (0-10) on the ladder that indicates where you feel you personally stand at the present time.

10 (or best)
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0 (or worst)

▼ ▼

29. Describe what you imagine "the worst possible life" to mean for yourself.

30. Describe what you imagine "the best possible life" to mean for yourself.

**This survey was created in part by the following students
(alphabetical by high school):**

Columbia High School, Maplewood, NJ: Yolana Allakhverdev, Jacob Bartholemew, Emily Brisborn, Melanie Harris, Charles Penn

East Side Community High School, New York, NY: Emily Genao, Luis Murillo, Noman Rahman

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, New York, NY: Fidel Tavarez, Murillo Tendilla

Fox Lane High School: Nicole Artis, Phil Bryd, Jeanne Clark, Nicole Lopez, Sekina Robinson

John F. Kennedy High School, Patterson, NJ: Tarrick Ahmad, Shamaya Mickens, Chris Murphy, Mohammed Ramadan, Magisel Rivera

Urban Academy, New York, NY: Adam Feeney, Alexis Jones, Joanna Kocub, Vance Rawles

White Plains High School, White Plains, NY: Jackie Halas, Maria Soto, Peter John Viamonte, Kevin Young

Appendix VI

Adapted Opportunity Gap Survey

YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT THE UNITED STATES AND YOUR HIGH SCHOOL

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) Basically people get fair treatment in the United States, no matter who they are.	1	2	3	4
(2) In the United States, a “low-income” student has the same chance of a good education as a “wealthy” student.	1	2	3	4
(3) We have the ability to change the government if we don’t like what it is doing.	1	2	3	4
(4) The government doesn’t really care what people like my family and I think.	1	2	3	4
(5) When I was in high school, every student had an equal chance of getting into the hardest classes.	1	2	3	4
(6) My high school was not as good as it should have been in providing equal educational opportunities for students of color.	1	2	3	4
(7) My high school prepared me as well for college as any other student in the United States.	1	2	3	4
(8) I cared a lot about my clothes or how I was dressed in high school.	1	2	3	4
(9) I cared a lot about grades in high school.	1	2	3	4

(10) Sometimes I didn't voice my opinion in high school because I worried that my friends or classmates would have criticized me.	1	2	3	4
(11) People in my high school were comfortable talking about issues of race and inequality.	1	2	3	4
(12) Sometimes I just couldn't relate or identify with the curriculum that was taught me.	1	2	3	4

Indicate if the following are true for *none*, *a few*, *most*, or *all* of the adults (teachers, counselors, and administrators) in your high school.

	None	A Few	Most	All
(13) If I messed up in high school teachers were willing enough to give me a second chance.	1	2	3	4
(14) My teachers really knew and understood me.	1	2	3	4
(15) Teachers, in general, cared about the students in my high school.	1	2	3	4
(16) My teachers knew their subject matter well.	1	2	3	4
(17) My teachers taught well, so that students understood the material.	1	2	3	4
(18) Teachers treat differently in terms of their race/ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
(19) Teachers believe that all students can achieve high levels if they try.	1	2	3	4

(20) A student's wealth or poverty affects how teachers treat them.	1	2	3	4

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(21) Students were encouraged to take leadership positions in my high school (e. g. Class President)	1	2	3	4
(22) Most students in low level classes (e. g. special education) received an education equal to all other students in the building.	1	2	3	4
(23) Honors and Advance Placed students think they are smarter than other people	1	2	3	4
(24) Most students in special education get the help they need.	1	2	3	4

Cont'D	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(25) I was challenged in high school by my school work.	1	2	3	4
(26) Honors and Advanced Placed students get treated with the same level of respect as all other students in my high school.	1	2	3	4
(27) A lack of money, prevented me from attending college.	1	2	3	4

(28) In my high school, all students could have achieved if they try hard.	1	2	3	4
(29) My parents/guardians had a hard time paying for what we need.	1	2	3	4

Demographic Inventory

Although we would like to answer all the questions below it is important to note that like the rest of the survey every question in the demographic inventory is optional.

1. Would you consider yourself to be street life oriented: Yes or No

2. Gender: Male or Female

3. Age: _____

4. Race/Ethnicity: _____

5. Primary Hustle: _____

6. City and State: _____

6. High School (s) You Attended: _____

7. Did you graduate with either a High School Diploma or GED

(1) Yes or (2) No

If yes, please circle which one: (1) High School Diploma or (2) GED

8. Residential Zip Code: _____

9. Are You Gang Affiliated: Yes or No

10. Gang Affiliation (e . g. Bloods, Crips, etc.): _____

Appendix VII

COUNSELING, EMPLOYMENT & READING RESOURCES

I. Social Agencies

1. *100 Black Men Of America, INC.*
<http://www.100blackmen.org>

100 Black Men of New Jersey, Inc.
 167 S. Harrison Street
 East Orange, NJ 07018
 (973) 678-6522
 (973) 678-3888 fax
chines@aol.com

100 Black Men of Long Island, Inc.
 9 Centre Street
 Hempstead, NY 11550
 (516) 538-6318 (phone & fax)

100 Black Men of New York, Inc.
 105 E. 22nd St., Suite 911
 New York, NY 10031
 (212) 777-7070
 (212) 692-1900 fax
ptwilliams@bryancave.com

2. *Concerned Black Men, INC.*
7200 North 21st Street
Philadelphia, PA 19138-2102
Phone: 215-549-1519 or 215-276-2260
Fax: 215-276-4734
E-mail: blksurfr@erols.com
URL: <http://www.libertynet.org:80/~cbmno/>

II. Employment

Concerned Black Men, INC.
7200 North 21st Street
Philadelphia, PA 19138-2102

Phone: 215-549-1519 or 215-276-2260
 Fax: 215-276-4734
 E-mail: blksurfr@erols.com
 URL: <http://www.libertynet.org:80/~cbmno/>

III. Counseling African-American Males

Recommended websites:

www.theviproom.com/visions/counselihtm

www.counseling.org/enews/volume_1/0104ahtm

IV. Publications: Books and Papers

Books:

1. Claude Brown (1965/1999) – *“Manchild in the Promise Land”*
2. *“Brothers”*
3. Nancy Boyd Franklin & Anderson J. Franklin (2000) – *“Boys to Men”*

Papers:

1. Paul Allen-Meares & Sondra Burman - *“The Endangerment of African-American Men: An Appeal for Social Work Action”*
<http://www.sistahspace.com/nommo/mv42.html>
2. *“Prison: The Comfort Zone”*
<http://www.jointfx.com/writing/comfortzone.html>

Appendix VIII: Research Methods Training Agendas

STREET LIFE PROJECT

Research Methods Training

Agenda I

1. Introduction

- Who am I?
- What this is about?: Project Purpose
- Research Team Contact Sheet
- What is Participatory Action Research (PAR)?
- Why you were specifically selected
- Implications

2. Project Budget

- **Project Expenditures**
- **Co-Research/Research Assistant Agreement**

3. Small Break

4. Theoretical and Methodological Notions regarding Street Life Oriented Black Men

Appendix VIIIA: Research Methods Training

STREET LIFE PROJECT

Agenda II

1. Review

2. 8 dimensions of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- **What is PAR?**

3. Dissertation Proposal (Dissertation Proposal Defense)

- Abstract
- Methodology
- Appendixes

Appendix VIII B: Research Methods Training

STREET LIFE PROJECT

Agenda III

1. Review

2. Research Ethics

- What is Ethics?
- Informed Consent/Assent
- Internal Review Board (IRB)

3. Methodology

- What is methodology?
- Read a sample of method section
- What is our methodology?
- What is our sample (Who do we need?/Who don't we need?)?
- Review what we have to accomplish in total

4. Data Collection Strategy

- Snowball Technique (What is this?)
 - Personal Network (list in session)
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Social Agencies (Probation departments, Group Homes, YMCA, Etc.)
- Data Collection Sites (both samples)

5. Three Kinds of Participants

- Grumpy, Average, Exceptionally Nice
- Role Playing

Appendix VIII C: Research Methods Training

STREET LIFE PROJECT

Agenda IV

1. Review
2. More role-playing (with equipment)
3. Review data collection sites
4. Set up data collection schedule and define specific roles

Contact system

Lets make it pop baby!!!!—

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