

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASOCIAL  
BEHAVIOR AND THE AVAILABILITY  
OF ROLE MODELS FOR AFRICAN  
AMERICAN MALE  
ADOLESCENTS

BY

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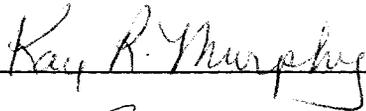
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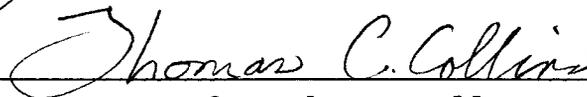
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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Black male adolescents are hitting the streets in record numbers (Hill, 1987). The rates of violence and unemployment in the black community are higher than ever (Kuznik, 1994). Homicide is the number one cause of death for black men from ages 15-34 (Kuznik, 1994). The 771 gang related homicides in 1991 accounted for 36% of all the murders in Los Angeles (Martinet, 1993). One in three adolescent boys carries some type of weapon to school each month (Martinet, 1993). Over 135,000 guns are carried into our schools each day (Martinet, 1993). The violence among our nation's youth has caused many schools to have metal detectors installed and have bullet drills where the adolescent learns to hit the floor when gunfire is heard. Daily routines for many adolescents are filled with uncertainty, chaos, and a constant need to watch one's back.

Today in the United States, there are about 2,200 gangs with 96,000 members located in over three hundred towns, and

cities (Hill, 1987). Gangs such as the Vice Lords, Gangster Disciples, Crips, and Bloods have taken over the lives of countless adolescent youth (Aquila & Clay, 1994). These gangs cover various races and areas of the country but, the African American street gangs receive the greatest notoriety.

Violence in the juvenile population has increased since the mid eighties (Gest & Friedman, 1994). Murder arrests among young adolescents under the age of eighteen have more than doubled since 1985 (Gest & Friedman, 1994). It is anticipated that these statistics may worsen with an increasing adolescent population. Overall, the number of adolescents in the U.S. will increase about 21% by the year 2005 (Gest & Friedman, 1994). Young black adolescents will also increase 24% by the year 2005 (Gest & Friedman, 1994).

African American male adolescents have the highest violent crime rates in the nation (Gest & Friedman, 1994). Research studies also confirm that there is a disproportionate number of high school dropouts within low-socioeconomic and minority groups (Stephens, 1990). The United States dropout rate for blacks surpasses that of

whites by 40% (Stephens, 1990). Out of school, less advantaged youth are more easily recruited for gang activity than other cohorts of adolescents. Due to gang violence black adolescent males are being killed at alarming rates every day. Measures need to be taken in the African American community to stop these adolescents from killing each other.

Adolescence is a critical period of cognitive, biological and psychological development for many children. During this crucial period of development, the black community and family are having difficulty properly raising African American youth to adapt to today's demands. Today, many black adolescents lack the identity, purpose, and direction to achieve success in society (Hill, 1987). In a recent study, only 4.8% of the black adolescents' time is spent with their parents and 2% was spent with adults who were not the adolescents' parents (Nightingale & Wolverton, 1993). It is estimated that adolescents should spend at least 12% of their total time with their parents in a healthy relationship (Nightingale & Woverton, 1993). The low percentage of time actually spent with parents indicates

that the relationship between parents and adolescents must be improved. African American male adolescents need someone to guide them because they are struggling to survive in today's society. Moral, mental and spiritual role models are urgently needed in the black community (Haley, 1965). The researcher intends to study the relationship between positive black male role models and African American male adolescents. With the population of adolescents in this country increasing, it is important to offer proper role models to help guide our youth. If this is not done, the future of our country could be bleak.

### **Problem Statement**

The daily life of urban African American adolescent males is extremely precarious. Drugs, violence, vandalism, crime, and other risky scenarios pose immediate threats to achieving a safe passage to adulthood. The well known scarcity of successful African American male role models leaves the African American male adolescent with little guidance on how to chart a successful life course. Some, however, do manage to stay out of harm's way and to live a

life worthy of society's approval. The problem in this study is to measure the presence of male role models among a selected group of African American male adolescents. The relationship between positive role models and asocial behavior will also be studied among adolescents.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research study is to improve the overall life of African American adolescent males. This can be accomplished by understanding delinquency and it's relationship with the lack of positive role models. Hopefully, findings of this research will bring the role model problem to the attention of black males and the black community. This added literature on this subject might encourage others to do research and focus on problems in the sometimes ignored black community. If the frequency of contact between positive black male role models and black adolescent males is increased, the condition of the adolescents, the black family and the black community may be improved. This study could be an effective way to introduce

programs that are already being used concerning African American adolescents.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this research were as follows:

1. Examine the relationship between positive role models and delinquency.
2. To assess the need for African American male role models in the black community.
3. To show the need for more programs implemented to target African American males and their need for more positive role models.

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses for this study were as follows:

1. Urban African American adolescent males who have role models, will be less delinquent than those adolescents who do not have role models.
2. Urban African American male adolescents who have contact with role models will be fewer than those adolescents who have no contact with role models.

3. African American adolescent males who have role models of their own gender will be fewer than those who have role models that are women.

### **Assumptions**

There are several assumptions mentioned in this research that must be clarified to gain a more complete understanding of the study. The following section will explain these assumptions. An urban city in this study consists of 200,000 people. The urban adolescents in this study are ages 14-18 years old. The predominantly African American schools in this study consisted of at least 65% of the total student population being black. Delinquency is defined by the Jesness Inventory (1962) and it is defined by the eleven personality dimensions in Table I. The Asocial Index is a composite score of these eleven dimensions that is the actual measure of delinquency. Role model and mentor are words that carry the same meaning. African American and black also carry the same meaning. Adolescents, young adults and youth all refer to adolescents between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. A positive male role model helps

the adolescents focus on academics, positive values, respect, and coping skills. A positive role model does not have to work for a government organization, it could just be someone who earns a decent living and is willing to lead by example for the adolescent. A negative role model influences the adolescent toward delinquent activity. A role model must have a job or occupation. Frequent contact with a role model is defined by the Background Questionnaire. A substantial period of time interacting with a role model can vary. This information is also assessed on the Background Questionnaire. The contact with role models involves communication and positive structural activities like a football game, for example. Positive role models are not engaged in illegal felony criminal activity in past or present (no criminal record). It is also assumed that the subjects answered the questionnaires truthfully.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are defined as they were used in this study.

1. Delinquency- wrongful, illegal or antisocial behavior (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
2. Role model- a person's behavior, example or success that can be emulated by others (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
3. Adolescence- the transitional period between puberty and adulthood in human development, extending mainly over the teen years and terminating legally when the age of majority is reached (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
4. Beliefs- confidence, faith, trust. Confidence in something being true not immediately susceptible to rigorous proof (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
5. Attitude- manner, disposition, feeling, position, with regard to a person, thing, tendency, or orientation especially the mind (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
6. Peer pressure- social pressure by members of one peer group to take certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted (Webster's Dictionary, 1990).
7. Symbolic interaction theory- views self-concept as a structure of attitudes arising from the interaction of individuals with the social environment (Takahashi, 1993).

8. Social learning theory- learning results from direct observations and environmental influences Learning is done by modeling or imitating various influences in the environment (Gottfredson, 1982).

9. Control theory- Three core bonds are vital in this theory. The attachment to the parents, the commitment to conventional activities, and beliefs in the conventional rules of society (Forshee & Bauman, 1992).

### **Scope and Limitations**

This study was designed to provide reliable information regarding positive role models and their relationship to delinquency among adolescents. Different communities have various racial compositions, populations, criminal statistics, poverty levels and other characteristics. Hopefully the information provided by this study can be used by others interested in studying other adolescents and role models in similar environments.

Since this is not a random sample the validity of this study is affected. Internal validity was threatened because of the selection of the subjects used in this study. Only

African American male adolescents enrolled in physical education classes were used in this study. This affects the true representation of the entire population of black males in the schools. No generalizations can be made to a broader sample. Another limitation is that the study purposely included only African American male role models. It is highly possible that some adolescents had contact with male role models that were of a race other than black.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of Literature**

In order to gain a complete understanding of this research the reader must first have a clear understanding of some characteristics of what a role model/mentor is. In the following section of this literature review, role models/mentors goals, backgrounds, and characteristics will be examined.

#### **Role Model/Mentor**

The idea of "mentoring" comes from mythology. The hero Ulysses asked his friend "Mentor" to guide and counsel Ulysses' son Telemachus (Jacob, 1990). Mentoring is a strategy for teaching, coaching, and strengthening character (White-Hood, 1993). Mentoring also is responsible for improving racial harmony, promoting social change, and assuring top quality education for all (White-Hood, 1993). These characteristics lead to opportunities for personal

empowerment in everyday society. The term, "mentor", is equivalent to the more common phrase, "role model".

It is common to hear mentors described as positive role models, teachers, trainers, and simply friends.

The overall goal of a mentor is to improve the life style of adolescents. This can be accomplished by various methods including modeling and counseling. Mentors assist the adolescent in academic achievement and in setting both short and long term goals (Jacob, 1990). Role models can help adolescents deal with problems of low self-esteem, disrespect of authority, lack of motivation, chronic disciplinary problems, poor academic skills and poor social skills (Cobbs & McCallum, 1992). Role models can also aid in the decision making process for adolescents, a process that is applied both inside and outside the school setting (Jacob, 1990).

Role models can come from diverse occupational backgrounds. A role model can be a store clerk, lawyer, jazz musician, or retired postman. A father figure or uncle are more common examples of male role models. A person does not have to live a glamorous life to spend quality time with

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adolescents and have a positive effect on them. By including role models from all facets of the community, an adolescent's respect for the honest hard working man could possibly be restored.

### **The Role Model/Adolescent Relationship**

The relationship between adolescents and role models is extremely important to the community as a whole. Results show that adolescents reporting more negative parental role models also report more delinquent behavior (Gottfredson, 1982). There is also a disproportionate number of delinquents that have parents with criminal records (Gottfredson, 1982). This is probably due to the fact that the adolescents learn from their negative models and believe that delinquent behavior is all right because their parent engages in criminal behavior.

In many lower class black communities today black men make babies and don't take care of them, are unemployed, or they are on drugs (Kuznik, 1994). This is one of the underlying problems in the black community. The fathers of these black adolescents do not take responsibility for their

children because in many cases they were themselves deserted as a child. Black fathers need to start raising their children to help break this cycle of desertion among black adolescents and their fathers. There are also large numbers of African American males that are incarcerated. These incarcerated males are also leaving their sons isolated to be raised by someone else.

The ecological theory assumes that fathers of all ethnic groups may play various roles in the family and community, roles that can lead to positive or negative outcomes (McAdoo, 1993). Fathers may utilize personal, family and community resources or coping strategies to mediate the negative influences (McAdoo, 1993).

Adverse socioeconomic conditions and poor role modeling contribute to adolescents dropping out of school and becoming delinquent (Stephens, 1990). Additional factors related to dropping out of school and becoming delinquent are living with only one natural parent, being in a family that receives welfare, and having parents who do not monitor their child's activities (Stephens, 1990).

Single parent families, latch-key adolescents, growing up in poverty, racial conflict and hopelessness in our youth are all associated with gang growth in the United States (Martinet, 1993). A mother can only do so much, when raising a adolescent male, a positive male figure is needed (Kuznik, 1994).

Youngsters who receive support from a mature, caring adult or role model are more likely to finish high school and get a job (Jacob, 1990). This is especially true for black adolescents, where a positive black male role model has a favorable effect on black adolescents. A relationship with a positive role model is believed to be a factor in improving adolescents' scores on tests in school, and their tendency to graduate and find a job (Evans, 1993). For example there is a 14.5% absolute improvement on the Economic Literacy test for students with a positive role model compared to students without a role model (Evans, 1993).

The role model/adolescent relationship in this section pertains only to African American role models and adolescents. Some of the problems that black male

adolescents face and how their relationship with African American males can improve their situation will be examined.

The focus of this study is not to determine if black role models have a greater positive effect on black adolescents than white role models or any other nationality. Instead, black male role models are studied exclusively as a cry out to the black community to save the lives of their youth by guiding them properly. The author believes it is the adult black male's obligation and duty to raise these black adolescents. Black adult role models also have empathy for the situation that the black adolescents are in. It helps the situation if the role models have faced many of the similar problems that the black male adolescents are presently facing and have overcome them. This is not saying that white male role models will not also have a positive effect on these youth. The African American adolescent male reaches a critical stage in identity formation and looks in the environmental mirror for an answer to the question "Who am I" (Wake County, 1989)? The response frequently tends to instill low self-concept and the acceptance of a nonproductive standard of existence (Wake County, 1989).

When black adolescents see a black man accomplish something positive in life, they can identify with him and say "I can do that too."

The absence of a sturdy and contributing male parent in a major percentage of the black families denies the black male adolescent a readily accessible model to positively influence his development (Wake County, 1989). In many circumstances African American adolescents may not know a single adult whose stable employment supports even the modest standard of living (Nightingale & Wolverton, 1993). Those who succeed in attaining a solid standard of living often move away from the inner city to suburbs, further depriving the young African American adolescents of role models (Nightingale & Wolverton, 1993). This goes hand in hand with the mentality of a country that teaches youth to look out for number one. We are socialized in this country to be selfish and not concerned with others. These African American adolescents have no experience interacting with responsible adults who have attained success in occupations in various fields (Nightingale & Wolverton 1993), which in turn affects the adolescent's ability to pursue an honest

occupation because they lack the proper guidance to reach these goals.

Lower socioeconomic adolescents, their parents and the communities in which they live are ill served (Maehr & Parker, 1993). Often the only role models available in poverty concentrated areas are gang members, and drug dealers. They appear to have what the adolescents desperately want, respect and money (Nightingale & Wolverton 1993). The adolescents are faced with the choice of making thousands of illegal dollars selling drugs and being popular or possibly working at McDonalds. In some instances a twelve year old child can make more money in a week than their parents legally earn in a month (Martinet, 1993). The adolescents look up to the hard guys, the ones who win fights and flash around money that they made dealing drugs (Kuznik, 1994). The adolescent will respect and model themselves after who is visible, and the drug dealers work the streets and are in plain view everyday. This temptation is extremely hard for any adolescent to resist.

African American male students lack positive role models in the neighborhoods, at home, and in the school

(Ascher, 1991). The majority of the teachers in the United States educational system are women (Ascher, 1991). The black male adolescent experiences perplexing and frequently transitioning relationships with females in our educational system that challenge identity formation (Wake County, 1989). The teachers of many lower class black youth, in all probability, are the product of the middle class, hired by a middle class board of education to teach middle class values. Consequently, they do not have the experience or patience to contend with disruptive youth (Stephens, 1990). Many lower class black youth have the most problems in the middle class milieu because of their relative lack of training in discipline and social order (Stephens, 1990). Subsequently, to adjust to the frustration of failure, these lower class black adolescents turn to delinquency and gangs to find standards they can meet successfully (Stephens, 1990).

There is a lack of African American male figures in the educational profession today. The black adolescents don't see any black professional teachers, and the material does not cover any significant blacks except the token few

mentioned during black history month. Identity confusion could occur due to the lack of knowledge about positive role models and differences between the lifestyles that minorities face in the school and what they see in their own home (Cooley, 1986). This could affect the adolescent's self esteem, and make the black adolescent feel their existence is not important. A low evaluation of oneself could eventually be related to delinquent activity. Low self-esteem frequently results in low grades, subject failures, retention, suspensions and dropouts (Wake County, 1989).

Adolescents usually perform at the level they think is appropriate. Only under rare circumstances does an adolescent perform at a level higher than they think they should perform. Many of our black male adolescents have a poor self-image as a result of failure or low grades over a period of years (Wake County, 1989). These adolescents have failed so many times in school and life's trials and tribulations that they accept failure as a way of life. In order for black adolescents to be successful in today's society, they must be guided in a more positive direction.

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Several programs are being developed to offer positive images of African American male adulthood through African American male teachers, mentors, advocates, and other role models (Ascher, 1991). By having these youth interact with positive African American role models they can develop positive values, and coping skills (Ascher, 1991). The success of the adolescents career could depend on the role model they discover (Stone, 1993). According to Evans (1993), African American students' overall achievement in school increased 19% when interacting with a positive role model. African American students also scored an average of 2.25 points higher on the Test of Economic Literacy with a black role model in the classroom (Evans, 1993). African American role models help the youth understand the nature of their future and resist the plague of negative communication that threatens the self esteem of a new generation (Jacob, 1990).

The preceding section introduced facts that showed black male role models do have a positive effect on black adolescents. It also discussed several problems that the

adolescent must face and how they can be combated with a positive role model.

### **African American Adolescents and Delinquency**

This section focuses on the black adolescent and how they learn delinquent ways. Peer pressure will be discussed in this section and how role models and peer pressure are related to one another.

Most delinquent adolescents have delinquent friends, and most nondelinquent adolescents have nondelinquent friends (Gottfredson, 1982). According to the Symbolic Interactionist perspective, youths learn delinquent values and acquire skills necessary to engage in delinquency through interaction with others who have these values and skills (Gottfredson, 1982). Social behavior is acquired through conditioning, imitating, and modeling (Gottfredson, 1982). Adolescents model or imitate the significant groups in their lives. What many adults may term deviant behavior may be a way to increase self esteem, and obtain a sense of belonging to a valued group for some adolescents. The most

important model of behavior for youths is a strong attachment to parents and other role models (Gottfredson, 1982). In many instances African American adolescents have few positive role models, attend the weakest schools, and have fewer clear avenues to opportunities into mainstream society (Jacob, 1990). Interaction between positive role models and adolescents could possibly help them fit into a positive lifestyle.

For a disadvantaged child, education can be a passport out of poverty (Jacob, 1990). For many adolescents however, it is not enough. Upper class families can often supplement their children's education with private tutors, test training workshops, and summer enrichment programs to help their child succeed (Jacobs, 1990). There is a particular and critical need to improve the education of children who are poor (Halliburton, 1993). Many adolescents often come to school ill-prepared for learning, sent by parents who themselves were school "failures" (Halliburton, 1993). This makes it harder for lower class black adolescents to compete against the upper class youth when they enter the job field. The classroom is a place that reminds many lower class

adolescents of their inferior status. It is not a place that gives them opportunities to feel increasingly efficacious and eager to work hard and learn skills that will enable them to break the cycle of poverty (Aquila & Clay, 1994).

Many African American adolescents face pressure to buy and sell drugs from peers as well as violence in the home (Jacob, 1990). Positive role models help teach these adolescents that they are part of a strong, proud race of people. This is important because most adolescents, particularly young adolescents, are susceptible to peer influence (Aaron, Allyene, Brasfield, Jefferson & Lawrence, 1994). When the peer influence is negative, adolescents participation in delinquent activity could occur in a short period of time.

Another problem impacting the African American community is that African American male adolescents lack a ceremony to usher them into manhood (Hill, 1987). Such a ritual or rite of passage could help insure proper socialization and self identity (Hill, 1987). A ritual of this type could help restore pride in the traditions of

black society which assists in the ethnic identity process. This ritual may also counteract the negative influences from the streets that the adolescent encounters (Hill, 1987).

On the streets, being macho is important. This is an exaggerated awareness and assertion of masculinity (Hill, 1987). Being tough or macho is often an important factor in determining high status and respect on the streets. Respect is often reserved to the best fighter and sexual exploiter of women among adolescent black males (Hill, 1987). Violent encounters are often fatal among adolescent black males. In many cases these confrontations are for respect and popularity among peers.

Black women are one of the leading groups for unwed mothers because black males are failing to live up to their responsibility. Among adolescents it is often considered cool to help bring a baby into this world and not take care of it. These are the values with which many of the youth in the African American community are growing up.

The media portray blacks as less intelligent, less hard working, and violent (Stroman, 1984). These portrayals are misleading and reinforce negative stereotypes commonly

associated with African Americans (Stroman, 1984). Black adolescents who view certain programs may learn negative self concepts from them (Stroman, 1984). If a positive male role model is present to teach the adolescent otherwise this would not be a problem, but this is most often not the case. Non-representation of blacks on television and in our education system is destructive to African American adolescents' self concept because it denies the importance of their existence (Stroman, 1984). The most clear point that is taught to blacks about their contributions to the history of this country is that they were slaves. Seldom during formal education throughout high school are the contributions that African Americans' provided to this country mentioned.

The above section on African American adolescents describe the overall mind set of these adolescents today. Mentioned were the disadvantages in the school systems and the strong influence of the streets pulling them toward delinquent ways. This section discussed the lack of black male role models in the family, community and the schools. In this section the author attempted to document the near

helpless situation that these adolescents are in, because adolescents can only model themselves after what they see. At the beginning of this section the author's personal perspective was also provided on why black male role models must be used to rebuild the African American community.

### **Role Model/Mentor Programs**

If violence and delinquency among African American adolescent males is on the rise in our nation, we need to focus on how to stop that rise (Senna, 1993). There has been too much time and money spent discussing what the problems are and not enough trying to find solutions to these problems. The importance of role model/mentor programs focused toward African American adolescents is evident. By looking at the desperate situation the black adolescent males are in it is easy to conclude there are not enough programs targeted at in this area of need. More effort throughout the African American community must be made in the attempt to bring adolescents and role models together. Programs like the Boys Club and the YMCA

sometimes offer support but their efforts are not nearly effective enough.

There are programs targeted at black adolescents and role models presently in the United States. Among the groups directly addressing the crises are 100 Black Men of America. This organization is a network of 4,000 professional black men in 37 cities (Kuznik, 1994). Local chapters sponsor sporting events, scholarships and mentor programs (Kuznik, 1994). Jesse Jackson working through the Rainbow Coalition, has also shown considerable interest in mentoring African American adolescents. The I Have a Dream Foundation offers college tuition and mentoring to a small number of African American public school students (Kuznik, 1994). Programs such as the mentoring program at Benjamin Tasker High School in Maryland have shown effective results (Stroman, 1984). This program is effective but it only affects about thirty five adolescents. To have a positive effect across the country school based programs similar to this one must be started all over the United States. Church based programs similar to the Flint Michigan Urban League program have also shown positive results. This program

brings together over one hundred African American adolescents with black role models.

Rites-of-passage programs are also sponsored by black churches throughout the United States (Kuznik, 1994). These program teach black adolescents about their culture, and allows them to participate in community service. It also allows black youth to interact and receive mentoring and guidance from elderly black males (Kuznik, 1994). These programs prove a positive result can be attained, so the black community must push to get more programs created to save the adolescents in our communities.

### **Theoretical Conceptual Framework**

Several conceptual frameworks can be applied in a study of black role models and how they relate to black adolescent delinquency. In the following section three conceptual frameworks and how they could be integrated with the research will be discussed.

### Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory holds that learning results from direct experience, and observations from environmental influences (Gottfredson, 1982). According to social learning theory, behavior is acquired through modeling, imitation, and conditioning (Gottfredson, 1982). Adolescents learn to evaluate norms within the significant groups in their lives. Positive black role models both inside and outside the family system are important to combat negative influences. Positive role models must be available to the adolescent in order for the adolescent to model them. If the adolescent imitates a positive role model the adolescent could learn the proper values and beliefs that are necessary to have a productive life in this society. These role models can combat negative peer pressure from the streets.

### Symbolic Interaction Theory

The symbolic interactionist theory stems from the works of George Herbert Mead (Takahashi, 1993). Mead views self-concept as a structure of attitudes arising from the

interaction of individual with the social environment (Takahashi, 1993). The individual then organizes the perceptions of his or her social milieu (Takahashi, 1993). The individuals in the social environment many African American adolescents encounter are negative influences. These negative influences come in the form of negative peer relations and negative role models. A more positive environment must be produced with more role models.

### Control Theory

There are three bonds that are at the core of Travis Hirschi's Control Theory. They are attachment to the parents, commitment to conventional activities, and belief in the conventional rules of society (Forshee & Bauman, 1992). The important attachment to parents includes the father figure who is often the adolescent male's role model. If this father figure is not present to teach the adolescent male the proper morals it could have drastic effects. The adolescent male then would have to search for a male role model to model and emulate. Drug dealers are often the most visible males in some lower socioeconomic areas and they

could easily be adopted as role models for adolescents. This could cause the adolescent to lose faith in the conventional rules of society because the drug dealers don't follow these rules and they have more money, prestige, and power than anyone in the community. These are all characteristics many black male adolescents view as important so they could be easily influenced into this delinquent lifestyle.

According to the control theory, adolescents low in attachment, commitment, and belief are more likely to engage in delinquency because they are free to satisfy their universal human needs (Agnew, 1993). The key ingredient here is the strength of the attachment. If this strong attachment is with a positive black male role model there will be positive effects on the black adolescent regarding delinquency.

There is one important factor that shows the relationship between the social learning theory, symbolic interaction, and control theory. This factor is the availability and visibility of a positive African American male role model for the adolescent. In social learning

theory if a positive role model does not interact with the adolescent, the adolescent cannot imitate, or model him. The adolescent might even imitate negative role models and be influenced into delinquent acts. These findings are also similar regarding symbolic interaction. The adolescent's self-concept is formed by interacting with important influences in their environment. If the influence is a positive role model a positive self-concept is likely to be formed. If the influence is negative the adolescent may become delinquent. Control theory discussed the attachment of adolescents to their parents. If there is no father figure present for the adolescent to bond with, delinquent behavior could possibly occur.

The above sections have offered information supporting the objectives for this study. This research of relevant literature has indicated to the author that the involvement of African American role models and their positive guidance of young black males has not been highly explored. Hopefully the study can offer some insight for others who plan to study role models and their effects on adolescents.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methods and Procedure**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the presence of adult role models in the lives of African American adolescents and their behavior. The study further sought to examine who the adolescents role models were and the extent to which the adolescent had role models. This chapter presents an explanation of the methods and procedures that were utilized in this study.

### **Research Design**

This study was descriptive in nature. According to Isaac and Michael (1981), descriptive research "describes systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population of interest, factually and accurately" (p. 46). The characteristics described in this study were the

presence of adult role models and the asocial behavior of a group of African American male adolescents.

Further elaboration by Issac and Michael (1981) indicated that descriptive research may be understood to be just the accumulation of data base and does not necessarily seek to explain relationships, test hypotheses, make predictions, or get at meanings and implications. The present study is representative of the broader meaning of descriptive research which includes all forms of research except historical and experimental (Issac & Michael, 1981). In the broader meaning, survey studies are included as an example of ways descriptive research is conducted.

This study utilized a survey method of collecting data from the subjects. Again, according to Issac and Michael (1981), the purpose of survey studies includes the collection of detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena and the identification of problems or conditions that currently exist. Further, survey studies are frequently used for the purpose of making comparisons and evaluations.

Touliatos and Compton (1988) indicated that survey research "deals with phenomena as they exist; they do not attempt to alter anything experimentally nor do they involve random assignment of subjects or conditions as in experimental research" (p. 263). Data for survey research are usually collected by asking the subjects questions through the use of questionnaires or interviews (Touliatos & Compton, 1988).

In this study, the researcher wanted to examine the extent of asocial behavior among the adolescents surveyed and determine whether there was a relationship between this behavior and their access to an adult role model. Therefore the survey method utilized an existing questionnaire, supplemented by a background data questionnaire developed by the researcher.

The survey used in this study was personally administered by the researcher in three physical education classes in two different high schools in an urban midwestern city during the week of March 6-10, 1995. The researcher developed a specific protocol for administration of the survey which was used in each class in each location.

## Participants

The sample for this study was taken from a midwestern urban community with a population of approximately 200,000. The participants were African American male adolescents who ranged in age from 14 to 18. Two urban predominantly African American high schools were sampled. The high schools were in the same general area of the city, approximately three miles apart. The high schools were selected because they afforded an excellent opportunity to assess the desired population and because the researcher was assured of the cooperation of school personnel.

Students in the schools selected in this study are required to take physical education in gender segregated classes. Since a male sample was being sought, the physical education classes seemed to be the most logical point of access. There were 250 students in attendance in the physical education classes on the day of survey administration. Of this number, 178 were the African American males who were the specific subjects in this study. In school A, 3 classes yielded 82 subjects and in school B, three classes yielded 96 subjects.

## **Instruments**

Two instruments were used for collecting data in this study. The Jesness Inventory (Jesness, 1962, 1992) was used as the measure of asocial behavior and a self-designed instrument was used to collect demographic data and data describing the adolescent/adult role model relationship.

The Jesness Inventory is a 155 item true-false personality measure developed to identify and classify young male delinquents. The Jesness Inventory was developed in 1962 but has been revised in 1972, 1983, and 1986. The specific instrument used in this study was published by Multi-Health Systems, Incorporated, with copyright dates of 1962 and 1992. The Jesness Inventory assesses dimensions of delinquency orientation, personality dimensions, and the changes in these dimensions over time.

The developmental studies for the Jesness Inventory were based on a male sample of 970 delinquents and 1,075 nondelinquents between the ages of 8 and 18. Delinquent subjects were taken from the California Youth Authority. Non-delinquent subjects were taken from an urban lower middle class area.

The Jesness Inventory provides scores from eleven personality dimensions. The content of the dimensions and data on their reliability are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Social Maladjustment scale refers to a set of attitudes associated with inadequate or disturbed socialization, as defined by the extent to which individuals share the attitudes of persons who do not meet environmental demands. Some dimensions of maladjustment are blaming others for their problems and distrust of authority. They also may have feelings of hostility that they have trouble controlling. The Social Maladjustment scale has an odd-even reliability of .84 and a test retest reliability of .79 (Jesness, 1962).

Value Orientation refers to a tendency to share attitudes and opinions characteristic of persons in the lower socioeconomic classes. The Value Orientation scale has an odd-even reliability of .88 and a test retest reliability of .79.

The Immaturity scale relates to behavior that occurs when the subject displays attitudes and perceptions of self

and others that are usual for persons of ages younger than the subject. The Immaturity scale has an odd-even reliability of .63 and a test retest reliability of .46.

The Autism scale measures the tendency in thinking and perceiving to distort reality according to one's personal desires or needs. The Autism scale has an odd-even reliability of .72 and a test retest reliability .57.

The Alienation scale refers to the presence of distrust and entanglement in a person's attitude toward others, especially those representing authority. The Alienation scale has an odd-even reliability of .83 and a test retest reliability of .68.

The awareness of unpleasant feelings, such as anger and frustration are characteristics of the Manifest Aggression scale. It measures the tendency of the subject to act on hostile emotions and obvious discomfort concerning these feelings. Manifest Aggression has an odd-even reliability of .83 and a test retest reliability .63.

The Withdrawal-Depression scale has an odd-even reliability of .62 and a test retest reliability of 63.

Withdrawal-Depression refers to massive emotional withdrawal

from individuals or situations. Isolation and severe emotional depression are also common.

The Social Anxiety scale has an odd-even reliability of .65 and a test retest reliability of .65. Social Anxiety refers to conscious emotional discomfort in interpersonal relations.

The Repression scale reflects the exclusion from conscious awareness of feeling and emotions, that the individual would normally be expected to experience. It also reflects his failure to label these emotions. The Repression scale has an odd-even reliability of .64 and a test retest reliability of .50.

The Denial scale has an odd-even reliability of .70 and a test retest reliability of .65. Denial indicates a reluctance to acknowledge unpleasant events or conditions encountered daily. Table 1 provides a summary of the reliability measures for each of the dimensions of the Jesness Inventory (Form G) (Jesness, 1991).

TABLE 1

Reliability of Jesness Inventory Scale Dimensions

Dimensions	Test/Retest	Odd-Even Reliability
Social Maladjustment	.79	.84
Value Orientation	.79	.88
Immaturity Scale	.46	.63
Autism Scale	.57	.72
Alienation Scale	.68	.83
Manifest Aggression	.63	.83
Withdrawal-Depression	.63	.62
Social Anxiety	.65	.65
Repression Scale	.50	.64
Denial Scale	.65	.70

## Sample Questions from the Jesness Inventory (Form G)

are as follows:

10. Sometimes I feel like I want to beat up somebody.
35. I hardly ever get a fair break.
60. If somebody does something mean to me, I try to get back at them.
85. I usually prefer to be alone than with others.

110. A lot of women seem bossy and mean.

135. I think my mother should have been stricter than she was about a lot of things.

Students were asked to read each statement, mark true (T) if they agreed with the statement and False (F) if they did not agree. Inventory directions reassured students that there were no right or wrong answers. Students were also encouraged to mark each item even though they might not always feel perfectly sure about the statements.

The method used for scoring the Jesness Inventory resulted in the calculation of the Asocial Index which refers to a generalized disposition to resolve social and personal problems in ways that show disregard for social customs and rules. High scores on the Asocial Index are predictive of delinquent behavior.

The second questionnaire reported characteristics of role models and the nature of the adolescent/role model relationship. The Background Questionnaire was designed by the researcher. The questionnaire had fourteen items included in it. This instrument attempted to determine if the adolescent had a role model and if the role model was

positive or negative. Other items related to the gender of the role model and how much time the role model spent with the adolescent. The length of time the adolescent had known the role model and what activities they participated in together were also included among the questions. The two questionnaires were stapled together for data collection purposes. A copy of the Background Questionnaire may be found in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection**

Parental consent forms were distributed to the students a week before the researcher actually went into the school to collect data. School personnel who cooperated with the researcher in collecting the data distributed and collected the consent forms. A copy of the Parental Consent Form may be found in Appendix B.

Questionnaires were administered in the physical education classes of two schools. The classes were separated by gender, facilities, and instructors. Questionnaires were passed out to the entire group of male students three different class periods in each of the two

different schools. For convenience of the physical education instructors, questionnaires were administered to the entire class regardless of the race of the individual participant. Instruments were later separated by race and only the data collected from African American subjects was used for analysis.

The researcher used a uniform set of procedures (protocol) for administering the surveys in each class. Instructions were given to the subjects before they started filling out the questionnaires.

To assure anonymity no names appeared on the instruments and identical number two pencils were supplied for the students. It took approximately thirty five minutes for the majority of the students to fill out both questionnaires. All participants completed the questionnaires during a 55-minute class period.

The plan for collecting data for this research was reviewed and approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). A copy of the approval form may be found in Appendix C.

## Data Analysis

After collecting data from the subjects, the researcher first removed all ineligible participants, then examined the data for the purpose of removing any unusable questionnaires. One questionnaire was deleted, leaving a total of 178 questionnaires for analysis.

The first process in the data analysis was to score the Jesness Inventory for each subject. The scoring process included visually counting the marked letters on the score sheet that were associated with each of the dimensions included in the inventory. A raw score was calculated for each respondent for each dimension. Raw scores were used to calculate weighted scores which were recorded in the formula box on each instrument. The Asocial Index for each subject was calculated by adding weighted scores of Value Orientation (VO), Immaturity (Imm), Autism (Au), Alienation (Al), Manifest Aggression (MA), Withdrawal (Wd), Social Anxiety (SA), and Repression (Rep) and then subtracting this sum from the weighted sum of the Social Maturity (SM), and a special scale labeled  $SM^x$ .

After the Asocial Index score for each subject was obtained, these scores and coded responses from the background questionnaire were typed directly from the questionnaire to the computer. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to obtain frequencies, means, percentages, and chi square analysis.

Chapter three provided information regarding the data collection methods and procedures of this study. Information concerning the instruments, data analysis, and the participants were also included in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if the presence of adult role models was associated with the asocial behavior of African American adolescent males. Other topics of interest were the gender of the role model, the activities in which the adolescents and role models participated, the amount of time adolescents spent with role models, and the adolescents' perception of other role model characteristics.

This chapter presents findings of the study in the following order: (1) description of the participants, (2) results of the chi square analysis, (3) analysis of research hypotheses, and (4) discussion.

#### **Description of Participants**

There were 250 African American male adolescents, ranging in age from 14-18, sampled in this study. The subjects were enrolled in two predominantly black high

schools in a midwestern city of about 200,000 people. In order to accommodate the instructors, data were obtained from each enrollee. From the demographic data provided, the non African American males were identified and deleted from the study and 178 were left.

A background questionnaire was used to obtain basic demographic information including the name of the school, date of birth, race, and whether the adolescent had a role model. Information was also obtained concerning the characteristics of the role model and the characteristics of the adolescent/role model relationship. Questions related to the gender of the role model, the generic group with which the role model was identified, the length of time the role model had been known by the adolescent, the kind of influence the role model was, whether the role model was employed or ever been incarcerated, the types of activities in which the adolescent and the role model participated, and the amount of time the adolescent and the role model spent together weekly. A copy of the Background Questionnaire may be found in Appendix A.

After sharing basic demographic information (i. e. school, age, and race), the subjects were asked if they had a role model. If they answered "no," they were requested not to continue the questionnaire. They were, however, requested to complete all items of the Jesness Inventory. Only 69 (38.8%) of the adolescents reported having an adult role model in their lives. The gender of the role models was reported as male by 73.9% of the respondents and female by 26.1%. The primary generic groups with which the role models identified included father (21.7%), mother (17.4%), uncle and brother (14.5% each), and teachers (11.6%). Smaller representations of less than 10% included minister, adult cousin, friend of the family, and other.

Almost all of the respondents indicated they had known their role model for at least six months. Only 2.9% indicated they had not. Likewise, almost all (95.7%) indicated they were with their role models several times per month. When asked for specific amounts of time they spent with their role models, 62.3% indicated they spent as much as five hours per week. A little more than a third (37.7%)

reported spending two or less hours per week with their adult role model.

Questions about characteristics of the role models and the nature of the adolescent/role model relationship resulted in 86.9% reporting that their role models were employed and 92.7% reporting that their role models were a positive influence. When asked if their role models had been incarcerated, 8.7% said "yes," 71.0% said "no," and 20.3% said they were "uncertain." To the question, "Do you and your role model participate in positive activities together (examples: movies, basketball, sporting events, and homework)," the adolescents responses were 55.0% for "definitely yes" and "probably yes," 18,8% for "probably no" and "definitely no," and 26.1% "uncertain." A complete listing of the responses to each of the questions in the Background Questionnaire may be found in Table 2. The exact age of the adolescent that attended high school was not a variable in this study.

TABLE 2

Characteristics of Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
N=69			
Gender of Role Model			
Male	57	82.6	82.6
Female	12	17.4	100.0
Relationship to Role Models			
Father	15	21.7	21.7
Mother	12	17.4	39.1
Older brother	10	14.5	53.6
Uncle	10	14.5	68.1
Teacher	8	11.6	79.7
Minster	6	8.7	88.4
Friend of Family	5	7.2	95.6
Adult Cousin	3	4.3	99.9
Known Role Model for Six Months			
Yes	67	97.1	97.1
No	2	2.9	100.0
With Role Model Several Times Per Month			
Yes	66	95.7	95.7
No	3	4.3	100.0

(table continues)

TABLE 2, continued

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Role Model Is Employed</b>			
Yes	60	86.9	86.9
No	9	13.1	100.0
Uncertain	0	0	100.0
<b>Role Model Is a Positive Influence</b>			
Yes	64	92.7	92.7
No	5	7.3	100.0
Uncertain	0	0	100.0
<b>Role Model Has Been Incarcerated</b>			
Yes	6	8.7	8.7
No	49	71.0	79.7
Uncertain	14	20.3	100.0
<b>Participate In Positive Activities with Role Model</b>			
Yes	38	55.0	55.0
No	13	18.8	73.8
Uncertain	18	26.1	100.0
<b>Hours Per Week Spent with Role Model</b>			
Less Than One	2	2.9	2.9
1-2 Hours	24	34.8	37.7
More Than Two Hours	43	62.3	100.0
<b>Spend Five Hours Per Week with Role Model</b>			
Yes	40	58.0	58.0
No	7	10.1	68.1
Uncertain	22	31.9	100.0

## Results of Chi Square Analysis

According to Bartz (1988), the assumptions necessary for chi square analysis are as follows: (1) data must be in frequently form, (2) observations must be independent from each other, (3) sample size must be adequate, (4) categories of data must be logically determined, and (5) the sum of the observed frequencies must be equal to the sum of the expected frequencies. The data collected for this study meets these assumptions.

In preparation for the chi square tests, frequencies and cumulative percentages were calculated for the subjects, while scores on the Asocial Index which were derived from the Jesness Inventory. Asocial Index scores ranged from 3 to 47 with the higher scores indicating higher levels of asocial behavior. Frequency and cumulative percent data were used to divide the subjects into three levels of asocial behavior. Approximately one-third of the respondents were categorized as low, medium, and high. These groupings were used to create a 2 x 3 contingency table for the chi square test for examining the relationship between presence of a role model and asocial behavior. The

results of this test were chi square = 3.124, df = 2, and p = 0.21. See Table 3 for a complete display of the results of this test. While the results of this test were not significant it can be noted that a greater proportion of those having role models were in the lowest one-third on the Asocial Index compared to those who had no role models, a contrast of 42% to 29%. When examining the upper one third on the Asocial Index, the comparison was 30.4% for those with role models and 39.4% for those with no role model.

TABLE 3

Chi Square Results for the Asocial Index

N=178

	Asocial Index Scores			Total
	n<18 Low	19<n>23 Medium	n>24 High	
<hr/>				
Role Models				
Frequency	29.0	19.0	21.0	69
Expected	23.646	20.545	24.809	
chi-square	01.2122	00.1162	00.5848	
Percent	16.29	10.67	11.80	38.96%
Row Pct	42.03	27.54	30.43	
Col Pct	47.54	35.85	32.81	

(table continues)

Table 3, continued

	Asocial Index Scores			Total
	n<18 Low	19<n>23 Medium	n>24 High	
No Role Models				
Frequency	32.	34	43	109
Expected	37.354	32.455	39.191	
Chi Square	00.7674	00.0735	00.3702	
Percent	17.98	19.10	24.16	61.24%
Row Pct	29.36	31.19	39.45	
Col Pct	52.46	64.15	67.19	
<hr/>				
Total	61.0	53.0	64.0	178
	34.27%	29.78%	35.96%	100%
<hr/>				
Statistic	DF	Value	Probability	
Chi square	2	3.124	.210	

Upon failing to find significance for the main hypothesis of this study, the researcher decided to conduct another chi square analysis using only the score from the Social Maladjustment dimension of the Jesness Inventory to see if there was a relationship between those scores and the adolescents' contact with role models. The result of the second test were chi square = 4.710, df = 2, and  $p = .095$ . These results were again nonsignificant, however the same

pattern was observed. A greater proportion of adolescents with role models than without role models were identified in the lowest scores on the Social Maladjustment scale. Obviously, a greater proportion of subjects without role models had higher scores on the Social Maladjustment scale. While not significant the observed pattern may be viewed as encouragement that having a role model may be helpful in reducing the incidence of asocial behavior among African American adolescent males. Table 4 presents results of the chi square test for the relationship between Social Maladjustment and role models.

TABLE 4

Chi Square Results of Social Maladjustment

	Social Maladjustment			Total
	n<26 Low	27<n>29 Medium	n>30 High	
<hr/>				
With Role Models				
Frequency	28.0	24.0	16.0	68
Expected	23.685	21.775	22.539	
chi-square	0.786	00.2273	1.8973	
Percent	15.73	13.48	8.99	38.20%
Row Pct	41.18	35.29	23.53	
Col Pct	45.16	42.11	27.12	

(Table 3 continues)

Table 4, continued

	Social Maladjustment			Total
	n<26 Low	27<n>29 Medium	n>30 High	
No Role Models				
Frequency	34	33	43	109
Expected	38.315	35.225	36.461	
Cell chi square	00.4859	00.1405	1.1728	
Percent	19.10	18.54	24.16	61.80%
Row percent	30.91	30.00	39.09	
Column percent	54.84	57.89	72.88	
Total	62	57	59	178
	34.83%	32.02%	33.15%	100%
Statistics	Df	Value	Probability	
Chi square	2	4.710	.095	

### Analysis of Research Hypotheses

The major research objective, for this study was to examine the relationship between the presence of role models and adolescent asocial behavior. By conducting this study the researcher also hoped to obtain information helpful in assessing the need for African American male role models for the black community. Further, given significant results, the researcher planned to use the results of the study to highlight the need for more systematic efforts toward

matching African American adolescent males with positive role models.

The hypotheses related to the major research objective were as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Urban African American adolescent males who have role models will be less delinquent than those adolescents who do not have role models.

Hypothesis 2. Urban African American adolescent males who have contact with role models will be fewer than those adolescents who have no contact with role models.

Hypothesis 3. African American adolescent males who have role models of their own gender will be fewer than those who have role models that are women.

As disclosed earlier, significant results were not found to support Hypothesis 1 that urban African American adolescent males who have role models will be less delinquent than those adolescents who do not have role models. Hypothesis 2 was not tested for statistical

significance, however, frequency data showed that the hypothesis was supported. Only 38.8% of the subjects reported having role models. If limited to adolescents who had male role models, the percentage was 28.7% of the total of 178 participants.

Frequencies and percentages were used to determine whether Hypothesis 3 could be supported. Results indicated that of the 69 subjects who had role models, only 26.1% of these had a female role model. The contention that female role models would outnumber male role models cannot be supported for this group of African American males, therefore Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

### **Discussion**

Adolescence is a crucial period of cognitive, biological, and psychological development for many adolescents. During this period the black community is having difficulty effectively raising it's youth. This study brings attention to the fact that black adolescents are having little opportunity to interact with positive African American male role models. Positive role models

could possibly teach black adolescents the proper morals, values, and beliefs to be a productive member of our society.

The overall goal of male role models is to be a positive influence on and a contributor to an improvement in the life style of the adolescents with whom they interact. This can be accomplished by various methods including modeling and counseling. Not to be minimized however are the benefits that can accrue to just being with the adolescent, informally enjoying talking or "hanging out" together. In this study only 55% of the subjects reported that they participated in positive activities with their role model. Another 18.8% reported that they did not participate in positive activities while 26.1% indicated they were not sure if they participated in positive activities with their role models. Clearly, work needs to be done to help role models and adolescents conceptualize more positive ways of enjoying time together.

Role models can come from diverse backgrounds. For example, they can be mail carriers, teachers, coaches, ministers, counselors, managers, lawyers, or anyone who

makes a solid contribution to upholding society's values for living a productive life.

The father, the most frequently cited category of role models (21.7%) in this study is all too often absent in the black community. While it may be encouraging that the youth in this study identified fathers as the most frequent role model, it is extremely discouraging that the percent that had fathers as role models was so small.

Sometimes, the only professional role models that African American adolescents see are the teachers, counselors, and administrators of the schools they attend. According to Ascher (1991), the majority of teachers in the United States are women, therefore the scarcity of male teachers compounds the problem of already-limited access to males as role model material.

While the results of this study do not provide statistically significant indications that the presence of role models is positively related to low asocial behavior scores, there were encouraging patterns in that direction. These patterns cited earlier in this chapter were clear and supported the researcher in believing that an examination of

this possible relationship should continue to be investigated. The results of one chi square test approached significance.

Even though the results of this study provide no conclusive evidence to support the hypothesis that contact with role models can be associated with less delinquent (asocial) behavior on the part of adolescents, the researcher maintains that studied along with other variables, results might be more significant. Perhaps the presence of role models by themselves is not enough to influence youth in positive directions. Most likely, delinquency is caused by a number of societal factors including poverty, lack of employment, self-care, discontinuous and chaotic family relationships, poor education, unstable neighborhoods, poor housing, lack of recreational programs, and a host of other variables. Factors dealing with the socioeconomic backgrounds and the quality of family relationships were not examined in this study.

Finally, it should again be pointed out that 61.5% of the adolescents included in this study had no role models.

This indicates that far too many adolescents are missing out on opportunities that could be afforded by having more adult role guidance in their lives. Young people learn many things from their peers, but on the other hand, successful adult role models are a chief source of guidance regarding some of the more important aspects of their lives. Among these important aspects are choosing an occupation, developing a style of interacting with close family members and significant others, and learning to contribute to one's community.

This chapter has described the participants included in this study, presented results of the chi square tests, presented conclusions regarding the research hypothesis, and discussed the findings in relation to the researcher's experience and belief system. Chapter V will present conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to determine the availability of adult role models for African American male adolescents and to examine the relationship between the availability of role models and adolescent asocial behavior. This chapter includes a summary of the research, conclusions regarding the findings, and recommendations for future study.

#### Summary

##### Objectives

The objective of this study were to: (1) examine the relationship between positive role models and delinquency, (2) assess the need for African American male role models in the black community, and (3) determine the need for programs implemented to target African American males and their need for more positive role models.

## Research Design

This descriptive study utilized a survey method for collecting data from the subjects. Adolescents' demographic data, descriptions of relationships with role models, and responses to an existing questionnaire were collected and associations among these factors were investigated.

## Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 178 black adolescent males who were students in six physical education classes in two predominantly black high schools in a midwestern city of approximately 200,000. The total number of students enrolled in the six classes was 250, however, the sample consisted of the African American students only.

## Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study. The researcher designed a Background Data Questionnaire for obtaining information about the subjects and their relationships with role models. The second instrument was

the Jesness Inventory (Form G) which is a 155-item questionnaire relating to adolescent asocial behavior.

### Data Collection

Surveys were personally administered by the researcher in two predominantly black high schools in a midwestern city. Students were reached through three all male physical education classes in each of the high schools. A total of 178 usable data sets were obtained.

### Analysis of Data

Data were entered directly into a personal computer. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to compute frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the data collected. Chi square tests were used to test the relationship of the presence of adult role models and adolescent asocial behavior.

### **Conclusions**

Only one of the three hypotheses for the study was supported by the findings. Results of the chi square tests

did not support the hypotheses that urban African American adolescent males who have role models would be less delinquent than those adolescents who did not have role models. The hypotheses that female role models would outnumber male role models among the subjects surveyed also lacked support in the findings of this study.

Unfortunately, a third hypotheses that adolescent males with role models will be fewer than those adolescents who have no contact with role models was supported. In fact, only 38.8% of the subjects reported having role models. Even though the chi square tests did not yield significant results, the researcher was aware of a strong pattern that existed in the chi square contingency tables. In the analysis of Asocial Index by role models and the Social Maladjustment Scale by role models, it was noted that subjects with role models had lower scores on the Jesness Inventory measure of delinquency than did their counterparts who did not have role models. These findings, while not significant, do suggest that the availability of role models can prove to be viable in helping adolescent males make a successful transition to adulthood.

Over 60% of the black adolescents that participated in this study said that they did not currently have a positive role model involved in their lives. This statistic alone should help focus public attention on the plight of large numbers of black adolescents who have insufficient exposure to positive adult guidance. While findings of this study cannot be generalized to other African American adolescent male populations in the United States, there are many reasons to believe that the community examined in this study is not unique. One can safely conclude that it will be more difficult for adolescents with little or no adult guidance to become productive citizens.

If 61.5% of the adolescent males in this study do not have a positive role model, one could ask, "Where are the fathers?" The researcher concurs with the literature that suggests that weakness in the family structure and functioning are at the heart of adolescent asocial behavior. Opportunities are lost when fathers are not available to positively influence and guide their children.

## Recommendations

Reflections on the results of this study have led to the following recommendations:

1. A more holistic approach to the study of adolescent asocial behavior may be more productive than a single variable approach. An adult role model is only one in a part the a system of support needed for positive adolescent development. While acknowledging that father figure and/or adult male role models are important resources for young black males, one can still conceptualize the value of a multivariate approach in studying adolescent delinquency. As mentioned earlier, there are several other variables that may be strongly associated with adolescent delinquency and could be studied along with the presence of role models.

2. The researcher suggests that in future studies in areas similar to this research that other measures of delinquency might be considered. Adolescents who participated in this study made negative comments and displayed negative emotions because of the extensive length of the Jesness Inventory. Completing 155 questions of the

Jesness Inventory and 14 questions in the Background Questionnaire was somewhat intimidating. While most students were able to finish the questionnaire in 35 minutes or less, the researcher did notice some problems in concentration or test fatigue. An additional reason for identifying other measures for adolescent delinquency is that language and situations which reflect the contemporary milieu might enhance an adolescent's motivation.

Adolescents who recognize updated language, might find the questionnaires more interesting.

3. Future studies might also examine the association between role models and asocial behavior in other ethnic groups. For example, a study of the availability of role models for Hispanic and Asian youth in relation to their delinquency could make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge. Likewise, role models of various nationalities in relationships with African American adolescent males would be an interesting variable to study.

4. In future research more attention might be directed toward the development of a clear understanding of what a role model is on a operational level. In this study, a

definition of a role model was given, but the researcher was not convinced that each of the subjects fully comprehended the concept prior to completing the questionnaires. A short video tape explaining and showing ways that role models relate to adolescents might be very beneficial.

5. Studies of the availability of female role models for black male adolescents and the availability of role models of either gender for black female adolescents would make interesting additions to the literature.

6. This study utilized a convenience sample and a non longitudinal design. While random selection and longitudinal designs are strongly preferred, they were beyond the resources available for this study.

7. Finally, it is difficult to obtain an all male African American adolescent sample. When working through the schools to access the sample, the organization and convenience of the school may be limiting. In this research, for the convenience of the cooperating school personnel, data were collected from all of the students enrolled in the male physical education classes. This procedure resulted in collection of data from non African

Americans who were not included in the study. The selection of a sample that is more cost effective is recommended.

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## **APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX A**  
**BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE**

## BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) The name of my school is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) My date of birth is (month)\_\_\_\_\_, (day)\_\_\_\_\_ (year) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) Circle your race or write in your appropriate race. (Black White Hispanic Asian other\_\_\_\_\_)
- 4) A **role model** is a positive figure or influence in your life that you can model yourself after. Do you presently have a role model involved your life? Yes No (Circle one)  
**IF you answer no to question four do not continue this questionnaire!** If you answer yes to question four complete this questionnaire.

5) My role model is a . . . (Circle one) Male Female

6) My role model is a . . . .(Circle one or fill in appropriate answer)

Teacher father uncle minister or preacher gym teacher adult cousin  
mother older brother friend of the family other\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the correct answer on questions 7-14.**

7) Have you known your role model for six months or longer?

Yes No

8) Do you spend time with your role model several times a month?

Yes No

9) Would you consider your role model a positive influence?

Definitely yes Probably yes Not sure Probably no Definitely no

10) Is your role model presently employed?

Definitely yes Probably yes Not sure Probably no Definitely no

11) To your knowledge has your role model ever been incarcerated for a felony criminal act.

Definitely yes Probably yes Not sure Probably no Definitely no

12) Do you and your role model participate in positive activities together? ex. go to the movies together, hang out and talk, play basketball, go to sporting events, help you with your homework.

Definitely yes Probably yes Not sure Probably no Definitely no

13) On the average, how many hours per week do you spend with your role model?

Less than one 1 -2 hours more than two hours

14) Do you spend five hours per week with your role model?

Definitely yes Probably yes Not sure Probably no Definitely no

**APPENDIX B**  
**PARENTAL AND STUDENT CONSENT FORM**

### STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Michael Woolridge is asking for permission to administer two questionnaires to me during my physical education class. The questionnaires are part of my research project for graduate school. These questionnaires will deal with different aspects of adolescent adjustment and role models. Complete confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained. I will be the only person handling the results of these studies. No money or other tangible benefits will be given to the subjects for completing this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for my refusal to participate. I am also aware that I may withdraw from this study at anytime without being penalized. If you have any further questions you may contact Jennifer Moore at (405)744-5700 or Michael Woolridge at telephone number (405) 744-1763.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

### PARENT CONSENT FORM

Michael Woolridge is asking for permission to administer two questionnaires to your son/daughter during their physical education class. The questionnaires are part of my reasearch project for graduate school. These questionnaires will deal with different aspects of adolescent adjustment and role models. Complete confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained. I will be the only person handling the results of these studies. No money or other tangible benefits will be given to the subject for completing this study. Your son/daughter's participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusal to participate. You should also be aware that your child may withdraw from this study at anytime without being penalized. If you have any further questions you may contact Jennifer Moore at (405) 744-5700 or Michael Woolridge at telephone number (405) 744-1763.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign freely and voluntarily.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

**APPENDIX C**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM**

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

**Date:** 02-21-95

**IRB#:** HE-95-017

**Proposal Title:** THE EFFECT OF ROLE MODELS ON AFRICAN AMERICAN  
ADOLESCENTS

**Principal Investigator(s):** Beulah Hirschlein, Michael Woolridge

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Expedited

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.

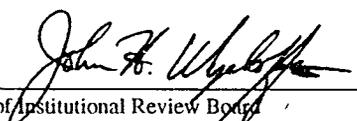
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.  
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 2, 1995

VITA

Michael Woolridge

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

**Thesis:** THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASOCIAL BEHAVIOR  
AND THE AVAILABILITY OF ROLEMODELS FOR  
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE ADOLESCENTS

**Major Field:** Family Relations and Child Development

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Kansas City, Kansas, On  
November 3, 1969, the son of Dan and Lula  
Woolridge.

**Education:** Graduated from F.L. Schlagle High School,  
Kansas City, Kansas in May 1988; received a  
Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor  
in Human Environmental Sciences from Oklahoma  
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May of  
1993. Completed the requirements for the Master  
of Science degree at Oklahoma State University  
in May, 1995.

**Experience:** Served as a counselor for the Y.M.C.A. for  
adolescents from May 1993 to Aug 1993. Graduate  
Assistant for Student Academic Athletics at  
Oklahoma State University from August 1993 to May  
1994. Employed as a youth supervisor for  
Operation Brightside in Kansas City, Kansas from  
May 1994 to August 1994. Graduate Assistant at  
Oklahoma State University from August 1994 to  
May 1995.