PERCEPTIONS OF THE WORKING WORLD AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS IN A LOW-INCOME JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

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Chapter 1: Background and Theory

Evidence from many different sources indicates that most African Americans have received an unusually small share of the wealth and the advantages of our affluent society. Historical sources provide evidence of rampant job, educational, and voting discrimination (Jencks, 1992; Wilson, 1980; Lemann, 1991; Ogbu, 1978); and U.S. Census Bureau data from all eras show African Americans faring poorly on most indicators of social, economic, and physical well-being (Farley, 1985; Farley & Allen, 1987; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991a; 1991d). At all education levels Black men earn considerably less than White men, and Black women earn even less than Black men (Tables 1 and 2). Furthermore, in many ways conditions for African Americans are worsening rather than improving. Black men with a high school education or less have seen their incomes and job opportunities deteriorate (Farley & Allen, 1987; tables 1 & 2 below), and Blacks in the Midwest have lost far more ground than those in any other region (Table 3). African American women have fared better, apparently because gender-related wage inequity has declined somewhat, but here too those without a college education have not seen gains in the last 20 years (Table 1).

Other recent indicators of African American well-being show an equally dismal picture. Poverty and unemployment rates remain high, especially for Midwest Blacks (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991b; U.S. Department of Labor, 1989) Mortality rates are high both due to violence, and due to limited access to health care (Jaynes and Williams, 1989).

The bleak patterns described above are the patterns that young African Americans see around them as they grow up. Improving opportunities would be expected to instill hope in young African Americans, but for the last two decades economic conditions for most African Americans have not been improving, especially in the Midwest. The striking economic gains which followed the civil

rights movement largely ended a generation ago. For Midwest Blacks in particular, the last twenty years have involved a severe slide from relative prosperity back toward poverty. Adjusting for inflation, the incomes of Midwest Blacks dropped more than 30% between 1974 and 1984 (Table 3), and did not rebound after that as the economy of the rest of the nation improved. Shifts in the economy and in the availability of union and blue collar industrial jobs have hurt African Americans more than other segments of the population (Farley and Allen, 1987; Jaynes and Williams, 1989; Wilson, 1980).

The young African Americans entering the labor market in the early 1990's have grown up watching economic conditions grow worse for African Americans rather than better. It is very likely that the political, economic, and social environment in which young African Americans have grown up has influenced their hopes and expectations about their future roles in American society.

This goal of this study is to explore and document the perceptions of a particular group of young low-income African Americans. Low income African Americans are the focus of many government programs and policies. In the current era of welfare reform initiatives, the goal of many new programs is to reduce the number of welfare recipients, and increase participation in the work force. This is accomplished through various combinations of restrictions on welfare, and job programs for individuals who are currently unemployed or underemployed. The goal of this study is to more clearly understand the participants in a job program of this type.

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is a piece of federal legislation which funds local job training programs across the United States. The participants in this study were young African Americans who participated in the JTPA summer job program in Champaign County, Illinois. JTPA participants were interviewed to explore how they perceived the working world, especially whether they saw employment as offering them fair opportunities or rewarding experiences. The interviews

focused on the opinions about work and opportunity that these young Blacks had formed through their own work experience and through hearing the work stories of older Blacks. In particular, the study tried to assess whether young low-income African Americans experience ambivalence or conflict as they try to balance African American culture and identity with their aspirations to succeed in work environments largely owned and run by Whites (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1991). These issues were explored through qualitative interviews, in order to allow subjective perceptions and personal experiences to be reported in some detail. It is hoped that by providing a description of the hope, discouragement, and ambivalence experienced by low income African American youth, light may be shed on the connections between the economic and social structure of society, and the perceptions and attitudes which develop as a result of being near the bottom of that social structure.

No single line of research has explored African American perceptions of opportunity and the ways that such perceptions may be related to the economic structure of society and to African American ethnicity and identity. Topics relevant to this area have been studied by researchers from a variety of disciplines, especially psychology, sociology, and education. The discussion below reviews and integrates past findings from several research traditions, and develops a theoretical structure for this study. First the discussion explores the historical and social context of African Americans in the United States, and the importance of clarifying the relationship between social context and subjective perceptions. Second, it reviews some of the extensive research on the aspirations and expectations held by African Americans, and the ways that these may be related to perceptions of opportunity. Third, it discusses theories and empirical findings regarding African American's perceptions of opportunities open to them, and the ways these perceptions may relate to their ethnic identity. Finally, it explores the way that social learning theory and related research

on internal and external attributions can provide a framework for understanding whether African Americans believe opportunities are available to them, and how they perceive settings which ask that they give up their African American ethnic identity as a condition of employment.

The Importance of Context in the Study of Attitudes and Expectations

As mentioned above, this study explored how African American high school students perceived the working world, especially whether they saw employment as offering them fair opportunities or rewarding experiences. Since the basic design involves the study of internal attitudes and expectations, it is important to address past criticisms of studies which focus on internal attributes of groups who have experienced discrimination (Rappaport, 1977b; Ryan, 1971).

There is danger in focusing on the internal attributes of a person or a group if one ignores the social contexts which shape these attributes. Doing so one might conclude that the internal attributes studied cause or account for any problems experienced by that person or that group. For example, if one studied attitudes toward the selling of drugs and found that many people have more tolerant attitudes toward drug selling in poor Black communities, one could conclude that permissive attitudes caused the drug problem and that better drug education would be the best intervention.

Community psychologists and others have sharply criticized this individual focus largely because an individual focus can ignore damaging environments and harmful institutions (Rappaport, 1977b; Ryan 1971). Such a focus can lead to efforts to repair individual deficits, rather than efforts to change environments in which many people fail to thrive. A fundamental assumption of this study is that if many members of a group fail to thrive in a given context, one must look closely at the context to discover what processes at work there lead to widespread failure.

The bias of ignoring context is common, and is in fact a natural human tendency. Psychology has often concentrated on the individual level of analysis, but the error of overemphasizing the effect

of individual attributes, and underemphasizing the influence of the environment is not confined to psychologists. An ironic and well-replicated finding from within the field of psychology is that most Americans in most circumstances overestimate the influence of internal factors and underestimate the influence of the environment when trying to explain the behavior of others (Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, and Marecek, 1973). This finding is pervasive enough that it has come to be called "the fundamental attribution error" (Bernstein, Roy, Srull, & Wickens, 1988). Applying this finding to theories about poverty, there is a basic and erroneous American tendency (found less in other cultures) to focus on the qualities of the people to explain their behavior, and to underestimate the influence of past and present circumstances and environments. Given the strength of this tendency, it is important when studying poverty avoid a premature impulse toward individual explanations, and attend more thoroughly to environmental influences.

Cultural Levels of Analysis

In his famous 1971 critique, Ryan argues against assigning blame at the individual level, and also against assigning blame at the cultural level. In his view "blaming the victim" applies not only to blaming the individual, but also describes blaming a culture which has experienced severe discrimination by finding deficits within the culture and using these to explain the problems of individuals. "Culture of poverty" explanations fit this mold: the African American child is seen as a product of a poor parenting and of a home life which fails to properly encourage education (Lemann, 1991; Steinberg, 1989). Cultural explanations can operate in the same way as individual explanations: They suggest that some intrinsic quality of Black culture causes Blacks to remain in poverty.

Ryan argues for an extreme position, one which would appear to relieve individuals of responsibility for their actions. This study includes a number of individuals who have chosen to do

very destructive things. Some seem enmeshed in long-standing counterproductive habits. At one level, these men are responsible for their actions, and will be seen that way by employers, teachers, families, and police. However, individual and even cultural explanations fail to account for how a group of people comes to develop certain patterns of behavior. To explain how various patterns came to be, it is necessary to examine the larger context, and the ways that environments shape individuals and groups. Steinberg (1989) offers a persuasive analysis of the ways that ethnicity can be used and misused in the theories of social science. Steinberg argues that ethnicity is too often treated as though it fully explains behavior, independent of the historical and social context in which the ethnic culture exists.

> That ethnic groups have unique cultural character can hardly be denied. The problem, however, is that culture does not exist in a vacuum; nor is it fixed and unchanging. On the contrary, culture is in constant flux and is integrally a part of a larger social process. The mandate for social inquiry, therefore, is that ethnic patterns should not be taken at face value, but must be related to the larger social matrix in which they are embedded. (Steinberg, 1989, p. xiii).

The tendency to explain social phenomena merely by pointing to culture is an error similar to the fundamental attribution error, but on a larger scale. Attitudes and behaviors are "explained" by saying that they are attributes of the culture. For example, one could say that many Blacks speak Black vernacular English because it is part of Black culture. Such reasoning is almost circular, and actually describes a pattern without explaining it. To explain a pattern one would have to examine how the pattern arose, and what helps it persist. To do this one must look at the historical and social context. In addition, one must be careful not to attribute to culture patterns which actually stem from other circumstances. As an absurd example, living in substandard housing, a common African American experience, is not an African American cultural pattern. One must also consider that African American culture is not homogeneous, but diverse.

This study sometimes examines patterns which might be considered cultural, but consistently emphasizes the context in which African American culture has developed. Ryan (1971) warns against simple cultural explanations because he argues that such explanations are often unsympathetic, and lack context. Steinberg (1989) argues that they are simple-minded, often erroneous, and produce poor social science. Sound analysis of cultural patterns is both careful and complex.

Historical, Social, and Economic Context

To follow Steinberg's suggestions and look at the larger social matrix in which African American culture is embedded, one needs to put African American culture in both an historical context and a current social context. The two are closely related, because the current social context of African Americans stems directly from their history. As background and context for this study, this section reviews both historical patterns and current demographic patterns which are likely to shape the perceptions of young African Americans currently entering adulthood.

Extreme discrimination in the pre-civil-rights era. As slaves, African Americans entered American society in a role which they did not choose, a role of extreme subservience and lack of power. Overwhelming evidence indicates that long after slavery Blacks were kept in unchosen positions of low power and status by a variety of social institutions (Jencks, 1992; Wilson, 1980). For southern Blacks there were few employment options other the sharecropping, which did not decline until the 1940's (Lemann, 1991). African Americans were overwhelmingly excluded from unionized and skilled employment until well into the 1960's (Ogbu, 1978). Extreme housing discrimination was practiced routinely, and could even be legal municipal policy until the civil rights acts of the 1960's (Fishel & Quarles, 1970; Lemann, 1991; Ogbu, 1978). Separate and unequal schools, with Black schools funded at far lower levels, were nearly universal in 1936, when the

NAACP began lawsuits for equal funding (Ogbu, 1978). Illegal segregation often persisted far beyond the Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954 (Ogbu, 1978). Exclusion from voting was rampant in the South until the voting rights act of 1957, and largely persisted until the voting rights act of 1965 (Ogbu, 1978). These are a few examples of systematic, intentional discrimination and exclusion going on in very recent years.

The participants in this study were be in their late teens and early twenties. They were born in the early 1970's, only a few years after the major civil rights legislation of the 1960's. It seems appropriate expect that this generation of young African Americans would be affected by the fact that overt, institutionalized racial discrimination was legal in the era when many of their parents were growing up. Prior to the civil rights movement the doctrine of Black inferiority was not just a belief of some individuals, it was institutionalized in legal codes, housing covenants, and voting registration practices. To the extent that ideas and perceptions are transmitted between generations, the recency of the pre-civil-rights era is quite important.

Current levels of discrimination and racism are harder to define and measure. Because many discriminatory practices of the past are now illegal, overt discrimination is probably less prevalent, and it is more difficult to precisely estimate the ways in which young Blacks may encounter racist individuals, ideas, or policies. Some theorists argue that Black youth still consistently face environments which devalue Blacks, and that Black youth are adversely affected by these experiences (Ogbu, 1988; Steele, 1992). This study did not attempt to resolve the difficult question of what acts and what policies were motivated by racist intentions, but it did explore the ways that Black youth experienced the environments in which they participated, and the role that race played in that experience.

Demographic Data on the Circumstances of African Americans

In spite of civil rights legislation, and the movement of some African Americans into the middle class, economic conditions continue to be quite bleak for many African Americans. The perceptions of the current generation of African American youth has been shaped largely by the economic conditions African Americans have faced for the last two decades. These conditions merit careful discussion. Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen have published extensive analyses of the ways in which African Americans have fared well and poorly in the United States, analyzing census data and other large-scale national surveys (Farley, 1985; Allen & Farley 1986; Farley & Allen, 1987). These data will be examined, and supplemented by more recent findings (Jencks, 1992; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991a; 1991b; 1991c; 1991d, 1991e). Of particular interest for this study are the patterns for education, employment and income.

It should be noted at the outset that there are limitations to Census Bureau data. For example, those without a fixed address or phone are often under-counted, resulting in an under-representation of the most disadvantaged. One the other hand, one would expect illegal income to be under-reported, resulting in an underestimate of the incomes of some low-income persons. In spite of these limitations Census Bureau data are often the best available.

Education patterns. As Tables 1 and 2 illustrate, higher levels of education are strongly associated with higher income. Education is also seen as one of the most important components of social mobility for individuals and groups (Kerckhoff, 1984). Blacks are currently completing much more education than in previous decades. The gap between the education completed by Blacks and that completed by Whites decreased markedly between 1940 and 1965, although the remaining gap has been closing only very slowly since then (Farley, 1985). As of the 1990, Whites aged 25 to 34 were still almost twice as likely to complete college (24.8% vs.13.6%), although Blacks were graduating from high school at almost the same rate as Whites (82.3% versus 86.8%) (U.S. Bureau

of the Census, 1991a, table 7). Unfortunately, as more people get more education, the pay for any given level of education often drops. A Black person with a high school education in 1969 would be paid (on the average) 89% of the U.S. median income. In 1989 that person would be paid 77% of the U.S. median income (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991e, table 2). For any given individual, this means that the penalty of having relatively little education is greater now. The pay of high school drop outs in particular has dropped, especially in the last five years.

Employment and income patterns are complex, and several distinctions should be made at the outset regarding their interpretation. Wage patterns indicate the pay that people receive after they have gotten a job. Wage inequity does not reflect any additional discrimination which may be occurring in the hiring process. To understand economic hardship, income statistics are sometimes better than wage statistics, and sometimes include the unemployed. However, statistics are sometimes given only for year-round full-time workers, and exclude the substantial number who are unemployed or underemployed, a group studied by Bowman (1984). This discussion focuses on income as an indicator of economic hardship, and highlights those trends which are most likely to affect the perceptions and the well-being of African American youth in the Midwest.

It will be useful to look at two different trends separately: Are incomes improving, and are incomes equitable? First, looking only at African Americans, have incomes been improving over the last 20 years? Improvement in income would be expected to foster hope in young African Americans entering the labor market. Second, what is happening to the gap between the incomes of Blacks and those of Whites? Persistent wage inequity would be expected to foster resentment, while decreasing wage inequity would be expected lead to decreased resentment. Finally, what are the patterns of unemployment? Unemployment means being entirely outside of the working world, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The unemployed would be expected to have the most negative

appraisals of the fairness of the rewards of working.

African American income trends. Tables 1 and 2 show the trends in the incomes of Black men and women from 1949 to 1984. These tables show a picture of strongly rising incomes from 1949 to 1969, but of stagnation and decline in income until 1984. Since 1984 the picture has been improving in most of the country. The data available are broken down slightly differently than those in tables 1 and 2, so they cannot be compared directly. They indicate, however, that in 1988 median Black male incomes in the U.S. had risen back to roughly their 1969 levels (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991d). Black female incomes in 1988 were about 24% above their 1969 levels. Essentially, the improvement in income for Black males has not progressed past 1960's levels, although the incomes of Black women have continued to improve.

Hidden within the figures just mentioned are a variety of more specific patterns. Most relevant for this study is a striking decline in the incomes of African Americans in the Midwest. In 1974 Blacks in the Midwest had the highest incomes of Blacks anywhere in the country. By 1984 they had the lowest incomes of Blacks anywhere in the country, and they were still lowest in 1989 (Table 4).

African American incomes compared to those of Whites. Although absolute pay levels may be most important when analyzing poverty and material well-being, African Americans' perceptions of the fairness of the income structure is likely to be strongly affected by the relative equity of pay levels: Are Blacks paid the same as similarly trained Whites? Inequity persists in the relative incomes of Blacks and Whites, and this inequity is sometimes extreme. The inequity varies by gender, by region, and, to a lesser extent, by education. Gender must be included in any discussion of Black-White pay equity, as the patterns by gender are as striking as the patterns by race. Prior to the 1960's African American women typically worked for extremely low wages (tables 1 & 2).

During this era there were also far more Black women than White women in the work force. In more recent years, many White women have joined the labor force, so that the labor force participation for Black and White women is roughly equal, at just over 60%. At the same time, the wages of Black women have risen, so that the incomes of Black women and those of similarly educated White women are roughly equal (Farley & Allen, 1987; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991a; 1991d; also see Tables 1 & 2).

At all levels of education both Black and White women are paid far less than White men, and somewhat less than Black men. This discrepancy is more extreme for women with less education. For workers with a high school education, both Black and White women make about 40% as much as White men; Black men make 66% as much. Black men who are college graduates earn significantly more than high school graduates, but here too they earn only 71% as much as White men (table 2).

Pay for African Americans in the Midwest is not only low in absolute terms, it is also extremely low in comparison to the pay of Midwestern Whites. Moreover, of all regions of the country, African Americans in the Midwest have experienced the most extreme shift from prosperity back toward poverty over the last 20 years. Table 3 shows that in 1984 dollars, African American men in the Midwest earned a median income of $16,200 in 1969. By 1979 this had slipped to $13,500, and by 1984 it had dropped markedly to $8,500. White male incomes declined far less, resulting in extreme pay inequity.

One of the best ways to evaluate pay equity is to calculate relative incomes. This method helps to eliminate the distortion of nationwide economic recessions and advances by giving incomes as a fraction of the overall median U.S. income for that year. Table 4 uses relative income statistics to illustrate the degree of income inequity in the Midwest. Table 4 shows that by 1989 African

American incomes had not rebounded from the recession of the early 1980's, and Black-White pay inequity in the Midwest had not decreased. The pay inequity between Blacks and Whites in the Midwest is the worst in the country. The median income of Blacks is 51% that of Whites. Pay inequity this extreme between Blacks and Whites has not occurred outside of the South since the depression (Farley & Allen, 1987, Table 10.6), and the Midwest now has greater pay inequity than the South.

Adjusted for inflation the median income earned by African American men in the Midwest in 1969 is the highest regional income level that African Americans men have ever achieved in a U.S. census. African American women received less than half as much, but even this was a substantial improvement from earlier eras. As of 1969 African American incomes in the northern and western U.S. had been increasing steadily and substantially for over 20 years. During this boom period African Americans would have good reason for optimism. Current African American youth have grown up seeing a far different trend. The drop in median Black male income in the Midwest, from $16,200 in 1969 to $8,500 in 1984 means that current Black youth in the Midwest have grown up during the steepest decline in Black incomes since the depression. Unlike the depression, however, the trend of the 1980's is not one of widespread national poverty, but of increased affluence for the richest members of society, and increased poverty for the poorest. The perceptions of Midwestern Blacks will be the perceptions of a group who have lost a great deal of ground, while those around them have fared much better.

Unemployment. Farley and Allen (1987) report a great deal of Census Bureau data on work force participation. Many more Blacks than Whites are officially "unemployed," and "discouraged." Both of these categories are relevant to understanding whether African Americans perceive the working world as a place which rewards them fairly. The term "discouraged workers" is used by

the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to describe those who are unemployed and have stopped looking for work because they believe that there are no jobs available. This group is not counted in the calculation of the official unemployment rate, and it is disproportionately Black. The "unemployed" are those people who have no job, but are looking for one. Conventional "unemployment" statistics include only this group.

Black unemployment rates are typically about twice as high as White unemployment rates, and have been for many years, during both economic recessions and expansions (Jencks, 1992). This is true of both men and women, with unemployment especially high in the 16-24 year old cohort (Farley & Allen, 1987, Figure 8.1). In 1985 15.3% of Black men and 14.9% of Black women were classified as unemployed. The numbers for young Blacks were about twice that. Furthermore, Black unemployment is worst in the Midwest. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1989) provide data from 1983-1988 showing that Midwestern Black unemployment rates were the highest in the nation for all six of those years. If high numbers of Blacks are looking for jobs and not finding them, it is extremely likely that they do not perceive the opportunities available to them as fair and rewarding.

One could say the same for "discouraged workers," who have given up looking. Bowman (1984) has studied the phenomenon of discouraged workers because he believes that government statistics underestimate the number who actually hold little hope of finding a job. In a national sample of 201 Blacks contacted by telephone, Bowman finds that 40% are not employed, and an additional 10% are working part time, but want to work more. 8% of his sample reports believing that finding work would be "almost impossible," and an additional 15% report that it would be "extremely hard." "Thus, a full 23% of the sample were discouraged, in the sense that they were jobless and saw little probability of success in their job search" (Bowman, 1984, p. 79). In addition to higher absolute

unemployment rates, Black unemployment is more sensitive to economic fluctuations than White unemployment, rising more sharply during prosperous times, and dropping more sharply during downturns (Farley & Allen, 1987, figure 8.1). Research indicates that the attitudes and perceptions of youth are significantly affected by such patterns. Studying predominately White populations in Canada, Pautler and Lewko (1987) found that adolescents' attitudes toward the working world were far more negative in a city with a volatile labor market and high unemployment. Pautler and Lewko (1987) found that children in a Canadian town with highly fluctuating unemployment levels "held a relatively jaundiced view of the work world" (p. 28). The town studied had greater employment fluctuations than are typical for Canada, and was experiencing high unemployment at the time of the study. "Subjects held views that suggested a shift in their thinking toward avoiding hard work, trying to get as much as possible without expending any effort, and diminishing the importance of having a job" (p. 29). In addition, subjects had very little confidence in their ability to get a job in the future and be successful. The findings of Pautler and Lewko (1987) are seen as very significant for this study, because they establish that an unrewarding environment can have a strong effect on adolescents' attitudes toward the working world. In this case, the effect occurs in a White sample without the history of work force exploitation experienced by American Blacks.

The findings discussed above about actual wages paid to African Americans provide substantial evidence that young African Americans may be quite skeptical about the fairness of the working world. This study examines that question more directly. The history of discrimination, and the recent patterns of declining wages for African Americans, form two parts of the context in which Black culture has developed. Part of this context is a society where both now and in the past Whites control most of the institutions that affect the lives of Blacks. Jobs, housing, government, and education are largely administered by Whites. In this context, current events are played out against

a background of historical discrimination and exclusion that gives the current events part of their significance. For example, if a White employee is cheated by her White employer, she is likely to attach a different set of cultural and social meanings to the experience than a Black woman who is cheated by her White employer. An assumption of this study is that individual and collective history shape current perceptions, and shape the ways that individuals give meaning to current experiences.

The analysis above allows us to return to our original question: When and for what purpose would it be appropriate to look at the internal attitudes and attributes of members of a disadvantaged group? First, it is appropriate when the study clarifies and restores the context, and describes the linkages between individuals, cultures, and societal institutions, especially discriminatory institutions. It is inappropriate if the study serves to further obscure the context by treating attributes of individuals as if they have independent explanatory power. It is essential to understand the origins of attitudes and perceptions. Given the fundamental attribution error, unless the connections between the individual and the larger social matrix are explored and clarified, the tendency will be for people to assume that attributes of individuals explain the social phenomena in question. In policy, this will lead to a continued preference for individual solutions, from encouraging kids to say "no" to drugs, to offering job training to adults after they were given an inadequate public education as children.

Second, by exploring the natural process by which subjective attitudes form, one can de-pathologize the attitudes themselves, and regain an stance of respectful sympathy for attitudes which develop in harsh economic and social environments. Examples will illustrate this point. It is no failing on the part of the parents if they come home from work and talk in front of their children about their boring, difficult, menial work, and their sense of being taken advantage of by employers who demand much and offer little. It is not poor parenting to communicate the degree to which one

has struggled with an unrewarding opportunity structure. The anthropologist John Ogbu (1988; 1978) has written extensively about the ways that the hopes of African American youth may be affected by their acquired perceptions of lack of genuine opportunity. His work is a good example of analyzing culture while continually exploring how it is shaped by historical forces and social institutions. His theories will be discussed in detail in a later section.

Malcolm X (1965) describes in detail his preference for working at illegal occupations rather than tolerating the humiliation of the jobs he held in servant-like roles for Whites: shining shoes, and as a sandwich vender on trains. This study is founded on the contention that the proper approach to the study of individual attitudes and perceptions is not to ignore them, but to place them in their larger context. It is only by studying the influences of institutions on individuals that one can develop sound interventions at the institutional and policy level.

Expectations and Aspirations for Education and Employment

African Americans' perceptions of opportunity have rarely been studied directly, but several lines of related research shed light on these perceptions. The sociological study of social mobility includes a line of research exploring how people aspire to and attain various occupational and educational levels (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Dawkins, 1981; 1989; Garrison, 1982; Hoelter, 1982; Kerckhoff, 1984; Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977; Porter, 1974; Portes & Wilson, 1976). This area, known as "status attainment" research, typically involves measuring the aspirations and expectations of youth, as well as socioeconomic variables, parental and peer influence, IQ, school performance, and more rarely, longitudinal outcomes (Figure 1). A number of their findings are quite relevant to this study, especially the findings involving high school students' expectations for occupational and educational success.

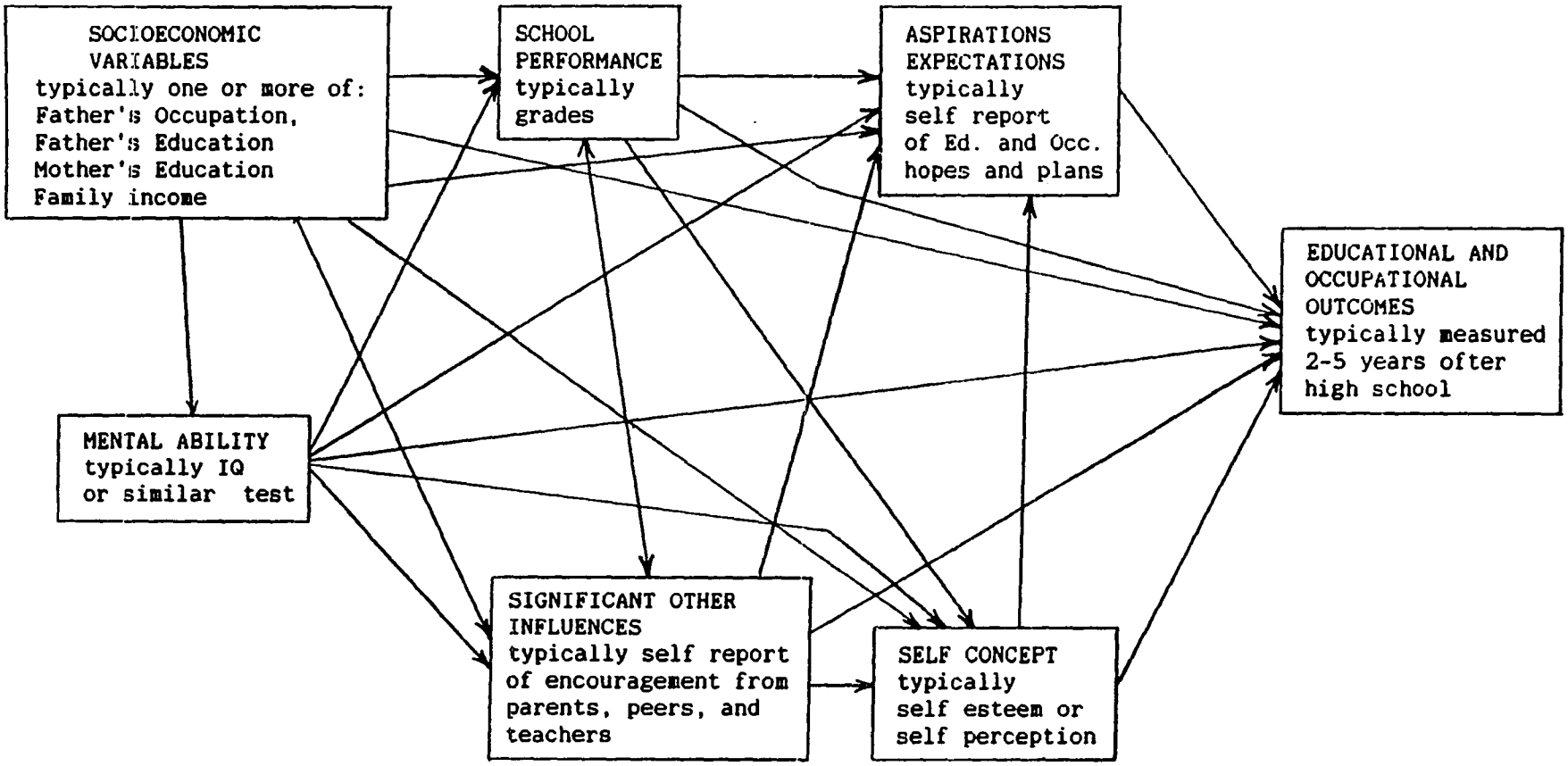
Insert Figure 1 about here

The studies generally use the term "aspirations" for the outcomes participants hope for, and "expectations" for the outcomes which they expect or plan to reach. It has been assumed that the expectations reported by African Americans would be closely related to their perceptions of the opportunity structure: If Blacks expect to achieve certain educational or occupational levels, that suggests that they believe it is possible for American Blacks to achieve those things (Dawkins, 1989). The relationship between aspirations and perceptions of opportunity is harder to predict: One may aspire to or hope for a certain outcome, but still think it very unlikely.

Levels of Aspiration and Expectation

Quite a number of studies (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Dawkins, 1989; 1981; Fields, 1981; Henderson, 1966; Klar, 1982; Picou, Cosby, Lemke, & Azuma, 1974) and review articles (Smith, 1982; Leonard, 1985) report very high aspirations and expectations among African American youth. Their expectations are high in comparison to what their parents achieved, and are very similar to the expectations of White youth. In a typical study, Burke and Hoelter (1988) found that most African American high school seniors in Louisville, Kentucky expected to complete college or graduate school, significantly higher expectations than the White students in the study. Dawkins (1989) found that 43% of African American high school graduates reported shortly after graduation that they planned to be working in professional-level jobs by the time they were 30. Garrison (1982) reported that 62.3% of African American male high school seniors in Virginia planned to work in white collar occupations, a figure very slightly higher than that of the White youth in the study.

Figure 1: Wisconsin Model of Status Attainment



Many other studies, cited by the authors mentioned above, report similar findings: The aspirations and expectations of African Americans are quite high, generally equal to or slightly higher than the expectations of White youth in the same samples.

A major limitation of these studies is their age: This author has not been able to locate a single study of African American expectations with a sample dating from the 1980's. Burke and Hoelter (1988) use data from the early 1970's. Dawkins (1989) analyzes the graduating class of 1972. Given the arguments made above about the way that Black expectations may be influenced by a long period of declining Black incomes, this is a crucial gap in the body of evidence presented here. A second limitation is that these studies often include no females. The notable exceptions are Burke and Hoelter (1988), Dawkins (1981; 1989), and a review by Smith (1982). Those studies which do include females find that their expectations are as high as those of males.

Although little recent research is available, the findings of high Black expectations are very robust. High Black expectations were found in two large, well constructed national samples dating from the 1970's (Dawkins, 1981; 1989; Portes & Wilson, 1976). Similar findings occurred for a variety of specific cohorts and regions. These include two large Virginia cohorts, who graduated in 1967 and 1976 (Garrison, 1982), a sample from Indiana who graduated in 1972 (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977), and a Louisville, Kentucky sample who graduated in 1973 (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Hoelter, 1982). Review articles note African Americans having expectations as high as those of Whites as far back as the 1950's in Florida, and in the 1960's in several samples in the deep south (Leonard, 1985; Smith, 1982). Although in most studies the aspirations of Blacks and Whites are roughly equal, it is more common to find Black aspirations higher than those of Whites than to find the reverse.

The Relationship Between Expectations and Outcomes

It is encouraging to find that African American aspirations are high, but it is essential to know whether these high aspirations are met with eventual success. Here the evidence is mixed. The few longitudinal studies available do find that aspirations and expectations correlate with later levels of achievement (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977; Porter, 1974; Portes & Wilson, 1976). For African Americans, the correlations between educational plans and educational attainment several years later was .32 in Kerckhoff and Campbell's study, and .36 in the study by Portes and Wilson. Thus, having high expectations can be viewed as a good thing, since it does correlate with later success. On the other hand, the relationship between expectations and eventual success is much stronger for Whites. For Whites, the correlations between educational plans and later educational attainment in these two studies were .59 (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977) and .52 (Portes & Wilson, 1976). It would be quite possible for there to be a lower correlation between Black expectations and outcomes, but for Blacks to succeed in equal numbers nonetheless. Less accurate self prediction need not mean lower average outcomes. Unfortunately, in these two samples Black educational attainment is lower than that of Whites at the follow up. In many cases, the errors in prediction apparently involve high hopes that are not realized.

A more specific analysis can be made by comparing the expectations in a national sample with census data from roughly the same cohort. Such a comparison shows a large discrepancy between the high expectations reported and the achievements actually attained. This comparison will use Dawkins' data (1989; 1981) and relevant census data (Farley & Allen, 1987). Dawkins analyzed data from a carefully selected national sample of seniors in the high school class of 1972, a sample of 21,600 students, 3,119 of whom were African American. Asked what educational level they would like to attain (their aspiration), over 60 percent aspired to complete a four year college degree, and over 30 percent of those aspired to complete graduate or professional school (1981). Farley and

Allen (1987) use census data to report the actual educational attainments of Blacks and Whites of different age cohorts. The high school class of 1972 would have been 26 during the 1980 census. Of African Americans in the 26-35 age group in 1980, 11.7% had completed college, and 4.9 percent had completed a year or more of graduate or professional school.

This discrepancy between the educational aspirations and the levels of education achieved is perplexing. A part of the discrepancy may be due to the fact that Dawkins' sample of high school graduates excluded dropouts from the class of 1972. 1980 census data for this cohort indicate that roughly 75 percent of the African American adult population aged 26-35 had graduated from high school (Farley & Allen, 1987). One may assume that the dropouts (who would not have been in Dawkins' sample) held lower aspirations than the graduates. However, if the dropouts had been included and had reported no college aspirations whatever, the percentage in the sample aspiring to complete college would still be about four times the number in the census cohort who actually reached that goal.

One would want the educational attainments of this group of African Americans to be far closer to the level which they had hoped to attain. But as researchers we also simply want to understand this phenomenon more clearly. Researchers currently have trouble accounting for the processes at work in African American aspirations and social mobility. Even if one assumes that there are differences between the attainment of Blacks and that of Whites, the status attainment model contains many variables which one would expect to be important for both groups. For example, it is likely that Blacks face greater barriers than Whites in their pursuit of success. In addition to the potential for racism, many more Blacks than Whites are born into lower and working class backgrounds, and must climb further to reach the high aspirations they hold. However, these things do not explain why the correlations between expectations and outcomes are so much lower for

Blacks. Even if there is a pattern of discrimination or hardship which lowers the overall levels of Black achievement, there is no theoretical reason why this would lower the correlation between expectations and success. The correlation is not based on the absolute levels of achievement that people attain, but on their relative achievement levels. Even under adverse conditions, people with high plans and expectations should fare better than people with low plans and expectations. Statistically, one would expect a lowered correlation if the variance in one of the variables were sharply truncated for Blacks, but this does not seem to occur. The means differ significantly by race; the standard deviations do not (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977: Porter, 1974; Portes & Wilson, 1976). The low correlations between these variables for African Americans are more consistent with the hypothesis that these phenomena are not being measured well, or that other factors are operating which are not well understood.

Relationships Between Aspirations, Expectations, and Other Variables

Status attainment researchers have worked for several decades to develop models which can predict upward social mobility. In simple terms, this research involves trying to find a set of variables which can predict whether people will get good educations and good jobs. The best of this research is longitudinal, and includes outcome data collected later (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977; Porter, 1974; Portes & Wilson, 1976). The non-longitudinal studies simply try to predict who will plan to get a good education or a high status job, since these plans correlate with the actual outcomes (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Garrison, 1982; Hoelter, 1982). Researchers repeatedly find that they cannot predict upward mobility or mobility expectations nearly as well among Blacks as Whites. Not only is the relationship between expectations and attainment weaker; almost all correlations in the model are weaker as well. The limited ability to predict (and to understand) social mobility among Blacks suggests that there are processes at work which researchers have failed to consider,

or failed to measure well.

The model which has been used most often is both complex, and intuitively appealing. It is typically called the "Wisconsin model of status attainment" (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Kerckhoff, 1976; Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977). The model is depicted in figure 1, above. The model tries to be both longitudinal and to include context, especially the influences of family and others. Variables on the left are considered theoretically prior to those in the middle, and all influence the outcome variables on the right.

The difficulty in interpreting the meaning of African Americans' reported expectations and aspirations comes from the fact that they do not correlate with other variables in the ways predicted by theory. The issue is not that African Americans' aspirations behave differently than those of Whites; that would not be surprising. The issue is more that researchers have not been able to develop a model which explains the aspirations of African Americans even on their own. The aspirations of Blacks do not correlate as highly as those of Whites with most variables in the model, and researchers have not been able to find variables which add to the predictive power. Table 5 illustrates this, showing the results of three studies which use multiple variables to predict either educational attainment, or educational plans.

The inclusion of all three studies in a table for comparison is not meant to imply that the studies are similar in all ways, for there are notable differences among them. All three illustrate, however, the degree to which the expectations and attainments of Whites are easier to predict with this model than those of Blacks. Authors readily acknowledge this. In a recent study which tried to add variables in order to improve prediction for African Americans in the sample, Burke and Hoelter (1988) say of African American males, "past research has never modeled the process well for this group. The present research did not either" (p. 44).

As one would expect, when the predictive power of the full model is lower for African Americans, many of the individual relationships within the model are weaker as well. The findings of Portes and Wilson (1976) illustrate this well, and come from a carefully constructed national sample. They measure (a) educational plans as of 10th grade, (b) educational attainment four years later, (c) grades for the 9th and 10th grade years, (d) current ability, measured in 10th grade through simple intelligence and reading tests, (e) socioeconomic status (parents' education, occupation, and wealth), (f) self esteem, and (g) self-report of whether a variety of significant others encourage the subject to attend college (called significant other influence). Table 6 lists some of the zero order correlations which they found. Table 7 shows that the lower correlations for African Americans are not due to restricted variance on these variables among African Americans in the sample.

A striking finding in these data is that almost all of the relationships in the model are far stronger for Whites than for Blacks. This finding has been replicated repeatedly in status attainment research, and a variety of authors have noted that the model predicts poorly for African Americans (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Hoelter, 1982; Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1977; Porter, 1974; Portes & Wilson, 1976). A theoretical explanation for these findings is needed. The hypothesis offered here focuses on the possibility that Blacks may be more uncertain and ambivalent about their future prospects than Whites. Both uncertainty and ambivalence would be expected to produce less accurate self prediction regarding expectations and aspirations.

The present study explores the hypothesis that African Americans have reason to experience ambivalence and uncertainty about work place opportunity. Before describing the theoretical basis for that hypothesis, it may be useful to consider a more limited hypothesis about uncertainty due to cohort effects. It may be that in the 1970's, when many of these studies were conducted, Blacks were genuinely uncertain about which opportunities would open up for Blacks in the U.S.. If many

more opportunities for Blacks were opening up in the late 1960's and early 1970's, it might have been difficult for Blacks of that era to predict which successes would be possible for them and which would not. Blacks of this era may have been trying to predict how they would do in situations which they and their parents had rarely encountered. The cultural rhetoric of the day was that opportunities were now open to Blacks, and that racial discrimination was now illegal. This could lead a young Black to expect that there was reason for optimism, but he or she would still be uncertain about how to use past experience as a basis for predictions about the future. One would expect this to lead to less accurate, and possibly over-optimistic predictions.

The age of many of these studies make it difficult to predict how the same factors would operate today. It is long enough after the structural changes of the civil rights era that African Americans may be able to predict their prospects much more clearly, although this author has not found studies testing that hypothesis.

Another hypothesis, which will be developed at far greater length below, is that many African Americans may be far more ambivalent than Whites about participating in the work force, which is largely owned and run by Whites. If many work settings are perceived as unfair or unrewarding, or as places that undermine ones pride or one's sense of cultural identity, it would be far more difficult to whole-heartedly aspire to work there, and far easier to get discouraged and give up along the way.

The two possibilities presented above are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. Since many African Americans are aspiring to higher goals than their parents often achieved, they may have not have enough information to predict how they can succeed at reaching those goals. Second, if they are ambivalent about the work settings and educational settings in which they would have to participate, their achievement goals would lead to fewer rewards, and provide less motivation to

persist in striving to attain them. Both uncertainty and ambivalence would be expected to lead to lower predictive power for the Status Attainment model.

African American Perceptions of the Opportunity Structure

The hypothesis that African American youth may perceive the opportunities available as unrewarding and alienating comes from the work of the anthropologist John Ogbu (1978; 1988, 1991), and from informal conversations with Black adults in Chicago during 1990 and 1991. This section discusses Ogbu's theories, as well as complimentary theories and findings by other researchers (Bowman, 1989; Triandis, 1975) to build the theoretical foundation of this study. Ogbu argues that an extensive history of discrimination has left many African Americans skeptical about whether they will be rewarded fairly for their efforts in school and in the work force. In addition to this, he contends that many African Americans have developed a positive sense of Black cultural identity, and are quite ambivalent about compromising this sense of identity in settings where they have to "act White" in order to succeed (Ogbu, 1991; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Ogbu's analysis is complex, and will be discussed in some detail to explore its relevance to this study.

School Effort

Ogbu argues that African Americans often do poorly in school because they do not try very hard, and that they do not try hard because they do not believe they will be fairly rewarded. Interviewing African American and Mexican- American students in Stockton, California, Ogbu found evidence of this belief:

> Many of them believed that their White peers took their school work more seriously because "they know they have more opportunities in society." . . . As one student remarked, "The Anglos work harder because they believe that they are the head of every business in the U.S." (Ogbu, 1991, p. 447-448).

In addition, Ogbu found evidence in these interviews that student effort bore little relationship

to their reported aspirations. "Students who aspired to jobs requiring long and difficult educational preparation (e.g., engineering and medicine) were no more serious about their schoolwork nor worked harder than others who wanted jobs that did not require a high school diploma" Ogbu, 1991, p. 446). Ogbu does not offer enough description of his qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to allow the reader to judge the robustness of his conclusions. There is some evidence collected by others, however, which supports Ogbu.

Mickelson (1990) conducted a study to test Ogbu's hypothesis that Black Americans often do not believe they will be rewarded for school effort. She discussed the common finding that African Americans "express a high regard for education even though their academic performance is poor" (p. 44). Mickelson constructed a questionnaire containing both "abstract" items about the value of education, such as "Education is the key to success in the future," and "concrete" questions about role of education for the respondent or the respondent's family, such as "All I need to learn for my future is to read, write, and make change" (Mickelson, 1990, p. 51). Not only did confirmatory factor analysis support the distinction between abstract and concrete beliefs about education, Mickelson also found that concrete beliefs about education significantly predict GPA, while abstract beliefs do not.

Mickelson calculated the gap between concrete and abstract beliefs toward education, and found that it was larger for Blacks than Whites, and larger for working class than middle class participants. The racial difference, however, was far greater than the class difference, and middle class Blacks had a greater gap in these beliefs than working class Whites. Mickelson found that for both Blacks and Whites, grades are related not to abstract beliefs about the value of education, but to concrete beliefs that education has helped their families, or will help them personally. Her findings support Ogbu's theory that African Americans expect less personal benefit from their education than Whites,

and that the grades of those who expect little benefit are lower.

Steele (1992) discusses evidence that African Americans at every level of schooling typically perform more poorly than ability tests suggest that they should. At any given level of SAT scores, African Americans flunked out of college at rates two or three times as high as Whites. This was true even at the highest ability levels, such as SAT scores of 1400. At one university, White students with C+ averages had a mean ACT score in the 34th percentile; African Americans with C+ averages had a mean ACT score in the 98th percentile. Steele concludes that African Americans have the ability to perform far better, but they have learned not to be invested in their own school success. Steele believes that those around them expect Black students to fail, and that they learn to have the same expectation for themselves, even if they are capable.

Findings from status attainment research support Steele's idea that ability is not as closely tied to achievement for many Black male students. In these studies the correlation between grades and standardized measures of ability, such as IQ tests, is far lower for Blacks than for Whites (Table 8).

These data, in addition to being old, show varying patterns. There is a tendency for African American males to show a lower correlation than White males, although the magnitude varies strongly by sample, and the difference is sometimes non-significant. The one study which reports data for females shows a much stronger relationship between ability and grades for females, as well as a race by sex interaction. African American females show the strongest correlation between ability and grades of any group in the sample, a finding which does not support the hypothesis of a lack of investment in school. More findings are needed to draw firm conclusions, but these results are quite consistent with the idea that African American men may have considerable ability which is not being used in the pursuit of school success. This is consistent with the hypothesis that they are not strongly invested in school. More findings are needed to determine if the gender discrepancy

is consistent, but if one accepts the hypothesis that African American males are often not invested in school, one must decide whether schooling offers rewards that would inspire African Americans to be invested in it.

Financial Rewards of Education

Ogbu believes that young African Americans are greatly discouraged by a perception that the job market offers them few opportunities, and by a perception that education does little to improve their chances of success. In his 1978 book Ogbu argues strongly that African Americans have been overwhelmingly denied opportunity, and that education is not rewarded. More recent evidence supports some of Ogbu's claims, but the case is less extreme than he argued in 1978.

There is abundant evidence of a history of extreme discrimination prior to the civil rights movement. One of the foundations for Ogbu's discussion, which he supports with considerable census data and historical evidence, is that there had long been a "job ceiling" for African Americans in the United States, meaning that African Americans are largely excluded from professional and high status jobs (Ogbu, 1978). Blacks have historically been denied access to work in many industries and professions in both the North and the South. From the emancipation until the middle of the 20th century, Blacks were excluded from trade unions, from professional occupations, and have historically been offered primarily low-paying work as farm laborers, domestics, and workers in a variety of difficult and dirty jobs not favored by Whites. During the pre-civil-rights era Ogbu notes that in some areas the majority of African American railroad porters were college educated (1978), and others have noted that educated Blacks could often only find work within the African American community, as teachers in segregated schools, for example (Lemann, 1991). Other authors and data sources, including census records, richly support Ogbu on these matters (Farley & Allen, 1987; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; Lemann, 1991; Wilson, 1980).

However, one important part of Ogbu's argument is not supported. Ogbu argues that the lack of opportunity has been felt especially strongly by educated blacks, who have often worked in jobs far beneath their educational level, because the discrimination against African Americans was especially acute in white-collar jobs. This is what Ogbu calls a "job ceiling", in which education is unrewarded because Blacks are almost entirely excluded from white-collar jobs, so that an educated Black has very few opportunities indeed. Ogbu provides relatively little evidence that the job ceiling of the pre-civil-rights era still persists, yet he argues that the job ceiling is a primary reason why African American youth currently do not value education. This point is important, because if greater education actually leads to greater discrimination, education would hold little appeal.

Income patterns discussed in an earlier section of this paper make it abundantly clear that there is still great pay inequity between Blacks and Whites. However, In spite of this inequity, there is strong evidence that education vastly improves the earnings of African American men and women, and that pay equity for educated Blacks has improved over time. The phenomenon which Ogbu called a job ceiling involves greater pay inequity among Blacks and Whites with more education. Tables 1 and 2 show that such a pattern has not occurred for many years. In 1949, Black male high school graduates made 68% as much as White male high school graduates, while Black male college graduates only made 59% as much as their White counterparts. By 1984 these ratios were 66% for high school graduates and 71% for college graduates. This indicates that in recent years greater education is indeed rewarded with greater pay and greater pay equity. Looking at actual income levels, the dollar figures make it clear that Black male college graduates make 70% more than Black male high school graduates, and well over twice the pay of drop-outs.

The data for African American women appear to indicate that more education has always been rewarded, even in the 1940's. Since the 1940's pay inequity for African American women has

always been far greater for those with less education (Tables 1 & 2).

> College education is quite beneficial to Black women, more than it is to White women. Even before the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Black women received greater returns for their investments in college education than White women; in 1960 an additional year of college added 62 cents to the average hourly earnings of Black women, or 3 cents more per hour than to the earnings of White women (Farley & Allen, 1987, p. 334).

These data do not support Ogbu's claim that African Americans are not rewarded for education. A more accurate way to summarize the evidence is that African Americans of all educational levels are underpaid for their work. The financial rewards of education are considerable, and should provide considerable incentive for further schooling. It is not clear that the pattern of being underpaid at all education levels would lead African Americans to value education less. On the other hand, being underpaid at all levels could easily lead to resentment towards employers, schools, and other parts of the opportunity system. Furthermore, acquiring more education is likely to have one racially loaded effect: It may lead African Americans to jobs where they are one of few African Americans in their work place. It is appropriate to ask how this would be experienced by a person aspiring to a position like this.

Evidence of Discouragement and Alienation

There is much more data available on patterns of work force inequity than there is on African Americans' perceptions of and reactions to that inequity. The evidence that is available supports the hypothesis that African Americans perceive the opportunities available as unfair. The Mickelson study discussed above (1990) finds that African Americans are less likely to believe that education will benefit them personally. She finds that the racial patterns of discouragement are stronger than the class patterns, so that even middle class Blacks are more skeptical about opportunity than lower class Whites.

Austin and Stack (1988) study beliefs about whether things are getting worse or better for the

"average man," and optimism or pessimism about the future. (They define more negative beliefs as greater "anomia".) In large samples interviewed in 1973, 1976, 1980, and 1984, they find that Blacks are consistently more anomic than Whites, and that those with low education are consistently more anomic than those with high education. (They use education as a proxy for social class). The intent of their study was to test the theory of William J. Wilson (1980) that race is declining in significance over time, and class becoming more important. They did not find race decreasing in significance or class increasing in significance between 1973 and 1984, but they did find that education plays a stronger role than race in determining anomia. The effect of education after controlling for race was far stronger than the effect of race after controlling for education. There was also an interaction effect, however, such that educated Whites were far less anomic than all other groups, while educated Blacks were only moderately less anomic than less educated Blacks. In addition to these studies, Mirowsky and Ross (1990) find extensive evidence that Blacks are typically more alienated than Whites. Their findings will be discussed at length in a later section.

Two qualitative participant observation studies also provide evidence of African Americans being discouraged by the working world. Both have small samples, but provide detailed analyses of how the attitudes of their participants formed. Liebow's classic 1967 study of Black street corner men contains vivid accounts of men steadily discouraged by menial and unrewarding work experiences until they do just enough to get by. MacLeod's 1987 study of public housing residents focused on a small group of African American high school students who were more hopeful, more diligent in school, and less delinquent than a group of Whites in the same housing development. Both groups were naturally occurring groups of friends, not samples selected to draw conclusions about racial patterns. Both groups fare poorly. Virtually all of the White participants do time in jail. The Blacks become quite disillusioned after high school at the lack of decent jobs available. Even

though MacLeod's sample is small and unrepresentative, it is noteworthy that the African Americans in his sample seem to have genuine high expectations until they enter the job market in the mid-1980's, but are discouraged and disillusioned two years later.

Finally, Jencks (1992) discusses evidence that both Black and White youth often do not want to take the menial, minimum wage jobs which are available.

> In 1979-1980, when the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth asked unemployed sixteen- to twenty-one-year-olds to name the lowest wage they would accept, roughly half named amounts that exceeded the legal minimum by more than 50 percent. This pattern did not vary by race. When the National Bureau of Economic Research asked unemployed sixteen- to twenty-four-year-old Blacks in the poorest areas of Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia how hard they thought it would be to find a minimum wage job, 46 percent thought it would be "very easy" and 25 percent thought it would be "somewhat easy" (Jencks, 1992, p. 127).

This is strong evidence that poor Blacks (and Whites) often do not see the available work experiences as rewarding or desirable.

The evidence discussed above indicates that many African Americans may indeed be discouraged and alienated as a result of living in environments which lack resources and opportunities. For this study it is important to have a clearer theory of the results of such discouragement or alienation. How would these things affect perceptions of the work place, or behavior toward the work place? Several theorists have offered descriptions of these dynamics. Although the theories are framed somewhat differently, they are complimentary. After discussing several of these theories, elements of them are integrated to form a foundation for this study.

Role Strain and Adaptation to Environments with Few Resources

Bowman (1989, 1990) developed a theory of role strain to describe the way that many Black men struggle to respond adaptively to the obstacles they face when trying to assume the productive roles that men typically play. (Bowman's analysis focuses on men, but one can assume that a parallel set of processes operates for women.) Like men of other races, Black men aspire to succeed in the roles

of student, worker, father, and spouse. Confronted with the barriers of inadequate schools, limited jobs, and few resources, Black men (and women) face considerable challenges when trying to assume these roles, and respond with both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Many cope effectively and succeed, and Bowman discusses a number of ways that Black ethnic culture contributes to effective adaptation with family and spiritual strengths, and a strong ethnic identity. In addition to those who succeed, there are many who struggle to effectively fill the expected roles, and fail at some point. In his analysis, Bowman points out the ways that early struggles can set the stage for later ones. For example, those who struggle with the student role are likely to have later troubles as workers and providers, and may eventually have trouble achieving a secure or dignified old age.

> A succession of adult role barriers may threaten cherished values by frustrating role efforts and eliciting discouragement or even hopelessness. During each period, extreme role discouragement may produce a perplexing approach-avoidance conflict. A strong approach tendency to seek salient goals in a valued life role is often repelled by an opposing tendency to avoid the stress of repeated failure (Bowman, 1989, p. 127).

This quote emphasizes the ambivalence which Bowman expects to find when people have struggled or failed, and have become uncertain of whether they will be able to reach important life goals. Bowman hypothesizes that the response of Black males to being frustrated in their attempts to attain the roles that men typically fill in society will be anger, rebellion, and perhaps antisocial and criminal behavior in their younger years, and, in later years, resignation and despair.

It is not clear how Bowman thinks women would might respond to the strain of trying to reach the roles that women typically fill. The subjective experience of frustration and role strain may be similar for academic and work roles, but different for the nurturing role of mother, which might be less easily frustrated by societal barriers. In addition, it is not clear that women would respond to frustration and role strain with the same behavioral reactions shown by men.

Caste-like Minorities and Resentment at the Social Structure

In recent years Ogbu (1988, 1991) has offered a provocative theoretical analysis of the disillusionment and discouragement of African Americans. In particular, he works to explain the relative successes that other minority groups have had in climbing the social ladder of American society. His analysis focuses on minority performance in schools, but he sees that as analogous to the role of the minority group in the larger society. Using cross-cultural research from other countries, Ogbu demonstrates that the cultural environment has a large impact on minority success in school, and that being treated as an inferior group is strongly related to school failure in many countries.

> A good example is the case of the Japanese Buraku outcaste. In Japan itself, Buraku children continue to massively underperform when compared with the dominant Ippan group. But in the United States where Americans treat the Buraku exactly the same way they treat other Japanese immigrants, the Buraku do at least as well in school and in the workplace as their other Japanese counterparts (Ito, 1967; Shamahara, 1983). Another interesting and instructive case is that of the Finns. The academic performance of Finnish children in Sweden is reported to be very low; whereas Finnish children in Australia are reported to be doing very well in school. It should be noted that the Finns were for a long time a colonized people under the Swedes (Ogbu, 1991, p. 436, italics in original).

Ogbu presents similar evidence for the performance of Korean children as colonial subjects in Japanese schools, West Indian children as colonial subjects in school in Britain, and several other groups. In all of these cases, children perform poorly in school in countries where they are considered a low-caste group, or colonial subjects, but perform fine in other countries where they are voluntary immigrants, where they do not have the stigma of being considered inferior. He argues that the history of Blacks in the United States fits this pattern: of being treated as inferior in a manner similar to colonial subjects or to members of a lower caste.

Ogbu carries this analysis further in a theory about the relationship between voluntary immigration and the success of minority groups.

> Immigrant minorities . . . are people who have moved voluntarily to the United States because they believed that immigrating to the U. S. would improve their economic status, social conditions, or political status. . . . Castelike or involuntary minorities . . . are people who were originally brought into the United States society involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization" (Ogbu, 1988, p. 140, italics in original).

Ogbu hypothesizes that immigrant minorities perceive the opportunities in American society very positively. When assessing their position in U. S. society, their point of comparison is the conditions they left in their country of origin. This allows them to make favorable appraisals of many of the conditions which are seen unfavorably by involuntary minorities. If they work in menial jobs and live in crowded conditions, they perceive these as either better than the conditions they left, or as a necessary stage on the way to eventual success in U. S. society. Even when they encounter discrimination they attribute it to their non-fluency in English or to their status as foreigners, and assume that it is a barrier which they or their children can overcome. These perceptions and attributions allow immigrant minorities to make great efforts to succeed, and to have hopeful expectations that their efforts will be rewarded by upward social mobility.

Involuntary minorities perceive the system very differently. They compare their current position with that of wealthier Whites, and make their interpretations in light of a long cultural history of exclusion and exploitation by the White majority culture. Menial jobs and substandard living conditions are not perceived as temporary, and the opportunity structure of society is assumed to be similar to the one in which their ancestors failed to succeed. In other words, a history of many generations of low income and discrimination makes it difficult for Black youth to have high expectations for their own generation, or for themselves.

The cross-cultural evidence that minorities do poorly in circumstances where they are viewed as inferior, or as colonial subjects, supports the idea that social and cultural environments can have strong influences on the success or failure of minority groups. Ogbu's more intricate theory of

immigrant versus castelike minorities is plausible, but the empirical support which he offers is often partial and indirect. His theory is framed in more detail than the empirical evidence he provides, and might be best thought of as a set of hypotheses. In particular, it would be helpful to directly measure the perceptions and attributions of Blacks and of immigrant minorities to see whether they match the patterns Ogbu describes.

Social Exchange Theory, and the Struggle for Respect and Status

Harry Triandis, a cross cultural psychologist, has offered an analysis of the exchanges which take place between Blacks and Whites (1976). He argues that Blacks get the less desirable end of many social and economic exchanges, leading them to resist participating in settings where the exchanges are unfair, or to try to get a fairer exchange in various ways. In the work force, money is often exchanged for various sorts of behavior. Triandis cites prior research indicating that in a wealthy society, money and goods become less prized, while certain forms of behavior, such as respect, deference, and acknowledgement of status are valued very highly. He points out that in our culture it is very common for exchanges to involve minority group members providing service, respect, deference, and status to majority group members in exchange for money. Triandis argues that this is a fundamentally unequal form of exchange, in which "the rewards received by the white majority from the exploitation of the black minority have been consistently greater than the costs" (1976, p. 184).

To frame this issue in less economic language, African American have traditionally been compelled to treat White Americans with respectful behavior which the Whites did not need to reciprocate. The work experience of a great many Blacks in the pre-civil-rights era was that of working for Whites in roles which involved deferring to Whites and treating Whites as superiors. An enormous number of Black women worked as domestic servants for Whites, and many Black

men worked in roles which had a servant-like status, such as shining shoes and as porters on trains. The result of this, which Triandis describes in economic terms, is that Blacks now want to avoid servant-like roles in which they must enhance the status of Whites (and lower their own status) by treating Whites as superiors. Simply put, African Americans want to be treated as equals and treated with respect rather than accepting the low-status roles of inferiors. As Triandis puts it, Blacks want to equalize the exchange. Triandis believes that this dynamic can lead to forms of resistance which are perceived very negatively by majority group members.

> To decrease costs, minority group members cans sometimes give less of value to the majority. This can take many forms, including producing less, cooperating less, revealing less, giving less status, and so on. Behaviors that the majority interprets a laziness, irresponsibility, uncooperativeness, hostility, and so on might be due to efforts by the minority to reduce the costs and pursue its self-interest (1976, p. 188).

Cultural Identity and an Oppositional Cultural Frame of Reference

In a theory which compliments the one offered by Triandis, Ogbu hypothesizes that Blacks have formed a culture which tries to be deliberately distinct from White culture. He believes that the oppositional quality serves both to enhance independence and self-respect, and to resist exploitation by Whites. Ogbu offers a small amount of empirical evidence to support his theory, but his findings are in need of replication. In an anthropological study of a Black high school in Washington D.C. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found that Black students reported being socially censured by their peers for a variety of behaviors which were termed "acting white."

> Among the attitudes and behaviors that black students at Capital High identify as "acting white" and therefore unacceptable are: (1) speaking standard English; (2) listening to white music and white radio stations; (3) going to the opera or ballet; (4) spending a lot of time in the library studying; (5) working hard to get good grades in school; (6) getting good grades in school (those who get good grades are labeled "brainiacs"); (7) going to the Smithsonian; (8) . . .; (17) putting on "airs," and so forth. This list is not exhaustive, but indicates kinds of behaviors and attitudes likely to be negatively sanctioned and therefore avoided by a large number of students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 186).

There is evidence here that the members of a minority group have come to value certain forms of behavior which appear to be related to their identity as African Americans. They describe certain forms of behavior as being appropriate for members of their cultural group, and other behaviors draw group censure. This phenomenon, because it is so closely tied to group norms and group membership, can be seen as a cultural value of behaving in ways that are both distinct from the majority culture, and in deliberate contrast to it. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) offer evidence that this phenomenon occurs in other cultural groups as well. In one example, Hispanic American high school students had developed nearly identical biases against Hispanics who "act anglo." In cross cultural studies in other countries, it was common for an oppressed minority group to express explicit standards that members of the minority group not behave like (their stereotype of) the behavior of the majority group.

Ogbu argues that the phenomenon is tied to group trust and group loyalty (1991). A common theme in Black writings (X, 1967), and in anthropological studies (Blauner, 1989) is that some Blacks cooperate too much with Whites, working against the interests of other Blacks. Blacks who do this have been called uncle Toms, oreo cookies, and other pejorative labels. For a Black person to be clearly aligned with other Blacks he or she must clearly behave and express views which show loyalty, and many of these behaviors are defined by making a contrast with the behaviors expected of Whites.

Ogbu refers to this as an "oppositional cultural frame of reference" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 181). The oppositional element of the culture creates both a sense of commonality, and a contrast between the culture of the exploited group and those who have exploited them, so that members can clearly align themselves with one or the other. There is little research on this phenomenon aside from the study by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), but at least one other theorist has described this

phenomenon as well, in discussions which make no reference to the findings by Fordham and Ogbu (Steele, 1992). Steele, discussing academic achievement, suggests that dis-identifying with school becomes a norm, encouraged by group pressure. "Pressure to make it" (dis-identifying with school) "a group norm can evolve quickly and become fierce. Defectors are called 'oreos' or 'incognegros.' One's identity as an authentic Black is held hostage, made incompatible with school identification. For Blacks students, then, pressure to disidentify with school can come from the already demoralized" (Steele, 1992, p. 75).

There are important implications to Ogbu's theory about this area. The desire to maintain one's Black cultural identity could potentially create a set of paradoxical situations. In addition to any discrimination encountered as a result of having Black skin, an African American must contend with discrimination associated with those behaviors of African American culture which the White community does not value. For example, on the job market speaking Black English is rarely an asset, and often a liability. The paradox is unavoidable: Cultural elements which developed as a deliberate opposition or contrast to White culture will almost inevitably fail to be valued by the White institutions of society. Since Whites continue to control most employment opportunities, employment for Blacks continues to hinge on behaving in ways acceptable to Whites. But behaving in ways which please Whites is in complete opposition to a cultural standard of proving that one is loyal to Blacks. In short, a cultural pattern which developed out of a value of resisting oppression, and resisting cooperation with Whites who are likely to be exploitative, clashes with the economic necessity of pleasing White employers in order to improve one's lot.

The overwhelming evidence of high aspirations shows that African Americans typically want the types of material success which are valued by most Americans. In a study of alienation among Black adolescents, Wolfstetter-Kausch and Gaier (1981) found that on the subscales of their

alienation measure, Blacks tended to feel powerless in society, and pessimistic or dissatisfied with society, but were not alienated from the idea of attaining middle class symbols of status and material rewards. They also cite Gottlieb (1969) who found that middle and upper class adolescents were more likely than "underprivileged" adolescents to reject middle class standards of material success. Those who are poor feel excluded and angry at society, but still aspire to the middle class goals of financial success.

The theories of Ogbu, Bowman, and Triandis all imply that Blacks have unpleasant and frustrating experiences in the work force, and all three theorists suggest that this may lead to resentment, anger, defiance, or the desire not to participate in such settings. Bowman focuses on the strain of trying to attain normal male roles with abnormally few resources and opportunities. He assumes that negative reactions occur when normal, adaptive aspirations are frustrated. Ogbu and Triandis emphasize the current resistance to roles Blacks have often filled in the past, roles which are perceived as demeaning and unfair.

A key hypothesis of this study was that African Americans want the types of success that most Americans want, but for African Americans there are costs which other Americans do not face. The evidence above indicates that African Americans may experience a deep ambivalence about their participation in White-dominated institutions such as employment. This study hopes to explore that possibility.

Expectations in Social Learning Theory

Ogbu's theory includes both ideas about whether Blacks expect to be fairly rewarded, and ideas about whether Blacks want the rewards which are offered, such as working in predominantly White environments where their identity as Blacks would not be valued. These ideas can be framed more formally using a model from social learning theory about the relationship between expected rewards

and behavior.

One of the most relevant formulations in which expectations figure prominently was developed in the fifties by Julian Rotter (Rotter, 1982; Phares, 1988b). Rotter's basic formulation concerns four central constructs. These are "behavior potential, expectancy, reinforcement value, and the psychological situation" (Rotter, 1982, p. 302). The behavior potential is the likelihood that a person will engage in a certain behavior. It is a function of the other three variables. Expectancy is the person's expectation that a certain action would lead to a certain reinforcement. For example, do I expect that my employer will compliment me if I work hard? Reinforcement value is the degree to which the person values the potential reinforcement. For example, do I care if my employer praises me for working hard? The psychological situation is the psychological meaning of the environment in which the action takes place. For example, a Black person might see a job as involving little pay and low status in comparison to the White employer. The employee may feel exploited and alienated. In that situation the employee may neither expect nor value a compliment. A compliment offered could be perceived as patronizing, insincere, or simply as a cheap substitute for adequate pay. The monetary rewards of jobs may have similar reinforcement values for Blacks and Whites, but the reinforcement value of the social experiences encountered on the job may differ substantially by race. (The experiences themselves, the actual social encounters which occur, may also differ substantially by race.)

Essentially, Rotter's formulation says that one will take action if one both values a goal and believes that the action will help attain it. Rotter's framework is relevant to this study because by including the concept of reinforcement value it allows one to consider ambivalence, and the trade-offs between monetary rewards and other consequences of employment. For example, if conventional success puts Blacks in social roles which they dislike, perhaps as one of a handful of

Blacks in a predominantly White college or company, these forms of success may not have a high or consistent reinforcement value. One must understand both whether Blacks are rewarded fairly, and how they see all of the consequences and trade-offs of striving for success.

Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement

One construct from social learning theory which has been used to analyze racial dynamics is the belief in internal versus external control of reinforcement (Phares, 1988b; 1976; Rotter, 1975; 1966). A belief in internal control of reinforcement is an expectation that one can attain desired rewards through deliberate personal action. A belief in external control of reinforcement is the expectation that rewards are contingent on things outside of one's control, and that one cannot attain what one desires through personal effort. Rotter believed that expectations of personal control or lack of control could be either generalized or domain specific, such as a belief that one can control one's sports performance, but not one's academic performance. However, most research in the area has centered on generalized expectancies for internal or external control of reinforcement (Rotter, 1975). Much of this research has found that an internal "locus of control" is correlated with many things which psychologists view positively: higher grades in school, higher aspirations, greater persistence at achievement tasks, greater confidence, and better psychological well being (Gurin, Gurin, Lao, & Beattie, 1969; Mirowsky and Ross, 1990; Phares, 1976).

Findings that African American and low SES populations are less likely to hold beliefs of internal control have led to a body of sociological research exploring the meaning of beliefs about control among groups who actually have less resources, power, and control in society. Gurin, Gurin, Lao, and Beattie (1969) were among the first to consider the ways that the experiences of Black Americans may affect their beliefs about internal and external control. Gurin et al. (1969) point out that in an urban minority setting, an internal locus of control may have negative implications. One

must consider the assumptions that a person comes to make about him or her self. "When associated with success, an internal orientation can lead to feelings of competence and efficacy. When associated with failure, however, it can lead to self-derogation and self-blame" (Gurin et al., 1969, p. 32). Gurin and her colleagues argue that when actual discrimination and lack of opportunity exist, system blame, besides being more accurate, may be emotionally healthier and pragmatically more adaptive than self blame.

This hypothesis led to a body of sociological research examining the relationship between beliefs about control and well being among people of different racial groups and socioeconomic levels. Mirowsky & Ross (1990) review this literature, and test a model of how beliefs about control may operate for people of different races and socioeconomic levels. Several theories about this phenomenon have been tested. The first theory is similar to that mentioned by Gurin et al. (1966) above. Called the "consolation prize theory of alienation" by Mirowsky and Ross, this model works as follows:

> According to the consolation prize theory of alienation, a sense of control over, and responsibility for, outcomes in one's own life is comforting if the outcomes are generally good, and discomforting if they are not so good. Greater wealth, income, power, and prestige imply more desirable outcomes and fewer undesirable ones. Claiming responsibility for a preponderance of good outcomes enhances self-esteem. It also motivates efforts that plentiful resources and opportunities make gratifying. In contrast, poverty, low income, powerlessness, and low prestige imply more undesirable outcomes and fewer favorable ones. Claiming responsibility for a preponderance of bad outcomes degrades self-esteem. It also motivates efforts that scares resources and opportunities make frustrating. For those with high status, instrumentalism is rewarding. For those with low status, fatalism is comforting self-absolution (Mirowsky & Ross, 1990. p. 1506).

From this theory one would expect an interaction between SES and beliefs about internal control when predicting self esteem or well being. For lower SES individuals, greater internal locus of control would be associated with lower levels of well being. For higher SES individuals, a greater internal locus of control would be associated with higher levels of well being. Two studies have

recently tested this hypothesis, and found that in fact, greater internal locus of control is associated with greater well being in low SES samples as well as high SES samples (Klugel & Smith, 1986; Wheaton, 1985, both cited in Mirowsky & Ross, 1990).

To better explain the findings just mentioned, it should be noted that researchers have repeatedly found that optimistic beliefs need not be realistic in order to improve a person's sense of well-being. In an extensive review of this literature, Taylor and Brown (1988) conclude that most non-depressed, well functioning people have unrealistically exaggerated perceptions of control and mastery over their environment. Taylor and Brown find extensive evidence for three sets of distortions, all of which enhance emotional well-being. Most people make unrealistically positive self-evaluations (compared to the evaluations of those around them), have an exaggerated sense of personal control, and are unrealistically optimistic about the future. The groups of people who do not make these distortions are those who are depressed, and those who have low self-esteem. The implication of this finding is that although an internal locus of control has many positive correlates, most people have beliefs about internal control which are actually an optimistic distortion of reality. Furthermore, it is psychologically healthy to hold overly-optimistic beliefs about personal control, up to a certain point. In the trade off between optimism and realism, only an extreme degree of optimism causes problems by leading to misjudgments.

The study by Wheaton (1985, cited by Mirowsky & Ross, 1990) did find that the relationship between beliefs about control and well being is not linear. As Rotter suggested long ago (1966), extremely external beliefs about control, and extremely internal beliefs about control are both unrealistic, and both extremes would be expected to lead to poor judgements and maladaptive behavior. Wheaton's findings strongly support this hypothesis. They find a parabolic relationship between depression and beliefs about control, in which the highest levels of well being tend to be

associated with greater internal beliefs about control at a level about .8 standard deviations above the mean. Both people with greater internal beliefs than this, and people with greater external beliefs are more depressed.

Mirowsky and Ross (1990) conduct a study to replicate this finding, and to extend it in order to understand how this pattern varies for low SES populations. Their data are from the 1985 Illinois Survey of Well-Being, a telephone survey of a probability sample of English-speaking Illinois residents, with a sample size of 809. They too find a parabolic relationship between beliefs about control and well-being. However they also find that this parabolic relationship interacts with socioeconomic status. For lower SES participants, and for minority participants, the optimal level of beliefs about internal control is lower than it is for higher SES and White participants. This finding actually supports part of the "consolation prize" theory, because it indicates that for minorities and lower SES individuals it is harder to be optimistic about control: high income people are more likely to make internal attributions than low income people. Mirowsky and Ross (1990) interpret these results to mean that for lower SES individuals, the natural human tendency towards optimistic beliefs about control is more quickly curbed by a realistic appraisal that they have less control.

Mirowsky and Ross (1990) conclude that these self-esteem-enhancing distortions of reality are more difficult for low-income, low-status individuals to maintain. For low status individuals, the hope-inspiring distortion of internal control is difficult to maintain in the face of greater evidence of lack of control from the environment. On the other hand, the external attributions which might make past failures more palatable would also make future effort seem more futile.

Findings about perceptions of control by Mirowsky and Ross (1990) and related findings about optimism by Taylor and Brown (1988) have been discussed at length because they provide important

evidence to help understand patterns which would otherwise seem paradoxical. It is important to recognize that the high aspirations and expectations of young African Americans may be slightly unrealistic, and still be very adaptive by avoiding the depressing acknowledgement of limited opportunities. However, this optimism may be hard to maintain as a person begins to actually encounter the work environment. MacLeod (1987) found that optimism waned quickly in his small group of African Americans entering the work force. This study plans to explore the complex set of perceptions experienced young African Americans as they prepare themselves for work force participation.

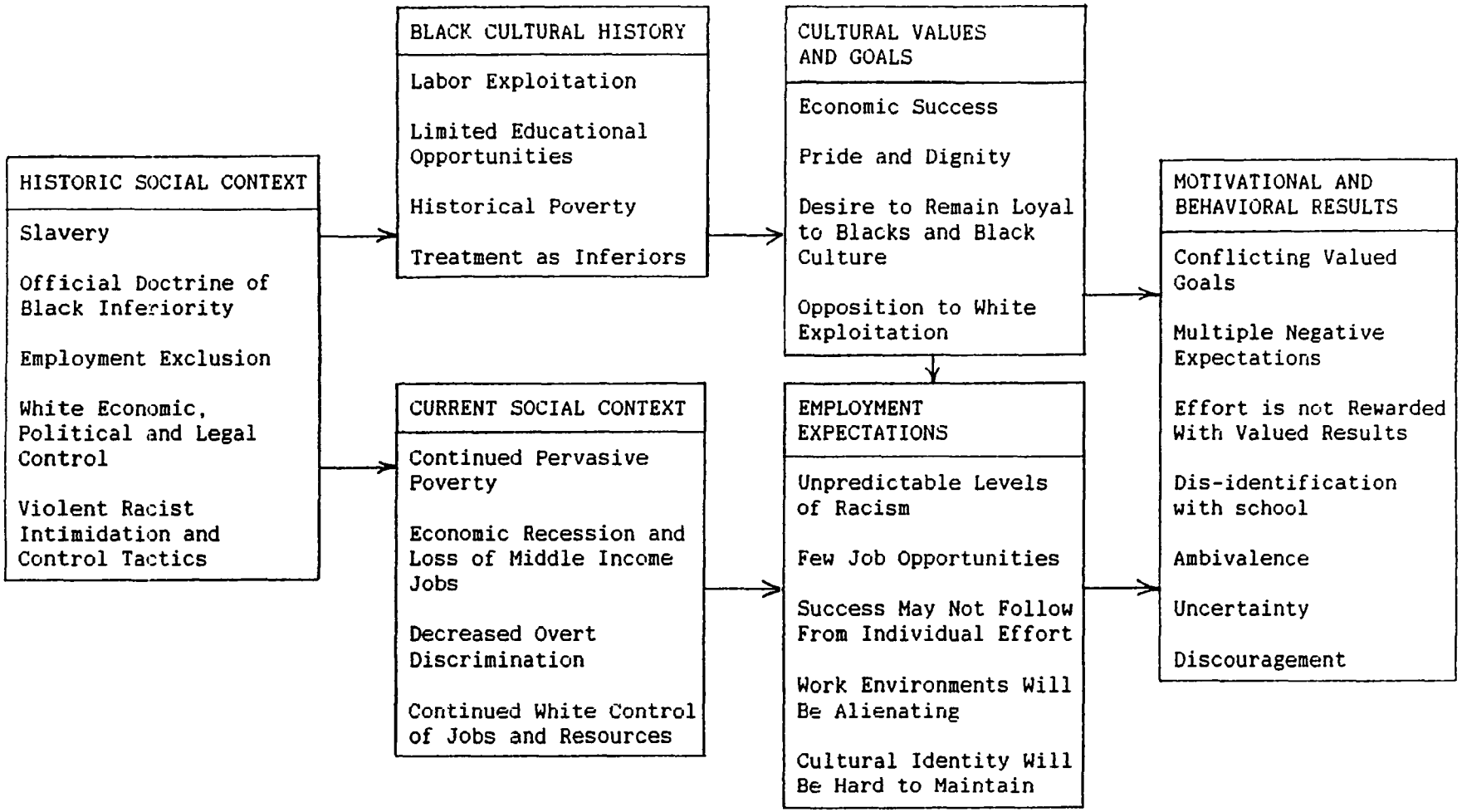
Theoretical Framework

A central goal of this study was to explore the connections between the perceptions of high school aged African Americans and the cultural and societal influences which shape those perceptions. To view these issues in context, the theoretical model used for this study includes cultural and societal levels of analysis, and also tries to represent the historical influences on current culture and perception. The hypothesized theoretical framework for this study is shown in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The theoretical framework shown in Figure 2 represents a set of hypotheses drawn from past empirical and theoretical work, and from my own experiences. As indicated in the literature review above, some elements of this theoretical framework are very well supported by past empirical work, while other elements, including parts of Ogbu's theories, are best viewed as hypotheses in need of further testing.

Figure 2: Hypothesized Model of Expectations, Desires, and Resulting Motivational Conflict for Black Americans



Since this study will be descriptive and to some extent emergent, it is not primarily designed to test specific hypotheses from this theoretical framework, but to describe the perceptions expressed by the participants, and to document how they view the dynamics of the working world. The theoretical framework shown in Figure 2 was a starting point for this research and a reflection of the ideas I held about these phenomena at the beginning of this study.

Historic Social Context

Based on many of the ideas discussed above, the perceptions of African American youth are framed in both a historical and cultural context. It is assumed that historical events played a role in shaping both current cultural perceptions, and the current societal structure (Fishel & Quarles, 1970; Franklin, 1980; Lemann, 1991). The model assumes that African American history in the era prior to the civil rights movement was shaped by some of the strongly discriminatory institutions of society. Slavery was only the first of these. As discussed above, there is extensive evidence of pervasive discrimination and exclusion in employment, housing, voting, education, and participation in organizations that form the fabric of American society (Farley & Allen, 1987; Jaynes & Williams, 1989; Lemann, 1991; Ogbu, 1978). The historical environment for African Americans has been one in which they held very little power over the institutions of society, while Whites held great power and used it to Blacks' disadvantage.

African American Cultural History, Cultural Values, and Goals

The cultural history and cultural awareness of African Americans developed in this discriminatory and inequitable environment. The history of African Americans for most of the time that they have been in America has involved labor exploitation and pervasive poverty. African Americans have been treated as an inferior group in ways which Ogbu compares to the treatment

of low-caste groups in societies which have explicit caste systems (1978; 1991).

It is assumed that the history of exploitation, lack of power, and inferior status did much to shape some of the current cultural values of African Americans. There is strong evidence of high aspirations among African Americans, and both quantitative and ethnographic studies show that Blacks possess a strong desire to escape poverty (Dawkins, 1981; 1989; Macleod, 1987). It is likely that a long history of poverty and lack of economic power has made these issues quite salient for African Americans, and created a current cultural value of economic success.

There is much evidence that African American culture and literature contains positive values of pride, and dignity, and a strong emphasis on being treated with respect (Fishel & Quarles, 1970; X, 1965). For much of their history in the United States Blacks have been expected to treat Whites with respect and often with deference, with no expectation that Whites would treat Blacks with respect in return. Blacks were expected to show the respect of a subservient, not that of an equal. The lack of respect accorded to Blacks in the past may be the origin of the strong emphasis on pride and dignity in modern Black culture. Naturally African Americans have long desired to end the inequitable and disrespectful treatment they have experienced (Triandis, 1976). It would be natural for Blacks now to resist placing themselves in roles which involve subservience and deference to White superiors.

An "oppositional cultural frame of reference" appears to have formed (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1988; 1991), in which African Americans symbolically resist exploitation by encouraging each other to behave in ways that are seen as not White and not approved of by Whites. This may lead to a conflict between the goal of economic success, and that of avoiding the cooperation which could lead to further exploitation by Whites. This would lead to an ambivalence, because it is difficult to succeed at both goals. The question to be explored is, are these things

perceived this way by young African Americans, and is it perceived as a no-win situation?

The cultural elements just described are expected to provide part of the context which a African American person may use to give meaning to his or her own experience. Similarly, the stories which people hear from their parents and from other older adults are interpreted and filtered based on the common history of African Americans in the United States. The qualitative and interactive methods chosen for this study are designed to capture some of the ways that common meanings are attached to personal experiences.

Current Social Context

To further capture the environment in which young African Americans have grown up, the model includes the current influences of societal institutions on African Americans. The current societal context in which African Americans find themselves is one of continued poverty for most, one in which Whites continue to control almost all access to employment, and one in which de-industrialization and an economic downturn have seriously hampered the efforts of those who are poor to work their way into the middle class (Wilson, 1980). Data from the U.S. Department of Labor (1989) show that the loss of income among African Americans is most extreme in the Midwest, where this study will take place. Given objective evidence the current economic environment is quite harsh for African Americans, it is important to study how objective hardship is converted into subjective perceptions of opportunity.

Employment Expectations

For most people employment involves a mixture of positive and negative experiences, but for most the benefits outweigh the drawbacks enough to motivate effort at training for jobs and at jobs themselves. The benefits of menial and minimum wage jobs are clearly smaller for individuals of any race. Not only are African Americans more likely to face menial and unrewarding job

opportunities because of their social class, it is also likely that race adds additional negative employment experiences and expectations. This study focuses on the question of what positive and negative experience African Americans expect to encounter in the work force.

There are several ways that race alone could lead to negative work force experiences, and hence to negative expectations. Overt racism in hiring and promotion is illegal, but there is evidence that such racism persists (Jencks, 1992). Racism is less likely to be practiced openly, but if it is occurring sporadically and covertly, a African American employee would be in the position of frequently wondering whether race was playing a role in job assignment, promotion, and hiring. Second, affirmative action could easily create a bind, as Black employees find that White coworkers assume they may not have been hired based on merit (Jencks, 1992). Third, there is reason to expect that acting culturally Black will not be valued, making the workplace a setting in which Blacks must conform to an alienating behavior standard to succeed. As Jencks notes, "most employers now pay blacks who can talk, think and act like whites almost as much as they pay 'real' whites" (1992, p. 128). Ogbu (1991) describes how acting White is socially censured and met with suspicion by other Blacks, who suggest that such behavior implies opportunism and lack of racial loyalty. Finally, it may be that for Blacks, the deference typically accorded to one's boss will feel like an uncomfortable subservience, especially if the Black employee feels that promotions and rewards are not distributed fairly.

After a long struggle for racial respect and equality it could be quite difficult for a African American to accept a role which mimics those that African Americans have been trying to escape. All of these processes could make the working world significantly less gratifying and more conflicted for Blacks than it is for Whites. The qualitative methods of this investigation were designed to allow participants to express personal interpretations of the work force experience,

including subtle things, such as the difficulty of deciding whether discrimination is going on in a particular instance.

Motivational and Behavioral Results

Based on Rotter's model of the relationship between expectations, the subjective value of potential rewards, and goal-directed behavior, one would expect that the subjective perceptions of African Americans will be extremely important in understanding the actions that they take. Rotter's theory of expectations and desired rewards allows one to explicitly consider the possibility that American African Americans may experience substantial ambivalence and uncertainty over the opportunities available in the working world.

This study explores the possibility that the goals which African Americans value may compete with each other. At the individual level, the primary hypothesis of this study was that for African Americans, striving to succeed may involve ambivalence and conflicting personal values. Past work provides ample reason to expect that such conflict might exist, and the present study would like to explore and describe the nature and extent of the conflict, if it is indeed part of the experience of American Blacks.

Ambivalence, uncertainty, and discouragement are three possible experiences which this study explores. First, do African Americans expect a high level of alienating and unfair experiences in the workplace? Second, do African Americans experience a conflict between their desire to succeed and their cultural identity as Black Americans? This could take the form of (a) feeling as though they are losing part of their identity when they "act White" in order to work for White employers; (b) feeling resentful when menial low-wage jobs feel like the same type of exploitation African Americans are trying to escape; (c) being unsure if they will be rewarded fairly with pay and promotions on the job; and (d) struggling with stigmas attached to "acting White" or "forgetting

where you came from" which may arise when they do well in school or become a financial success. Finally, is it possible to learn how young African Americans form their impressions of the working world? To what extent are they able to describe either direct experiences of their own, or experiences they have heard of from older African Americans regarding the fairness of the opportunities available?

As mentioned above this theoretical framework was only a starting point for this study. The emergent nature of this study is such that one would normally expect additional insights and hypotheses to emerge from the interactive process of data collection. These are impossible to specify in advance. The description of hypotheses given above is included because it is essential to capture the ideas already held by the researcher prior to data collection. These ideas partially determined the initial questions asked and lines of inquiry pursued. The goal of an emergent qualitative study is to go beyond these initial hypotheses by attempting to gather information which could either support or undermine any of the ideas described above. A primary goal was to allow the perspective of the informants to emerge through the lens which the researcher focuses on the topic at hand.

Chapter 2: Methods

This study explores the perceptions and expectations of African American participants in the Jobs Training Partnership Act program through individual interviews in which participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the working world and the opportunities it offers. The interviews were taped and transcribed, and then processed using The Ethnograph software written for the analysis of qualitative data (Kennedy, 1991; Seidel, Kjolseth & Seymour, 1988). The design of the study, and the procedures used for processing data and drawing conclusions are based on qualitative data analysis methods recommended by Miles & Huberman (1949a; 1984b), and by various other authors including Denzin (1989a), Erickson (1986), Kieffer (1981; 1984), and Lincoln and Guba (1985). This chapter will describe both the rationale for the use of qualitative and interpretive methods for this study, and the details of the data collection and analysis procedures.

Rationale for the Use of Qualitative Methods

Since its beginnings, community psychology has been a field motivated by a desire to address social problems with the tools of psychology and of science (Rappaport, 1977a; Sarason, 1978; Shadish, 1990). In the tradition of community psychology, the design of this study is based on a desire to do sound empirical work on an important social issue, and to do that work in a way which respects the dignity and wisdom of those who participate (Rappaport, 1990).

In discussing the values which motivate researchers, Howard (1985) offers a useful distinction between "epistemic" and "nonepistemic" values. As the name suggests, epistemic values stem from the simple belief that knowledge has value. As scientists, we value accurate, valid knowledge of the phenomena we study. Epistemic values are the driving force behind many discussions of how research can be conducted carefully and rigorously (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Cook & Campbell, 1979; Kerlinger, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1984b). Nonepistemic values include all the other

human values which motivate us. Political, social, religious, and ethical values are all included in this category. For example, to value acquiring specific types of knowledge because that knowledge might ease human suffering is a nonepistemic value.

In the present study, the methods used were chosen based on both epistemic and nonepistemic considerations. Among the epistemic considerations, qualitative methods are expected to produce an accurate, useful, and detailed picture of the phenomena of interest. The nonepistemic considerations include the value that the methods used promote the welfare of those studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1986: Rappaport, 1990), and avoid reproducing in the research the same inequities which the study examines.

Epistemic Values Related to the Choice of Qualitative Methods for This Study

Qualitative and interpretive methods are well suited to studying the ways that people understand and interpret the world around them (Denzin, 1989a). They are appropriate when a researcher is trying to capture and convey the ideas and perspectives held by others. Qualitative analysis is primarily descriptive. It is not typically used to determine causality, but rather to describe the complex and sometimes contradictory ideas that are found within a group of people as they try to make sense of something important to them. Perceptions of opportunity, because they are both subjective and potentially complex and varied, are an area for which qualitative methods can be quite appropriate and useful.

Capturing subjective perceptions. This study explores the subjective perspectives of young African-Americans. If African Americans entering the work force base their plans and actions partially on their beliefs about the opportunities available, knowledge of these beliefs becomes important.

At the core of the traditions behind qualitative and interpretive research is the belief that there

is value in understanding the subjective perspectives of others. Anthropology and sociology, for example, often strive to understand a group of people by capturing the ways that the people perceive themselves and the world around them (Adler & Adler, 1987; Liebow, 1967). In a very different field, many of the therapy traditions in clinical psychology stress the importance of understanding a person by discovering how that person understands and interprets the world (Landfield & Leitner, 1980; Rogers, 1961; Rowe & Isaac, 1989). In each of these cases, members of these fields assume that one understands a culture or an individual better by attending to the subjective meanings and interpretations that people attach to their experiences.

A fundamental motivation for this study is the expectation that community psychology could benefit from a clearer understanding of the subjective experience of young low-income African Americans. It is my belief that social and environmental interventions such as job programs and welfare reform can be designed more sensitively by taking into account how social environments are subjectively experienced by those who participate in them. Qualitative methods facilitate understanding the subjective perceptions of others by allowing participants to frame and explain their ideas in the way that they find most natural and most appropriate. To capture the perspective of the participants, the qualitative interview format allows the participants the opportunity to express complex and novel ideas of their own, ideas which may not yet have occurred to the researcher. This is especially helpful when the researcher and the participants come from different backgrounds, as in this study, in which the researcher is White and comes from an upper middle class background, and the participants are Black and from financially poor backgrounds.

The work of George Kelly emphasizes a particularly important aspect of the individual differences in people's conceptions of the world (Landfield & Leitner, 1980; Phares, 1988b). Kelly found that different people use different groups of constructs as they work to understand and

conceptualize the events around them, and that a construct which is central to one person's understanding of events may be peripheral or absent from the thinking of another person. As a hypothetical example, one person might accept misfortune by using constructs such as "God's will," and view such acceptance as a virtue, whereas another, using constructs similar to Marxist doctrine, could construe the same misfortune as evidence of unfair victimization, and view accepting misfortune as a self-defeating and misguided.

One of the strengths of using detailed, qualitative interviews is that such interviews allow each participant to express a unique, individual perspective, using the constructs which that person finds most appropriate in understanding the events being discussed. In this way a participant can introduce ideas and organizing constructs which the researcher could not have anticipated. In addition, qualitative interviews allow the participant to emphasize or minimize any given idea which the researcher brings up, to disagree, and to reframe an issue if the participant feels the interviewer has a mistaken understanding of the issue being discussed.

Capturing ambivalence and paradox. The perceptions of African American 17 to 19 year olds may be difficult to capture because they are likely to be sometimes subtle and paradoxical. African Americans' perceptions of and reactions to the opportunity structure are expected to be complex, varied, and ambivalent. Past research has suggested that the positions African Americans have occupied in American culture can easily lead to ambivalence and conflict about the roles available to them (Blauner, 1989; Liebow, 1967; Ogbu, 1978; 1988). The content of this ambivalence and paradox was discussed in the previous chapter. Here it is appropriate to discuss the ways that paradoxical content influences research methods.

Rappaport (1981) has argued that social problems are paradoxical, that the dynamics of social problems and of their solutions require a dialectical approach, of balancing two or more positive

values which may conflict. This study hypothesizes that African American youth may find themselves at the heart of a number of social paradoxes, and that their personal experience may involve the dialectical balancing of opposing values. The desire to further one's own career through hard work may be undermined by the feeling of being taken advantage of (Triandis, 1976). The desire for the self-respect related to holding a job may compete with the humiliation of dead-end menial work, or of being rejected for low skills. Educational aspirations may meet great obstacles in overcoming early poor schooling. The desire to preserve a African American cultural identity may be hard to reconcile with predominantly White work environments and the conforming behavior expected of those hired.

Open ended interviews, such as those used in this study, are appropriate to explore ambivalence and potentially competing aspirations held by participants. To capture ambivalence, the research method must deliberately provide the participant the opportunity to express complex and contradictory attitudes. One tradition within qualitative research has devoted a great deal of attention to the topics of conflict, ambivalence, and paradox. These researchers hold that the construction of knowledge always involves a dialectical process (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; Kieffer, 1981). A dialectical approach assumes that people hold multiple conflicting ideas and values, and that any one person is continuously developing and reconciling a variety of ideas about the regularities of the social world. Kieffer (1981) discusses the dialectical process in which "ideas are thus conceived as being formed and transformed, or interpreted and re-interpreted, in the continuing confrontation of life events" (p. 55). "The dialectics of development place strong emphasis on the constructive role of contradiction and discord. Contradiction is viewed as inherent in the nature and process of all things, and is seen as the motive force of all evolution" (p. 57).

From the conflict and paradox in a person's encounters with the social and physical

environment, that person must continually construct a synthesis, a way of ordering and giving meaning to experiences as they occur. Since there are great individual differences in the ways people make sense of events, a method which wishes to capture these conceptions well should be idiographic, and capable of capturing ideas which may be unique to one or several individuals.

Symbolic interactionist and interpretive interactionist research methods (Denzin, 1989a; 1989b; Kieffer, 1981) allow the researcher to engage in a dialectic process with the participants, a process of synthesizing the conflicting perceptions and interpretations of experience. This is both a dialectic that contrasts the interviewer's conception with that of the participant, allowing the interviewer to synthesize his or her current conceptions with the new one being presented, and a dialectic in which the participant explores and clarifies the contradictions which he or she perceives in the workings of the social world. Open ended interviews are seen as the most appropriate method to allow the kind of dialogue in which contradiction can emerge and be explored. That is one of the reasons qualitative interviews are appropriate for this study.

Nonepistemic Values Related to the Choice of Qualitative Methods

The proceedings of a recent conference on methods in community psychology (Tolan, Keys, Chertok, & Jason, 1990) reaffirmed community psychology's long standing commitment to research which promotes social action and social change (Rappaport, 1977a; Sarason, 1978). The desire to assist social change is not viewed as one positive goal among many, but as community psychology's fundamental mission; its reason for being (Shadish, 1990). This priority leads community psychologists to consider carefully what knowledge is most likely to help promote social change, and what methods of conducting research are most likely to help and not harm the communities we study (Glenwick, Heller, Linney, & Pargament, 1990; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990; Rappaport, 1990; Riger, 1990; Shadish, 1990).

Collaboration. An area which is beginning to receive considerable attention concerns a basic research relationship: How do we behave towards the people we study, and how do we treat their knowledge and their opinions? A number of community psychologists argue that our methods should avoid creating the social roles of "expert" and "subject" in the settings we study, and instead should create roles of collaboration and greater equality between community psychologists and those who participate with us in research (Kieffer, 1984; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990; Rappaport, 1990; Riger, 1990).

Rappaport argues that the goal of empowering those who have had little power in society should be central to both the content (1981; 1987) and the methods (1990) of community psychology research. He contends that the goal of empowering society's outsiders must be an immediate and local goal of the research, and not merely a long-term, abstract goal. He notes that it is difficult to know ahead of time what research will have a positive impact through its contribution to knowledge, but that a researcher has much more control over the impact which the research has on the local setting while it is being conducted. To be consistent with a social agenda of empowerment, the research must treat all participants in respectful ways, as competent individuals whose knowledge and opinions are valuable. This is especially true because our social change focus often leads us to study people who have traditionally had little power or status, people who have often been treated with little respect (Glenwick, Heller, Linney, & Pargament, 1990; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990, Riger, 1990).

In our research we must avoid creating the types of relationships which we believe to be damaging. Research relationships in which the investigator has complete control and authority, and subjects merely respond to questions the investigator finds interesting, are the types of role relationships which community psychologists would do well to avoid. Conversely, collaborative

research is quite consistent with the goal of empowerment.

Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1986) suggest that research is most compatible with a philosophy of social change if the research methods themselves create collaborative, equal power relationships between the investigators and the participants. Respectful and collaborative relationships with members of a local community can be developed using a variety of different research designs and methods. Qualitative interviews are not automatically respectful, collaborative, or sensitive to local culture, but many qualitative researchers have attended to these issues and have described ways to conduct respectful research (Adler & Adler, 1987; Denzin, 1989a; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 1986). Qualitative methods were chosen for this study partly because of this well developed tradition among qualitative researchers, which will be discussed further as the methods are described in more detail below.

Giving voice to the people of concern. In his discussion of research methods which foster empowerment, Rappaport (1990) emphasized the value of research designed to amplify the voices of those who rarely have the power to make their opinions heard. Racial minorities, and people who are economically poor are often among those whose ideas are not listened to or respected. Rappaport (1990), drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1986), argues that in research guided by an empowerment agenda, "the assessment methodology that is used will frame the issues and see the world from their viewpoint. It is their voice that we wish to amplify" (Rappaport, 1990, p. 58). To "give voice" to the people of concern our research must listen to, record, and publish the perspectives of those who are often ignored or denied a voice in the decisions which affect their lives. The qualitative methods chosen for this study are intended to give voice to the people of concern by recording and describing their perspectives on the opportunities they see in society.

The choice to do research which gives voice to the people of concern is motivated by

pragmatic concerns as well as ideals about fairness. This author believes that social policies and programs simply have a better chance of succeeding if the policy designers attend to and respect the ideas of those who will be affected. One of the contributions that community psychology can make as a research enterprise is to explore and document viewpoints which policy makers would not otherwise hear. A fuller understanding of the subjective ideas and interpretations of young African Americans is simply useful knowledge for those who are developing strategies for effective social change. A program to find job placements for young African Americans is likely to be more effective if it considers the way that young African Americans subjectively experience the job environments they enter. Successful adaptation is more likely if the job environment can be made less subjectively aversive to those entering it. In my view one of the primary reasons that we should work to give voice to the people of concern is to promote the design of interventions which the participants will experience as sensitive and appropriate to their needs.

Epistemological Assumptions of This Study

In keeping with an interpretive approach to qualitative research, this study assumes that people's beliefs and interpretations regarding the events around them are socially constructed (Denzin, 1989a; Erickson, 1986; Gergen, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an epistemological assumption, a belief in the social construction of knowledge can take several forms. The strong form of the constructionist view maintains that "there is no reality except that created by people as they attempt to 'make sense' of their surrounds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp 12-13, emphasis in original).

This study adopts a more limited form of the constructionist view, one which is becoming increasingly well accepted in psychology (Gergen, 1985; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990; Manicas & Secord, 1983; Riger, 1990; Tolan, Keys, Chertok, & Jason, 1990). The stance outlined

by Manicas and Secord (1983) assumes that a real, physical world exists, but that what we call knowledge is a socially constructed interpretation of that physical world.

> ...on realist terms, there is a world that exists independently of cognizing experience. Since our theories are constitutive of the known world but not of the world, we may always be wrong, but not anything goes (Manicas and Secord, 1983, p. 401, emphasis in original).

This version of realism, however, makes no claims that human knowledge or human ideas about the world are accurate. On the contrary, "...knowledge is a social and historical product; hence the inevitability of a nonvicious hermeneutic circle" (Manicas & Secord, 1983; p. 401). In the years since Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), most scientists have come to accept that scientific constructs and theories are hypothetical entities, created by scientists as mental models of the phenomena we study, and refined by a process of communication, debate, and consensus among researchers (Kozac & Miller, 1982; Manicas & Secord, 1983; Mishler, 1990). The "nonvicious hermeneutic circle" referred to by Manicas and Secord (1983) describes the social process of communication, debate, and reinterpretation by which theories come to be accepted as useful models of the physical world.

Since this study focuses on the ideas and interpretations of African American youth, it is important to be clear about assumptions regarding how those ideas are constructed, and how they relate to the physical world. This study assumes that all people construct and share ideas regarding the workings of the world around them. African American youth and adults construct and share ideas about opportunity, about the working world, and about all other significant parts of their lives. Assumptions about the workings of the world are sometimes conveyed directly by stating abstract principles, such as "no one ever said it would be fair." However, ideas about how the world works are often indirectly implied through the story-telling which makes up much of human conversation.

From childhood, people are socialized about how to interpret the world through the narratives they hear from other people in their culture (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990).

Whether stated directly or implied in stories, people develop and share mental models of how the world works. These are mental models of physical phenomena quite similar to the theoretical models created and shared by scientists working to explain the physical world. There is a great deal of semantic complexity in the way that these ideas are constructed and expressed in words as people communicate with one another. The process involves both the subjectivity of each individual's perspective, and the imprecision of verbal communication. Those sources of variation are assumed to operate in all of the interactions in this study (Briggs, 1986). However, from a realist perspective, this study assumes that there is a real, physical world in which there are real differences in opportunity. In spite of subjectivity and semantic imprecision, most people agree that college graduates are offered jobs not given to high school drop outs. As a realist, I assume that there is a physical world of jobs, wealth, poverty, and suffering independent of the words we use to represent these things.

When I assume that ideas about opportunity are socially constructed, I do not mean to minimize the reality of the experiences to which the words refer. However, since this study is so dependent on words and interpretations, it is important to emphasize the complex semantic process by which people share their experiences with each other, and create and refine their interpretations of what those experiences mean.

Description of the Procedures Used

This study involves two primary sources of data, which are intended to complement each other. The first source of data is extensive interviews conducted with African American JTPA participants regarding their perceptions of opportunity and of the working world. The second source

is interviews with key informants. The key informants are adults who work with youth in the JTPA program, or who work with African American youth in other settings. In addition, a number of other sources were interviewed about various aspects of the local job market. These included military recruiters, and the president of a local temporary placement agency. This section describes the procedures used in the study, and the rationale for specific decisions about the methods.

Collaboration and Consultation

Two aspects of this study make collaboration very important. First, as a White researcher studying the perceptions and experiences of African Americans, it is important to work closely with African Americans in order to represent their experiences accurately and respectfully. I have discussed my procedures and the theory behind this study with a number of African American faculty and graduate students, and have structured the study so that both participants and adult key informants are consulted on how best to interpret these interviews. Second, given the emergent nature of methods used for this study, it is natural that some elements of the procedures have been developed or modified during the course of the study based on field experience. Decisions about modifications in methods have been made in ongoing consultation with members of the dissertation committee, and reflect the input of African American researchers and students.

The Sample of Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Program Participants

The Champaign Consortium, which administers the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs for Champaign County, gave me permission to interview the participants in their Summer Youth Program, and in their Work Experience Program. The Summer Youth Program places low-income youth in summer jobs working at public and non-profit agencies, with their wages paid by the federal government. The Work Experience Program places people in similar jobs during other parts of the year. Over 200 people participated in the summer program during the summer of 1992,

over half of them African American. The ages of participants ranges from 15 to 24, although the vast majority are 17 to 20. All participants are low-income. To be eligible for the JTPA summer youth program one must be in a family whose income is below either the federal poverty line, or the Department of Labor poverty standards.

The JTPA summer program is designed to provide summer work experience and income, but it does not normally lead to a permanent job. At the end of the summer the participants typically go back to school, or search for other employment. The JTPA participants are especially appropriate as participants in this study because they have all experienced workplace environments through the JTPA, and many of them are actively seeking further employment or are in school preparing themselves for further employment. They are likely to have thought about issues related to jobs and work, yet they are still at the career stage of making the transition to full time employment or to a career. The participants are all male. Due to the small sample size it was not considered feasible to clearly investigate the experiences of both men and women, and it appears that the work experiences of the two would differ in important ways. The sample is fairly homogeneous in age, ranging from 18 to 21, and all participants' families have incomes below the poverty line.

Participants were selected from a list of JTPA participants provided by the Champaign Consortium. The Champaign Consortium compiled a list of all program participants who were African American, over 18, and no longer in high school. Participants need not have graduated from high school, and need not have a GED. Current high school students were excluded to increase the homogeneity of the sample, and because work issues are likely to be less salient to people who are still in high school. Participants in junior college or other education programs were included.

The JTPA staff compiling the list of participants for this study were surprised to discover that relatively few of the 200 summer program participants fit all of these criteria, and when the decision

was made to include only males, it became apparent that more participants would be needed. Apparently over 60% of the summer program participants are still in high school, and of African American participants no longer in high school, 75% were female. For younger participants, those still in school, there are roughly equal numbers of males and females participating, but in the 18 to 21 age group females predominate. The JTPA director commented that they had noticed low participation in their programs from African American males aged 18 to 21, and that participation rose again for African American males between the ages of 22 and 25. He interpreted the low participation as reflecting lack of interest during the late teen years, and commented that it seemed as if men in their mid-twenties notice their careers failing to progress, and return for additional training or job assistance.

Because there were relatively few potential participants in the summer program, the investigator and the Champaign Consortium decided to include participants in the Work Experience Program as well. The work experience program is similar to the summer program, but it is smaller and operates year-round. It is designed for people who are no longer in school.

During this process it became clear that selection criteria for the study had the effect of selecting a group that is not typical of JTPA participants as a whole. Both the key investigator and the director of JTPA were comfortable with the fact that the participants are not a representative sample of JTPA participants. Since African American males, aged 18 to 21, are a group that the JTPA would like to understand and serve better, it continued to seem appropriate that they be the focus of the investigation.

After identifying a list of appropriate participants, the Champaign Consortium sent a cover letter describing the study to all potential participants, and provided the investigator with a list of the participants and permission to contact them. The letter described the study and stressed that

participation was voluntary. The list generated consisted of 16 JTPA participants appropriate for the study. Each participant on the list who could be located was contacted, and invited to participate in the study. Although it was often difficult to contact participants, typically due to changed addresses and disconnected phones, 100% of the JTPA participants contacted agreed to be in the study. Of the 16 on the original list, 13 were eventually located and interviewed (Table 9). Two of these 13 were eventually dropped from the study. Michael was dropped because he claimed to be (and appeared to be) developmentally disabled. Workforce participation issues are presumably quite different for a person with a developmental disability. Frank was dropped because of very poor rapport, and evident hostility toward the interview process. This is described in more detail below.

In the original design for this study the plan had been to interview 12 JTPA participants three times each. This numerical goal was approached as closely as possible, but was not met. Given that the entire pool of potential JTPA participants turned out to be 16, it was not possible to complete the full set of three interviews with 12 men. Eight men were interviewed three or four times (Table 9). Bryant was interviewed only twice because we had thoroughly covered all topics in the interview schedule in that time. James was interviewed once because he was quite busy and it proved very difficult to schedule subsequent interviews. Jessie was interviewed only twice because he was released from jail very shortly before I moved away from Champaign in the August of 1993. Finally, Talbot was included in the study at the request of Ray, through circumstances which are described in more detail below.

For the first interview, it was originally planned that all participants would be interviewed in pairs, with the pairs chosen so that they would already know each other. It was felt that this would help establish rapport and make the participants more comfortable. It was planned that they would

subsequently be interviewed individually for the second and third interview. In pilot work for this study, interviewing participants in pairs resulted in lively, comfortable interviews with a great deal of spontaneous conversation between the participants. The plan for paired interviews proved logistically unworkable for two reasons. First, most JTPA participants could no longer be reached at the phone numbers given to JTPA the previous summer. Since many people had moved, and many phones were disconnected, it was typically necessary for me to visit the addresses to arrange interviews. This made it extremely difficult to coordinate pairs. Second, it was common for participants not to be at home at the arranged interview times. The absence rate was about 30%, high enough to seriously disrupt plans for paired interviews. I was sometimes left with one participant when I had expected two. These circumstances led to the decision to interview participants individually when paired interviews could not be arranged. In the end about half of the participants were interviewed individually for the first interview, and half were interviewed in pairs (Table 9). There were no striking differences in rapport between those people interviewed individually and those interviewed in pairs. Of the participants for whom rapport with me was quite good, half of them began individually.

When pairs were formed, they were formed using this procedure: I called a potential participant and if he was willing to participate, I asked whether he was acquainted with other men on the list. We agreed on several men with whom he was comfortable being interviewed. I then called those men to see if one of them was willing to participate and to be interviewed with him.

Informed consent. At the beginning of the first interview I described the workings of the study to participants, and we read and signed the consent forms. A copy of the consent form is provided in Appendix B. In addition, participants were informed about the study in two other ways prior to this time. The letter sent from the JTPA program describing the study contained much of the

information in the consent form, and I also described their role as participants when I called people to invite them to participate. All of these contacts stressed the voluntary nature of the study.

The Interviews With JTPA Participants

The participants were interviewed three times in 1993, if possible. Bryant, whose answers tended to be brief and concrete, was interviewed only twice, because all of the relevant content areas had been fairly thoroughly covered in that time. The interviews lasted about an hour each, although some ran longer to avoid interrupting particularly fruitful conversations. All interviews took place at a setting chosen by the participant. Most occurred in participants homes, but some also occurred in public libraries, in fast food restaurants, in a public park, and at a participant's workplace. The list of interviews conducted with the various participants may be found in Table 9.

A nonschedule standardized interview. The interviews format was that of a "nonschedule standardized interview" (Denzin, 1989b, p. 105). In a nonschedule standardized interview, certain information is desired from all participants, but the phrasing and ordering of questions is left to the discretion of the interviewer. Furthermore, in a nonschedule standardized interview the conversation need not be limited to the information required. "The interviewer will often find that the interviewees will raise important issues not contained in the schedule" (Denzin, 1989b, p. 106).

The flexibility in the order and wording of questions allows the interview to more nearly take the form of a conversation. I worked from a list of desired information, and steered the conversation toward those areas, but the nonschedule interview allowed me to avoid imposing a rigid or unnatural structure on the interaction. The pilot interviews were studied to better understand how to foster a comfortable, conversational feeling in the interviews, and to avoid either a question-and-answer pattern or awkward communication blunders. The analysis and refinement of the communication process occurring in the interviews continued throughout the study.

Both therapists (Phares, 1988a; Weiner, 1975; Zaro, Barach, Nedelman, & Dreiblatt, 1977) and qualitative researchers (Denzin, 1989b) advocate developing rapport and fostering a comfortable conversation in order to put the participant at ease and increase the likelihood that the participant will share personal information honestly. As a therapist, I have a great deal of experience conducting purposeful interviews, and have studied and practiced methods for conducting interviews in ways which are sensitive and respectful to the other participant. The interviews for this study are not therapy sessions, and are not designed to have therapeutic effects, but I used interviewing skills from my therapy experience to help explore the experience of the interview participants.

The content of the interview. The nonschedule standardized interview means working from a list of information which is desired from all participants. The wording of the questions varied from one interview to another, and there was considerable variation in the number of follow up questions asked on the different topics, depending on how much various participants chose to elaborate on various topics. After each interview, the tape or transcript of the interview was compared to the interview schedule to decide which topics still needed to be discussed, and which interesting themes merited further exploration.

Appendix A contains the list of information desired of the participants, along with possible wording for questions. The first interview typically focused on personal work history, work experiences, and aspirations. More sensitive questions, such as information about family structure, and about having sired children, was typically discussed in the second interview. It was felt that more sensitive topics were better discussed after some rapport had been established, and in an individual interview rather than a paired one. Racial issues in the workplace were discussed after a more general discussion of work history, to avoid a premature overemphasis on racial dynamics to the exclusion of other perceptions of the workplace.

The family information was collected to provide a picture of the types of work experiences the participant heard about growing up. By finding out about the older people who live with the participant and the jobs those people have worked one can better understand the origins of the stories and opinions the participant may have heard.

The section of the interview dealing with the influence of racial identity or ethnicity explored participants' perceptions of how race relates to one's behavior, and to belonging in a work setting. I asked about what types of behavior various people encourage and expect of them. This included asking whether employers expect them to speak and behave in ways less typical of Blacks and more typical of Whites, and whether they experience pressure from other Blacks to behave more like Blacks, or to demonstrate their loyalty to Blacks.

In the interviews I encouraged participants to tell me stories of experiences they have had or heard about from others regarding racial dynamics in the workplace. The emphasis on stories reflects the influence of researchers in psychology who study storytelling and narratives (Howard, 1991; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990). I encouraged those stories whenever they arose, and in one section of the interview I asked about them specifically. After finding whether the participant has worked, and who the participant knows who talks about work, (parents, siblings, friends), the interviews elicited work stories based on the participants' experiences and the experiences of others.

Prior to the second interview with each participant I reviewed the first interview and prepared a list of topics to be discussed. This list includes any information desired of all participants which has not yet been discussed with this person, as well as ideas expressed by the person in the first interview which seem worthy of further exploration. By the end of the second interview with each participant, all of the topics in the non-schedule standardized interview (Appendix A) had been

raised and discussed, although some may have been discussed only briefly.

Prior to the third interview, a description was written of the experience described by each individual in the interviews up to this point, based on the transcripts of the previous two interviews. The guiding question for this description was "what are the key elements of this person's understanding of the workplace, and the key events in this person's story?" Since the transcription and writing takes time, the third interview typically occurred three to four weeks after the second. The description was shared with the participant during the third interview, and the purpose of that interview was refining and elaborating the description. An example of one such individual description is provided in Appendix E.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) advocate checking back with participants as a way of enhancing credibility (a concept from qualitative research which they see as parallel to internal validity). By allowing participants to help in the construction of descriptions of themselves, the interpretations which I make as I distill the descriptions from the interview material can be challenged or refined, resulting in a description which more nearly represents the way they see themselves. When showing descriptions to men in the study, at a number of points they clarified or corrected information, or elaborated on an opinion they had previously offered.

Follow-up and analysis-phase interviews. The third interview with each participant in 1993 typically involved discussing the summary I had written about them, and also involved discussing ideas raised by other participants. Hypotheses and tentative conclusions were being developed at this stage, and participants were given the opportunity to offer their perspectives on these ideas. This was done even more directly in the follow-up interviews conducted in 1994.

In September of 1994 those participants who could be located were contacted again, and interviewed if possible. The interviews focused on the getting their perceptions of the conclusions

and interpretations that I was drawing from the study. I described various findings and ideas, and asked for their reactions, and whether the conclusions seemed valid to them. In addition, I took a draft of the results section in which I had marked the places I quoted them, and paged through it with each person, showing them how they had been quoted, and asking whether it reflected their point of view. In a couple of instances participants suggested corrections or revisions to what was written, but far more often they elaborated on the ideas described, offering additional examples or emphasizing the opinions they had expressed before. These interviews were taped, and were not transcribed fully, but important parts of them were summarized or transcribed and included in the description of the results.

Payment of participants. Participants were paid a nominal fee for each interview. The amount was $5.00 for each interview hour. The decision to pay participants was made reluctantly, because it is likely that payment changes the nature of the interaction. However, I am strongly committed to the idea that participants benefit directly from their participation in the study. Payment may also have reduced attrition, and made participants more likely to agree to multiple interviews.

Taping and transcription. To ensure that statements made by participants were recorded accurately, the interviews were taped, transcribed into a word processing program, and stored on microcomputers. Although undergraduate research assistants did much of the transcription, I corrected each transcript prior to analysis by listening to the tape myself, and checking it against the computer file. This was done in part because research assistants could not always tell who was talking in paired interviews, and in part because some assistants did not produce fully accurate transcripts.

Key Informant Interviews and Other Sources Interviewed

In addition to the interviews with JTPA participants, interviews were conducted with JTPA

staff members, and with other African Americans who work with youth in Champaign county. These interviews were designed to provide a second perspective on the experiences of the 18 to 24 year old JTPA participants. The key informant interviews are intended to increase the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Through their contact with JTPA participants and other African American youth, the key informants are likely to have developed their own perspectives on the workplace experience of young African Americans. Since they have worked with many young people over a number of years, the key informants were able to provide opinions about general issues and common patterns, while the younger individual participants were able to talk about their own experiences and those they have heard of from others. These are seen as complimentary data sources, with the older key informants likely to offer opinions at a higher level of abstraction and generalization. Key informants were interviewed using an interview similar to the one used with the younger JTPA participants, and were asked how they believe young African Americans experience the workplace, and the opportunity structure.

The other significant role of the key informants was as consultants on how this study is conducted and how the findings are interpreted. Three of the key informants were contacted again in September 1994 to get their reactions on some of the findings and interpretations. Their reactions are incorporated in the results and discussion sections.

Other sources in the community were interviewed as necessary, typically to gather more information about the workings of the job market or the nature of the local community. These interviews were often conducted by phone, and had no standard length or format. They were simply used to explore various topics that appeared relevant to understanding the local environment. A list of key informant interviews and other interviews is provided in Table 10.

Data Management and Analysis

Although some authors argue that qualitative work should be extremely intuitive, and that attempts at rigor interfere with coming to a "gestalt" understanding of the phenomena at hand, this study prefers the approach of those qualitative researchers who advocate explicit, systematic procedures for drawing conclusions from qualitative data (Miles and Huberman, 1984b). In addition, this study strives for "trustworthiness," a term used by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) for procedures which allow us to be confident of our conclusions.

The methods of recording and analysis work to accomplish several things. First, procedures were used to document the events of the investigation. Conceptual memos and summaries of meetings were written to record the chronology of events, interviews, and analysis ideas, and the development of the study (Sarason, 1972). Second, the interviews themselves were documented with brief subjective notes written by the interviewer, and by using direct transcription to allow the preservation and analysis of exactly what was said. Third, a systematic memoing process was used throughout to document decisions about the fieldwork and the analysis, and to show the progression by which hypotheses were considered and tested against the data set. Each of these procedures is described in more detail below.

Contact Summary Sheets. Contact summary sheets provide a substantive, conceptual description of events occurring in meetings and in interviews. These dated write-ups range from a few sentences to one page depending on the substance of the contact. There are two sets. The first set documents contacts which help in the development of the study. These meetings were with collaborators, contact people in the local setting, and with faculty and others who assisted in the planning and organization of the investigation.

The second set of contact summary sheets are one page, subjective summaries of the actual

research interviews. They were written by the interviewer, and consist of impressions and ideas related to the each interview. These summaries are intended to accomplish several things. First, they provide a forum for the interviewer to reflect about each interview after it occurs, and to relate the interview to the concepts under investigation. They allow each interview to have a conceptual impact on the development of the study long before it can be transcribed and explicitly analyzed, and provide a place for the interviewer's subjective and intuitive responses to be recorded. This aids in the conceptual development of the study, and provides a truer collaboration by allowing a participant's ideas to be considered immediately, and makes the data collection phase an active process of concept development rather than a data collection exercise.

Memos. Memos are brief conceptual write-ups of developing ideas. They are typically used during the analysis stage to help the researcher move from the data to a conceptual level (Miles and Huberman, 1984b). They provide a format for one to comment on or think about the accumulating data or about theories or other ideas in ways that are accessible later. Memos form an idea-oriented paper trail, complete with dates, and a description of the way that the idea arose. As one is writing up notes, or going over transcripts, significant new ideas which arise are written up as memos. Memos can propose new codes or analysis categories, or can document an idea about any aspect of the project. They are important in that they can make explicit and systematic a process which is typically both unsystematic and unrecorded. The ideas produced become part of the data set, and form the foundation for future conceptual analysis.

Analysis of each participant. As mentioned above, the transcripts of each individual were first analyzed separately, and a description written of the experience of each individual. Since the transcripts from two interviews with one participant form a relatively small data set, the descriptions were written without the aid of The Ethnograph package for the analysis of qualitative data. The

principle of checking the data set for negative evidence was still employed as the descriptions were being written: As a tentative conclusion about an individual was being drawn, his transcripts were searched for counter examples, or for places where his various comments on a topic were not consistent. Deliberately searching for counter examples and inconsistencies increases trustworthiness by guarding against the possibility that confirmation bias is leading the researcher to notice statements which agree with a hypothesis, and ignore those that do not (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness is also increased by the technique of asking the participant directly about the written description of him or her self. This allowed the participant an additional opportunity to express his or her perspective and see that it is accurately recorded.

Analysis of interviews across participants. After the interviews were transcribed and checked, each one was coded to label the content being discussed. In this study the initial list of codes was modified steadily during the interview phase, but the final list of codes was used to code all transcripts during the analysis phase. This required re-coding some which had been coded previously. The coding scheme was revised both to reflect emergent issues, and to allow for the ways that the initial codes are too narrow, too broad, or inapplicable. Both the initial and final codebooks are presented in Appendix D.

The initial list was developed first by going through the theoretical issues of interest in this study, and creating codes to represent them, and then by coding the interviews of a pilot participant, and creating and modifying codes in ways that seemed appropriate at that time. The codebook lists the codes being used, and specifies the type of content labeled by each. The specification was intended to be clear enough to minimize ambiguity in the use of the code, and allow it to be applied consistently.

Once the interviews were coded, the transcripts and codes were entered into The Ethnograph program. The Ethnograph program allows one to systematically label the data set with a set of codes which identify specific types of content. One can then extract all passages labeled with various codes and combinations of codes for analysis of that content. This allows the researcher to identify patterns in the ways that various participants approach various topics and ideas. The basic procedure is this: One repeatedly reads through the text of each interview, marking the text with labels to identify different types of content (Miles & Huberman, 1984b). The codes are associated with line numbers assigned by The Ethnograph software. After creating a list of codes and line numbers (see Appendix C for an example), one enters the codes and line numbers into The Ethnograph program.

After the text has been coded, The Ethnograph software was used to locate and extract all passages marked with a particular code. Naturally the quality of the excerpts produced in this way is only as good as the quality and consistency of the coding process. The computer is systematic and reliable only in locating and extracting coded passages, it is the researcher who must ensure the conceptual quality of the coding scheme, and the consistency with which the codes are applied to the text (Kennedy, 1991).

After coding the interviews, The Ethnograph program was used to extract all passages related to various topics of interest. This created files consisting of all interview passages relevant to certain topics. A large number of topical files were created in this way, based on the codes in Appendix D. Files were created based on the codes ED, ASPIRE, ARMY, DRUG, TROUBLE, JTPA, ABSTRACT, and DEMO. Racial issues were reflected in the codes RACE, BIAS, STEREO, CONFORM, and SLUR. Job experiences fell under the codes JOB, FACT, and MIN. Natually there was great variation in the amount of time spent discussing various topics, and the files of

conversations on various topics ranged from only a few pages to more than 200. The sizes of the files associated with the various codes are given in Table 11. Some files, such as RACE, were so large that they required a great deal of organizing and processing. Others, such as GENDER, were so small that there was very little to analyze.

For each topic area, the file of interview passages was read from beginning to end at least twice, marking salient passages and making notes in the right margin. (The Ethnograph program leaves a right margin of 2 1/2 inches to allow the researcher to write notes and ideas on the printed copies.) I then began to construct summaries and descriptions of the ideas expressed in the file. If one person expressed an important idea, I searched back and forth through the comments made by others to see what they had said about it. After constructing a computer file of salient ideas and quotes about that content area, I worked to shape an outline of the ideas significant enough to be written up in the results section. This involved deciding how various ideas related to each other, and how they related to hypotheses and ideas considered in the design of this study. For certain topics it seemed appropriate to create a matrix of quotes or summaries which could be presented as a table to allow the reader more direct access to the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984b).

In addition to The Ethnograph approach, which focuses on how topics are discussed across individuals, it proved helpful to develop a system to manage the information about each individual more systematically. A database program was used to keep track of a wide array of demographic and other information. Entered into the database were such things as the participant's age and education, mother and father's education and occupation, information on siblings and children of participants, family structure, public or private housing, and brief summaries of ideas expressed about race, jobs, friends, aspirations, and illegal activities. The database was developed because the enormous quantity and variety of information about each individual made it hard to find particular

pieces of information quickly in the overall data set. The database was enormously useful in comparing responses across other variables, such as public versus private housing, or completion versus non-completion of high school.

Conclusion verification. A number of strategies were used to combat confirmation bias, and to ensure that negative evidence about any given conclusion was properly weighed and considered. First of all, the verbatim transcription of interviews guards against selective memory and selective recording of conversations. The Ethnograph topical coding and retrieval work to ensure that all comments pertinent to a given topic are considered simultaneously.

The process of checking tentative conclusions directly with both key informants and with participants helps ensure that unwarranted conclusions will be questioned, challenged, and re-examined during the analysis phase. This study employed the technique of checking with participants and informants at several phases. First, the third interview with each participant allowed the participant to offer feedback on the summary and the ideas being considered at that point. Second, the follow up interviews with both participants and key informants were explicitly designed to allow additional feedback about tentative conclusions being drawn. These procedures appeared to be successful at drawing additional feedback, and at making the analysis a collaborative and an iterative process.

Report Writing

In the text which describes qualitative data, one typically faces the problem that by summarizing a pattern too briefly one may miss or minimize the complexity of the opinions expressed. One risks the loss of context, the loss of dissenting opinions, and the possibility that the summary statement cannot be clearly understood without giving the reader more access to precisely what was said. Many authors suggest that one address this problem by providing a more detailed

thorough write up, often referred to as "thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Denzin, 1989a). Thick description provides the reader with a fuller description of the context, and involves the rich use of quotations and examples which make it clearer to the reader how the participants frame the ideas being discussed.

Since the intention of this study is to explore and document the perceptions of young African Americans, the findings are written in an ethnographic style which attempts to preserve and convey the ideas expressed by the participants. The writing involves extensive quotations in the text, as well as tables of relevant quotes where they are appropriate (See the discussion of matrices in Miles and Huberman, 1984b). The writing is intended to make the thoughts and experiences of the participants accessible to the reader. Descriptions of each individual are provided to place the quotes in a fuller context, and to allow the reader to observe how the individuals construct unique and internally consistent frameworks for understanding their experience.

The participants often expressed varied and sometimes conflicting opinions. In these cases, the write up works to describe the various points of view expressed, rather than focusing largely on the majority view. It is assumed that part of the process of "giving voice" involves acknowledging that there are multiple voices, and multiple perspectives which deserve to be heard (Denzin, 1989a).

Chapter 3: Results

The results discussed here are based on interviews both with JTPA participants, and with a variety of informants from agencies and from the community. The interviews with participants are treated as the primary focus, with information from informants used to supplement, clarify, or interpret the findings. To be clear about the usage of these terms, "participant" refers to the 12 men in the study, whose interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The term "informant" refers to the community members or staff who were interviewed, but not to the 18 to 21 year old JTPA participants.

The Participants

In describing these men and their ideas, this paper attempts to capture both the unique experiences of individual men, and some of the patterns common across men. Each participant is described individually, and then in later sections concerned with specific issues the men are quoted and mentioned using their aliases. This allows the reader to see which person expressed particular ideas or reported particular experiences. This is done because there is a coherence in the style and behavior of each individual. One could argue that each man has developed an individual approach to coping with jobs, school, race, and other challenges, and reporting who said and did various things allows the reader to understand both the issues and the individuals involved. Before beginning that type of discussion, however, the group-level patterns are presented, including the demographics of this group of 12 men.

Group Patterns

Participants in the study were 11 African American men who participated in the Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA) program in Champaign county during the summer of 1992, and one friend of a JTPA participant, included at the participant's request. These 12 men ranged from 18 to 21

years of age, 18 to limit the study to men out of high school, and 21 because that is the upper age limit of the JTPA summer program. All of the men had completed high school or dropped out by January of 1993. Demographics and a variety of other basic information are provided in Tables 12 and 13.

Their educational histories varied widely, and many of them had difficulty completing their high school educations. Four completed a traditional high school in the typical period of time; two completed high school after dropping out and returning; two completed alternative high schools after having problems in a regular high school; and four dropped out and did not have diplomas or GEDs. Four of the men had attended junior college, and one of those had transferred successfully to a four year college.

Family patterns also varied widely. All of the men lived in Champaign-Urbana at the time of the 1993 interviews, and all had mothers living in Champaign-Urbana, although three of the men grew up elsewhere until their mid-teen years. Six of the men were raised primarily by their mothers; the other six were raised either by both biological parents, or by their mother and a step-father. Parental education varies from bachelor's degrees to not finishing high school. Seven of the men had children of their own. Of these, one was married and living with his wife and children; two were living with their girlfriends and children; one couple was engaged but not living together, and three were no longer dating the mothers of their children. Finally, six of the men were raised largely in public housing; the other six have lived consistently in private housing. All come from families who were officially below the poverty line, as that is a requirement of the JTPA.

It is also worth noting that my reaction as the interviewer varied among the participants, in ways that seemed related to the rapport and the ability to have mutually enjoyable, interesting conversations, and also in ways that seemed related to my reactions to the content. In particular I

found it impossible to feel like a neutral observer, and found myself making positive and negative judgements about the men's behavior. This was especially true when they described violence, or activities which harmed others, but I also found myself feeling strongly about other things, such as having children and not supporting them, or (on the positive side) about persisting at efforts to gain education. I found myself able to remain sympathetic to most of the men in most circumstances, but since my reactions were sometimes laden with my own values, I will try to be explicit about when my reactions were strong.

Individual Descriptions

The description of each participant includes his work and school background, his family background, including whether he has a partner or children, and a brief description of legal and scholastic problems he may have had, where that is appropriate. The legal problems described here are limited to those in the distant past, or those which have already been adjudicated. Other more recent illegal activities will be described more anonymously in a later section. The description also includes how rapport developed or failed to develop in the interview. I also describe here a man whom I interviewed but did not include in the study, and explain why it seemed best to exclude him. The ages and circumstances described here refer to 1993 unless otherwise noted.

Alex. Alex was 20 years old, and lived in public housing with his mother, siblings, nieces, and nephews. He was unemployed when interviewed in 1993 and in 1994, and had been expelled from high school in his senior year. Asked about his jobs, he gave brief descriptions in a bored tone, and appeared not to enjoy talking about it. Over the years he had worked at five fast food restaurants, a grocery store, and a factory. He usually got fired or quit within a month or two, and expressed little regret or concern about the jobs ending. The exception was the grocery store job, which he liked and wanted to keep. He worked there nearly a year there before getting fired for

three instances of missing work without proper documentation of his excuses.

He became far more enthusiastic and talkative in our conversations about family, friends, and other activities. In 1993 Alex had a fiance, in the army, and they have a daughter, aged 2 at the time, being cared for by his fiance's mother. He enjoyed visiting her, but did not help with child care because he was "out too much." In 1994 he had broken up with his fiance, but still occasionally saw his daughter. Alex also talked of going to church, but only sporadically. He was one of only a handful who mention going to church at all, and in both 1993 and 1994 he talked of wanting to be more involved in church, and mentioned things his pastor had said to him.

Alex talked of being easily bored, and of seeking out excitement. One of his most incisive descriptions of the working world was of the way that friends of his with factory jobs went from excitement at the steady wages to frustrating boredom at the endless repetition and sameness of the task. His other problem on the job is that he admited not liking being told what to do. He did not mind working hard, but talked of becoming very irritated when superiors gave him orders or reprimanded him in ways that did not seem respectful. "He tried to demand me to do something. I told him he could ask me better than that." This form of irritation with supervisors resulted in jobs ending more than once.

Alex had a similar clash with his high school dean, for which he was expelled from high school. He described getting along fine with people who treat him respectfully, but became very angry when reprimanded for misbehavior and threatened the dean, leading to his expulsion. Asked about the confrontations he got into, he related it directly to growing up in the Public Housing neighborhood. "If you live on this bad end where I live at, you know you are not going to take no bullcrap from nobody." He had been arrested for two or three offenses over the years.

Rapport with Alex developed slowly at first, but was strong by our second interview. Our first

interview began with rather perfunctory, disinterested answers. As the interviews progressed, however, Alex became animated and talkative, seeming to thoroughly enjoy telling me stories of himself and his past. He punctuated his descriptions with verbal sound effects and gestures, cracked jokes, and seemed to enjoy having an interested audience.

Bryant. Bryant was 21, and described living in different places and moving fairly often. He alternated between living with his mother in public housing in Champaign, and living with his father in a nearby town. When last interviewed he was living with a friend, also in public housing. He was unemployed, and had been for most of the previous year. Bryant was evasive at first when asked about his siblings, apparently because he was reluctant to admit that at least three of his brothers were in jail at the time of our interviews. He had been arrested a couple of times himself, although not recently. Another of his older brothers did not finish high school and was unemployed, and the final older brother was very religious, worked two jobs, and attended community college. His mother lived with her current boyfriend and their children, who were still younger than age 8. Bryant's father worked in a nearby town, and once helped Bryant get short-term work at the place where he worked.

Bryant dropped out of school in the 10th grade, and appeared to be nearly illiterate. The consent form had to be read to him, and he reported getting through job applications with difficulty. "The big words I just sound out." He claimed to have gotten A's, B's, and C's in junior high, and that he began failing after he began "hanging out with the wrong crowd." If he were to go back to school he would "have to start all over," because he remembered so little. He was considering trying to get a GED, but was reluctant because he believed it would take him several years. His job history included only two fast food jobs, the JTPA job, and the temporary job that his father got him. He appeared as though he would compete rather poorly on the job market. He described filling out

applications regularly, mostly at fast food restaurants, but had not had a job for some months.

Rapport with Bryant seemed fairly good. He was cooperative and even friendly, but he typically talked of things in very simple, concrete terms, gave short answers, and seemed disinclined to talk about ideas. The interviews felt like question and answer sessions, and never developed into more natural conversations. I found myself becoming slightly impatient at times with his concreteness, as I had hoped to discuss ideas as well as facts. I interviewed Bryant only twice because we got through all my standard questions and all the additional ones that seemed relevant, and I wasn't sure what I would ask him if I interviewed him again.

Charles. Charles was 19, and was raised as an only child living with his mother in her public housing apartment. His girlfriend appeared to live there too. His mom had not worked in many years, and he had little contact with his father. Charles actually had many half-siblings, because his father had a number of children by several different women, but Charles had no contact with most of them. Charles also had a daughter by a previous girlfriend, but did not see the daughter much because he no longer got along with the mother.

Charles had been in and out of trouble since junior high. He was expelled in the 9th grade and stayed out all year, and then was expelled again in the 11th grade, and transferred to an alternative high school, from which he graduated. He has been arrested multiple times. A 1994 follow-up interview revealed that he spent almost all of the previous year in jail on an assault charge. He said he was "trying to stay out of trouble" to avoid being sent back to jail for a parole violation.

Charles had held a large number of fast food jobs, as well as three factory jobs. He had lost jobs over lateness, and over such circumstances as not showing up because he was in jail. In 1994 he reported working at a restaurant job, and the job was going well. In 1993 he expressed hopes of becoming a professional basketball player, by going to junior college and then to college, but in

1994 he seemed more focused on simply staying out of jail. Conversations with Charles were often slightly awkward and conventional. A friend was present during our first interview, and during the 1994 follow-up interview, and in these conversations he seemed more at ease. At other times he gave the impression of viewing me as an authority figure. I had the sense that he was trying to say the right things, and he seemed embarrassed at times when describing his long history of school and legal troubles.

Derrick. Derrick was 21 years old, married, and had one son. His wife was pregnant with their second child. He grew up in Chicago with his mother and stepfather until age 13, when he was sent to live with grandparents in Champaign because he was getting into trouble. He lived there for two years, went back to Chicago, and soon dropped out. He went to Job Corps in Kentucky, and dropped out of that too, and went back to "running the streets" in Chicago. His family sent him to Champaign again, where he eventually graduated from high school, but only after many more discipline problems. He also got into fights and other trouble routinely, and was in the detention room often. "You might say it was another class for me. I used to be down there every day." He described extensive gang activity including violence, but seemed quite happy to be done with that part of his life. He commented at one point "I've been to too many funerals."

He had worked at several fast food restaurants, bussed tables at a sit-down restaurant, and worked very briefly at a factory job where he found himself unable to stay awake for the night shift. He wanted to do construction or factory work, but was unable to find a job above minimum wage. In 1993 he was working at a fast food restaurant. While attempting to contact him for a 1994 interview, a relative informed me that he had been unemployed most of that year, and had left town to seek work elsewhere.

Rapport with Derrick was good. He had a slightly gruff, matter of fact style, and seemed quite

frank and open during our interviews. He once wrote a paper for school describing his gang years and his reasons for giving it up, and he talked quite openly with me about the same topic. He reported not caring about school for most of his school years, but he did go back and finish. He regreted that time, feeling as though he wasted a few years, but at the time he did not care to hear anyone's advice, and he notes that teenagers in 1993 did not care to hear his advice either.

Dwight. Dwight was 20, and lived in public housing with his mother and two half-sisters. He had almost no contact with his father. He had several more half-siblings on his father's side, and is close to one of them, but has not met the others. He himself had two children by two different mothers. One of the mothers he continued to date; the other was a casual encounter and he had never seen the child.

Dwight's history was a mixture of relative success stories and of stories of getting into trouble. He dated the beginning of his troubles to age nine, after a male relative, who had been acting as a father figure to him, died. He was so "hard to handle" that he was put in foster homes and group homes for a number of years. The primary place where he attended high school was apparently a school for delinquent boys in another part of the state, but Dwight had a tendency to put the best face on things, and he described going to high school "at a private school." He tried to join the military after graduation, but was not accepted. After graduating from high school Dwight attended a technical college briefly before being forced to drop out to serve jail time. He later attended community college, but dropped out after less than a year when he ran out of tuition money. In 1993 he talked of returning to community college, and in 1994 talked of wanting to attend the University of Illinois, but he had not been in school during that year. He was extremely proud of the time he had spent at college, and refered to himself as having "a college education."

Dwight was articulate, and talked of having "high test scores" and fairly high aspirations. He

has done well in school at times, and hoped to get a bachelor's degree in computer science. At the same time he talked of enjoying outsmarting the police, and felt justified in stealing from "the man" and bringing it back to "the community." During a follow up interview in 1994 he mentioned that he had been in jail for a brief time for carrying an unregistered pistol, and that he still hoped to get a bachelor's degree.

Rapport with Dwight was consistently quite good. He appeared to enjoy our conversations, and was very pleased with the summary I wrote about him prior to our third interview. He was interested in discussing racial issues, and had extensive opinions about the implications of both legal and illegal participation in the workforce.

Frank. Frank was dropped from the study, so his background will not be described here. Rapport between Frank and I was never good, and deteriorated until it seemed there was no point in interviewing him further. Frank's stories were confusing and contradictory, and as I asked follow-up questions to clarify things, he got very defensive. Later examination of some of his contradictory statements make it clear that he could not have been consistently telling the truth. Follow up questions asked at the time may have painted him into a corner. He eventually gave only the briefest of answers, and appeared quite hostile and defensive.

My best guess is that Frank was involved in illegal activities. He reported having multiple brothers in jail, and got particularly defensive when asked what most of his friends did for a living. In the paired interview he appeared very uncomfortable as the other person told me about drug dealing being common in Champaign. Frank's responses were dropped from the study entirely.

James. James was 20 in 1993. He grew up in a distant state with his mother, father, and nine brothers and sisters. Around 1990 his mother and father separated, and she came to Illinois with most of the children. He had dropped out of high school before coming to Illinois, dropped out

because he began working and liked that better than school. In 1993 he lived with his girlfriend and their two children, and was considering marriage.

His primary aspiration was to find a factory job, like the one his dad worked for most of his childhood. Asked about plans for further schooling or a GED, he responded, "I don't think so. I don't think I like school very much." His poor school performance was not accompanied by legal trouble or serious disciplinary trouble. Visiting the state where he grew up, he reported being surprised at how many of his friends had been to court or to jail, and he reports having trouble finding friends in Champaign Urbana who were not involved in illegal activities. He socialized mostly with his family, especially his brothers.

He has worked several fast food jobs, although he dislikes them very much, and had one factory job which he was very disappointed to lose. He lost the job by calling in sick to take his daughter to an appointment, but prior to that he had been promoted to supervisor there, and appeared to have a promising future there.

James had a fairly brief and direct manner of speaking. He was initially reluctant to talk about issues of race, saying "I just forget about it," but when I persisted he had a great deal to say about his experiences. I only interviewed James once. Rapport seemed good, and we both seemed to enjoy the interview, but after running into repeated scheduling problems setting up the second interview, he finally said that he did not have time to be in the study right then. I considered dropping him from the study entirely, but I had one fairly rich interview in which we had covered much of the usual material, and I saw no compelling reason to discard what he had said.

Jessie. Jessie was 21 in 1993. He grew up in Chicago with his parents and nine brothers and sisters. His father typically worked in factories. They moved to Champaign-Urbana toward the end of Jessie's high school years, and Jessie worked off and on, most often at fast food restaurants. He

had two children, one in Chicago and one in Champaign, and lived with his girlfriend, who is not the mother of either child. Jessie went to high school in both Chicago and Champaign, and returned to complete his degree after dropping out for a time. He has worked at fast food restaurants and at one factory, but was unemployed when I interviewed him in 1993.

Jessie had been arrested several times, primarily for violent offenses, but had never been convicted at the time of our 1993 interviews. Attempting to contact him for a follow-up interview in 1994 I was informed that he had been sentenced to eight years in prison. Jessie reported being unemployed for most of the year prior to the 1993 interview. His JTPA experience was also fairly brief: He quit when he got his first paycheck.

Jessie's manner was cordial and he seemed to talk freely about most topics. He was willing to talk about his job history, but that topic did not seem to interest him, and he appeared to enjoy other topics more. He appeared distracted during much of the second interview after he noticed a smudge of dirt on his new basketball shoes. They were expensive-looking leather high-tops. He rubbed at the smudge unhappily for much of the interview, and by the end was commenting that he would have to get new shoes. I found myself reacting quite negatively to Jessie's matter-of-fact descriptions of times he had hurt people, as I could see no sign of remorse.

John. John was 18 and lived with his mother and stepfather in a private house in a newer development in town. His mother was a clerk for a small company, and his stepfather was retired from the military, and had a government pension. John did well in high school, playing sports a lot as his older brothers had. John had hoped for a sports scholarship to college, and he was scouted by college teams during his senior year, but he injured himself early in the season. Without a scholarship he decided to join the military after high school, but was discharged after a short-lived medical problem. He had the option of re-enlisting when he recovered, but chose to go to

community college instead. His brother was in the military, and warned him that "after boot camp the government doesn't care about you anymore." In 1993 John was attending community college studying computers, and had hopes of transferring to another school where he could play sports.

John reported having no legal or disciplinary problems, but noted that many of his friends dealt drugs, and would be happy to get him started if he so desired. He has also encountered no problems on account of his race. He expressed the opinion that racial conflicts are primarily a thing of the past, although he did note that some people hold negative stereotypes of young Black males, expressed in such things as suspecting him of being a drug dealer.

Rapport with John seemed fine, although his style was somewhat reserved. Although they knew each other, he did not seem to like Frank, the person I interviewed with him the first time. He was articulate, but did not seem inclined to talk about ideas and social issues.

Marcus. Marcus was 19, and grew up living with his mother, although his father was also around and they had frequent contact. He had lived primarily in public housing, as his mother moved into public housing after she and his father split up. Having recently started a good job, Marcus had just saved up the money to rent a place for himself, his girlfriend, and their two kids, and he seemed excited to take that step. Marcus had a good work history in that he did well with the jobs he held, but his school history did not go smoothly. He dropped out in 1991 rather than repeat his senior year. In 1993 he was considering going back for his GED. His jobs in high school were primarily janitorial. He subsequently did janitorial work in the JTPA, and then got a janitorial job with the University. Although there were other jobs that he might have preferred, this job met his main requirement by paying well, and he planned to keep it a while.

Marcus described a period of gang membership and illegal activities after he dropped out of high school. He described being questioned by police a number of times, but was never tried for any

crimes. He eventually became tired of "watching my back," and of having people after him, and gave it up shortly after having kids.

Marcus talked quite openly about a variety of things during our interviews, and rapport was generally good. The main impediment to rapport was a growing irritation on my side because he was maddeningly unpunctual for our appointments. We met at a public library, and he was repeatedly very late, or stood me up altogether. This experience made me grateful that most participants had chosen to have me come to their houses. Marcus seems soft-spoken and easy-going, but his stories of his life experiences include descriptions of violence that contrast with his style in conversation.

Ray. Ray was 21 and lived with both his parents and with his two younger siblings in a private house. His father had a four-year college degree, and both parents worked at moderately well-paying jobs. He had a girlfriend, but planned to wait until he was more financially secure to get married. He typically earned excellent grades in school, and was also successful on the jobs he held, earning glowing recommendations from the JTPA among others. In 1993 he worked in a factory while attending community college, trying to make up his mind about a career.

Ray was articulate, and had many well-developed opinions about race and about society. He was consistently very willing to talk to me, and interested in what I was doing, especially the racial aspects of my work. Hearing that I wanted to talk about racial experiences, he asked if the initial paired interview could be conducted with a coworker of his, who had some notable bad experiences on the job. The two of them spoke at length with me about racial issues, both clearly having given those things a lot of thought before I came along. The aspect of Ray's personality that most set him apart from others in the study was his very strong sense that he did things differently than most people, and he had no desire to conform to the prevailing standards. In his view, both mainstream

American culture and African American culture are messed up and based on lousy values. He saw them as materialistic, destructive, and misguided, and he spoke of wanting a simple, traditional life with a family. Ray did not drink alcohol, and was part of an anti-drinking campaign at his high school, but also described himself as popular among his peers, and notes that members of rival gangs at the school defended him and do not allow others to mess with him.

Rapport with Ray was very good, and I found myself feeling impressed at his well-developed ideas about things, and at his apparently effective coping strategies. His interest in my work also added to our rapport.

Simon. Simon was 20 in 1993. He was raised by his mother, a local school teacher, and lived with her and his younger brother. He was completing his bachelor's degree at a four year college after transferring from community college, and he planed to go on to law school.

In his schooling Simon had typically been quite successful. In Champaign public school he was ahead of his grade level in several subjects in the primary grades, and then made virtually straight A's through middle school. In high school he got A's and B's. He noted that he wasn't trying very hard during those years because it did not seem to him that high school grades would make much difference for his future. He worked much harder during his two years at community college, because it did seem to him that those grades mattered, and then transferred successfully to the University of Illinois. All through school Simon aroused resentment in his Black classmates through his success. They would whisper "want to be White" when he would raise his hand to answer a question, and he even had occasional experiences like this in college, such as having a Black friend ask "what are you talking that way for?" when he was using standard english.

Simon was one of the very few participants who sometimes mentioned God and God's intentions for him as he describes various plans for his life. Although these religious beliefs were

not in the foreground of most conversations with him, they were clearly among the principles that he used to organize his thinking. Simon had done very well at his jobs, including a small family business where he felt he made himself indispensable by learning the skills of jobs other than his own, and avoided being fired even when other workers were let go.

Rapport with Simon seemed quite good, and he expressed consistent interest in my research. He declined payment for the interviews, but asked if I could send him a copy of the finished report. Simon had a great many opinions on the racial issues of the study, and also seemed quite interested in talking about and understanding the effects of social class. He had clearly thought about many of these ideas before, from a personal perspective as well as an academic one.

Talbot. Early in the interviewing phase, as it proved difficult to arrange the initial paired interviews, I briefly experimented with a new way to accomplish that. I called Ray, and when we could not find a way to arrange an interview with another JTPA participant, I asked him if he simply had a friend that we could include in the initial interview. He said that he did. We had some trouble finding times that fit our three schedules, and I finally suggested that I just interview him alone. At that point he said, "no, my friend wants to do this. He has some things he wants to tell you." It is notable that although I introduced the study in similar ways to all participants, Ray and Talbot responded to my interest in racial factors and emphasized them strongly in their discussion. Both Ray and his friend Talbot had fairly extensive and sophisticated opinions about race and the workplace. When it came time to do subsequent interviews, they did not like the idea of Talbot being left out. I deferred to their preferences, and in an odd variation of my usual technique, I interviewed them three times together, and then interviewed Ray once by himself.

Talbot had clearly thought through his opinions rather carefully, and crafted many of them out of personal experience. He expressed more personal hard feelings about race than anyone else I

interviewed. He had some rather significant encounters with racism at work, and said he did not trust White people, and did not want to be friends with them. His animosity did not seem to include me; in fact he seemed rather eager to explain to me how he felt about race, and why he felt that way. He seemed glad that I was working on this project, and asked if he could see a copy of what I wrote when I finished.

Talbot and his three older siblings were no longer living at home in 1993. He grew up living with both parents, although he talked about his mother more than his father. As he encountered racial biases in the workplace, she coached him on how to handle it. He had changed jobs to find a more favorable environment, although he did not quit suddenly as others in the study have done, but waited until he had a new job lined up.

The Town

This study took place in Champaign and Urbana, Illinois, two incorporated cities which actually form one urban area. The city centers are roughly two miles apart, but the cities themselves have grown together so that the boundary between them is simply another city street. The University of Illinois, a state university of over 30,000 students, is located at the center of the combined towns, straddling the boundary. In 1990 Champaign had 63,502 residents, and Urbana had 36,344. The towns were 14.2% Black and 11.4% Black respectively (Bureau of Census, 1992). Champaign-Urbana is located in the vast farming region of central Illinois. The nearest large cities are Indianapolis, 135 miles East, and Chicago, 140 miles North. Towns such as Bloomington and Danville, both within an hour's drive, have comparable levels of African American residents, but in the smaller rural towns of Champaign county the proportion of Black residents at the time of the 1980 census was 2.7%. The Black population of central illinois is primarily an urban population, not a farming population.

African Americans were 1.2% of the county population at the turn of the century, and 3.0% in 1940 (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984). The 1940's were a decade of rapid northward migration for African Americans (Lemann, 1991), and the Champaign county Black population grew by 130% in that decade. The Black population doubled again between 1950 and 1970, and by 1980 Blacks made up 8.7% of the county population (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984). The parents of at least 9 of the 12 men in this study came to Champaign-Urbana from Mississippi and other southern states between 1940 and 1970. (Some are reluctant to discuss family roots in the deep south, especially if their parents picked cotton, making this information hard to gather at times.)

Champaign is a stop on the primary passenger railroad between Chicago and Mississippi. Since rail transportation was the commonest way to make the trip, most African Americans moving north to Chicago passed through Champaign both on the original trip and on any subsequent visits south. The close connections between Champaign-Urbana and Chicago have endured, and appear to affect both family life and street-gang life in the local area. Many local families have relatives in Chicago, and several men in the study have spent extended periods with families or gangs in the Chicago area.

The African American community in Champaign developed along the Illinois Central Railroad tracks in North Champaign, and later spread eastward into North Urbana (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984). Segregation in Champaign-Urbana was extreme until the 1940's, as realtors would not sell or rent to Blacks outside of the Black area of town. The university opened its dormitories to Blacks for the first time in the 1940's (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984); prior to that time Black students had to become boarders with Black families in the north end, and commute to campus.

Some elements of this extreme segregation have persisted. Although many Blacks now live outside of the traditionally Black areas of town, few Whites live within it. When public housing

neighborhoods were built in Champaign and Urbana they were built in traditionally Black areas, and the residents of public housing are currently over 95% Black. Low income Whites, although eligible for these units, manage to avoid them, and live instead in a number of trailer parks and other scattered low-rent private housing units. African American informants characterize Champaign-Urbana as a town with a history of racial hostility, which has improved but not disappeared.

In contrast to the housing segregation, schools in Champaign-Urbana are all intergrated. Unlike Chicago, African Americans in Champaign-Urbana grow up spending a great deal of time in integrated settings. Jessie, who moved to Champaign during high school, commented that the integrated schools in Champaign made it a very different cultural experience than Chicago. One result of this would be that in Chicago a Black person entering the workforce out of high school might have very little experience with integrated settings, whereas a Black person in Champaign-Urbana would have a long history of such experience.

The African American poverty rate in Champaign-Urbana was 24.5% in 1980, compared to 6.9% for the overall population, and the African American jobless rate was 9.8% compared to 4.0% for whites (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984). In 1989 the Black per-capita income in the Champaign-Urbana-Rantoul SMSA was $8,017, while the overall per capita income was $14,100.

The Job Market

The context and the backdrop for these men's workforce experiences was the job market of Champaign-Urbana. Both objective reports and subjective impressions suggest that Champaign-Urbana is a more limited and less lucrative job market than other Illinois towns of similar size. Citing 1980 Census data, a report published by the Champaign County Urban League (McClendon & Blackstone, 1984) says that in 1980 "Champaign County has the lowest wage structure in the State of Illinois" (p. 3). "The median family income for Champaign County is $21,303, one of the

lowest in the state. Only Kankakee and East St. Louis among the SMSA's [Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas] in the state had lower medians" (p. 11). The mayor of Champaign and the director of the JTPA note that central Illinois towns such as Bloomington, Peoria, and even Danville have far more heavy industry than Champaign-Urbana. Champaign-Urbana differs from these town in having the University of Illinois as a major employer, but the local job market, as reflected in the census income comparisons above, tends to pay less than most towns in Illinois. The problem is not that jobs are scarce in Champaign and Urbana. Unemployment statistics show that in 1990, when the national unemployment rate was 6.7%, and the Illinois unemployment rate was 6.2%, Champaign and Urbana had unemployment rates of 2.2% and 4.0% respectively. 2 to 4 percent unemployment is incredibly low, and indicates no scarcity of jobs. The combination of low unemployment and low family income suggests that Champaign and Urbana are home to an unusually large segment of the working poor.

Both the JTPA participants and the other informants described this as a frustrating job market for someone coming out of high school. The job opportunities in town, discussed in detail below, can be summarized quite briefly. There was some industry in town, but only a modest number of high-paying factory jobs, and they were hard to come by. There were also a number of strenuous low-paying factory jobs that were much easier to get. Several informants described Champaign-Urbana as having an unusually small number of manufacturing and industrial jobs for a town its size. There were jobs at the University of Illinois, with janitorial jobs and grounds jobs occasionally open to young males. The most accessible job opportunity in town, however, was minimum wage service jobs, primarily in fast-food. Because of the large student population in Champaign-Urbana, there were an unusually large number of restaurants and retail shops. This combination of factors created a job market in which the lowest tier was quite large, but better paying jobs were fewer and are

difficult to get. As participants descriptions illustrate, it was not difficult to get a job in Champaign-Urbana, but was difficult to get a good one. Taylor Thomas, in an essay included in the document by McClendon and Blackstone (1984), writes, "a number of local Black youth have overcome and found employment in their chosen field. It is regretable that over the years so many of these youths have found it necessary to leave the Twin-Cities in order to find employment" (p. 29).

Jobs Held and Considered

Fast food. Overwhelmingly, the most common job on their collective "resume" was fast food restaurants. All but one of the participants had worked in fast-food, and collectively they had held dozens of such jobs. One person had eight fast-food jobs in his history. Asked to list the places they had worked, a number of participants recited a litany of fast-food restaurants: "Uh, Taco Bell, Rally's, Grandees, Hardees, Burger King, and McDonalds-" Paul: "That's a pretty good collection." "-and Hot-N-Now." Most participants expressed an explicit dislike for fast-food jobs. When asked where their friends were working, participants overwhelmingly mentioned fast food, often with a note of resigned irritation. James observed, "they got fast food all over the place. You can't live on no fast food." Participants agreed that fast food jobs are easy to get. As Dwight put it,

D: McDonald's, fast food, and stuff like that, anybody can get that. He can walk in there (pointing to a four-year-old asleep on the floor) if he was tall enough, he could get a job. McDonalds and fast food will hire anybody, because they get people in there that quit, because it's not, not a good- They hire and fire people constantly.

Marcus commented on the low opinion people have of fast food jobs: "One thing about fast food jobs is that they're not jobs that anyone respects too much. Everyone thinks a fast food job is the bottom rung of the ladder, if you don't have nothing else." Marcus raised the issue of respect, saying that the jobs are not respected. He implied that perhaps people who hold those jobs are not respected either. Jessie amplified that point, talking about how he felt when friends came into a fast-

food restaurant where he was working:

J: I worked at [restaurant]. Man, uh-uh. I couldn't do that man. I stayed for a good week. A good week. The people that I know that seen me coming up in there, they weren't trying to make fun of me. I just felt funny, man. No, I just felt funny about it. It just didn't seem right. I don't know. I just didn't go back.

Jessie talked about disliking the way it felt to be seen working in fast-food, disliking it so much that he simply quit. Similarly Talbot said, "It don't make you feel- You don't feel proud. Like when I started here" (a grounds keeping job) "I felt better about myself."

In a follow-up interview in 1994 Alex strongly endorsed the idea of friends not respecting fast food work, and of being hassled for it:

A: I know the feeling. It be like, you are not expecting your friends or your partners or your boys to come up in there and see you there. They see you back there in the uniform working. They are like, "ha, you working! You working a minimum wage job! Need some of this?" They pull out a stash of money, and you are thinking they probably got that stash of money in two days time. It takes you two weeks time to get up to what he got.

The issues of respect and pride seem as central in these men's descriptions as the issue of low pay. Jessie strongly implied being ashamed in front of his friends, so ashamed that he quit. Unlike some other menial jobs, most fast food jobs are quite public. Friends and acquaintances would probably never you doing janitorial work, but may see you selling hamburgers. Respect and disrespect appear repeatedly as themes in this study, and are considered below both in the discussion of illegal activities, and in the discussion of peer pressure about school effort and other activities.

In 1994 follow up interviews, Dwight and Charles noted that while respect is important, the main reason people dislike fast food jobs is because of the low pay. That may be accurate, but the lack of pay and the lack of respect are likely to be related. James, who said "you can't live on no fast food" had a girlfriend and two children, and was considering marriage. He was working in fast food at the time of his last interview, so his comment suggests that he could not adequately support his

family. His girlfriend received welfare which would be cut if they got married, and it appears that his ability to earn a decent income was very important to their plans. He is unlikely to be able to succeed in the role of provider for his family while working at a fast food restaurant, and failure in that role has profound implications for self-respect, and the respect of others.

In addition to low pay and little respect, fast-food jobs were described as being unpleasant hard work. Derrick talked of working the grill and finding it unpleasantly hot and fast-paced. The floor by the grill was slippery with grease, and he once fell and hit his head. Ray touched on the difficulty of the work, and on several other issues, including race:

R: Some people feel it real strongly. Some people feel like, "well, I don't want to work for the White man, you know, I simply prefer not to do it." They don't want to go through all the hassles of going through the fast food. For one thing you do more work than you're paid for. You know what I'm saying? If you want to get down technical, maybe that should be one of the higher paying jobs, for the work you do for so little pay. It's like you are going to clean the castle and you get some crumbs for food. And you go to other places where you don't do nearly as much work, and you get paid big dollars, big dollars. [fast food is] always fast paced. And you don't get paid nothing. . . . They're always hiring, but the reason they're always hiring is because people are always quitting!

The context of Ray's comment was a discussion of why a person might choose to deal drugs rather than work for minimum wage. It is noteworthy that Ray saw fast food work not merely as too much work for too little pay, but as working for the White man, implying racial exploitation. White fast food workers might conclude that they are getting a mediocre deal, but it would not hold the same meaning for them. It is not clear whether other men in the study saw this work similarly, in terms of an unfair system in which Blacks get some of the less rewarding roles. These issues will be taken up again in the section on racial issues.

At times fast food jobs were mentioned when men were asked about jobs that they had liked. Alex, Derrick, and Dwight each talked of fast food jobs in which there was a pleasant camaraderie among the employees, so that the job was enjoyable and time went by quickly. As Derrick put it,

"what makes a job good is the other people." He spoke quite highly of the people at his current fast food job, saying, "it's like one big family there." These were the exceptions, however, and fast food jobs were far more likely to be viewed negatively. Asked if there was any kind of job they wanted to avoid, the nominations were pretty consistent: "Fast-food." "No restaurants." The picture painted was of fast food being a job opportunity that is always available, one which most of the men have worked for periods of time, but one which was typically disliked, avoided, and not respected. Dwight summed up the general sentiment when he said, "I mean, who wants to spend the rest of their lives at Burger King, slopping burgers?"

Factory work. The other type of job often discussed was factory work. Some of the men, such as James, Jessie, and Derrick, specifically aspired to factory work. Others, such as Marcus and Alex would happily work at a high-paying factory job if it were available, but those jobs were rare. Surprisingly, the entry level pay at local factories varied so much that some factory jobs were the most sought-after jobs in town, while others were constantly hiring and could not keep their workers. The high-paying, hard-to-get factory jobs were exemplified by the Kraft food factory, the largest manufacturer in Champaign-Urbana. None of the men in the study had been able to get on full-time at Kraft, although several had tried.

The factories where men in the study had worked all paid $5 and hour or less to start. They included Plastipak, Solo Cup, Collegiate Cap and Gown, J. M. Jones, and McKechnie. Part of the reason for the low starting pay was that at most of these factories the workers did not begin as employees of the factory; they began as employees of a "temp" agency. In what appears to be an increasingly common arrangement, many of the factories in Champaign and Urbana did not hire their own workers directly, but relied entirely on "temp" agencies to locate and hire their permanent workers.

This pattern was described by a number of men in the study and was confirmed in an interview with the president of a local temp agency. The agency advertised, screened, and hired workers, typically at about $5 an hour. The agency had exclusive contracts to hire workers for several factories in town. The employees worked for the agency, not for the factory. They received no health benefits, although they did begin accruing vacation after a number of weeks had passed. They were basically sent to factories on a trial basis. Since they were not permanent employees, they were much easier to fire than if the factory hired them directly, and the factory did not have to perform the typical personnel functions of hiring and screening.

The contract between agency and factory allowed the factory to hire workers permanently if they were performing well. However, the contract stipulated that the factory could not hire a worker for at least 13 weeks, because the temp agency made profit only during the time that the workers worked for the agency and not the factory. It was typical for even a successful worker to work for the temp agency for 6 months to a year before being hired on. When one became a regular employee one typically got a raise in pay from $5 to perhaps $8 and hour, and benefits such as health insurance.

5 of the 12 men in the study (James, Dwight, Charles, Alex, and Derrick) had "temped" at factories; none had lasted long enough to get hired on as a regular employee. Four of the five quit within days. Dwight and Alex said they were physically unable to continue doing the work, due to back problems and such. Derrick could not stay awake for the night shift, and would not take caffeine because he had an extremely cautious attitude about drugs. Charles got angry at the performance demands of the supervisor. Finally, James lasted over six months and was actually made a supervisor even though he was still "temping." He hoped to get hired on as a regular employee, but was eventually fired for calling in sick to take his daughter to an appointment.

JTPA personnel spoke with some irritation about the extended periods of "temping" that many men do while trying to get hired at local factories. One expressed the opinion that this method of hiring benefits everyone but the employees, who are simply forced to endure long trial periods at low wages, with no job security during that time. A JTPA worker also expressed the opinion that the turnover would be much lower if pay were higher. He backed up his argument with a description of how turnover had dropped among local nurses' aides during a recent period when the prevailing wage went up.

It is not clear how many of the JTPA participants would have kept their factory jobs longer if wages were higher. None cited wages as the reason the jobs ended, but in their descriptions of the hard work, long hours, and personality conflicts, several did give the impression that the benefits of the job did not match the disadvantages. The high turnover of the JTPA participants in these factory jobs suggest that it could indeed be quite difficult for a personnel director to keep the jobs filled.

Even though none of them personally got on as regular factory employees, most of the men believed there was a genuine opportunity to do that. Alex, James and Marcus had friends and relatives who became permanent employees after temping, and Charles and Derrick, though frustrated at the temping arrangement, believed that temp workers who did well were eventually hired. It seems likely that the work environment would foster this perception, because coworkers would be those temporary employees who eventually got hired, and those who were unsuccessful would not be present.

Other men in the sample based their positive impression of factory work on older people they knew who had worked at lucrative factory jobs. Marcus and Alex were the only two who describe friends their own age working at lucrative jobs, such as those paying $14 to $18 an hour at factories

like Kraft. James, Derrick, Jessie, Ray, John, and Dwight spoke of older friends, closer to their parents age, who worked in factories for good pay. Charles, Bryant, Simon, and Talbot did not mention knowing factory workers, but Charles in particular still spoke of factory work as a genuine opportunity. Indeed, factory work was seen as one of very few high-paying job opportunities for people with a high school education. Marcus and Alex even considered moving to another town with more manufacturing opportunities. They mentioned Caterpillar and Diamond Star respectively as places they had considered applying for work.

On the other hand, the men in the study with realistic college aspirations all clearly planned to avoid factory work in the long run. Simon and John both planned to avoid factory work entirely, and Ray, although he was working in a factory in 1993, spoke of it being simply a source of money for school.

The perceived drawbacks of factory work were the difficulty and the boredom. Alex spoke of a number of friends who worked in factories, and liked the pay, but complained of the boredom. With a dramatic flair he enacted the process of people going from appreciation of a high wage to tedium and discouragement.

A: Most like it. Others are, like, ready for a different job because they're tired of the same old stuff, same old stuff. They get a little played out, get bored. At first when you work there you're like, "yeah, I'm making <u>all this money</u>!" After you've been there, you're like (in a tired, draggy voice), "I'm making . . . all . . . this . . . money. This job boring. You have anything else to offer?"

Alex and others believed there were opportunities to advance once you had worked at a factory for a while. James actually held one of the lower supervisory roles for a time. Alex's comments suggest that he may have underestimated the difficulty of supervising, but he clearly believed the opportunity was open to him:

A: There's a shift leader like job, you hire this employee, you've worked there a year or two and

> you go through an evaluation, you know, take an evaluation and everything. You become a supervisor, a supervisor's assistant, or a line leader. You know, you can just get close up to manager. Just walk around, and be, like, just a manager (laughs).

He went on to describe the benefits of learning how to work on other production lines, becoming versatile and knowledgeable, so that one would be able to substitute for other workers as needed. He described the idea that the way to advance was to make yourself valuable to the company.

The men described factory work as being more desirable than fast food even for those factory jobs that did not pay much better. In part this was probably because they expected the job to begin to pay better if they were there long enough. Several complained of the hours, one saying that 8 hours was a long time to stand at a manufacturing line, and three others mentioning a local company which had gone to 12 hour shifts and three day work weeks. In spite of the opportunity for a four day weekend, or overtime on off days, all who mentioned it prefered an eight hour day. The two men who had tried the twelve hour day found it extremely long.

Unlike the fast food descriptions, no one spoke of a sense of shame, or lack of respect associated with factory work. Although difficult and boring, it is seen as potentially paying well and offering opportunities to advance. Again, however, it must be stressed that the pay varies dramatically. Ray spoke of his new factory job paying considerably less than he had made at his seasonal job all summer.

As an overall summary, factory work was one of the common aspirations of those men who did not plan to pursue college. Factory work was respected, unlike fast food work, but the factory jobs which the men wanted were the lucrative ones which were very hard to get. Most of the men who had actually worked in factories worked in the low-paying factory jobs, often through temp agencies. Many of them quit indicating they did not like the jobs once they had them. Two others were fired from factories, and fired due to lateness and misuse of sick leave, not through inadequate

performance on the job. Factory works apparently looks better from a distance, but again it appears that the factory jobs the men wanted were not the ones they were actually able to get.

Other local jobs. In addition to fast food, factory jobs, and JTPA jobs, participants had worked an assortment of other jobs, with few clear patterns. A few participants had worked in other restaurants, such as family restaurants or steak houses, but it was typically bussing or dish washing, and never included waiting tables or receiving tips. Discussing patterns of restaurant work with a JTPA executive, we noted what appeared to be a strong racial pattern in this regard. Neither of us could ever remember being served by a Black waiter or waitress in local restaurants. This was true of both upscale restaurants and cheap diners. It seemed that Blacks work at such places in the kitchen or bussing tables, but not waiting on customers.

Four participants had worked in retail settings, typically grocery stores, and had usually liked it. Here too there appeared to be a pattern in the sample. Given the large number of small retail stores in the local area, it is notable that none of the men in the sample had ever worked as a salesperson dealing directly with customers. Stocking shelves appeared far more common.

One man worked in the mail room and elsewhere in a small family business. Two did outdoor seasonal work for city governments. One had a job associated with a sports team, although not as a player. Two had paper routes when they were younger. At least two detassled corn. One worked at a car wash. One worked at a youth center, doing activities with kids after school.

Like the fast food jobs, most of these assorted other jobs were seen as short-term jobs to make money, and were not viewed as career opportunities. Given that these men were 18 to 21 years old, it is not necessarily a problem if some of the jobs they held were temporary, stepping-stone positions. Paper routes and detassling corn are often first jobs for youth in their early to mid teens. However, most of these men were finished with their schooling and training at the time of the

interviews, and they were trying to locate jobs for their adult career. All of the men who did not have college aspirations (8 of the 12) fit this description. They were looking for jobs which either paid adequately at the entry level, or which had some kind of an advancement ladder, and only one was working at a job he found satisfactory. Two others held satisfactory jobs, but eventually lost them. Alex wanted to keep his grocery store job, but was fired for missing work. James wanted to keep his factory job, but was fired for calling in sick when he was not. Marcus was the only one working at a job that satisfied him at the time. In 1993 was working a janitorial job with the university, that he liked and planned to stick with for a time. He liked it primarily because it paid well and offered good benefits.

The men who were college students seemed content with their employment because they expected college to propel them into better positions. The other men, however, often seemed frustrated. Some had been out of high school three or four years, and had worked at half a dozen jobs or more without any sign of progress. Of the non-college-bound men, none had been able to both keep a job and advance within it in the years since they left high school.

Military service. For many years the military was seen as a job opportunity to consider when local opportunities were limited. This was particularly true for Blacks, because after Eisenhower forcefully imposed non-discrimination policies in the 1950's, the military was seen as a place where Blacks were offered relatively equal opportunity (Lemann, 1991). Many of the men in the sample considered military service, and at least 8 of the 12 went as far as talking to a recruiter.

At least six of the men actively wanted to be in the service at some point, but most of them failed to meet the requirements. It is important to understand how they failed to clear this hurdle, because the military had long been considered an important opportunity for lower-income men with a high school education. It has been seen as a way to learn skills, to get to college, or to simply

"straighten out" for guys who were not completely disciplined or responsible. Initially the men in this study told such contradictory stories about the military entrance requirements that I had to talk with a couple of recruiters before I understood what had happened to the men.

Alex and Marcus were both told they could join the military as high school drop outs, and they would be sent to school to earn a GED straight after basic training. Charles tried to enlist with a high school diploma. He was told that his aptitude test scores in math were too low, and that he would have to raise them to get in. Dwight was told that he did not have enough high school credits on his diploma, and he would need a GED. A year or two later, after getting a GED, he was told that was insufficient, and he would need some college credits before he would be accepted. He was irritated and perplexed by this.

I called an air force and a navy recruiter to help make sense of these stories, and to understand exactly what opportunities were available. Their explanations were quite surprising. According to both of them, entrance standards rose dramatically during the last few years. They verified that there was a time in the late 1980's when a high school drop out could have joined the military and earned a GED. (Marcus was told that about 4 years before our interview, while he was still in high school.) However, since the downsizing of the military began in the late 1980's entrance standards have risen sharply. In 1993 the recruitors reported that one could no longer join the military to earn a GED, and that they were accepting less than 1% of applicants who already have GED's. By 1993 applicants with GED's were typically told to take 15 credits of college courses, and re-apply. Applicants with high school diplomas were subjected to rigorous academic and physical testing, and "only about 1 applicant out of 8 gets in. For minorities it is even lower." Standards had risen so much that by 1993 the military was open primarily to above-average high school graduates, and the recruitors did not expect those standards to be lowered again.

The message of this is clear: The military is no longer a second chance for those who failed to excel in high school. As an opportunity for low-income people, unless they have outstanding abilities, the military is no longer a road into the middle class. One of the recruiters noted that the military was never intended to be a social program for low-income people, but in fact, until very recently it has been an open opportunity for low income people with average abilities. It is not that any longer.

A surprising thing about this discovery was that several of the men in the study clearly thought of the military as something they could still turn to if they so chose. Future cohorts may never develop the idea that the military is an open opportunity, but some of the men in this sample appeared to be unaware that the opportunity they passed up was now closed to them. One high school drop out in the sample said confidently, "I could join up right now," describing the old GED program. Another, with a diploma and a below-average school record, was "still considering it." "I'll still probably go to, um, the navy, so they can pay for college." Their prospects were bleaker than they realized.

Separate from the issue of enlistment requirements, the men in the study had a wide variety of reactions to the idea of military service. (See Table 14.) Bryant, Charles, Dwight, and Marcus saw it as a good opportunity. Other men had ambivalent or negative reactions. Alex and Ray were firmly against it. Derrick and James saw it conflicting too much with family life. John actually served in the marines briefly, but did not want to enlist again.

Alex was emphatic that he did not want to be in the army. He mentioned difficult experiences that his fiance had in the army, but his main objection, which surfaced at other times as well, is that he hated being told what to do.

A: They talk about "be all you can be." You can't be that much in the army. . . . I wouldn't mind

> it, but it's just like, I don't want no every day thing for a whole four years doing it your way. I do want some say-so about it, or some suggestions about it, or something. I don't want to be waking up (imitates reveille) da dut da da dut, da dut da da dut. You know?

Ray did not seem put off by the discipline and structure, but absolutely refused to risk getting killed. Friends of his fought in the gulf war, and he believed that conflict would flare up again.

> R: Nope. Cause I wouldn't die for no country. I just wouldn't do it. I wouldn't die for this country. I wouldn't even die for Africa. I wasn't put here for that.

Derrick was attracted to the military as a job opportunity, but was well aware that he would be signing his family up for a military life as well as himself.

> D: I thought about it. My wife don't want me in there because she don't like the army period. She hates guns and stuff. . . . I just put it up to her whether she wants me in the service, whether she wants me to go in the service and make something of myself. . . . I don't want to make her do something she doesn't want to do. I don't want to drag her all over the country anyway.

John was the only one in the study who had actually served in the military. He was in the marines for a couple of months, but was given a medical discharge after becoming ill. He could have re-enlisted after his recovery, but decided not to. In part he was persuaded by his brother in the army, who had always been against his joining the service. Also, as an illustration of the changed entrance standards described above, John was successful enough in high school to have no trouble getting into college. Being qualified for the marines means that he was also qualified for many other opportunities. He decided to go to college rather than re-enlist.

Patterns of Employment

When planning the study it seemed possible that some of the men might have worked very few jobs. Given that the JTPA aims to prepare people for workforce participation, it seemed possible that for some of the men the JTPA might be their only experience in the workforce. This was not the case, and all of the men in the study had worked at a number of jobs besides the JTPA. Some

had held nearly a dozen jobs, and everyone in the study had worked at least three. (See table 15). The numbers of jobs worked are large enough that one can find patterns within and across the men in how they had participated in the workforce.

Changing jobs seldom versus often. There were notable differences among the men in how long they typically held jobs. Most men had at least some jobs which they held for a very short time, so the more notable pattern was in whether the men had ever held a job for a long time. As an arbitrary indicator of longevity in a job, the men will be separated into those who had held a single job for at least one year, and those who had not. The men who had held a single job for one year were Derrick, John, Ray, Talbot, and Simon. Those who had not were Alex, Bryant, Charles, Dwight, James, Jessie, and Marcus. James may actually belong in the longer job category, because he had worked one job for eight months, another for six, and another for five, a record which set him apart from others in the short-employment group.

What is the best way to understand the pattern of changing jobs quite frequently? To begin with, it may be helpful to know whether the men took jobs intending to keep them only a short time, or if the short jobs were intended to be longer jobs, but went awry. A couple of the men did mention times when they held a job planning to quit after one or two paychecks. The jobs were easy to come by, and were intended only to get them out of an immediate financial pinch. However, it was far more common for the men to talk about jobs that they would have kept longer if something had not gone wrong. In these cases it becomes important to understand how and why jobs ended.

Before examining how jobs ended, there are patterns of job longevity in the group that deserve mention. Comparing job longevity to demographic variables reveals a couple of strong patterns. First, all five of the men who grew up in public housing had failed to hold jobs for long periods. Five of the seven men who grew up in private housing had held jobs for over a year. James, with

his three jobs of moderate duration was also among the private housing group. This may be an artifact, given the small sample size, but in this sample it is a striking pattern.

There also appears to be a relationship between completing high school and job longevity. All five of the men who held jobs over a year completed a regular high school degree. Of the seven who had not held jobs for long periods, three did not have a high school degree, and two had degrees from special high schools where they went after getting into trouble. The jobs which men held for over a year were predominantly not post-high school, career-type jobs. They include a paper route, a job bussing tables, a fast food job, a job working with kids after school, and a seasonal grounds-keeping job which did not go continuously for one year, but the person worked there four consecutive seasons. Only Talbot's longer job was a full time, post-high school job. This is important, because it does not appear that the men who held longer jobs did so by entering the job market more successfully with higher credentials at the end of school. Most were holding the types of jobs which are often short-term, but simply held them longer.

Since there were patterns of public housing, and of lower education that went with holding jobs for briefer periods, it makes sense to hypothesize about what patterns could account for the shorter duration of jobs. Shorter jobs could be due to qualities in the worker, such as persistence, or ability to conform behavior to a certain environment. Framed this way, it would make sense that people who had trouble staying in school would also have trouble staying on the job. It seems likely that personal qualities such as this account for at least some of this effect. However, there could also be qualities of the person-environment fit that could be problematic. If employers value more middle-class speech or behavior, they might not try as hard to retain employees whose backgrounds do not fit the image they are trying to project. They might be less likely to promote, praise, or encourage employees from a lower-class African American background if they would rather have

middle class employees working with their customers. Finally, the association between finishing regular high school and job longevity could mean that skills are an issue. Those who did not complete school might have more difficulty meeting the task demands of the job.

A third demographic factor, being raised by a single parent, was examined, but it did not seem strongly related to job longevity.

How jobs ended. If many jobs end after a brief period, it is worth understanding how they end. There are several typical ways for a job to end. One can be fired for poor performance. One can quit. And one can be laid off (fired when no longer needed in spite of adequate performance). Quitting can also take a number of forms. Although this is not a precise distinction, quitting can sometimes be rather sudden and impulsive, and at other times can be part of a calm and reasoned plan, such as quitting to take a better job.

The men in the study were not always eager to tell me that they had been fired, and impulsive quitting was sometimes hard to distinguish from carefully planned quitting. Even so, it seemed useful to try to tabulate which men had been fired at some point, which had quit in anger, and which had not done either in their job history (Table 16).

For some men in the study, jobs were always ending amid bad feelings, often suddenly, and with no plan for what will come next. For others that situation almost never arose. They kept a job until it had served its purpose, and quit in a way that furthered their own goals. JTPA staff mentioned explicitly that they saw part of their job as teaching "job keeping skills," and some individuals did appear better at that than others.

Getting fired is clearly the most problematic way for a job to end. Six of the twelve men in the study had been fired, and at least three had been fired more than once. This implies that half the men had never been fired, so difficulty keeping a job was far from a universal problem. But it is a

problem worth considering. Since all of these men were working at fairly low-skill jobs, one may assume that getting fired was typically related to other issues, and not to lack of ability. Problems might include reliability problems or to personality clashes. JTPA staff talked of the possibility that some men were not used to environments that hold them accountable, and that the workplace may surprise them by being less forgiving than home or school. Traces of this can be found in some of the responses of men in the study, who were clearly irritated and indignant at being fired for lateness.

At a fast food job, Alex claimed that he was late only once, during a thunderstorm, but also revealed that he had been slightly late other times.

A: I mean, the other times, I don't really be late. It'd be, like, I'd say about 30 seconds late. You don't call that late. You just, boom! Made it there in 30 seconds later than what you normally make it there.

The restaurant considered him late and fired him. Jessie spoke similarly of his supervisor at another restaurant:

J: There was this lady I didn't like and she was just acting funny. And she, like, catches an attitude with people when they come in late. "You have to come in some time early because we need people here." You know, I stay all the way out on [street name] and I don't have no car, and I have to catch a bus. And I don't be no more than five or fif-- five or ten minutes late.

Charles described a similar situation, getting fired from a factory where he worked, not having a car, and having supervisors who were unsympathetic about the problems of getting across town to arrive on time in bad weather. His description (and those above) make it clear that these men thought their lateness was not extreme, was justified by circumstances, and that their employers should have been more tolerant. JTPA staff described trying to impress on their participants that employers would fire them for this, but it appears to be a lesson that takes some learning.

In a similar vein, Alex was fired from a retail job he really liked because he missed work for

apparently legitimate medical reasons, but did not bother to get the required doctors' notes. Apparently one of the times he went to the doctor, and the other time he took his sick child. Both of these fell within store policy as excused absences, and he was surprised and angry at being fired simply for not getting proper documentation. James was fired from a factory job he really liked for calling in sick to take his daughter to an appointment. He regreted this incredibly, because not only had he wanted to keep that factory job, but he was working for a temp agency that hired for many of the factories in town. They refused to give him another chance, dropping him out of the running for several local factories where he wanted to work.

The common theme in these firings is that the men were not expecting to be held to such a high standard, even after being told what the standard was. Presumably losing a couple of jobs could teach them this quite effectively, but there may be other factors operating as well. Alex was a man who spoke of resenting being told what to do, and he had lost more than one job by failing to follow these kinds of rules, and by getting irritated when supervisors gave him orders.

A: I was working at [fast food restaurant]. Things didn't go well with the manager up there. He tried to demand me to do something. I told him he could ask me better than that. He goes right on talking about "next time I tell you to do something, you better do it." My mom doesn't even tell me what to do. I'm a grown man. He should have asked me. He was telling me this, and I better do that. He was getting mad and this and that. I was about to throw him somewhere. . . . This guy must have thought I was a little wimp. I was standing there over him looking down in his face. "You don't know me do you? I suggest you not talk to me that way. You'll find yourself right here in this sink, you little midget you."

In the 1994 follow-up interview with Alex I explored his perceptions of his pattern of losing jobs over getting angry at being told what to do. He agreed that was a problem for him, and elaborated on it for some time, relating it to growing up in public housing, and to the street toughness expected there. He talked about having grown used to a standard in which you never back down when challenged, and you confront anyone who does not treat you with respect. He even

agreed that Black men from other neighborhoods would be more likely to keep jobs if they were less inclined to confront demanding supervisors.

A: Mainly what I think it is, they [other Black men] was probably not raised up around in this neighborhood. That is probably why most of them keep jobs. I'm going to tell you, if you are a Black guy being raised up in this society-. If you live on this bad end where I live at, you know you are not going to take no bullcrap from nobody. And if you live out by Centennial or out that way, you will take a lot of B.S. from a lot of people. Because you are not used to this life. We are going to call this the bad life, and call this the good life. Some people out of this so-called good life comes over here into the bad life, and they cannot adapt to it. At work, this group is like, "please, can I keep this job?" It's good that they can try and talk it out, but you still got some stubborn people over here [from his neighborhood] that are like, "forget talking."

He thought the same kind of factors were operating when people were looking for jobs. "They way he [from the other neighborhood] talk, they are going to be looking like, 'when can you come in for an interview?' It's just the way you talk to people. With people from up on this side, they'll be like, 'we'll give you a call.' But they won't."

Alex described himself as being somewhere in the middle of these two styles, able to make a good impression when he needs to, but getting irritated when he feels he's being treated with too little respect. He agreed that he had lost several jobs over these sorts of issues.

Derrick also spoke of a losing job over what seemed like a clash between a "street" confrontation style, and a typical workplace style. He described a series of power struggles with a manager over such things as whether his hair was long enough to require a hair net. The manager fired him for lateness when he had been taking his son to the hospital, in spite of the fact that he arrived with a doctor's note and his son's blood still on his clothes. He refused to leave, physically threatened the manager, and was eventually removed by the police. He called the restaurant owner, who immediately said he could have his job back, but the owner later changed his mind when he found out about the physical threats. It was clear that Derrick could have kept the job if he had

handled the conflict differently. In the "street" approach to conflict, which will be discussed further below, one stops getting hassled only by strong confrontation. Being diplomatic and conciliatory only invites further harassment. This does not bode well for resolving workplace conflicts.

In this discussion of firings, the emphasis has been on the ways that the men lose jobs by not meeting reliability expectations, and the ways that men sometimes clash with employers over issues of respect. There is another side to this issue, expressed by a couple of the men. They pointed out rather persuasively that they felt quite expendable and easily replaced in most of the jobs they had held. In fast food work, new employees could be trained to replace them in a few short hours, and they believed that employers make little effort to retain employees. They felt that employees are fired at slight provocation, and that even good job performance was not particularly valued.

A fast food restaurant manager interviewed for this project agreed that firings are common, and that rules are fairly rigid. She also acknowledged that new workers are quickly trained, but indicated that they would rather keep old workers than train new ones. She defended the rigid rules as being the only way to ensure that management did not play favorites, and that employees know the consequences of their actions ahead of time. Lateness, for example, would typically lead to warnings after the first two incidents, and being fired after the third.

The other unsatisfactory way for a job to end is through the employee suddenly quitting. However, it is harder to judge this as a negative outcome because if the employee genuinely does not want to work there any more, one is second-guessing his judgement to suggest that he should. Even so, quitting can be seen as evidence of a workplace problem that could have been resolved, and quitting abruptly can be an impulsive act, not necessarily in the best interests of the person chosing to do so.

People quit jobs for a number of reasons. One of the more interesting reasons, which was far

from uncommon, was quitting because after feeling unfairly treated. Dwight, Charles, James, Talbot, and Bryant all described feeling unfairly treated on the job. Derrick argued over such an incident, and was fired. Of particular interest were those times when people suspected they were being unfairly treated because of their race. This theme will be developed further in a later section, but it is worth noting that James, Dwight, and Talbot each quit after experiencing what seemed to be racial bias at work. The incidents with Derrick and Bryant both involved times where they perceived the supervisor had singled them out to test them or hassle them, but they were not sure whether it was racially motivated.

Another source of quitting is someone deciding a job is not what they expected and not what they want. This fits the pattern of many of the men who tried factory work and quit after a few days. There is no basic problem if this happens occasionally in the job history of someone who is usually employed. But it is evidence of some sort of problem if it occurs in the job history of someone who is often unemployed or underemployed. The nature of the problem depends on one's appraisal of the jobs that such a person turns down. One could decide that the jobs are adequate, and that the solution is for the person to make the best of them and continue to work. Or one could decide that the jobs are unsatisfactory enough that it is reasonable to refuse to work at them. The solution now becomes more difficult, because it does little good to assert that better jobs should exist when in fact they do not. This quandry arises repeatedly in this study: How does one evaluate the refusal to work at menial jobs?

Being fired and quitting in anger have a very disruptive effect on one's working life. Some of the men who were able to hold jobs for longer periods of time also reported being able to get better jobs after that. Presumably one would be able to offer good references to a new employer, and would be able to show on applications a pattern of holding jobs for extended periods of time.

The basic problem with jobs ending badly is that it suggests that the person involved is no longer really guiding the course of his career. Getting fired, even from a job one does not value, means that a person is no longer making the active decisions about what happens next in his career. He is acted on by the decisions of others, and is giving up his chance to make the job go as he prefers. It may be too large an inference to decide that those who get fired have a more external locus of control than those who do not, but the implications are similar. Getting fired means being acted upon by someone else's decisions. Avoiding that means retaining control of the situation, so that jobs end by one's own deliberate choices. These ideas will be explored in more detail in the discussion section.

Quitting in anger, although a conscious choice of the individual, also may involve losing some control over events affecting one's life. In many relationships, such as family and school, anger or interpersonal conflict may cause a short-term disruption, but it usually does not end the entire relationship. At school one may even be suspended, but it takes extreme circumstances to get expelled. On the job, however, having a temper can have very severe consequences. It is rare to quit angrily, and then get the job back. It is extremely rare to get the job back after getting fired for an angry interchange with an employer. If some of the men in this study are unable to contain their anger in business situations it is likely to have very negative consequences for their working careers.

It seems important to understand the patterns of people being fired and quitting, because this is an area where intervention might lead to people keeping jobs rather than leaving them. The JTPA already works hard to encourage responsibility, punctuality, and the like. The men's stories indicate that additional factors may be at work, which may or may not be amenable to intervention. If pride and status are fiercely defended, in ways such as refusing to be told what to do, will proud men be open to the suggestion that accept orders or become more defferential? If tempers flare easily,

resulting in being fired or quitting in anger, might it be possible for men to learn skills of resolving conflict or managing anger? These skills might be helpful for times when the men want to use them. The problem is the times when such solutions run into issues of pride, and issues of race. Alex was quite clear that becoming more subservient towards authority was exactly what he did not want to do. He was convinced that others from his neighborhood would have similar trouble making that adjustment.

Aspirations

As discussed earlier in this paper, aspirations have been studied quite extensively in elaborate longitudinal research. This study cannot begin to address many of the questions explored there, such as why Black high school students often fall further short of their aspirations than White students. However, a number of interesting patterns emerge from these interviews which may shed some light on the relationship between aspirations and efforts to attain goals.

Early in this study it became clear that aspirations vary widely from one person to another. The most interesting part of this variation was not the differences in the goals that people held, but in the very different ways that they formulated and invested themselves in their goals. Two aspects of aspirations left unmeasured in most quantitative research on the subject are the possibility that people vary widely in how certain they are of their goals, and how realistically they have formulated those goals. The discussion below will focus on these two elements of aspirations, as these are areas where the current study may be able to offer new insights. The basic occupational aspirations held by the men in the study are shown in Table 17.

Certainty about aspirations. It is clear that many of the men in the study were not all that certain of what they planned to do. Given their young ages this may not be a problem. Some of the most successful men in this sample were uncertain about what they wanted to do with their career

(Table 18). Marcus, Ray, and Talbot are good examples. All three were working at pretty good jobs at the time they were interviewed. All three saw their current job as a good opportunity for the time being, but nothing permanent. All three had been doing a good job of gaining skills, training, and references, even though they were not certain where all of that would lead. Marcus described his goals this way:

M: That's a real good question. Five years from today. (pause) I can't say I know what I want to do five years from today.
P: If every place in town was hiring, where would you want to work?
M: Um, probably the one that paid the most money.

Marcus was content with his well-paid janitorial job. Ray was thinking of changing college majors away from the liberal arts toward something that might lead more directly to a job, but he was not sure what. His factory job was a fine way to pay for college. Talbot was considering going back to school, or trying to start a construction company, but thought his landscaping work was perfectly good experience to "fall back on." Derrick did not have a specific profession in mind, but was considering several of the more lucrative blue-collar trades. Construction or factory work were the leading contenders.

There were other men with goals they were sure of, and the goals were realistic. James wanted to work in a factory, and was is a hard worker who succeeded well at his previous factory job. Jessie also wanted to do factory work or janitorial work, and spoke of applying at a local factory which was often hiring. John wanted to work in computers, and was studying computers at junior college. Simon wanted to be a lawyer, and was currently doing well at a four-year university. These men all had reasonable goals, and most of them were pursuing the goals quite appropriately.

Realism of aspirations. Two of the people who were the most certain of their goals also had goals that were quite unrealistic. Bryant was absolutely certain that he wanted to own his own

business. He was not sure what kind. At one point he said, "Just sell, like you know, like furniture or stuff like that, or um, vacuum cleaners or something." In a later interview he said he wanted "a store downtown." Asked what kind, he said, "I don't know. Just have your own office or something. Selling cars or something." (It was not entirely clear that Bryant should be classified as "certain" about his goals when he was so uncertain about the type of business, but he was very certain that he wanted to own one.) Bryant had great difficulty reading and writing, and he answered somewhat more realistically when asked if he would need any additional schooling to reach his goals. He said he would have to go back to school and "just start all over." Although he had no immediate plans to do that, he estimated his chances of owning his own business in five years as "about 50/50."

Charles, who could not make the junior high or high school basketball teams, spoke of "probably" playing professional basketball. He would go to junior college, and

> C: they have a little small basketball team. I'm going to try to get on that team and see, you know, how far I can get from there and if I get as far as they let me, then that's what I'll probably be doing for the rest of my life, or how long I can do that.

He would transfer from junior college to a university and then go pro. Charles also had the more realistic goal of becoming an auto mechanic, but he had not been pursuing it. He had never studied auto mechanics and was not making arrangements to begin such studies at the time he was last interviewed.

Like Charles, it was rather common for the men to have one goal that could be considered a long-shot dream, and another that was a more realistic possibility. Charles wanted to play pro basketball or be an auto mechanic. John and Dwight both wanted to play pro football, or work with computers. Derrick wanted to play pro football, or work in a factory or in construction. Ray wanted to be a professional musician, or go to college.

Among the men who dreamed of glamour occupations, there were enormous differences in

how realistic they were. As noted above, Charles's plans appeared to be quite unrealistic. Derrick, on the other hand, approached his dreams with a pretty clear appraisal. Derrick was a big guy who played football successfully in high school, and he realized that it was a long shot for him to think of playing professionally. He probably overestimated his chances when he said his chances were "1 out of 10," but it was also clear that his efforts were more focused on ordinary jobs in the local area. John too had played football successfully. "I'm hoping to go pro because, you know, football is something I've been doing since sixth grade." "I had a chance to get a football scholarship. I mean, I had scouts asking about me and writing me letters and things." Unfortunately he was injured his senior year, but playing college ball may still have been a reasonable goal for him. Furthermore, he seemed to know that playing professionally was not all that likely. His basic aspiration was, "I want to get out and have a job in the field that I'm studying."

Finally, there are times when uncertainty about aspirations simply reflects the fact that some men in the study were living rather precariously. One said, of what he hoped to do, "I don't know. I do not know. I can't even try to boast about anything. I do not know. The only thing I hope to be doing is still living five years from now."

Efforts to attain one's goals. It is clear that the aspirations of the men in the study ranged from clearly formulated plans to vague intentions to no plan at all. Past research has repeatedly shown that aspirations account for some of the variance in occupational and educational achievement (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Dawkins, 1989). On the other hand, these studies also show quite strongly that past achievement predicts future achievement. That side of things stands out clearly in the present study. More specifically, since their future success remains unknown, those men who had succeeded well previously tended to be the ones working hard on their goals at the time of the study. Several of the men who did not know what they wanted to do were working hard to prepare

themselves for a variety of future possibilities. Some men who claimed to know what they wanted to do, such as Charles and Bryant, were doing very little. Both of them had fairly unrealistic goals, and their actions belied their claims that they intended to attain them.

A good measure of effort towards goals is what the men were doing at the time of the study. At the time of the last 1993 interviews, Alex, Bryant, Charles, Dwight, and Jessie were neither employed nor in school, and their plans to do either one seemed less than certain. Derrick, James, Marcus, Ray, Simon, and Talbot were all working, and Simon and John were attending college. At the time of the follow-up interviews in 1994, Alex and Dwight were unemployed; Jessie was in prison; and Charles had recently been released from prison, although he was working in a restaurant. Simon was still in college, and Derrick had left Champaign to look for work elsewhere.

Some of the men who were working in 1994 had gone through periods of unemployment and non-productivity, so it is clear that those periods need not last forever. On the other hand, all five men who were unemployed at the time of the last interview 1993 had been unemployed a high percentage of the time since they left high school. This pattern, of being only an occasional and inconsistent member of the workforce, seems a likely indicator that one may have trouble with workforce success in the future. To the extent that success in the workforce depends on learning on-the-job, skills, on developing a work history that looks good on an application, or simply on gaining seniority within a given firm, lack of workforce participation leads to lack of career progress.

To summarize, it appears that certainty about aspirations were not strongly associated with how well the men were faring at the time of the interviews. Some were uncertain, but making strong educational or occupational progress, and some who were certain about goals were not getting any closer to them. Being realistic about goals seemed important, and those who were more successful also tended to be more realistic, but there is a certain aspect of the realism that merits further

discussion. Those who were least realistic, such as Bryant and Charles, seemed to simply be in denial about the extent of their own failure. The problem was not in having a dream which they might not reach, but that they appeared to have stopped facing the bleak reality of their situations. Their aspirations were just a story, unconnected to the realities of the world, or to their actions. Taking action, in the form of efforts towards some kind of future goal, seemed to be quite important.

Perception of the Role of Education

The degree to which men in the study valued education seemed related to their career aspirations. Men who planed a blue-collar career sew higher education as mostly irrelevant to their goals, unless they needed a specific form of technical training. Furthermore, at the blue collar level there was some debate over the usefulness of even finishing high school. Several people agreed that a regular high school diploma was more respected than a GED, and all agreed that a GED was better than nothing. Bryant thought that doors were probably closed to him that would have been open if he had a high school degree. He mentioned "office jobs. Like be a secretary. My auntie, she got her GED and now she is a secretary at [large company]." Surprisingly Bryant did not think going to college would open many doors. "It don't make a difference, as long as you have your high school diploma." He later allowed that college might be useful "if you are going to be a basketball player, or a football player." Derrick also believed a high school degree had great value. "It matters. It matters a lot." He believed his sister "could probably have a better job" if she had not dropped out. "I told her to stay in school. I tried to talk some sense into her, but she didn't want to listen." Derrick also stressed the idea that staying in school probably meant not doing other things which might mess up one's future. The diploma was of some value, but it was at least as important to be in school instead of on the street, selling drugs, or having children, as his sister had done. Marcus too believed that a diploma or a GED could open additional doors for him.

Dwight was not sure whether a high school degree opened up employment opportunities. He believed a bachelor's degree would allow him to get a good job with computers, and like other men with college aspirations he viewed a high school degree as an essential step along the way to his goals. Simon, Ray, and John shared this view. Dwight's perspective was unique, though, in that he stressed the emotional side of having a diploma, the pride of having one versus the shame of not having one. A friend of his who had gone back for a diploma was pointing out that he still was not getting any jobs, and Dwight responded, "but, knowing that you have a high school diploma, knowing it, you don't go walking around with that small feeling, like, 'Oh I ain't no good no how. I dropped out of high school."

Alex, who did not graduate from high school, felt that it didn't matter whether one had a diploma when applying to the factory jobs. "No, it's like, when you apply for the job, they have to train you. It's like paid training." Expressing similar sentiments about dropping out of high school himself, James said "It didn't look no different to me. I know a lot of people who graduate and apply for a factory job and still don't get hired." "I really don't know" if a diploma makes a difference. "If it does, they are not saying nothing about it." He noted with irritation that when he applied for a job and did not get it, he typically had no idea why he was screened out. Apparently employers rarely make their screening procedures public. Other people noted that employers do ask on applications whether one has a degree, and suspected that they might screen out those applicants without diplomas, but people basically did not know when or if that was done. One person with a diploma commented that he could not tell if he had gotten jobs that he would not have gotten without the diploma. Other than the military, which tells you outright why you are being turned down, most private employers allow it to remain a mystery.

As for a college education, it was valued quite highly by those who aspired to it, such as

Simon, Dwight, Ray, and John. Simon aspired to be a lawyer, making both college and law school essential to his plans. Dwight and John believed college training in computers would be required for them to do well in that field. John also hoped to play college football, and to go professional if he did well at it. Ray was less certain about the exact connection between college and his career, but he was switching majors to a more technical field in which a degree will lead more directly to a job. He had known people with liberal arts degrees who struggled to find a job after graduating from college. With Ray's change of major, all four of these men would be studying fields in which their training would lead to a particular trade. None of them planned to enter the workforce with a liberal arts diploma. For the men not going to college, college was viewed as too difficult or too unpleasant, and it was not something they considered in their future plans.

Views on the value of education vary. College, and especially a bachelor's degree, was viewed very favorably by those men who had some chance of attaining one. A high school diploma was viewed ambivalently. It opened no great opportunities, and one was not strongly rewarded for having one, but one might sometimes be punished or excluded for not having it. Bryant was aware that to run a business he would actually need knowledge that he lacked, but others tended to emphasize the credential rather than the knowledge it represented. They do not appear to see what is learned in school as strongly related to what one needs on the job.

Drug Dealing and Illegal Activities

Drug Dealing

The most surprising and unexpected aspect of this study was the extent to which participants told of illegal activities in their past. The activities described were particularly important because they have to do with these men's workforce participation. Fully half the men in the study appeared to have been involved in drug dealing. Most of them admitted this activity. All the people who

spoke of selling drugs also spoke of street gang participation.

It was surprising to me that so many of the participants told me of their activities with gangs and drug dealing. I believed the stories I was told because I found them to be plausible, both individually and collectively. However, one researcher cautioned me to be skeptical. He spoke of an inner city research project of his own a number of years ago in which many young men claimed to be pimps. There were far more claims of pimping than he found plausible, far more than any such neighborhood could have supported. He got the sense that it was cool to be a pimp in that area, so many men claimed to be one as a claim to status.

I considered the idea that something similar could be going on with the men admitting to drug dealing in this study, but even when I listened to their stories with a skeptical ear I found them persuasive. There is no way to be sure of the truth of any particular story, yet I still believe that most or all of the men who describe dealing drugs have in fact done that. The stories will be described below in some detail for the reader to evaluate. For the six men in the study who seem likely to have dealt drugs, I will include the essential information which persuaded me.

This was also an area of the study in which I was aware of my own reactions to the content being discussed, and I will describe some of those reactions here to be as clear as possible about my role as interpreter of this material. In general I found the discussions of illegal activities fascinating. I found myself making few negative judgements about the drug dealing, and being sympathetic to the idea that men with few job opportunities would deal drugs. This is true in spite of the fact that I view drug dealing as a destructive process rather than a victimless crime. The primary areas in which I was aware of feeling negatively about the men and their actions was during descriptions of violence, especially for those men who still seemed inclined to violence or seemed to have little remorse about it. In spite of my knowledge of the ways that certain environments can elicit violent

or cruel behavior from most people, I found it hard not to make negative, stable, internal attributions about the men who had been most violent in the past.

Before beginning to relate the stories of illegal activity that the men told, it is appropriate to consider issues of confidentiality, and of protecting men from being identified if that could cause them harm. In the other sections of this paper, each man has been consistently identified by a single alias. Associated with each alias there have been descriptions of the person, the family, multiple quotes, and assorted other information painting rather rich pictures of the participants. Although identifying details, and very unique details about the men have been omitted, the information attached to each alias is rather extensive, and might perhaps be identified by someone familiar with the man in question. That is problematic if I also talk about relatively recent illegal activities. The approach taken here, agreed to by the human subjects reviewer, is to use the aliases when discussing illegal activities in the distant past, and those which have already been adjudicated. More recent illegal activities will be discussed in ways which further disguises the identity of those involved. When recent illegal activities are discussed the participants will be identified by another set of identifiers, assigned in random order. The men will simply be numbered P1 to P12, for "Participant #1," etc.

An appropriate place to begin with this section might simply be a listing of descriptions of the men's illegal activities and drug dealing (Table 19). It should be noted that among the men in the study who admitted to drug dealing, all claimed that it was in their past. (One did eventually slip and admit to dealing drugs in 1993.) Four men described how they used to deal drugs at an earlier time, typically over a year previously. It was one of these who eventually admitted dealing drugs at the time of our 1993 interview, after being asked about a contradiction in his story. Two other participants are listed as having dealt drugs, even though they never admitted that they had. One

of these was out on bail for drug charges at the time of our 1993 interviews. The other admitted to an extensive record of legal and school trouble, and a friend of his told me that he had also dealt drugs.

Patterns of Drug Dealing in Champaign-Urbana

Dealers and non-dealers alike talked a great deal about how the drug dealing business worked in Champaign-Urbana. These descriptions were remarkably consistent across the sample. All participants who talked about drugs agreed that there was an enormous amount of drug activity in town. Overwhelmingly, the most common drug sold was crack cocaine. In a study where most issues elicit a wide range of responses from participants, when asked to describe the general workings of the local drug economy, the descriptions offered by various people agreed with each other quite well. The descriptions of the men who said they had not sold drugs are quite consistent with the descriptions of those who did claim to sell. Knowledge of the drug economy appeared widespread, rather than being confined to those who actually sold drugs. The participants who offered at least some description of the local drug business were P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P12. The most extensive descriptions came from P2, P3, and P4.

The drug economy in Champaign-Urbana was quite easy to get into, because current dealers were typically more than happy to have someone new selling for them. As one person said, "seems like they are trying to bring everybody up into selling drugs." The eagerness for new recruits was because it was actually safer to make money from drugs by having others sell for you instead of carrying and selling the stuff yourself. Talking about how some people stayed in the drug business for years without getting caught, P3 said:

P3 One thing, you gonna be doing it for that long, you never touch the product. Never touch it. You have a middle man. And you run the business. All you do is call the shots.

Furthermore, there was a direct incentive for guys to recruit relatively young kids, and to do less direct selling as they got older. After age 17 the penalties were much harsher, so older guys would deliberately recruit kids younger than 17 for the direct selling. If caught, the kids would be tried as juveniles, and were more likely to be first offenders.

Participants consistently reported a very close connection between gang membership and drug dealing. Asked what proportion of gang members also dealt drugs, several people without hesitation said things like, "all of them." The reverse pattern, of all drug dealers being gang members, probably did not hold, but there were clear advantages to gang membership. For one thing, there was competition to sell in the popular areas, and an unaffiliated person would have been forced to leave by gang members, who had the weight of numbers and the threat of violence to back them up. Apparently the gang association also occured because the gang becomes a natural network of people to purchase, transport, and distribute the drugs.

Participants reported that there was relatively little serious gang violence in Champaign-Urbana, because, as three participants reported, there was a truce between the two primary local gangs in 1993. "Relatively little" can be taken to mean "less violence than in Chicago," because the local area could be fatally violent at times. The most serious conflicts that do occur were between the local gangs and gangs from Chicago who wanted to control parts of the local drug market. P4 described the conflict this way:

P4: Some [gang members from out of town] try to hold down one spot, which, you know, they can't! I mean, this person, say he was born over here. I mean, you were born and raised here all your life. And someone from out of town want to try and come to where you were born and raised and you know all about and try to take over and try to tell you what you can't do over there. I mean, that's what it's like. I mean, people from Chicago try to come down here and run Champaign, which is not going to work. You don't come to no one else's home town where they been born and raised in that common area, and try to tell them what they can't do when they be doin'- They been doin' for, what, twenty, thirty, forty years in <u>this spot</u>. No. And you come down here, you a little young fuck. You nineteen, twenty, twenty one. Try to

> tell this grown person what to do, what he can't do over in this part. And you got a lot of nerve. I mean, this person and a whole lot of other people that was born and raised here, they could do something to you alone. And there's nothing you and your friends can do. I mean, you can't come and take over nobody else's home. Never do that. Never walk in another man's home and try to hold things down. It will not happen that way. . . . It's a big conflict over it.

Regarding the size of the local drug economy, estimates varied, but most estimates were very large. Asked to estimate the number of local drug dealers, P1 responded, "There's a lot. I don't know... I would guess about- thousands." P3, asked how many people he thought were being supported from drug revenues, said "Whew, man, more than half this city could be supported off doing that." Asked to give a more specific number of how many he thought were actually dealing, "It's at least- I'd say it's about six thousand people here in Champaign Urbana." Both these estimates were offered after what appeared to be a genuine effort at constructing an estimate. The word "thousands" did not seem to be intended as hyperbole. That does not mean that "thousands" was an accurate estimate, but it does suggest that drug dealing was so prevalent among people that these men knew that it seemed to them as if thousands of people must be involved.

Asked what his high school acquaintances were doing, P11 said that about half of the people he knew in high school had gone to college. Others had dropped out, or worked in fast food some.

P11: and the rest, you know, they want to sell drugs.
Paul: Like, what percentage would that be?
P11: Oh, probably out of thirty people I would say at least- probably like about twenty seven or twenty eight.

Follow up questions indicated that "the rest" that he was referring to was all those who didn't go to college, because his opinion was that even those who worked fast-food sometimes also sold drugs. His estimate was that 27 of 30 of his non-college-bound friends were selling drugs. Furthermore a friend of P11 told me in a separate interview that P11 himself had been a drug dealer.

All participants who talked about drug dealing agreed that the business was very easy to get into. P1, who reports not dealing himself, said, with a slight note of disgust:

P1: If I wanted to go out and start selling drugs today, I mean, it's like that (snaps fingers). Because I know a lot of drug dealers.
Paul: You grew up with people that were doing it?
P1: Yeah, and they would help me out. I mean it's like they, it seems like they are trying to take over. I mean, they try to bring everybody up into dealing drugs.

Individual Descriptions of Drug Dealing

This section will present some of the individual stories of drug dealing in more detail. The goal will be both to capture what it was like for these men to engage in this occupation, and to provide the reader with more access to how these activities are described and framed by the participants.

P4. P4 described the workings of the business of dealing at great length, talking about weights, about hiding money that one cannot take to the bank, about learning to spot police. He talked with great gusto about dealers who had been arrested but not convicted, and about the police being intimidated by his size and looks, so that they sent many officers when they needed to arrest him. (He has been arrested a couple of times for battery, never for drugs, and never convicted.)

As the conversation progressed he began using the first person instead of the third person when talking about the dealing. He consistently maintained that he no longer dealt drugs, but admitted that he had for a period of time until his supplier was busted. One aspect of drug dealing that he emphasized a great deal in his storytelling was the combination of exciting fast money and high risks. He emphasized his ambivalence in choosing between the boring stability of the legal working world, and the exciting but risky business of dealing. Drawing a diagram to help explain it, he said:

P4: OK, this is your life right here. This is fast money, which means dope. I'll put a dollar sign.

> This is your life, this is fast money. And this is what you've taken, a risk. (makes a big question mark.) That's a straight risk. And that's what it comes out to. You don't know what the outcome will be. But then if this is your life plus the working world, "WW," you know what it is. You ain't going to put no question mark, because you are just going with the flow.

The approach that he described taking was to sell drugs, but to try and keep a low profile, not selling too much, and working legal jobs on the side so that when he had money it would not seem like a mystery where he had gotten it.

> P4: I mean, if you want to do it and try to be too big-headed about it, you would get caught. You stay low, like if I'm doing it, I'm going to stay low like up under the table, up under the chair! (getting under the table between us and laughing as he talks.)

In spite of his description of keeping a low profile, P4 appeared to enjoy the excitement of the risks involved in dealing. He described himself as being "hyper," as needing to be out where the action is all the time, which usually means on the street. He noted that boredom is one of his biggest problems when he has tried to work legal jobs. At the time of our conversation P4 carried a beeper, and reported not holding a legal job in the previous five months.

At one point when describing drug quantities P4 was making accurate conversions in his head between grams and fractions of ounces. Four grams are an "eight ball" or an eighth of an ounce, eight grams are a quarter ounce, etc. (These were not perfect metric conversions, but they appeared to be what is used on the street.) At higher weights his accuracy slipped. "When you get past ounces it falls into keys, and a keys weigh, like, a pound. That's a pound of dope. I mean a straight pound." This suggests a greater familiarity with the smaller amounts. His mistake about kilos strongly suggests that he had not dealt with those quantities.

P2. P2 began telling me of his gang participation and drug dealing after a question about a gap in his schooling. He looked uncomfortable a moment, then began describing a period in his life marked by violence, no consistent home, and a number of aborted efforts to continue his education.

P2's story of his drug dealing career was particularly poignant because of his description of why he quit. His style was tough, forceful, and hardly sentimental, but it was clear that the things he saw made a deep emotional impression on him. He described friends being killed, described hiding for his life from a man who thought he had stolen drugs. He also described watching addicts waste away as weeks went by.

P2: Earning a living the way I was it would have been selling drugs. But now I'd rather work a job or something. 'Cause dealing drugs don't get you no farther than the county jail. And drug dealing, like say you make three thousand? The three thousand gonna go to whoever you are selling for. And you won't get more than two hundred dollars of it. And with a job, you don't have to worry about nobody getting your money.

P2 only once tried cocaine, and mostly smoked pot himself. (Smoking your own wares is seen as weak and stupid in many drug circles (Williams, 1989). P3 later commented that "the ones that use it, they don't go too far. They get caught or they get robbed.) P2 did not use cocaine, but had been in crack houses where others were using.

P2: They're addicted to it really. I seen people really DO the stuff. Smoke and smoke and smoke. Shoot theyself up. I just sit there and look, and it's a scary sight to see. It's bad a week later, a month later to see how skinny they are. They are like- you won't see them tomorrow. They are like the people in Ethiopia. They are, man, skinny, no bigger than that. I'd never try that.

P2 also spoke of people being "addicted" to dealing drugs:

P2: Once you sell drugs you can't stop. . . . You're addicted to it. Your head gets big and stuff. "I'm this; I'm that." Then you buy your gun. "Can't nobody hurt me." Just a bad attitude thing. . . . I knew one boy, right now, he was so big-headed. It cost him his life. Like, man, it hurts.

Asked about what motivated him to quit, he said,

P2: My grand dad, he sat down and talked to me about the stuff, and he is a religious man. He told me that he didn't want to have to go to court or go to my funeral. Because drugs, he told me that people selling drugs, they die quicker. And they do! . . . There were some shocking times when I was selling drugs, because you never know when you are going to get sticked up or something. I was just, man, changed my mind. I want to get married and that's it, 'cause I don't need this. I don't need to keep watching my back every five minutes. I had to watch my back every minute. After you get done doing all that you get tired of running from the police.

> You get tired. I was like, man, I'm tired of hiding out, tired of running. Let's just forget it. I just told them, "y'all go that way, I'll go my way."

P2 spoke of living in abandoned places, of sleeping in his car. "The legal way you got a house, a roof over your head. You don't have to worry about nothing."

The other men in the sample who described dealing drugs spoke of it in a way that suggested it still had some attraction for them. P2, however, sounded thoroughly and deeply disillusioned with it, happy with his current life, and unlikely to sell drugs again.

P9. P9, in our initial interview talked extensively about his troubled childhood, and about how he had turned over a new leaf. He had been in various residential placements because his mother couldn't handle him, and continued to get into trouble even after high school, but talked of finally getting his life on the right track. He spoke of being indignant with the staff of a nearby youth center because they refused to let him volunteer. They knew some of his gang and drug history and told him that he would not be an appropriate role model. Frustrated, P9 felt that his experience of turning over a new leaf after a troubled history could be exactly what the kids need as a role model.

Like P4, P9 described working legal jobs at the same time that he was dealing drugs so that his income would not look suspicious. With evident pleasure, he acted out the way he used to deny dealing drugs, and then point to his legal job as evidence of his innocence. This episode made it clear that P9 was capable of being a rather fluent liar. A careful review of my notes suggested that P9 had also strongly distorted and exaggerated a number of other things, usually to portray himself in a more positive light.

His admission drug dealing in our 1993 interview came as a result of a slip. He talked of being completely out of cash except what I was paying for the interview. He noted, "if people would just pay me what they owe me I wouldn't have any problem." Asked if he had been loaning people

money, he looked sheepish, hesitated, and said that he had been giving them drugs on credit.

P6. P6 persistently and categorically denied dealing drugs. However, at the time of our interview he was out on bail, charged with possession of crack cocaine with intent to sell. Although he had never been convicted of any thing, he had been charged with several fairly serious crimes in the past. He was once charged with participating in a rape, in which a group of men tore a woman's pants off, and at least one of them inserted his fingers in her vagina. She identified P6 in a line up, and he admitted being present, but told me he had not participated. It was thrown out of court because "She showed up in court one time, and then didn't show up no more. And every time I see her I just want to get her. Stomp that bitch." In a separate incident a year later, he was charged with battering a girlfriend. She too failed to testify. His description of his current arrest went as follows:

P6: Um, well, I had, I been set up.
Paul: oh yeah?
P6: Yeah, I was set up. What happened was, I was like on the other side of town, and I found some stuff on the street and I picked it up and I was walking with it. And I was trying to tell the police I just picked it up, but it was in my hand, so they didn't just give me no excuse. They didn't want to hear that, so they took me to the police station. They didn't really care, but, you know, they asked me sort of all kinds of questions, "whose stuff was this," and I told them "I don't know." They were talking about how somebody had called Crimestoppers on me. And they, when they picked me up they harassed me, you know what I'm saying? But uh, I was, for all I knew I was set up.

No further questions were asked about drug dealing in the interviews with P6, because it seemed important not to collect information that might be of interest to the courts during his trial.

P3. P3 spoke of his drug dealing and gang history rather casually. A couple friends were gang members from Chicago, who helped him get started dealing.

P3: The first time I started, I think it was like three days and I made fifteen hundred dollars. And the next day I was going to get- I was going to re-cut me a pack. The police took that money from me. And so from then on I just had to try not to make as much money, so they wouldn't keep harassing me and taking my money. . . . So I just try to spend more money that I was makin', and try to at least enjoy some of my money.

For a period of a couple years he was in Chicago much of the time. He had a few other people selling for him after a while, but some rivals kept robbing them to try to drive him away. He is the only one in the sample who described having others selling for him at times, indicating that may have been one rung higher on the drug dealing ladder than some others. His report of making $1500 in three days "the first time" he started also indicates a fairly lucrative market. P3 reported getting stabbed once, but not seriously. Asked why he stopped, he said, "It was like I was always rippin' and runnin' and either somebody was lookin' for me, or we was runnin' from the police or somewhere up there, and I just couldn't take it."

Asked about the process of addiction, P3 became somewhat defensive. Unlike P2, P3 emphasized that using drugs was simply something people choose to do.

P3: Addicts? There are really no addicts, just people that use it. You very seldom run into a real addict unless you are trying to find an addict. There are people that use it and want to keep using. . . . They can stop if they want to stop. . . . But it's like, once you start using it- Let's say it's a Friday night and you started using it Friday morning, you probably won't be able to stop using it until you run out of money.

Blacks versus Whites selling drugs:

The men in the study described drug dealing as a common way to make money, and as a job opportunity that was virtually always open. Most men in the study agreed that drug dealing was open to Whites as well as Blacks, but it seemed to be more common among young Blacks, and somewhat easier for Blacks to get into. P4 noted that there were more Blacks than Whites selling drugs, but said that it was not uncommon for a White guy to deal, and not uncommon for a Black guy to get him started. The prerequisite that P4 emphasized was a bond of friendship and trust between them.

"I mean, you got to be around that Black person for a while. Not like for years or nothing like that. But you gotta be down with them. Y'all be kickin' it with 'em, drinkin' with em." Basically

Whites who hung out and became friends with Black dealers were readily set up to begin dealing themselves, but it was more common for Blacks to be the middle-level dealers and the suppliers, and the White guys would have to earn their trust. P2 thought it was open to "anybody who wants to do it." "You just wouldn't believe how many Blacks and Whites are out there trying to sell drugs."

P: How many people are being supported by selling drugs?
P2: Of the people that I know, I'd say about half.

Asked for an estimate of the number of people in town, he said, "I wouldn't know. There is just so many here."

P1 responded that the drug dealers he was aware of were "mostly Black. One supplier is White, but most of 'em are Black." P3 gave the most precise estimate of the racial mix of drug dealing in Champaign.

Paul: What percentage would you say is White guys?
P3: Like, maybe a little bit less than half. Thirty to thirty five percent. Something like that.

One JTPA supervisor talked of becoming aware that a number of the people she supervised also dealt drugs. She became particularly aware of it with a pair of White participants with whom she worked extensively. She emphasized that patterns of drug dealing and of gang membership were not confined to African American youth, but such behavior also seemed not to be uncommon among the low-income White participants in JTPA. In addition, some White JTPA participants told her that they were members of integrated street gangs, supporting the descriptions given by participants in this study.

Representativeness of the JTPA Sample

Because they were located through the JTPA, all the men in this sample sometimes worked legally. The men in this study who reported dealing drugs were a combination of men who reported dealing drugs while also occasionally holding legal jobs, and men who reported that they have given

up drug dealing and turned back to legal work. A few of the men discussed how common each of these patterns was, and although more information on this would be desirable, what is available indicates that the men in the sample represented certain patterns of drug dealing, but were not typical of other patterns.

In particular, the men who reported dealing drugs as their exclusive source of income for a period of time said that it was not typical for people to quit doing that and return to legal work. P2 described the attitude that typically forms as someone deals drugs seriously, of feeling tough and "big-headed," and invincible. He spoke of some dealers changing their minds after a prison term, but indicated that he was definitely unusual in having quit before going to prison or being badly hurt. Similarly, P3 was asked about how common it was for someone to give up drug dealing and go back to legal work. He responded, "it's not really that common. But, if they are not in it so far that the only way they are gonna get out is dead, then there is a way out." Both P2 and P3 indicated that there was a sizable group of more serious drug dealers, who typically did not work legal jobs on the side, for whom it was rare to give up dealing and turn back to legal employment. The JTPA sample interviewed for this study was not typical of that group. Both P2 and P3 indicated that by returning to legal work they had taken a course that was rare for the group they had been involved with. Neither of them indicated how much money they typically made when they were dealing steadily, although P2 indicated it was more than he could easily keep track of or spend, while P3 noted how much went back to the supplier, and implied that what was left was not as much money as he would like.

The other pattern represented in this sample was that of dealing drugs on a relatively small scale, while also working legally at times. These men were probably at the lowest level of the drug-dealing heirarchy, although it was not clear whether they were dealing with trivial or significant

sums of money. Some of the men told stories of making one to two thousand dollars in a couple of days, but I never asked specifically about the average income from dealing. One non-dealer told of arriving in Champaign on a Friday with a broke friend who had over two thousand dollars by the time they left again on Sunday. (The friend had gone to prison by the time of the 1993 interview.)

Given that participation in the drug market varies significantly, it is likely that the drug dealing incomes of the men varied from trivial amounts to occasional sums in the thousands of dollars. Unfortunately it is not clear from these interviews exactly what an average lower-level drug dealer typically earns.

The men in the sample who followed the pattern of dealing while working legal jobs placeed less emphasis on the difficulty of ending their drug dealing careers. They did not talk as directly about how common it was to give up drug dealing entirely, but they clearly implied that there was less of a dichotomy between a drug dealing lifestyle and one of legal work. They did not imply as strong a barrier in lifestyle or attitude between doing legal work and illegal work. Most of them denied ongoing drug dealing, and the interviews did not explore such interesting issues as how common it was to plan to give up dealing, and then return to it when money runs short. However, since it appears that it would be easy and tempting, there is a strong possibility that such a scenario is not uncommon.

Implications of Pervasive Drug Dealing

The descriptions of these participants make it clear that drug dealing was a very accessible and appealing job opportunity. The appeal of drug dealing seems to be based on both financial incentives, and on emotional incentives. For men who have grown up in poverty, who are often quite embarrassed by their poverty, it offers an immediate way out. The educational skills required are limited to some basic math, that involved in prices, weights, and counting money. This means

that a person who has failed to excel in school, and whose school failures could quickly come back to haunt him in the legal workforce, can escape into a job where past school failure is irrelevant. Drug dealing also requires very little of the form of submissiveness, politeness, or conformity often required in the workforce. It is geared more to behavior standards used on the street. Street standards naturally contain their own conventions which must be observed. There are street conventions for saving face, for being respected and respectful, and for conformity to an expected way of doing things. It is, however, a very different standard than the working world, and one that some people are likely to strongly prefer. It is one of the few jobs that not only allows one to be "cool," it actually enhances one's reputation for toughness and street smarts. Other than paying the supplier, one is one's own boss, and need not conform to anyone else's schedule. Also, as P4 pointed out, it is exciting when much legal work can be frustratingly dull.

The men is this study described two primary reasons for ending their drug dealing careers. First, some stopped when they had families. It should be noted, however, that those who emphasized family as a reason to stop dealing were people who actually moved in with the mother of their children and started playing the role of father. Merely siring kids does not appear to have much to do with it. Second, people stopped dealing because they were tired of the lifestyle, and especially the violence. Both of the men who reported moving to Chicago and spending a period of time dealing drugs exclusively reported wanting to get away from the possibility of violence. P3 talked of being stabbed and stalked, and P2 emphasized friends being killed. Those who dealt drugs while working legal jobs tended to emphasized the violence less, with the exception of P4. He talked of wanting to escape the violence associated with dealing, and also to escape the potential violence of simply living in public housing.

It should be noted that the drug dealers in this study were probably not typical of the drug

dealers in Champaign-Urbana. All the men in this study participated in the JTPA program, which means that all of them were interested in working a legal job during 1993. Some participants reported selling drugs while working at a legal job for "cover." It is not clear how common that is among drug dealers, because the only ones who could possibly wind up in this study were those drug dealers who were working legally, either permanently or occasionally.

It is noteworthy that some of these men reported making the decision to turn to legal work, and that others oscillated between legal and illegal occupations. By providing an opportunity to work legally, the JTPA intervened in a way that could allow some of these men to make the transition to permanent legal employment. In other words, the JTPA intervened with a truly high risk group, and provided an additional option for legal work. It appears that the population of young men who actually participated in JTPA contains many men who were actively struggling with the choice between legal and illegal livelihoods. The present study is not organized to prove the effectiveness of the JTPA, but it does appear that the JTPA was working with a group of young men who were at an important crossroad.

Racial Issues in the Workplace and Elsewhere

At the heart of this study is a set of questions about how young Black men perceive the racial dynamics of the workplace. Among the Black men interviewed here there were striking differences of perception about this issue. The most notable area of disagreement was in people's perceptions of whether race made much of a difference at all. Participants were asked quite a variety of questions about race and the workplace, but their basic responses can be boiled down to two issues. First, did they think race was an important factor in what happened in the workplace, in areas such as hiring, promotion, and how people were treated? Second, had they personally experienced racial problems at work?

Table 13 shows the basic responses to these issues. Exactly half of the men in the study reported that they personally had experienced a problem at work that seemed racial. The perceptions of whether race was an important factor were less definite, and a number of people expressed opinions that can be condensed to "sometimes" or "it depends." Basically, between a third and half of the participants saw race as having little or no effect in the workplace. The rest saw race as being important, to varying degrees, and often intricately entwined in the events at work. There was a great variety of opinion even among those who saw race as significant.

The discussion below of the ideas expressed will attempt to do justice to the various opinions. However, a balanced discussion is made more difficult by the fact that when a person sees something as not happening, or as being unimportant, there is typically not much else to be said about it. Those who perceived race as making little difference elaborated far less than those who did find it significant. The discussion below will reflect this, in that there will be more to explain, describe, and explore in the opinions of the people who did see race as having an effect. On the other hand, the discussion will continue to note that a sizable minority of the men held a dissenting view, and that fully half reported no racial problems arising in their own work history.

Using demographic variables and other variables to compare those who felt that race played a significant role in the workplace to those who did not reveals little. There are no clear patterns that distinguish the people that fell into one group or the other. One might expect that those with more experience in the workforce would have more developed opinions about race and how it affects workforce participation. There was some evidence for this in the sample, although precise calculations are somewhat hampered by difficulty quantifying workforce experience. The large numbers of part-time and short-term jobs, and the great variation in workforce participation during high school make it hard to estimate workforce participation precisely.

Among those who had worked quite a lot were James, Ray, Simon, Derrick and Talbot. Those who had worked relatively little included Alex, Bryant, Jessie, and Marcus. Dwight, Charles, and John were difficult to estimate. Their experience was probably closer to the low end. It appears that all five of the people who had worked a lot saw racial issues as significant (Table 13). Of the other two categories, Alex and Dwight saw race as significant. The others emphasized it less. This provides some support for the idea that people with more workforce experience tend to see race as more significant, but a larger sample would be needed to demonstrate this conclusively.

Perceiving Little or No Discrimination.

Of the men who perceived little or no discrimination in the workplace, Marcus, Bryant and John expressed this opinion most clearly. As Bryant put it, "I never seen no prejudice at none of the places I worked at. I never seen any. They treat everybody the same." Bryant's work history had not gone smoothly, and in one job he felt that his supervisor had a grudge against him and assigned him the worst shifts and duties. He felt that it was a personal conflict, but did not attribute it to race.

John's stepfather had been in the military during the 50's and 60's, and told him about some racially motivated events there, but John had seen none of that himself. He was inclined not to judge something as racial unless he is quite sure.

J: In some cases you might have somebody trying to get a job and they might hire Whites first. I mean, I don't know if that's out of prejudice or what. It might be just coincidence that he hired this person. He might be better. I don't think it's prejudice.

Later John noted that being poor could stand in one's way of getting a job. "If you're poor and dress poor they might not hire you." He thought it might also depend on "attitude."

Marcus refered to his own job experience when offering his opinion, and noted that he had always gotten the jobs he had applied for. Things had gone well at work, and he had never seen his work aspirations impeded by race or by anything else. He got impatient with his friends who often

claimed they did not get jobs because of race. In addition to the stories of his friends, he noted that his parents strongly cautioned him to expect discrimination at work. "I just hear about it, and I never experienced none of it." He acknowledged that race may sometimes affect job decisions, but saw it as a small factor that could readily be overcome. "If you apply yourself to gettin' that job, you will get that job." He pointed out that his father, who charged low rates for auto repair, easily drew customers of all races.

Jessie mentioned a time when a Black female coworker accused the management of playing favorites in a racially biased way, but he himself did not see what happened to decide whether she was right. Jessie himself had not perceived any racial discrimination where he had worked, and he was inclined to think that it was not a significant problem. Finally, Ray noted that he personally had never experienced any problems at work that seemed related to race. He, however, had known enough people who had that he felt it was a significant problem.

The finding that a sizable minority of the men in the study perceived race as fairly unimportant was discussed with three African American informants during the analysis phase, and all three expressed surprise. One, in his mid 30's, commented, "the people I grew up with, the first thing they would emphasize would be race." The other two also thought it odd that several of the participants would de-emphasize it. Since the finding strikes people as unusual, there may be some reason to question its validity. Given that I am White, some participants may have been trying to reassure me or tell me what they thought I wanted to hear by telling me that racism was a minor thing. Some may have been uncomfortable talking about it with me, and may have down-played it to get on to the next subject. Or, people may have responded honestly, but my sample may have contained an unusually large number of people who have experienced little racism. It is hard to know which of these possibilities is the most likely. A final possibility is that my key informants, like myself, are

so used to thinking about racial issues that they find it hard to believe that others are not. In this case, the men in my sample might have been representative, and my key informants could be the ones who were not fully representative.

Uncertainty and Ambiguity in Perceptions of Discrimination

Early in the interviews for this study a pattern emerged which became a central theme as the study progressed. Very often participants saw an event at work, and wondered whether a racial motive was involved, but were unable to decide for certain. The event was ambiguous, and the motives of the people involved were not clear. What has become clear is that lack of certainty, and wondering about the motives of others are very common events in racial interaction. It appears to be a common workplace experience for some African Americans to wonder about the motives of coworkers, to be uncertain about others' motives or biases, and to be frequently looking for evidence to decide whether coworkers are inclined toward racism. These experiences are separate from the times when it seemed clear to the person that racial bias was involved. A later section will consider the times when participants are fairly certain of their perceptions of racism. This section will explore the experience of uncertainty, of wondering about others' motives, and of how the men reacted to feeling uncertain about those around them.

Perceiving Unclear Situations and Wondering

Almost everyone in the study spoke of the experience of being uncertain at times whether the actions of others were racially motivated. Dwight spoke of typically giving a person the benefit of the doubt, but of beginning to look more carefully for signs of bias. Talbot and Ray expressed similar sentiments. They felt that one often cannot be sure, so one continues to watch and try to figure it out. Others showed their lack of certainty as they tried to respond to questions about noticing bias. Asked whether he had seen signs of bias among supervisors, Alex said, "Somewhat.

I can't exactly say, 'yeah.' You know, it's kind of on a borderline." Marcus did not rule out the possibility, but was inclined not to assume racial motivations. "I don't know. That's what I always used to say to them" (Friends who were claiming discrimination), "'I don't know, man.'" James did not leap to racial explanations, but got very angry and frustrated at simply not knowing why he was not hired, or why someone was behaving as they were. Most of these men did experience times when they were fairly certain that a racial bias was involved, but the uncertainty of other situations seemed to be just as difficult.

Trying to size up people and environments. Participants commonly talked of the experience of trying to figure out whom they could trust, and whom they could not, and of trying to size up work environments to figure out which ones would welcome them. James was outspoken in his irritation over the hiring process. He filled out applications at places with "help wanted" signs, heard nothing, and wondered why.

> J: I don't understand why, why the company won't tell you why they don't want you. That's what I don't understand. They aren't going to tell you. They don't say no reason at all. So you never know. . . . So I don't know if it's a race thing or not. What? I don't know.

Dwight spoke of going through a logical process of elimination, trying to account for a supervisor who seemed kinder to other employees. Wondering if he was just hard on new employees, Dwight tried to watch how he treated Black employees who had been there a while. Simon talked of watching carefully, and having a long memory for whom not to trust once someone showed signs of bias.

As they described the process of sizing up those around them, Talbot and Simon spoke of a particularly difficult aspect of this issue. Both described the idea that the job of figuring out whom to trust was made more difficult by Whites pretending not to be prejudiced even when they actually were. In the sample only two participants described this, but the same idea was also mentioned by

one of the key informants, and by one of the female pilot participants before the study was limited to males. Talbot and Simon both talked at length about this issue of who was being genuine, and who was being hypocritical. As Talbot put it:

T: I still kind of believe that some White people still do have some prejudice in them against Black people. They just don't admit to it. Give you that big happy smile in the conversation, but there's probably still a little bit inside of them.

He went on to say that in recent years racism is less widely tolerated, and he believes it has become more covert.

Simon talked of his mother's warnings. Although he indicated that her position may be somewhat more extreme than his own, in his descriptions of workplace encounters he spoke very clearly about sizing people up, and keeping mental track of who appeared to be nursing some kind of bias. Of his mother, he said:

S: She said that in the South at least you knew who didn't like Blacks. But in the North, no. She said in the South - this is a really good saying. I'll bet she copied it from someone. "In the North there's foxes; in the South there's wolves." A wolf, you know, a wolf will get you no matter what if you're present. But a fox, you never know. They're sly in a way. In the South, if they didn't like you they weren't ashamed to tell you. We had always talked about racism in the South, and she said she would rather live there than here. And up here - she never really liked to go into that much, and now lately she is beginning to come out and say little things. She keeps a lot in.

The key informant who mentioned this idea spoke very similarly about liking the South because racial bias was not hidden there. The pilot participant emphasized experiences in which she felt as though White coworkers were being excessively friendly, in a way that felt fake and awkward and made her uncomfortable. She found herself unable to trust female coworkers whose behavior did not seem genuine.

The paradox of these situations is intriguing. There are a variety of company policies and federal mandates prohibiting racial discrimination, and overt racism is likely to be socially censured

in most work environments. These rules, designed to make the workplace more accommodating towards Blacks, apparently have the side effect of making racism more covert, and the job of assessing the biases of others becomes more difficult for a Black employee.

Participants' descriptions of trying to decide whom to trust, and of struggling with their own uncertainty as they assess ambiguous situations, paint a picture of these men at work with their guard up, trying to stay ahead of the game by figuring out who might be a threat to them. There appears no way to be certain about the motives of others, especially if those motives may be deliberately concealed. How might this affect the workplace experience of those involved? Of the men in this study, it appeared to affect different ones differently. Some of the men in the study said very clearly that their habit was not to worry about it. Marcus acknowledged that he did not know for sure whether racial biases were involved, but he was confident that being a good worker overcomes such biases, so he concentrated on that. Derrick carried this further in that he actually assumed that people would think the worst of him at first, that he would have to prove himself. "It ain't nothing but like a new challenge. It ain't nothing but like a football game." He described how a new team member has to prove himself.

D: Because when I first got to [fast food restaurant] people looked at me like I was crazy, like I was going to steal from the place. So I just stay to myself. But when they found out how I was, I just seen them all helping me.

Marcus and Derrick both escaped the problem of worrying about whether their coworkers harbor racial biases, but in both cases their solution lay in the conviction that biases would disappear when coworkers got to know them, and learned that they did not fit some negative stereotype. This point is important because their solution only works if they were correct in their assumptions about racial bias. Does prejudice work the way they think, or is it more ingrained? The most likely answer is that it varies from person to person, that their approach would be successful with many, but would

fail with some.

Other men in the sample, such as Simon, Talbot, and Dwight, framed the problem differently. Rather than simply needing to overcome a stereotype, their comments implied the assumption that some people are prejudiced in a way which is not easily overcome. The problem is greater than proving that one does not fit a stereotype, although Simon talks of that as well. The problem involves figuring out whom to trust, and keeping close track of those who may be untrustworthy. The unavoidable uncertainty of this process, and the experience of not knowing for sure about the motives of others, was a fairly common and not entirely comfortable experience.

Perceiving Discrimination with Subjective Certainty

The preceding section dealt with situations of ambiguity and uncertainty, in which the participants were not sure whether a racial motive was involved. A parallel process occurred with me as the researcher, listening to their stories. As events were described to me in various interviews, I often tried to decide if an event involved a clear racial motive, but would be uncertain, even at times when the person who had been there was quite certain that there had been a racial motive. One participant assured me with the line, "if you had been there you would have known!"

Even after I decided that it would generally not be possible for me to make judgments about when discrimination had "really" occurred, I found this issue perplexing. When describing participants' perceptions that racial dynamics were at play in the workplace, it proved difficult to find a comfortable style with which to report their stories. I found that if I consistently noted that participants "perceived" various events as racial, it sounded as though I, a White researcher, doubted all of the stories of racial bias. However, if I omitted the qualifiers and simply told their story, that something racial had occurred, it sounded as though I had lost my capacity for critical thinking and simply took everything I was told as gospel. Having noted this problem does not mean that I have

solved it; the reader should simply be aware that some of these tensions are woven thoroughly into the fabric of this study. Furthermore, in spite of the goal of accurately reporting the perceptions of the participants, there are times when it made sense to critically examine their stories, and to offer my perceptions when they disagree with those of participants.

Among those who described experiences with discrimination, there were several types of discrimination which they perceived. Some felt that hiring and promotion were biased. Some felt that supervisors discriminated in assigning jobs, giving them the least desirable. And finally, although overt racial slurs were not reported frequently, during the times when they did occur participants were upset that supervisors did not seem to punish the perpetrators adequately.

Hiring and promotion are biased. Hiring and promotion cut to the core of employees' financial well being, and personal satisfaction on the job. Were these things seen as being strongly influenced by racial bias? Bryant, John, Marcus, and Jessie all believed that the effect of racial bias was negligible in these areas. Other men in the study believed that the effects were far stronger. Charles and James each spoke of incidents in which a White fast food worker who had been there a shorter time was promoted over them. Alex told of the same thing happening to a friend. All three concluded that the motivation was probably racial. As James put it, "I was there longer than this White boy. I was there way longer before he got there. . . . He was White, and I'm Black, so he got shift leader." James quit at that point, and later quit another job where he felt his supervisor was assigning him more than his share of the unpleasant work. As he said, "I'm going to quit 'em all that ain't right." It is clear that these episodes and his reactions to them strongly affected his work history.

Alex also told of responding to help wanted ads in the newspaper by going out to stores the same day to apply, and being told, "we aren't taking applications." He felt that hiring discrimination

was especially bad at retail stores in a large local mall. He was not certain that it was just skin color, but he was very sure that the mall stores would hire college students, and would not hire low-income Blacks who are not in college.

A: All the jobs out in the mall, the students get that. The only jobs a person like me can get in the mall is probably working at [an arcade], being a maintenance man, working at Hardees, or working at Payless. The clothing stores will have a big old sign, "now hiring, equal opportunity employment." You go through all that and they will not even hire you. I have a strong sense of discrimination going on out there. Once you leave, I done sit there and watched the manager one time throw my application away.

Talbot told of deciding that hiring discrimination was going on based on the composition of the department in which he worked. "See, the last Black person that was hired at [a city department] was 13 years ago." (He was excluding seasonal workers, like himself.)

Ray was convinced that this was the typical pattern. "It's not highly likely for them to be promoted over somebody White" if they both have the same qualifications. "Nine times out of ten if it's a White boss, the White guy will get the job. Nine times out of ten, but it could be the one time that somebody don't see race; they see another human being. The human race. And then they get on that way." Charles gave a somewhat lower estimate of the amount of time that race determines hiring. "I'd say about 20% out of a hundred are people who look at color" when hiring.

In discussing the reasons why Blacks might not be promoted, one of the most notable ideas expressed was that if Blacks were promoted they would wind up supervising Whites, and that some White employees would not tolerate a Black supervisor. Talbot described it this way, in an interview that included Ray:

T: It seems like some White people, you know, just can't take orders from Black people. You know what I'm sayin'? Like if a Black foreman gets a job some White people won't be able to, like, take no orders from them.

R: Yeah, there was a Black Foreman over at _____. They said that he felt he was treated so bad.

T: Yeah, he used to talk about how they used to treat him and stuff.

P: How who treated him?
T: The other foremen, the operators, management. It seems to me like, you know, White people are scared that if we get a good position we'll run something, and they really can't hack that, you know.
R: Or we gonna take over something, like we got the power.
T: We always think that White people are kind of scared, you know, of us trying to take over.
P: Well, you know, this thing that you are saying about if it is a problem having a Black foreman, that's pretty important, because-
T: Or if a Black foreman do get it, it will be ONE.
P: It will be one, it's a token?
T: You know, we just got one, instead of two. It's always just like that, you know, one.
P: Makes it look like it's just public relations.
T: They say, "yeah, we got one here. We got one. There they go right there. So leave us alone." That's all they really want.
R: Just throw it in the picture to make it look good.

The idea that White employees may not cooperate with a Black supervisor adds a new facet to the issue because it suggests an additional reason why an employer might not promote Black employees. If management simply wants to make a profit, management should be equally satisfied with any competent employee, and it would make no sense to avoid promoting a competent Black. However, if management has an additional motive, that of keeping the peace in a somewhat racist work force by not forcing Whites to work for Blacks, then it would make far more sense to discriminate. This is one of the ideas developed by Jencks (1992) in his economic analysis of discrimination.

Talbot and Ray also raised the issue of tokenism here. They implied that complete exclusion of Blacks from higher positions would be easy to spot, and perhaps to prosecute. Their perception was that Black foremen were tokens, thrown into the picture "to make it look good." James offered a similar opinion when he said, "over here you might have a few Black <u>assistant</u> crew leaders. But they not the boss boss." All three of these men implied that Blacks were rarely in positions of real power, which meant they would rarely have the power to promote others or advocate for others during a dispute.

Supervisors discriminate, and play favorites. James, and Talbot both spoke of being given what seemed to be less desirable work, or more than their share of work, and saw it as racially motivated on the part of their supervisors. Bryant and Derrick each described a time when it seemed to them that a supervisor took a personal dislike to them, and began imposing unpleasant duties and special rules, but it was not clear to them whether it was racial in origin. Talbot:

T: It was very much like another racial thing. It was like when we had to do potholes. It was always me and another Black guy. The White seasonal guy got treated different. He always got to do this and do that, but when all the shit jobs came up, we got them. . . . I was like "wait a minute; we ain't the only two seasonals. There's one more. There's one right there." He [the supervisor] walks off, you know. He didn't even look at him.

Talbot also described a racially-charged workplace in which he and the other Black seasonal worker typically sat at a different table than the White workers. The supervisor had the habit of walking up and addressing the White workers with his back to the two of them. He would give the day's instructions and leave without even looking at them.

James felt that he was loaded up with work, while White employees were left idle:

J: I just had problems with a person I was working with, a White girl. And she was, like, a crew leader. And she always had me doing a lot of stuff instead of making the other people do it. The other White people do it. Tried to have me doing all the work. I didn't like it.

James described his supervisor taking the side of a White employee in an argument, even when he had offered what he thought was conclusive evidence that he was correct and the other employee was lying. "They get on the White person's side instead of my side. Knowing that I'm right." "It ain't right! They don't do their job right, so why should I do mine right? If you try to speak up on it, you ain't gettin' no where. 'Cause mainly all the managers in there are White."

James was a man of few words, and in his descriptions he had not fared too well when he had tried to talk problems out with his supervisors. His preferred way of handling a situation that seems discriminatory was to get out of that environment by quitting the job, and go looking for one that

would treat him fairly. "I'm going to quit 'em all that ain't right." There is nothing wrong with that strategy when it is needed, but for James it has led to a number of job changes with the accompanying loss of seniority, and the appearance of switching jobs a lot.

Talbot described one particular workplace where multiple incidents convinced him that race determined a great deal. In addition to not having hired a year-round Black employee for 13 years, he spoke of other specific incidents there.

T: I remember we got a new truck. We got a new truck. We kept the old truck; the Black crew kept the old truck, and they kept the new truck. We never even got to use that truck. We were basically doing the same kind of work, setting forms, pouring concrete, the same kind of work they were.
P: Who decides that stuff?
T: The foreman.
P: And the foreman is, what, a White guy?
T: Yes. Since, when they get off work and they'll go drink beer, you know, at a bar. And that doesn't bother me. It really doesn't bother me. I ain't here for them to like me. I just want them to treat me like everybody else. I don't care if he likes me or not, just treat me like everybody else. Treat me the same.

This story is noteworthy because Talbot mentioned being outside the social circle at work. He was not one of the guys, apparently all White, who go out for a beer with the foreman. Talbot was acutely aware that his race affected his social participation with his coworkers, but asks that race be set aside at work, that he be treated the same.

Jessie reported a case of a Black coworker who complained about White employees at a fast food restaurant being given free food by a supervisor, but she was forbidden to eat any. Jessie described not seeing all of this, but only hearing the Black worker's complaints, so "I don't know what really happened." The case described by Jessie is worthy of further analysis because the motivations involved are unclear. Assuming that the Black worker's story was true, what might motivate the behavior of giving free food to some employees, but not others? It appears to be favoritism, but it becomes difficult to clearly determine the relationship between favoritism and

racism. It may be that the supervisor involved would have given free food to anyone White, and denied it to anyone Black. However, it may be more likely that the supervisor was "playing favorites," ignoring store policy and giving food to someone she liked. She had some authority, and may have enjoyed the power of being able to do favors for her friends. If she were White and her friends tended to be White, then the people that tended to get free food would be White. If this is a plausible scenario, it still leads to problems. White managers may see themselves as doing favors for people they like, and given the oft-noted tendency for more within-race than between-race friendships, White employees would more often be the beneficiaries of the favors of White managers. This could be true even if the managers see no racial motive whatever in their actions.

This example is partly hypothetical, but it relates closely to Talbot's experience of being left out as the White guys go out for beer after work. Talbot was outside the circle of work-related friends. He need not be liked to get the job done. On the other hand, supervisors tend to promote people that they know well, get along with, and like, not necessarily to play favorites, but because a congenial coworker is better than a cold, remote one. Talbot may have been missing more than a glass of beer when his White coworkers went out to drink together. The tendency of workers to befriend those of their own race is not benign in its consequences.

Crude slurs sometimes occur, and are not punished. It was relatively rare for participants in the study to describe overt racial slurs being used at work. Only two spoke of experiencing that type of incident themselves. Both were struck, however, with the sense that they could not count on their supervisors to intervene on their behalf.

Dwight reported two fast-food coworkers who "would really dirty up a lot" when Dwight was on the clean-up detail, "and then like, 'let that boy do it,' or 'let that nigger do it.'" "I talked to the manager and the manager didn't do nothing." After repeated complaints, with no action from the

manager, Dwight got into a heated argument with one of them, and walked out, quitting the job.

Talbot spoke of sharing trucks with Whites, and tolerating country music without complaint even though he disliked it. One day he got into the truck first and turned on the radio before his partner for the day got in.

T: I don't like country and western music; I like rap. Automatically they don't like me. They don't want me nowhere, you know? Because my culture is different. I remember one time I was listening to the radio. The guy told me to "turn off that jungle music!"

Talbot felt that the supervisor of the crew sent so many racist signals himself that others knew behavior like that would go unpunished.

Ray heard from a friend about an incident where a Black worker overheard a White worker showing some dolls to other Whites, joking about how she had a "nigger baby" doll. The Black worker told other Black workers, one of whom got angry and wanted the White worker fired. The White worker was the niece of the supervisor, and eventually the Black worker who got angry about the comment was fired.

P: So the message there is?

R: They can get away with it if they want to.

Most men in the study had never been subjected to racial slurs on the job, and the slurs appeared to be a rare occurrence. However, in the incidents people had experienced and heard about, there was a consistent perception that the supervisor would not support them, and might even back other White employees at their expense. This perception fits with other situations in which participants reported feeling like White supervisors could not be counted on to treat them fairly if there was a conflict with a White employee.

Other perceived discrimination. Participants often talked about other experiences in which they felt they were discriminated against on account of race, both on and off the job. These

perceptions were varied, and formed no precise pattern. Some of these will be discussed here, largely to illustrate the range of situations and the types of situations in which these men perceive racial bias to be operating.

Simon spoke of having his employer try to engage him in debate about racial issues, with the employer taking the devil's advocate position. The boss talked of not understanding why it mattered that the governor of Arizona opposed the Martin Luther King holiday. A debate of a few minutes ensued, with neither of them changing their opinions on the matter. A couple weeks later the boss returned to the issue, noting that Lincoln had freed the slaves, and saying, "you should be more thankful to Abraham Lincoln than to Martin Luther King." Simon spoke of thinking "I can't believe this jerk." He had debated the topic with his boss the first time, but began to feel like the boss was baiting him, and he did not want to have repeated conversations about racial issues. "He knew that I" (had strong opinions), "and he would push little buttons to see what I would do."

A common experience that participants reported was feeling as though security guards and police were giving them extra scrutiny, apparently because they were young Black males. Derrick describes one such incident:

D: I looked back again and he was right there behind me, trying to fake like he was looking at some shirts. I walked down to where he was at, and I was like, "could I ask you a question?" And I asked him why he was following us. "To make sure you ain't stealing." I told that man, "sir, look, I ain't got to steal. I got money."

Asked why the guards follow him, Derrick said:

D: Most of the times I go into the store I think it's because of your color. I walk into a store and it be like, I be tellin' someone, "what's he following us for? 'Cause we're Black." . . . And when they follow me, I be like, I ain't never been back in [clothing store] since the day they followed me. I never go in that store no more. If somebody is following me because of my color, if they don't like my color, I ain't gonna come back. That's one less customer you got with me.

The issue of Blacks getting extra scrutiny from police and security guards came up at least three

times with these participants, but also came up twice in the pilot interviews, and in assorted other conversations related to this study. It appears to be common, but it also came up at least once in which the claim of racism was hard to accept.

There were times when men in the study describe the authorities as racist when they themselves were actually doing something wrong. P11, who had a rather extensive arrest record, was particularly likely to perceive racism in this regard. He had often missed his court dates on various charges (typically theft), and thus had often had warrants out for his arrest. However, he was indignant when police stopped him for questioning, in his car or on foot, and asserted that "the cops on campus mess with young Black men." He was indignant that store clerks "look at colored young men as if they are always stealing something," yet he had been caught and convicted of shoplifting repeatedly. In a similar vein, Alex spoke of being called into the dean's office for jumping from the back emergency exit of the school bus at an intersection. He was expelled from high school soon thereafter, and blames the dean for being racist.

A: I don't know what it was with her, but I think it was a racist thing. They try to do all Black kids like that. Get 'em out of school. Think we're not smart. So I went off on her, I said, "Yeah, I'll leave this school. Because if I don't leave then I might do something to somebody. Just let me leave up out of here," I said, "if I do do something you'd be the first person to get touched." I didn't like her anyway.

The men in these examples were clearly avoiding responsibility for things they had actually done, and that tends to undermine the persuasiveness of their claims of racism. On the other hand, other men in the sample, pilot participants, and multiple other sources consistently note the tendency of store clerks and police to suspect, follow, and question them. While this form of racism clearly occurs, it also seems that a couple of the participants were using accusations of racism as a way of denying responsibility for their own actions.

Although the preceding section explores a number of examples of racial bias in the workplace,

it bears repeating that half the men in the study did not report a single incident involving racial bias in their work history. It appears that overtly racist incidents are rare, but it also appears that a substantial proportion of Black employees are quite watchful, and spend considerable effort at times trying to figure out whether people or environments will treat them fairly. Sometimes, as in Talbot's case, this takes the form of a defensiveness or guardedness.

Given the marked discrepancy between the half of the sample who do not report bias and those who do, the question arises, how does someone come to see race as important in the workplace? Part of the answer seems to relate to personal experience. Note in Table 13 that of those who had never experienced a racial incident at work, all but one felt that the phenomenon was fairly rare or unimportant. Those who had experienced a racially hostile environment, or even one clear incident, had greatly altered viewpoints. Furthermore, it appears that hearing about racism from others is far less persuasive than experiencing it yourself. John and Bryant had a father and a grandmother respectively tell them about racist events in the past. Marcus had his parents and his friends tell him to expect racism. In spite of these second-hand descriptions, all three felt the influence of race was small. Talbot and Simon both spoke of having their mothers warn them extensively to expect racism, but both noted that they doubted these warnings until they ran into similar situations themselves. One exception to this pattern was Ray, who had never experienced racial bias at work himself, but felt very strongly about it. He may have been swayed by Talbot's vivid descriptions of one particular workplace, or he may have held these opinions long before. For most, however, personal experience seems very strongly related to estimates of the seriousness of the problem.

The discussion of racial patterns presented above does not lead to a simple answer to the question of how race affects the workplace. Race apparently leads to a variety of experiences, felt more strongly by some than others. Most of these experiences are discouraging or alienating in their

effects. One might wonder whom to trust, wonder if one is being treated fairly, or if coworkers have biases they are hiding. One might feel socially outside the camraderie of the workplace, or feel tolerated but not welcomed. One might feel an extra burden of proving oneself, or feel that others unfairly doubt one's abilities. One might find that promotions and rewards seem to be unfairly distributed. And one might struggle with the question of when to manage the situation by being accepting, diplomatic, and conciliatory, and when to be confrontive and demand that things be done differently. The dynamics of race are only a part of the story of workforce participation, but they appear to be one more challenge, one more difficulty to be managed by African Americans in the working careers.

Participating and Conforming

Pressure Over Styles of Behavior

Participating in the workforce means participating in a certain cultural context. When discussing pressure to conform their behavior to a certain standard at work, and to a different standard among their peers, there was striking disagreement among the participants on exactly how much people felt pulled in two opposite directions by this. As usual, the sample was divided more or less in two in their opinions. About half felt the effect was quite trivial, and the other half felt it was very important. A greater surprise, however, was that among those who resented being pressed to conform, almost all expressed resentment at other Blacks who accused them of "selling out" or "wanting to be white." They expressed very little resentment toward employers for requiring or expecting grammatical, non-slang speech or professional behavior at work. (see Table 20)

Pressure to conform at work. Only about half of the participants felt as though there was any pressure from work to behave differently than they otherwise might. James, Bryant, Charles, and Marcus mentioned no such feeling. As James put it, "if they did [expect different behavior] they

ain't never told me about it." The others commented that they behaved at work just like they spoke and behaved everywhere else. However, Simon, Dwight, Ray, Talbot, and Alex reported it as fairly common and completely natural that different behavior was expected at work. They typically saw the behavior expected of them less as racial behavior, and more as simply being professional.

Several people offered the opinion that at work you were simply expected to talk grammatically or properly, even if that was not the way you talked with your friends. It seemed natural to be expected to not talk "street" while at work. Even people who reported talking at work far differently than they talked at home did not object to this. Asked if he found the expectation uncomfortable, Talbot said, "No. You don't have to go in there using slang words, you know. You just come in there proper, talking just like I'm talking to you. You're not going in there using street slang, but that doesn't mean you are changing yourself." Dwight bragged of a time when a friend of his called his workplace by chance, and did not recognize his voice until he threw in a little slang for fun. Dwight was quite proud of his ability to talk professionally when he wanted to. Ray reported viewing it as a natural expectation of professional behavior. Simon spoke of actually preferring to behave professionally in order to avoid fitting his employers' stereotypes of a low-income African American male.

The responses of these men did not fit one of the hypotheses of this study, that the men would resent being expected to behave at work in ways different than they were accustomed to behaving in other places. Only one person (described below) reported feeling as though a work site was asking him to behave in ways that felt unnatural, or felt as though he was being asked to pretend to be something he was not. No one described resenting being asked to behave more like a typical White person, and to give up styles more typical of Blacks. As noted above, the people interviewed tended not to frame the issue as one of "acting White" or "acting Black," but as one of being

professional. Simon explicitly said that he did not like hearing the issue framed as one of acting "White" or "Black," but preferred to define it in other terms.

The one person who reported resenting a job's demand for conformity was Alex. In this case he was clearly told to conform in grooming, not speech. Although he was asked to conform in order to get a job, it is not clear that he was being held to a certain racial or cultural standard. He was simply told to use more conventional grooming.

A: Now I'll be, like, "forget it," and I'll sport my little crazy look. (laughs) Make it wet, dread it, and go, let it hang down. I mean my hair was shorter than this months ago-
P: Talking about your hair, do employers get up tight about-
A: Yes! Whooooo, whooooo, yeah!
P: OK, tell me.
A: When I applied at (grocery store), I had this hairstyle, like over to the side. It was not long, it was just nice and cut, and I had it dyed right here at the tip (indicating the back).
P: Died what color?
A: Blond. I mean it was coooooool. I went and applied for a job. It was like this, like a fire color, straight this color, orangey-yellow. It was orange down to there and grew up to yellow, bright yellow. It was cooool. I went in and applied for a job. They told me I had to cut this off.
P: Cut the yellow part off?
A: Yeah! No, this job is not that important to me. I am not going to cut my hair for no one. If you don't accept me as an employee- I'll come in dressed neat, neat appearance, I mean, intelligent. I mean, you can't ask for nothing better than that. "You have to cut that off before I'll hire you." I said, "Well, you just won't be hiring me then." I said, "I don't want to seem rude, or all straight ghetto or nothing, but it is not based on my hair."

Alex went on to say:

A: He don't want no worker. He want someone- He wants to make someone, just make them out of his own thing. Out of his own kit. This is the store kit. This is my kit. This is what I'm making.

Alex's story was complex, and open to multiple interpretations. At one level Alex was refusing to conform to get a job, refusing to give up a personal grooming statement that he really liked. The store manager may or may not have demanded that a White male cut off a similar tendril of hair, dyed blond. But employers routinely demand some conformity in dress or grooming.

Uniforms, ties, skirts, and hair codes are completely unexceptional. At a slightly more subtle level, Alex's story is a story of having someone tell him what to do. It is likely that employers value obedience, and they may be wary of those who choose to flaunt non-conforming styles. Non-conformity implies an assertion of individuality, an overt assertion that one chooses not to be controlled by standard expectations of dress and grooming. When hiring employees for a rather conventional job, an employer might rightly be wary of someone who feels it is important to show that he prefers to defy convention.

Alex might have been a first-rate employee, blond tail and all, but the employer's first impression of him was of a non-conforming young man who would not agree to change his unusual grooming in order to get a job. A potential employer could interpret that in a variety of ways. One fairly clear interpretation is that the job being sought is lower on Alex's priority list than his hair style. It is not clear from this interaction whether Alex would have been uncompliant in other ways as an employee, or whether he would have had other power struggles with his boss, but these things might cross an employers mind during an interaction such as this one. The possibly unavoidable conflict is that employers want obedience; they want people who will carry out tasks under their direction, and it is likely that proud young men find it irritating to have someone demand obedience.

Pressure to conform from peers. The men in the sample disagreed markedly over the amount of conformity expected by peers. Some talked of being repeatedly stung by comments from peers, who were saying such things as "want-to-be-White," or "sell out." Others thought that this type of pressure was rare and trivial.

Marcus, John, Bryant, and James felt little press to conform to different standards with friends than at work. Marcus saw a fair amount of self-segregation, people hanging out with others of their own color. But he also saw a fair amount of voluntary social integration. He was one of at least four

participants who have described the racial integration of Champaign street gangs. Asked directly about Blacks teasing each other with lines like, "want-to-be-White," he said that he had seen it a couple of times, but he felt that it was quite rare, and not a strong influence on anyone's behavior. John, Bryant, and James expressed similar sentiments. All three said that peer pressure to behave or speak a certain way was negligible. Their reactions to certain questions, however, did not always support this claim. For those who minimized the effect of peer pressure, I often asked, "What if you were driving through the neighborhood with country music cranked up on your car stereo?" All four of the men mentioned above laughed at the question. Marcus said, "they'd probably ask what I was listening to, but it really wouldn't matter that much." Bryant also said it would not matter, but James said that you would probably be told to "turn that shit off." He talked as though it would be part joking, with more camaraderie than ostracism to it. Even so, it is notable that for all these men the very idea of playing country music was absurd enough to draw a laugh. That suggests that even if they would feel comfortable defying a convention, the convention was pervasive and well-understood.

For these men who were aware of behaving differently at work, the ambivalence and resentment typically occurred when peers gave them a hard time about behaving in ways that imply efforts toward success. These patterns are discussed below. Unlike some other issues on which opinions differ, there was a clear pattern in this case regarding who felt the most torn about expectations at work and among peers. The conflict is felt most keenly by those with the highest aspirations, and the highest level of academic success. Simon, Ray, and Dwight were the three who said the most about it, and all three had attended college, and had plans to continue college.

As mentioned above, those in the sample who most noticed censure from other Blacks were also those with the highest educational attainment and aspirations. In addition to their comments,

several key informants, Black undergraduates and graduate students at the U of I described similar experiences. Perhaps the most detailed description of these types of experiences came from Simon:

S: As a kid, you would hear the term. The first time I heard it was at _____ middle school. I was on the honor roll, never was off. Straight A's every year. I remember the first time I heard it - seventh grade. And she- one of the kids that said it, "oh, you're, you're a wanna-be-White." I'm like, "what does that mean?" I went home and asked my mom. I kind of knew it was something bad.

His mother told him that the other kids were just jealous, and mean to anyone who wasn't doing what they were doing.

S: And I always thought that was so unfair. That especially your own race, because when I was brought up, it was the PUSH, everyone, especially Blacks should stick together. Because there is so much racism and discrimination out there. I mean, how can you fight something if you're not all unified? . . . It hurt me in a way. And after that I would hear certain things. Many kids were not really scared of me, but they were- I was a mean looking kid. You know, then I knew I had to look mean so no one talked to me. . . . I'd hear "want-to-be-White," and I'd look around to see who said it. And they always- those who lacked the will to succeed in school would always try to use it as a scapegoat, that you're trying to be White. It's not the White way; It's the right way, education is. Like I said, education is an equalizer of discrimination. And it's hard to put you on the back of the bus when you're the best on the bus.

Another incident was far more recent, occurring in college.

S: Or better yet I have a friend I haven't seen in years and I saw her in (college) my last semester. And I came out and said, "Well, how are you doing," and da da da. She's like, "What's wrong with the way you are talking?" I'm like, "huh?" She didn't say it, but I knew what she meant.

Dwight has this to say about it:

D: People will call me White, or, "you talk White just like your sister." No, I'm talking proper because this is the way you talk to people. This is the way you get it done.
P: Do Blacks sometimes give each other a hard time if they're talking too proper?
D: Yeah, they always want to ridicule each other. That's another one of their problems. They want to change, but yet they don't want to be the only one trying to change.

Simon reported feeling similar pressure about his musical preferences, and worrying about how others would react to his tastes:

S: I was scared for four years to tell anyone Black that I listened to classical music. And I love

metal. I was scared for years to tell anyone that I was listening to metal, or classic rock. And especially going through a Black neighborhood. I would be really scared! When I first got in my car, there was a really good jam that came on, I think it was Led Zeppelin. It was a really good oldie.

P: And you kind of rolled up your windows? Turned it down?

S: Yeah. No, it was too hot to roll up my windows, because I don't have an air conditioner. So I turned off the stereo and I put in a tape. And I turned IT up. You know, driving through the neighborhood, through the west side of town, going toward Urbana. Then I'd take it out and see if the jam was still on and drive through.

Simon went on to describe the conflict of being pulled to do one thing among his friends, and another thing in work settings. He felt that the best solution was to be able to say, "this is who I am. If you don't like this, forget it. Because I'm still going to do what I have to to succeed." He noted, however, that it would be hard to acquire this confidence unless your family really supported you in this approach. His mother had told him about having similar experiences herself. She had been angered and saddened by them. It was clear from the way Simon described his own experiences that he felt hurt and torn about these things even though his family did support him.

Simon clearly expressed many of the ideas advanced by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), richly illustrating the ideas with examples from his own life. He was clearly talking about ideas that he genuinely believed. However, later in the same interview we talked of a sociology class which had fascinated him in college, and it turned out that he had actually read Fordham and Ogbu (1986), as well as a number of other works in a similar vein. It is quite significant that he agreed with those authors' conclusions so strongly, but it is not surprising that he described the ideas somewhat more elaborately than his peers.

Another aspect of the peer pressure that particularly irritated several people in the study is the experience of being called a "sell out." Dwight, Ray, and Talbot all discuss this. Dwight described it this way:

D: They call this sell-out if you are with a lot of White people or if you're talking White. You a

> sell out. But no. To classify a sell-out is a Black person who thinks they're above the rest of the Black people, above being Black. That's a sell out, for the simple fact is, you're never above being Black. If you're Black, you're Black. You're Black for life. You're Black 'til you die, then you turn darker! (laughs) But you should never forget where you came from, and where your people came from. And once you forget that you are classified as a sell-out. But they will call you a sell-out just 'cause you got a white girlfriend, or you got a lot of white friends. Cause I been a sell-out. Me and Charles are sell-outs. If they classify us as sell-outs then that's what I'll be because I have white friends.

Ray on the same topic:

R: A sell out is basically someone who comes up from the bottom, works their way to the top, but gives no credit to where they came from. You know what I'm sayin'? If they makin' X amount of dollars, they stop hanging with the Blacks. They have nothing else to do with the Blacks, and then they don't-
T: Stop talking Black, and start acting White.
R: It's a cross-over, you know. They forget who they are.

Dwight, Ray, and Talbot all spoke resentfully of being called a sell-out, and all three offered definitions of what it means to be one. All three identified themselves as Black with some sense of pride, and all defined being a sell-out in such a way that it clearly did not apply to them. It is notable that all of them implied that sell-outs do exist, and that they resented Blacks whom they viewed as sell-outs, but they themselves were stung and resentful at the fact that some other Blacks saw them that way.

Parental Advice on Participating

In designing this study it seemed useful to explore the way that ideas about race are discussed and passed on within families or among friends. I had assumed that the men in the study, although early in their own working careers, would have heard stories and advice about racial issues in the workforce from family and friends. Surprisingly, very few participants reported race being discussed much at home. Many of the men talked of racial issues being mentioned briefly, or not at all. Many said that their parents had never talked about racial issues in the abstract, or told stories of their own racially loaded experiences at work. Jessie and Ray reported that their parents really

never said anything about it. Comparing his parents to Talbot's mother, Ray said, "I guess they really haven't walked down that path that his mom has been through. You know, that's good. But if they have I guess it wasn't bad enough to bring to my attention because it really wasn't spoke upon." John reported only that his father told of some racist experiences in the military many years ago. Bryant noted that his grandmother talked of how things used to be in the South.

B: My grandma says she ran into some crazy stuff. Like you can't get in this line and stuff like that. Go to your own water fountain, and go back where you came from. Stuff like that. Separate drinking fountains in the South.

Both Bryant and John reported getting the impression from the stories that the discrimination their relatives talked about was in the past. As Bryant put it, "they told me things was hard back then, but it's OK now." Charles' mother told him that he could expect to encounter racist people, and possibly racial slurs. "All my mom ever told me was that it's just words, and you're going to find people like that, so just ignore 'em. Ignore 'em and go about your business."

Interestingly, Marcus's parents warned him to expect racial bias, but he had not experienced it and did not expect to:

M: Well, they told me, like, if I was more qualified for a job than the next man they'll probably give it to the next man because of my color. And I never really ran into it. That's really- I can remember that being said. And the rest of it, I just hear about it and never experienced none of it.

Only two men in the study spoke of their parents talking extensively about race. In both cases it was their mothers, and in both cases the mothers warned them extensively to expect racism. Talbot's mother said the following:

T: She told me, "Wherever you go there's always going to be racism. And every job you get, there is going to be people like that." That's what she said. You know, "Don't joke with them. Don't play with them. Just go to work. And when they cross that line, you make sure you tell them. You make sure you put them in line, you know. Because if you don't they'll keep doing it and keep doing it."

P: Oh, so the kind of thing is if you don't stand up for yourself, you're just going to have it in

your face all the time.

T: Yeah. They're going to keep doing it until you put them in check or in line, you know. Then they are going to back off, and you don't take no mess, make them back off. So, she told me all kinds of stuff that I told you previously. She basically just told me to keep your guards up. Don't really get too involved with the people you work with. When you get off, just keep that front. And I've found that everything she said is perfectly true, you know? Seeing what happened to me over there. You don't really understand it when your mom's telling you, but when something comes up and you see everything that she told you, then it all falls into order. Then you believe it.

Simon's mother was also quite outspoken. This passage builds on the one quoted above, in which she spoke of the North having "foxes" and the South "wolves."

S: My mother's uncle was hung by the Klan.
P: Really!?
S: Uh-huh. Her uncle was hung by the Klan for being a trouble maker. In the South, she's like, "they will come out and get you. In the North you never know who's your real friend or not. Even though they may know that slavery is wrong, they will never find you equal to them, never!" And I was like, "What's she talking about?" You know, I'm a kid. I never really saw it as a kid, one on one with the kids. But as you get older, I think what she was articulating was what she was dealing with. Maybe my mom made a mistake by saying "Whites" when she should have said "some."

And on another occasion:

S: My mother was a racist in a way. When I was a kid I <u>thought</u> she was a racist, that's what I was trying to say. She was saying, "Simon, you look out. The Whites, they'll get you. If you let them, they'll get you." And I would pick up on things like that, or when we would talk about certain things that would come up, "Simon, a White person will <u>never</u> find you equal."

Both Talbot and Simon spoke of never fully understanding their mothers' views until they were in the workforce themselves, and perceiving racial bias in their own work environments.

<u>Stereotypes</u>

For some of the men, part of the experience of interacting with Whites on the job and elsewhere involved trying to prove that the initial negative assumptions made by others were wrong. The men in the study reported feeling as though they were often combating stereotypes of what others expect young Black men to be like. There was little clear consensus about which stereotypes

are the most common. Some men reported encountering one, some reported finding another, and some reported none at all. Since stereotyping was not a topic in the original questionnaire, not everyone was asked about it, and it is likely that those who said nothing about this issue would have had more to say if asked directly. The discussion here is based on the times when the topic arose spontaneously in conversations about work or about racial issues.

John, who reported that most areas of racial dynamics were not a problem, does note that prospective employers seemed suspicious of young Black men. He thought employers assumed young Blacks were drug dealers. "Some people tell me I look like I'm a drug dealer." He could not account for that except by his race. He had the feeling that employers followed their hunches, even if there was little to support them, and "they just hire somebody else or something." Derrick noted that "most people tell me I look dangerous." His size may have had something to do with that, but it was unlikely to account for all of it. Dwight spoke of the difficulty of overcoming people's first impressions in order to get a job: "You have to work twice as hard trying to get the job than you do while you got the job."

The stereotypes people mentioned that seemed to most interfere with getting jobs fell into two broad categories. The first was the stereotype that Black men were not honest, or would steal. The second was the stereotype that Black men were not very smart, or were lazy, and thus would not do a good job.

The stereotype that Blacks are not honest. The discussion above already described times when Derrick and Charles felt that guards were assuming they would steal from stores. Both of them also spoke of feeling as though others expected them to steal at work. Charles spoke of not wanting to be given a key to the safe so he would not be suspected if money was missing. Derrick, as noted above, talked of feeling as though coworkers expected the worst of him until they had been with him

for a while. Later, when asked whether he would expect it to be easier to work in a predominantly White setting or a predominantly Black setting, Derrick's answer revealed that he held the same negative stereotype that he finds in his fellow employees:

D: You know, to tell you the truth, I prefer to have more Whites on the job, because, you know, any time a Black person gets a job they turn around and steal from the job.
P: Think so?
D: I know a couple of Black people that stole from the job. Cases of meat. Cases of fries. I told them it ain't that serious. You want that stuff you just wait for your check and buy some.
P: And you get a sense that it's more likely that a, that a Black employee would do that more than a White employee?
D: It's hard to say. They both do it. I've seen it so many times. I even seen people from [fast food restaurant] steal from the safe.

In a later interview I quoted what he had said and asked again whether it seemed to him that Black employees were more likely to steal than White employees.

D: Yes, 'cause I seen it done before.

He went on to describe several times when he had seen Black employees steal, and as he thought about it he also mentioned two times when he had seen White employees steal, but he did say that he had seem it more from Blacks than from Whites.

Taken together, Derrick's responses form an odd paradox. He spoke of resenting it greatly when security guards follow him, and of refusing to go back to stores where that had happened. He spoke of expecting to have to prove himself at a new job, and expecting that others might form negative assumptions about him before they know him. And he described a strongly negative stereotype which he held of other Blacks on the job. One would expect these perceptions to be a source of ambivalent and conflicting emotions as he dealt with his own reactions and the reactions of others.

The stereotype that Blacks are not smart, or not diligent. Dwight talked a great deal about trying to create a favorable first impression, especially by trying to be articulate, and of trying to

escape the perception that Blacks are only qualified for menial jobs.

D: Being Black takes a lot more effort physically and mentally. And the reason I say physically is because you have to work penny ante jobs, working fast food restaurants just to build up a work history. And nine times out of ten it's the wrong work history, for the simple fact is, Black people don't want to be labeled as "all he's good for is flipping burgers, or he's good to mop this place," and stuff like that. Black people want to make a mark in computers, in accounting, in the big corporate world too. I mean, our brain size is just the same as anybody else's. And our abilities, if we are taught, if we have the skills, are the same as anybody else's. But we got to work twice as hard.

The man who spoke most extensively about overcoming the stereotype of Blacks having low intelligence was Simon. Simon spoke of that stereotype as being like something sitting on his shoulder that he had to repeatedly dislodge:

S: Every time I- Every class I attend, when you have discussion, it's always like it's on your shoulder. You know, it's over your head and you have to push it off. You have to show them that you're not this and that, and that stereotype is just a small minority. So you have to prove yourself. And if you don't, even if you have your education and so forth, if you have, if you show maybe one or two of the traits of what that stereotype is, you will get left behind. I believe that. I really do believe that. And I think that plays a large part in what you will get. What they will give you. Put it that way.

Simon felt that prospective employers discriminated based on how a young Black man talked, and that a "Black accent" worked against you.

S: A stereotype begins to come up that you're uneducated. Uneducated. No knack for talking without using a slang term. It becomes a stereotype of, I hate to say this, but a lot of ignorant people would say the term of a "common Black."

Simon spoke of some friends of his who were bright, but not especially articulate, or who spoke with an African American accent. He felt that such people were consistently underestimated and "left behind." Simon also felt that in addition to facing the stereotype of not being as smart, that Blacks were also typically stereotyped as "lazy," and that one had to prove both that one was smart, and that one would work hard on the job. This includes such signs of responsibility as showing up on time. He spoke of one job at which people actually commented in surprise on his consistent punctuality,

and implied that his race was the reason they had not expected it of him.

It should be noted that both Simon and John, as they talked of stereotypes, mentioned that it was not always clear which stereotypes went with race and which went with social class. Simon noted that working class White friends of his also got directed toward vocational classes, and neglected by guidance personnel, apparently based on the assumption that they would grow up to be working class like their parents.

For African Americans, participating in the work environment typically means participating in a cultural context which comes with a set of meanings attached. It is a cultural context which it is possible to "sell out" to, one which is ambivalently experienced as a source of success, and a place where one may lose one's identity. It may be a place of negative judgements and stereotypes, and may be a place which reawakens old tensions surrounding the roles played by Blacks and Whites in the United States. Different people emphasize these tensions differently, and for some men in this study such tensions were rarely in the foreground. Others found that these issues colored their work experience deeply, and affected their relationships with other African Americans as well.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This discussion explores and synthesizes findings relevant to the theories described in the introduction, and also discusses the implications of findings that emerged during the study which were not clearly anticipated prior to conducting the fieldwork. It also presents some strategies that may be effective, both individual strategies used by the men in their workforce participation, and intervention strategies that may assist men like those studied in their searches for satisfying working lives.

The Effect of Methodology on the Findings

Within-Group Variation

One of the most striking aspects of the men's perceptions was the many times that they expressed very different perceptions of the same phenomena. This occurred with most every topic discussed. This study had always intended to capture and describe multiple points of view, but the extent of the variation was surprising, especially since all the men in the sample were drawn from a fairly narrow demographic group. All were low-income, African American men, aged 18 to 21, from the same town. The variation within this group brings to mind the common finding in ANOVA studies that within-group variance often exceeds between-group variance. A benefit of the qualitative approach used in this study is the ability to illuminate and emphasize the variety found in a demographically homogeneous group.

A strong conclusion of this study is that there is no typical young African American male, and no typical JTPA participant. The men in the study varied widely in their workforce participation, their school participation, and their opinions on almost every topic discussed. The few times when they agreed can be taken as a rather strong consensus, because disagreement was by far the more typical reaction. People agreed that the local job market was not very welcoming. On most other

matters the men in the sample held strongly diverging views.

This diversity has a number of implications. If the men were quite different from one another, they would be likely to follow different routes through the workforce. Their aspirations were different, and if they needed any assistance to reach their aspirations, they would be likely to need different forms of assistance. This is consistent with Rappaport's argument (1981) that complex and paradoxical problems require multiple simultaneous solutions, because one size does not fit all. Any single approach is likely to be helpful to only a particular sub-group of the population of interest.

The existence of such a strong diversity of opinion and experience also implies that if a theoretical model is to represent the experience of these men accurately, the model must allow for the likelihood of different patterns in different sub-groups. The theoritical model presented in the introduction to this study suffers from just this flaw. The model was intended as a hypothetical representation of the experience of African Americans in the workforce (Figure 2). Some parts of that model refer to historical or economic factors about which there is wide consensus. However, in all of those areas where the model hypothesizes African Americans having certain feelings, opinions, or interpretations about their participation in the workforce, the model fails to capture the diversity of perception in the sample. It is not a trivial fault that the model implies a universality of opinion that does not actually exist. There is substantial support for many of the ideas outlined in the model, but even if the model captures the most common set of opinions it fails to capture the complexity of the issues involved. It is clear that no model could fit the experience of the men in the sample unless it allowed for multiple interpretations of the same phenomena.

The research on aspirations and status attainment discussed in Chapter 1 provides an example of a model which describes general patterns emerging from the study of very large numbers of

people (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Kerchoff, 1984; Figure 1 above). Although useful in understanding the trends across large numbers of people, this model fails to adequately convey the diversity within the group, and implicitly suggests a within-group homogeneity that is not actually present.

The model hypothesized for the present study was derived from the status attainment model, and from other models which represent trends across large groups of people. The problem with adapting these models for the present study is that they do not capture the individual and small-group differences which become apparent when one takes a closer look at a much smaller group of people. In spite of the fact that virtually every idea in the model was expressed at some point by men in the study, it would be erroneous to say that the results of the study support the model. The results of the study suggest a practice of developing theoretical models which deliberately try to capture the competing perceptions of naturally occurring sub-groups. Even within these sub-groups any model is a hypothetical approximation of the ideas expressed, and fits no one perfectly.

One implication is that theoretical models used in large-sample quantititive research, such as that of Burke and Hoelter (1988) must be adapted carefully when they are used in small-sample qualitative research, such as the present study. Small-sample qualitative research like the present study can offer insight into the variety of patterns and pathways concealed within the larger trends.

A particularly interesting phenomenon observed in this study is that individuals and sub-groups often developed logical and internally consistent ways of understanding and reacting to their environment. The coping strategies used by different men to succeed in the workforce were a logical outgrowth of their perceptions of how the workforce operates, and what they expect from those around them. This is explored in greater detail below.

Implications for Workforce Participation

Increasingly Limited Opportunity

In the introduction it was hypothesized that the job market might be perceived as unrewarding. Ogbu (1978; 1988; 1991) argues that it may be unrewarding because of racial discrimination; census and labor data suggest that it may be unrewarding because of the widespread loss of middle-income blue collar jobs. As noted above, there is also evidence that the local labor market had unusually many low paying service jobs.

Whatever the combination of reasons behind it, it was clear that the men in the study had a strong perception of limited opportunities in the local job market. Opportunities were apparently more limited than most men expected. The military was less of an opportunity than expected. Decent factory jobs were harder to come by than expected. The executive director of the JTPA and the mayor of Champaign both confirmed that Champaign-Urbana never had a large base of industrial or manufacturing jobs, but recent years had seen hundreds of industrial jobs lost, with the closing of several facilities, and the primary area of job growth had indeed been low-paying jobs in the service sector. The JTPA executive commented that 15 to 20 years ago the local industrial base was sufficient that men his age leaving high school appeared to have far less trouble finding good blue collar jobs.

The experience of most of the men in the study was one of repeated failure in their attempts to find and hold satisfying jobs. The number of fast food jobs held conflicts sharply with the almost universal preference to avoid such jobs, indicating that many job searches failed to reach the goal of finding something better. The frustration expressed by some of these men, especially the ones with partners and children, is consistent with the theory of role strain, described by Bowman (1984; 1989). They were experiencing the struggle of trying to provide adequately for themselves and their families on wages of approximately $180 per week. Although no one explicitly labeled himself a failure, the men did express the frustration of being stuck in a situation where they had not found

it possible to reach their goals.

Drug Dealing Opportunities Change the Job Market

The relationship between legal and illegal ways of earning money is a part of this study which deserves close scrutiny. Dealing drugs is an occupation with strong positive incentives and strong negative consequences. Both are quite apparent, and it seems that people make the decision to deal with an awareness of the pros and cons. All of the men in the study who had dealt drugs had also worked legal jobs before, after, and sometimes during their periods of drug dealing. There was a methodological artifact in this sample, in that JTPA participants would automatically be people who work legally at least some of the time, so it was impossible to decide from this sample whether it was common or uncommon for local drug dealers to work legally as well as dealing. Participants descriptions implied that such a pattern was probably not rare, but that it was also common to deal drugs without participating in the legal workforce.

The ready opportunity to deal drugs apparently changed the way that people participated in the legal workforce, offering an easy way to escape unpleasant jobs, financial binds, and the motivating poverty associated with unemployment. Because it was relatively easy to do a small amount of drug dealing on the spur of the moment, it would be easy to return to dealing even if one had formed an intention not to do it anymore. For example, if a legal job seemed promising at first, but was disappointing later, there was a ready alternative to enduring it and hoping it improved. If a job became boring, or a personality conflict arose, there was no necessity to put up with it. A couple of men in the sample indicated that they turned to drug dealing in circumstances like these.

It would be easy to find fault with the men who dealt drugs. Clearly some of them had a more general inclination toward illegal activity and toward violence. One could frame their drug dealing

as a result of their character flaws, and argue that through legal work they might develop greater patience, perseverance, and responsibility. The men clearly bear some of the responsibility for the lives which they are leading. However, one need not hold them blameless in order to recognize that as a group they were facing a rougher economy than cohorts who came before them. It was not their fault that they grew up in a time and place where decent jobs were hard to come by. If some of their peers succeeded through hard work in school, or through diligence or good luck on the job, that does not change the fact that their cohort faced unusually bleak prospects. More men in their cohort were destined to fare poorly, because more were likely to be unable or unwilling to meet the greater demands of the workplace. Essentially, every time one raises the threshold of what is required for job success, more fail, or find alternate ways to cope with the situation.

Conversations with older men in Chicago, about factory work there in the 1960's, make it clear that lucrative jobs were easy to come by then. During that time one could quit a job or lose a job and find another with little effort. Like the current drug economy, this meant that workers need not tolerate jobs they did not like, need not work hard for low wages, and need not acquire extensive academic skills in order to succeed. The job market did not demand excellence of everyone. Similarly, the military did not demand excellence, and was seen as a second chance for poor students and even for those with discipline problems. Those opportunities were not available to these men, but drug dealing opportunities were abundantly available. Men who might have turned to one of those legal opportunities in the 1960's found that one of the few alternatives to poverty wages in the 1990's is illegal work. It is worth noting that even one of the most successful men in the sample, who had never gotten into trouble, spoke sympathetically about understanding why people would deal drugs if there were no good jobs around. As he put it, "you got to keep a place to stay."

Further Implications of Race

The responses of men in this study indicated that it was not easy to be sure of the exact influence of racial factors in the workplace. Not only was there little agreement about whether race was important at all, those who did see race as important often found themselves trying to interpret ambiguous situations, trying to determine the motives of others who may have deliberately concealed any biases that they had. In the total group of interviews there were enough descriptions of racially loaded incidents to make it clear that such factors did come up, and that did affect people's careers. In a number of instances where men in the sample changed jobs, the goal of the job change was to escape an environment that was perceived as racially unfair. Racial factors caused incidents of considerable discomfort, anger, and suspicion, and some men saw these factors as quite central to their workforce experience.

At the same time, most men in the sample did not portray race as the primary factor determining the outcome of their work experience. If it is possible to draw a single conclusion from this diversity of opinion, that conclusion might be that the men see race as one factor among several that account for their difficulties in the workplace. Without minimizing the role of race, it seems that race is emphasized more by some of the theorists described earlier in this paper than it was by most men in the sample (Bowman, 1984; 1989; Ogbu, 1978; 1988; 1991; Triandis, 1976).

Race and Education

The men in this study have a wide variety of perceptions of the importance of education in their lives. Some see no point in a high school diploma or a GED, while others see a bachelor's degree or a law degree as the most reliable way to occupational success. Ogbu argues that Blacks do poorly in school because they do not believe that they will be rewarded for education in the same way that Whites are rewarded for education. He argues that more educated Blacks actually experience more discrimination than less educated Blacks, and that education brings fewer financial

reward to Blacks than it does to similarly educated Whites. These arguments were critiqued in Chapter 1, with data showing that education tends to bring substantial gain in earning power to Blacks as well as Whites. However, it is notable that the more educated men in this sample were far more keenly aware of racial issues and of discrimination than those who were less educated. It would require more research to draw this conclusion with certainty, but in this study it appeared that education thrust men into more racially loaded roles, both with Whites and with members of their own race. This might be because the more educated men were competing and advancing in various workplaces, and were beginning to notice issues like whether Blacks were promoted over Whites, and whether the ladder of opportunity was there for them as well. Although Ogbu emphasizes the financial rewards, his theory hinges on the idea that African Americans may be less drawn to the life that education opens up for them than Whites are to to life that education wins for them. The interpersonal rewards of education, in terms of status and peer respect, do seem to be far lower among African Americans, and it may be that education also propels African Americans into more difficult racial environments. These things would be strong cause for ambivalence.

It is worth noting that many men in the sample did express, both in words and behavior, the idea that getting more education is not high on their priority list. Some clearly said that they saw education as not worth the trouble, or as irrelevant to their goals. Although some of them said that a high school degree was good to have, it was not clear that the local job market strongly rewarded a high school degree.

Mickelson (1990) found evidence that people are not likely to act on the abstract belief that education is a good thing, but are more likely to act if they specifically believe that more education will benefit them in their future lives. Some men in the sample noted that the local job market would not offer many more opportunities to them even if they had more education. One strongly expressed

the idea that anything short of a bachelor's degree was not worth much, and a bachelor's degree was probably out of reach for all but a few of these men. In other words, these men may have perceived that the next level of education which was within their reach (a GED for some, community college for others) would bring them few tangible rewards in the local market.

Pressure to Conform

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argue that Black youth do not encourage each other to try to succeed, and even discourage success with accusation of "wanting to be white." This idea received considerable support in the present study. The men in the sample who had been the most successful in school consistently reported that other Blacks sometimes discouraged their efforts at school success. Three of the four men who had been to college talked of being called a "sell out," and one spoke extensively of other comments, such as "want-to-be-White" and "what's wrong with the way you are talking?" The participants' perceptions of this were strongly supported by the African American informants, who were also likely to have done well academically. This experience seems relatively common among successful African Americans.

The men who were less successful in school were far less likely to have experienced this, although some reported seeing it happen on occasion. Men who were more successful reported that at times they were harassed simply for being successful in school, although they also reported criticism from peers for associating with Whites to much, or for speaking with too little of a Black accent. As mentioned above, the men who talked of being labeled a "sell out" did not think that description fit them. They too spoke of resenting Blacks who stopped associating with other Blacks, or who began pretending they had never been poor, but they clearly expressed the view that merely being successful was not "selling out." Two or three complained that the very act of criticizing others who were successful created a divisive lack of unity, when they felt that Blacks should

support each other. These results support Fordham and Ogbu's description of these phenomena. The fact that many people in the sample did not report experiencing this was offset by the finding that those who are more successful almost universally did.

The finding of men being pulled to conform to two mutually exclusive standards supports the hypothesis raised in the introduction that African Americans may experience conflict and ambivalence in trying to fill the roles expected of them. Apparently those conflicts increase as one tries to participate or excel in higher-status educational or occupational roles. Most men in the sample who reported these experiences talked of having concluded that their peers were mistaken, that efforts toward education and success do not constitute "selling out." However, it cannot be easy, especially in the adolescent years, for individuals to reject the beliefs of their peers. At any age this process would require the maturity and confidence to tolerate ambivalence, and to maintain one's beliefs in the face of pressure.

The Social Construction of the Racial Environment

The wide variation in the men's perceptions of race supports the notion that many of the racial concepts studied here are not objective ideas about what exists in the world, but subjective interpretations, influenced by social consensus. The men in the sample have come to very different conclusions about race. Bryant spoke of racism existing in his grandmother's day, but could not think of a single way that it affects things in modern times. Simon found issues of race central to his interactions with both Blacks and Whites. Derrick saw many people holding negative stereotypes of Blacks, but believed that they would see him differently after they had been around him a while. These men share much of the same cultural environment, of public schools, the media, and the town. These environments apparently allowed for rather extreme variations in perceptions of race. Some of the variance seemed related to various families' habits of discussing and

interpreting race. Even noting that effect, however, it seemed largely unclear how individual men's perceptions about race came to develop as they did.

An assumption which guided some of the plans for this study was that the men would have heard quite a bit about racial situations from family members and older Blacks by the time that they entered the workforce. This assumption proved to be largely incorrect. Participants were asked what they had heard about race and about workforce participation from older relatives and friends, and most reported that such things were rarely discussed. Their responses did no provide evidence of a common set of constructions and interpretations about race.

Only two men talked of hearing extensively about racial issues from their parents, and in both cases most of the conversations occurred after the men had begun encountering racial situations themselves, and talked about them with parents. For these two men, it seemed as though their perceptions were strongly affected by these conversations, and by the experiences which led them to initiate the conversations. A far more common experience was for parents and grandparents to say little or nothing about racial issues, or to mention some general things and emphasize that they were in the past. This omission was all the more striking because almost all of the men in the sample had parents or grandparents who migrated north from the deep South, typically Mississippi. Almost all of the men had extensive contact with family members who lived in the South during the Jim Crow era. There can be no doubt that a great many stories of southern racial dynamics could have been told if the family members had been so inclined.

Informants, when I talked with them about this omission, raised the possibility that parents wanted to spare their children the knowledge of such painful experiences. As one put it, the parents have made sacrifices themselves, by moving north or working for civil rights, so that their children will not have to endure those things. Having done that, they did not want their children to have to

experience that pain even indirectly, through stories of times past. A couple of informants noted that in their families as well, such issues were rarely discussed.

In addition to hearing little verbal lore, most men in the study appeared relatively unfamiliar with much of African American history. (This topic came up with only about four participants, so the conclusion is based on limited data.) Some men who had read things on their own outside of school commented that the school coverage was skimpy, and emphasized the positives. They were taught about Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, but not about Malcolm X, or the pervasiveness of lynching, or the difficulty escaping from sharecropping well into this century. Ray and Talbot noted that their ideas about race had been influenced significantly by rap music. The topic of rap music was not covered with most participants, so it is unclear how common it was for rap to affect opinions, but listening to rap seemed extremely common. The question is not whether the rap perspective is widely accessable, but how different people process it. Simon's thinking was influenced by a college sociology course that covered issues of race and class, but he was apparently the only one in the sample to have taken such a course.

In summary, it appears that the diverse perceptions of race had a variety of origins. In spite of sharing various elements of background and cultural environment, ideas about race were transmitted somewhat idiosyncratically, and perceptions varied dramatically within the sample. Ideas about race appeared to be largely socially constructed and transmitted, and this process permited a number of different constructions to occur, even within a small and in some ways homogeneous sample.

Individual Solutions and Coping Strategies

The men in this study approached the working world and other situations with a variety of strategies to try to achieve their goals. Although the strategies differed from each other, generally

each one was logical and internally consistent. It will be useful to explore some of the strategies as exemplars of ways to tackle the thorny problems of race and the workforce. Rather than pick out single individuals, the discussion will explore some of the approaches used by them, and how those approaches seemed to work.

Several men adopted the strategy of assuming that they would have to prove themselves on a new job. When they started at a new work site they set out to demonstrate that they were the kind of worker that was needed there. One man, who commented on seeing people fired almost at a whim by the manager, set out to master several different jobs at the work site, figuring that the manager would soon come to think of him as someone too valuable to lose. This worked very well, and the time came when he saw people fired who had been there longer, and he was retained. His approach was not just to prove himself, but to try and make himself indispensable. Those who employed the strategy of working to prove their worth to any new employer reported that it usually worked. Even when the emphasis was on proving that one does not fit a negative racial stereotype, men reported that the effort was successful, and felt that coworkers came to see them in a very positive light.

This approach appeares to have a number of psychological consequences, both positive and negative. On the positive side, it allows the person to maintain a sense of internal control over the events on a job. As discussed above, and in Mirowsky and Ross (1990), a sense of being in control has a number of positive consequences, including motivating further effort. The belief that one can overcome racial stereotypes by proving that one does not fit them allows a feeling of personal control over even the racial biases of others.

The negative side of this approach is somewhat more subtle. There is no problem in proving that one is a good worker, but what exactly is one proving when one shows that one does not fit a

negative stereotype? One man talked explicitly about his goal of undermining that stereotype in the minds of those around him, of hoping to prove that the stereotype was not true of him, and of hoping that people would begin to question whether their negative stereotypes were true at all. He saw it as far less of a success, and perhaps even a failure if people merely decided that he was not like a "common Black," a term he disliked. He found it irritating to think that he might merely be considered an exception to an intact stereotype. There appears to be a long history of strong ambivalence among Blacks about gaining White approval by being considered different from other Blacks, being considered a "credit to one's race," or one of the ones who does not cause trouble (X, 1965). One informant, an African American graduate student, amplified this point, noting that it would be an ambivalent experience to use an approach which allowed the person you were dealing with to keep their negative racial stereotypes. It amounts to saying, "I don't care what you think, just don't think it about me."

As another coping strategy, two of the most academically successful men in the sample were also rather extreme non-conformists in their peer group. One was very popular; the other had a narrower group of friends similar to himself, but neither one expressed much personal investment in trying to be like his peers. The popular one, for example, practiced abstinence from alcohol, and was an advocate at his high school for avoiding alcohol and drugs. He saw both American society in general, and his peer group, as messed up, and commented, "how can you base yourself on a messed up society?" It is difficult to say how these two men came to be so dis-invested in the usual practices of their peers. Part of the answer may be that at some point they found themselves different, or found themselves outside of conventions, and resolved the conflict by deciding to stay that way. As one put it, "they get involved in what everybody else is thinking and trying to fit in. I really don't care. You know what I'm saying? I really don't care what people think about me."

Both of these men seemed proud of their individuality, although one did comment that he got tired of being noticed as different all the time, even if it was for excellent performance.

It is not clear how people come to be unusually good at resisting pressure from their peer group. It appears that both of these men got strong support from their families as they made their decisions about how they would do things. Both had parents who had gone to college; both families strongly encouraged education; and both men continued to live with their families as they went to college. It is not clear how others might best avoid the potentially negative influences of peers. It makes little sense to offer a general suggestion that young African Americans try not to care about the opinions of those around them, because it is not a normal human response to be indifferent to the evaluations of those one cares about. Perhaps the most reasonable approach, and one which is already widely used, is to try and develop social networks that provide close attachments and support pro-social behavior. Big brother / big sister programs, church youth groups, and many other youth programs fit this mold. A couple of the men in the study indicated that there were already multiple peer groups to choose from in local schools, some of which have a very pro-social orientation. One man indicated that among Black males at his high school, the group who were "doing it the positive way" outnumbered the ones like himself who often got into trouble. It is important that the pro-social peer groups exist, but there appears to be a strong attraction to the types of status that come with negative groups, such as gangs. JTPA personnel and others commented that many boys, both Black and White, wear gang clothing and adopt gang styles, even though they are not actually gang members. The role of the rebel, who defies authority, has long held an attraction for American adolescents, but it appears to have taken on a special significance for the current generation of African American males.

A number of men in the sample had become accustomed to using a coping strategy learned

around their peers, that of being tough and confrontive in response to a perceived challenge, in order to avoid being treated poorly in the future. As discussed above, this strategy often seemed to backfire when used in work environments, especially with supervisors. Talbot described a variation on the strategy being effective with coworkers when racial issues arose. As quoted above, his mother told him "don't joke with 'em; don't play with em." "And when they cross that line you make sure you tell 'em." He found this worked pretty well.

This strategy, of coming back in a confrontational way, has a great deal of psychological appeal to it. It seems likely to offer a sense of strength, and of control over the situation, with all the advantages described by Mirowsky and Ross (1990) from taking active control of a situation. However, jobs were often lost this way, and it seems that the strong confrontational approach seems threatening to supervisors. Some episodes described by men in this study involved the use of overt threats, making a negative response from a supervisor very likely indeed. It might be possible to avoid some of these incidents by coaching the men, in a setting such as JTPA, on strategies for resolving conflicts with employers, and on the potentially negative consequences of strong confrontation.

It is common for work relationships to involve issues of power, status, pride, and respect. Depending on personalities and interpersonal skills of the people involved, such issues can be handled sensitively or manipulatively, respectfully or punitively. Some of the "street" approaches to issues of power and respect are rather raw and undiplomatic. The approach described by men in this study involved asserting one's strength through strong confrontation, and assuming that such a show of strength would deter further threats. Employers are unlikely to respond well to employees who want to equalize the power relationship in this way.

One of the street styles described by several men in the study was that of having a reputation

for being "crazy." Charles seemed proud of having "crazy" as part of his nickname. To be "crazy" is to be so hot-tempered that one flares into violence unpredictably, or starts fights with no provovation. On the street this elicits respect, because others avoid confrontations with someone reputed to be "crazy." At a less extreme level, over half the men in the sample mentioned at some point that they "had a temper." They usually mentioned this with at least a trace of pride, implying that there was strength in their anger, and that others should treat them with respect.

Given the general lack of tolerance for strong anger in the workplace, if these men have allowed their "tempers" to blossom as an asset, they may now find them a liability. Anger control, diplomacy, and conflict resolution skills might serve them better in their work relationships. These areas could be the focus of intervention.

If companies were interested, managers could also be trained to better defuse such situations, but that would require environments in which the company really wanted to keep its employees. Some of the confrontations described in this study involved managers who appeared to enjoy being in a position of power, and it may have been inevitable that issues of control and subservience would erupt into conflict.

Implications for Intervention

Although the two fields often study similar issues, community psychology differs from sociology in that it is oriented toward social intervention, and not merely the study of social phenomena. The goal of intervention has a significant impact on the view that the researcher takes of the areas being studied. In theory, if one has no desire to intervene, one can observe a setting without being obliged to judge what elements of the setting are better or worse. For example, an anthropologist could study the practice of headhunting as merely an interesting social phenonemon. The goal of intervention dramatically changes the lens through which one views the setting. One

arrives with the explicit goal of deciding which parts of the setting would be better if they were different, and of figuring out how these things might be changed.

The goal of intervention also has strong implications for one's professional sense of success or failure in one's work. Before talking about specific intervention possibilities, this last element requires further exploration. This study has affected me as a researcher in a number of ways which have not been described up to this point. For the reader to understand my perspective on the issues described here, it is appropriate for me to briefly describe the place of this study in my professional development. As an enthusiastic newcomer to community psychology in 1986, I found myself excited and persuaded by scholars writing about the potential for positive intervention in areas such as poverty. Between 1989 and 1992 I was involved in both research and interventions in inpoverished areas of Champaign and Chicago. The Chicago intervention was the more intensive of the two, and in my opinion it went quite poorly. I began the this research project discouraged about the potential of community psychology to intervene meaningfully in areas of importance to the field.

My emotional reaction to this research has been one of deepening discouragement. I greatly enjoyed becoming acquanted with the men described here, and found it fascinating to view the world through their eyes. As an interventionist, however, this research left me with little hope. Economic and employment trends are becoming bleaker, and such trends are outside the influence of community psychology intervention. In other areas, such as housing policy and welfare policy, community psychology might be a voice in the policy debate, but these public debates appear to be gathering momentum, often with a reactionary and sometimes anti-intellectual fervor which do not make me hopeful.

Of the men in this study, the three or four who had succeeded all their lives continued to do

well. The others, the ones who really needed to get their lives back on a positive track, were in bleak situations when I last saw them. Some seemed to be failing to find a foothold, in spite of sincere effort, such as James or Derrick. These are people who could realistically do much better, if the opportunity were there. I do not see how community psychology can provide that opportunity. Others in the study continue in destructive patterns of illegal activity, violence, and siring children they do not raise. It is not clear whether these things are done out of habit, preferance, or hopelessness about the potential for change, but I do not see these men changing as a result of a program or intervention that I could devise.

The essential result of this study, and of the intervention in Chicago which preceeded it, is that I have become discouraged enough to leave the field of community psychology entirely. Both the academic study of these issues, and the work in the community to effect change, seem increasingly frustrating and unrewarding. I have chosen instead to work as a clinician, a field in which I can see positive changes occuring, and remain hopeful about my ability to facilitate them. Clearly my emotional reactions to this research have been very strong. It is not possible to say exactly how much of my discouragement came from doing this study, and how much from previous experiences, but it seems appropriate for the reader to know that at this phase I see these topics through a discouraged lens.

The interventions suggested below are ones which appear to follow logically from findings in this study. I suggest them in spite of my sense of how difficult it is to intervene successfully in these areas.

A High Risk Group

Since this study involved participants in an existing intervention, that seems the logical place to begin discussing interventions for this group. The JTPA Summer Program and Work Experience

program were designed to help young men gain a more permanent foothold in the workforce. They do that by providing a job, to allow the person to gain experience, and by teaching job skills and job habits which are intended to help participants keep jobs once they get them.

The men in this study were slightly older than is typical for the summer program, which involves a large number of 15 to 17 year olds. The men in the study had already had the chance to finish or leave school, and to try a number of occupations, both legal and illegal. Given the illegal work practiced by some of the men in the sample, it appeared that the JPTA programs offered an avenue back into the legal workforce for some men who may not have been working legally. The men who chose to try the JTPA when they have also tried drug dealing are at an important crossroads, and were deciding, perhaps more than once, whether their future would consist of legal or illegal work. One cannot assume that men who have sold drugs and then join the JTPA will never again sell drugs. However, it is clear that in working with these men the JTPA is reaching a group at extremely high risk for negative life outcomes. The present study cannot determine to what degree the JTPA may be instrumental in helping these men to a permanent place in the legal workforce, but it is clear that this group of people are in strong need of a preventative intervention which might help them. Put simply, in working with these men, the JTPA program is clearly working with a group that needs them, or needs something.

Systemic Interventions

Most men in this study seemed able to get low-paying jobs fairly easily. The fact that they had difficulty getting good jobs was partly due to the limited local job market. The interventions which might help that situation are beyond the scope of a local program, but could include things such as a higher minimum wage, and increased unionization of the local workforce. Attracting industry to town also comes to mind, but with a nationwide problem of declining blue-collar job

opportunities, having any particular factory here instead of somewhere else makes no difference in the overall situation.

Another more feasible approach might be to overhaul the vocational education track in the local schools to more specifically educate non-college-bound students to prepare them for jobs in industry. There is currently little connection between high school education and specific jobs. The connection between education and jobs could be made more overt, both by providing more information about how specific training can lead to jobs, and by setting up programs in which high school students are placed directly in jobs at graduation.

Arrange partnerships with industry to hire graduating students. By setting up partnerships with industry, so that vocationally prepared students are hired directly, it would become far more clear to students that specific efforts in school are relevant to having good jobs after graduation. This could also allow the school training to be more specifically tailored to the actual vocational skills needed. Arrangements might be made for students to work part-time during the final years of high school, and there could be explicit arrangements for certain firms to hire trained students for industrial jobs. This could add to student motivation, and make school seem far more important. In at least one town where it was implemented, the strategy of dramatically increasing the quality of technical education in the public schools has actually attracted industry to town, drawn by a skilled work force. This is not simply another way to relocate factories from one town to another, because a widespread strategy of increasing the level of worker training would be expected to produce widespread increases in American industrial productivity.

Provide more complete information about opportunities. In multiple interviews, men in this study showed signs that they did not have complete or accurate information about what to expect in the workforce. Most people did not know the credentials required by the military. Most did not

know whether various factories required high school diplomas. They also appeared not to have complete information about the jobs that were available, either locally or in other communities.

Both educational programs and job programs could help remedy this lack of information by compiling and distributing the relevant information. For example, the public schools could circulate information on typical military recruiting requirements, hiring requirements and preferences at local companies, and jobs in the local area that could be attained with various forms of specialized training. If the best factory jobs in the local area require a high school diploma, that information should be publicized.

Given that the local area has a limited industrial base, they could also emphasize sites in other cities which might hire those with specialized vocational skills, such as welders, machinists, drafts-persons, or court reporters. This would help counter the typical effect of any local environment: While immersed in any particular setting one does not become aware of the ways that the local setting differs from others unless one is explicitly told. Proper information could serve as inoculation against the perception that certain types of training go unrewarded. If welding is an extremely rare profession locally, students might need to be told that it is a perfectly feasible job alternative in Indianapolis. Relocating, though difficult, is an option some may be willing to consider, especially at the beginning of their careers. Directing students' training and aspirations only to local job opportunities seems a disservice when local opportunities are so limited.

To make the link between training and wages more concrete, sites could also publicize the average wages of people with various levels of education, and the typical wages earned by those with various types of specialized skills. This type of data could be posted on hallway bulletin boards, or included in a curriculum. Either way the effect would be for schools to better advertise the benefits of schooling. The men in the present study were making some of their decisions based

on erroneous or incomplete information about what various jobs require.

Individual Level Interventions

The basic interventions which promote education and aid people in joining the workforce already exist in a variety of forms. The emphasis here will be on how patterns observed in this study might be used to refine or improve such efforts.

Do not reward behavior that would be punished in the private sector. Participants indicated that some JTPA jobs did not hold participants to a very high standard. Lateness and absenteeism was not always punished, and sometimes when work ran short people reported sitting around. Subsequently, a number of men in this study were surprised and indignant at being fired for lateness, or for occasionally missing work. It appeared that some JTPA sites were setting a lower standard than the private sector, with negative results. Commenting on this finding, the director of the JTPA noted in 1994 that they had tightened up standards considerably in the last year, encouraging sites to hold JTPA workers to the same standards as other employees. More workers were fired for inadequate performance, after which the program coached them in what was expected, and eventually placed them at a different site.

To the extent that racial or cultural factors to play a role in the workforce, it might be possible to teach people explicitly how they might best deal with such things. As mentioned above, the possibility of teaching people better strategies for handling conflict could avert job-ending confrontations.

Ambivalence About Participating At All

There is an aspect of the JTPA and similar programs that bears further analysis. The JTPA shares a quality with other job programs, and with GED and adult education programs, that is rarely discussed. Such programs are targeted at people who have chosen to leave school, or chosen to

leave the workforce. (Naturally there may be exceptions, who do not choose to leave these settings, but choice was central for the men in this study.) Essentially these interventions are designed to give people a chance to reenter a system which they have chosen to leave.

JTPA personnel note that a large number of eligible people do not come to their programs because they have no interest in job training and job placement. People often leave school, or leave a job because they find it unpleasant and dislike it, and at the time other alternatives seem more attractive. Adolescents in particular may not make these decisions based on the best information, and the grass may look greener for short-term or ill-considered reasons.

The reasons for leaving may include wanting to avoid failure experiences, wanting to do something "cooler," or more respected by a youth subculture, wanting easy money, wanting to avoid being told what to do, or wanting to leave an unpleasant workplace or racial environment. Some may leave the system of school and legal work for illegal work. Some may find others to support them. The point is that many wind up out of school or working illegally because they have chosen to leave the standard, conventional system of education and employment. Whatever the reason for leaving may be, many interventions essentially just offer another chance to join the normal, legal system and play by its rules. It stands to reason that someone who left that system would be ambivalent about rejoining it.

Interpreting these interviews, I found myself drawn to the metaphor of a person in a card game playing a losing hand. Although the participants did not frame their experience this way, for me it seemed to fit their frustration at not finding a good way to succeed in the legal working world. It is typically not until adolescence that a person really begins to understand the impending responsibilities of adulthood. At that stage, many of the men in this sample may have begun to realize that they were playing a game in which they held a rather lousy hand. They were poor,

Black, with few marketable skills, in a difficult job market. At that point they wre told that one of the only legitimate ways to play that hand successfully was to turn around their mediocre school performance, and get a college education, a seemingly impossible task. In this circumstance it would be quite natural to want out of the game. It would seem a no-win situation.

Drug dealing offers just that. It offers an entirely new set of rules, new ways to succeed, and the liabilities of race, poverty, and poor education are no longer liabilities. It is like being given a second chance. Drug dealing has its own substantial drawbacks, but it makes sense to want to leave a game that you are losing and try another. One aspect of interventions like the JTPA and other job and educational programs is that they involve rejoining the game even though you know you will be playing out a lousy hand. Even if men decide to do that, it is bound to be an intensely ambivalent experience.

Limitations of the Current Study

The uniqueness of the sample and the setting. Naturally this study contains all the limitations typical of qualitative work done with a small sample in a unique setting. The men studied participated in a particular program in a somewhat unique town, and it must be assumed that some of the things described by them and observed in them are unique to setting in which they were found. The men in my sample are likely to differ from others their age who pass up the opportunity to participate in a jobs program. As noted above, in the 14 to 18 age group in 1992 there were roughly equal numbers of men and women participating. In the 18 to 21 age group women outnumbered men nearly three to one. Apparently most eligible men did not choose to join JTPA. It was not entirely clear how the men in my sample differ from men who did not join the JTPA. It was not clear what proportion of the other men were working other jobs, and what proportion were earning money illegally or not working at all. It is likely that the men in this sample hold different

attitudes towards the working world than men from similar backgrounds who did not join JTPA.

The men in this sample were also quite likely to have different workforce experiences than middle-class Black men their age. The reader should bear in mind that this was not a study of Black youth in general, but of low-income Black youth. The high number of drug dealers, the high incidence of unemployment, the high rate of early parenthood, and the relatively low rate of college attendance would probably all be different if the sample had been drawn at random from young African Americans in Champaign-Urbana.

As described above, the town of Champaign-Urbana differs from other towns its size in a number of ways that may influence these findings. The schools are all integrated, although public housing is almost entirely African American. The men in the sample who grew up here grew up in spending significant time in integrated settings, unlike many big cities. Champaign is close to Chicago, and both family life and street life appear to be affected by connections to the city. Champaign is on the main train route from Chicago to Mississippi, and the parents or grandparents of most men in the study came from Mississippi. There is a distinct Black area of town, where all the public housing is located. Even though housing discrimination has decreased, men in the sample emphasize the difference between living in "the north end" and living in other parts of town. And the town is dominated by a major university, in ways that influence local schools and local perceptions of status.

It is largely impossible to determine which of the factors listed affect various findings of this study. Clearly there were aspects of this group of men which were unique to them, and aspects which they share with other men in other programs and other towns. Presumably many of these same issues arise in other settings, but the generalizability of these findings cannot be assumed. Anyone who wishes to use these findings to understand another setting would have to carefully

ponder the similarities and differences, and would have to observe the new setting carefully before deciding that it can be compared to this one.

Factors in the way the research was conducted. The results discussed above provide good evidence that many of the men in this study talked fairly freely with me about a wide variety of topics. However, it must be assumed that some responded to me, a White stranger, by at least partially editing what they said. Conversations with two of the participants still felt stiff and awkward after two or three hours together. If some of the men were editing what they said, it is not clear whether that editing affected certain topics more than others. In particular, I was surprised at the number of men who down-played the importance of certain racial issues. Various key informants and others also reported being surprised and somewhat skeptical about participants who claimed not to have encountered any racial problems in the workforce. It may be that a Black researcher asking these same questions would have found a larger number of men describing racial difficulties. There did not appear to be a general trend for men to emphasize race more in the paired interviews, with another Black person present, and downplay its effects in individual interviews. Two of the men who emphasized race the most were interviewed only individually. On the other hand, some of those who de-emphasized race may have responded differently if they had been interviewed in pairs.

It might have been possible to do a similar study in such a way that the men involved came to know me better and trust me more fully than they did here. This study was not done as participant observation, meaning that I had no history with the men before I called to ask if they would let me interview them. A better method might have been to choose a setting in which I could work with them for a time, and become acquainted with them in a less artificial way. Some settings where that might have been done were considered, such as volunteering at a local adult education program.

That plan, however, had its own set of drawbacks, and the JTPA participants seemed to offer a unique window into the subject areas that were of interest.

This study also has natural limitations as a result of keeping it within a manageable scale. With additional time or resources it might have been possible to increase the sample size, to include women in addition to men, or to work more intensively with each participant. Given the quantity of data generated by this project in its present form, significantly enlarging the project would not be feasible for a single researcher.

Had women been included, several important issues might have appeared very different. Bearing children and child care would probably have taken a central role, both for women who worked as well as having children, and for those who had children but did not work. The welfare system would have taken on a more prominent role, because although many of the men have been supported indirectly by welfare, only one disabled man was eligible for welfare himself. Drug dealing would probably have been a less prominent alternative to work, as men appear to dominate that business. Issues of pride and power might have been less central in relationships between employees and employers. Naturally some of these differences are merely hypotheses. The larger point is that for a variety of reasons the issues studied here are likely to operate quite differently for women, and much of what was observed here is probably not generalizable to women.

Implications for Further Research

There are a number of intriguing findings of the current study which might warrant further exploration, and there are also ways that these findings bear on previous theories and lines of research.

The wide variation in perceptions of racism merits further investigation. The variation is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it struck informants and others as odd when people

reported no experience of racism, and it would be interesting to explore the validity of that finding. Second, the wide variation is at odds with the way racial attitudes have been described in other research, such as that of Ogbu (1988; 1991), who suggests much greater uniformity of opinion. As a social construction of meaning, perceptions of racism are interesting because they so clearly illustrates the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same set of circumstances. Future research could further explore the phenomenon perceived by men in this study, of people hiding their biases, creating more ambiguous situations, and fueling the possibility the same actions might be perceived differently by different observers.

Related to the variation in perceptions of race is the question of how people come to form their perceptions about the effect of race in the workplace and in other settings. This study had intended to explore in some detail the ways that people had heard about racial dynamics from parents, friends, and others. Only a small number of participants described having discussions and hearing stories about racial incidents. The majority indicated that race was seldom talked about in the home. Some mentioned rap music as a source of ideas about race, but this was not explored with most participants. It is not clear to what degree the racial ideas expressed in popular music are adopted by those who listen to that music. A study focusing more specifically on ideas about race and how they are transmitted could shed further light on how these ideas are socially constructed and transmitted.

Some of the men in this study have had experiences like those described by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), of being pressured by peers to speak and act in ways seen as culturally Black. However, the wide variation in these experiences, and the apparent pattern that more academically oriented Blacks receive the majority of the pressure, bear further study. It is notable that the men who have not experienced this themselves see the entire phenomenon as rare and trivial, while those

who have experienced it see it as important and quite troublesome. Further research could also explore the relationship between this phenomenon and social class.

Given the apparently abundant opportunities to work illegally, future research could explore the process by which people choose illegal versus legal work. It might be illuminating to compare different towns, and try to establish the relationship between the availability of more lucrative legal jobs and the rates at which people choose to earn money illegally. In addition it would be interesting to further explore the social patterns surrounding illegal work, and the relationship between the respect one might earn from street activities versus that earned through conventional success. The social phenomenon of street success and street respect is especially intriguing because it appears to allow a reversal of many of the patterns of racial participation in the workforce, with entirely new definitions of success and failure, and different patterns of status and subservience.

Table 1

Median Income of Black and White High School Graduates, 1949-1984

(All Incomes Converted to 1984 dollars).

Male High School Graduates

	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Median	$9,800	$13,300	$18,000	$16,200	$12,900
White Median	$14,500	$19,700	$24,700	$23,400	$19,600
Black as % of Wh. Male	68%	68%	73%	69%	66%

Female High School Graduates

	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Median	$4,800	$6,100	$9,600	$9,800	$8,400
White Median	$7,000	$8,000	$9,500	$9,300	$7,800
Black as % of Wh. Female	67%	76%	101%	104%	108%
Black as % of Wh. Male	33%	31%	39%	41%	43%

Table is adapted from Farley and Allen (1987). Data are originally from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data for 1939 through 1979 are from the decennial census; data from 1984 are from the Current Population Survey.

Table 2

Median Income of Black and White College Graduates, 1949-1984

(In 1984 dollars).

Male College Graduates

	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Median	$11,400	$17,300	$25,000	$24,300	$21,900
White Median	$19,500	$27,700	$36,000	$32,200	$30,800
Black as % of White Male	59%	62%	69%	76%	71%

Female College Graduates

	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Median	$9,000	$13,300	$18,100	$18,100	$18,400
White Median	$10,200	$13,400	$16,500	$15,600	$15,700
Black Fem. as % of Wh. Fem.	88%	99%	109%	116%	118%
Black Fem. as % of Wh. Male	46%	48%	50%	56%	60%

Table is adapted from Farley and Allen (1987). Data are originally from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data for 1939 through 1979 are from the decennial census; data from 1984 are from the Current Population Survey.

Table 3

Median Income by Region for Black and White Men and Women Who Received Income
(In 1984 dollars. Adapted from Farley & Allen, 1987, table 10.6)

Northeast

	1939	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Male	$5,900	$9,000	$11,800	$15,500	$12,800	$10,500
White Male	$8,800	$13,000	$16,600	$20,500	$18,600	$16,900
Black Female	$3,500	$5,100	$6,100	$8,600	$7,700	$6,500
White Female	$5,300	$6,100	$6,200	$7,200	$7,700	$7,000

Midwest

	1939	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Male	$5,700	$9,500	$12,400	$16,200	$13,500	$8,600
White Male	$8,500	$11,900	$16,100	$20,600	$19,400	$16,300
Black Female	$2,900	$4,100	$4,800	$7,300	$7,300	$5,900
White Female	$4,900	$4,700	$4,900	$6,200	$7,400	$6,600

South

	1939	1949	1959	1969	1979	1984
Black Male	$2,800	$4,500	$5,900	$9,200	$10,000	$8,800
White Male	$6,500	$9,000	$12,600	$16,500	$17,000	$15,600
Black Female	$1,400	$1,900	$2,600	$4,400	$5,700	$5,800
White Female	$4,700	$4,100	$4,700	$6,500	$7,600	$6,900

Table is adapted from Farley and Allen (1987). Data are originally from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data for 1939 through 1979 are from the decennial census; data from 1984 are from the Current Population Survey.

Table 4

Median relative income: Figures indicate the proportion of the median U.S. income for that year.

	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989
Midwest Blacks	0.71	0.72	0.65	0.55	0.54
Midwest Whites	1.07	1.09	1.09	1.05	1.06
Black/White Ratio	0.66	0.66	0.60	0.52	0.51
Northeast Blacks	0.74	0.69	0.65	0.61	0.75
Northeast Whites	1.10	1.10	1.09	1.05	1.06
Black/White Ratio	0.67	0.63	0.60	0.58	0.78
Southern Blacks	0.48	0.50	0.52	0.57	0.55
Southern Whites	0.96	0.97	0.99	1.02	0.98
Black/White Ratio	0.50	0.52	0.53	0.56	0.56

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991e), Current Population Reports, Table 2.

Table 5

Predictive Power of Status Attainment Model for Blacks and Whites

Variables	Portes & Wilson (1976)	Kerckhoff & Campbell (1977)	Hoelter (1982)
Socio-Econ Level	signif		
Father Ed.		sig-W	sig-W
Father Occ.		sig-W	signif
Mother Ed.		nonsig	
Income			sig-W
Community Size		nonsig	
Mental Ability	signif	sig-B	sig-W
Sig. Other Influence	nonsig	------	
Parent Influence			signif
Peer Influence			signif
Academic Performance			
Jr. High GPA		sig-W	
Sr. High GPA	signif		signif
School discipline action	------	signif	------
Self Esteem	signif	------	------
Ed. Expectations	signif	sig-W	DEP VAR
Ed. Attainment	DEP VAR	DEP VAR	------
R-squared for Blacks	.311	.431	.159 (segregated) .334 (integrated)
R-squared for Whites	.432	.566	.456

Notes: "signif" indicates that this variable had a significant effect for both Blacks and Whites. "sig-B" and "sig-W" indicate a variable significant for Blacks only or for Whites only. "nonsig" indicates a variable which was not a significant predictor. ------ indicates a variable which was not measured in that study. DEP VAR indicates the dependent variable being predicted.

Table 6

Zero Order Correlations Among Selected Variables for Blacks and Whites

(Portes & Wilson, 1976, p. 420)

	Blacks	Whites
Educational plans with later educational attainment:	.36	.52
Educational plans with current grades:	.27	.46
Educational plans with socioeconomic status:	.08	.41
Educational plans with current ability:	.00	.41
Current ability with current grades:	.23	.52
Current ability with later educational attainment:	.34	.48
Self esteem with later educational attainment:	.32	.24
Sig. other influence with later ed. attainment:	.22	.36
Sig. other influence with educational plans:	.22	.40

Table 7

Standard Deviations for Blacks and Whites on Selected Variables

(Portes & Wilson, 1976, p. 420)

Variable	Blacks	Whites
Socioeconomic Level	78.1	77.2
Mental Ability	2.71	2.01
Academic Performance	5.22	6.47
Significant Other Influence	2.84	2.81
Self Esteem	48.8	52.05
Educational Aspirations	.915	.817
Educational Attainment	1.35	1.40

Table 8

Correlations between grades and mental ability or IQ measures

	Black Males	Black Females	White Males	White Females	Data Year
Burke & Hoelter, 1988	.348	.650	.461	.539	1973
Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1969	.549	no data	.590	no data	1969
Portes & Wilson, 1976	.23	no data	.52	no data	1966
Porter, 1974	.057	no data	.341	no data	1960

Table 9

Interviews With Participants

	Alias	Paired	Indiv	Follow up	Total
1.	Alex	0	3	1	4
2.	Bryant	0	2		2
3.	Charles	Dwight	2	1	3
4.	Derrick	0	3		3
5.	Dwight	Charles	2	1	4
6.	Frank	John	1		2 (dropped)
7.	James	0	1		1
8.	Jessie	0	2		2
9.	John	Frank	2		3
10.	Marcus	0	3		3
11.	Michael	0	1		1 (dropped)
12.	Ray	3 Talbot	1	1	5
13.	Simon	0	3	1	4
14	Talbot	3 Ray	0		3

Note. Frank and Michael were dropped from the study.

Table 10

Key Informants and Other Sources Interviewed

Key Informants	
JTPA Executive Director	1 hour interview, 1993
	1 hour interview, 1994
JTPA other executive	1 hour interview, 1993
JTPA supervisor	1 hour interview, 1993
JTPA supervisor	1 hour interview, 1993
	1 hour interview, 1994
African American Community Activist	1 hour interview, 1993
African American High School Counselor	1 hour interview 1993
African American Graduate Student	two 1 hour interviews, 1993
African American Graduate Student	1 hour interview, 1993
	1 hour interview, 1994
African American Graduate Student	1 hour interview, 1993
African American Undergraduate Student	two 1 hour interviews, 1993
Other Sources	
Navy Recruiter	30 minute phone interview, 1993
Air Force Recruiter	20 minute phone interview, 1993
President of Temporary Service	20 minute phone interview, 1993
Fast Food Restaurant Manager	30 minute interview, 1993
Mayor of Champaign	30 minute interview, 1994

Table 11

Pages of Conversation on Selected Coded Topics

Topic Code	File Size
DEMO (including discussions of family)	186 pages
JOB (including FACT and MIN)	227 pages
DRUG	77 pages
JTPA	46 pages
ARMY	29 pages
RACE (including CONFORM, FAKE, BIAS and STERIO)	230 pages
ASPIRE (including SPORTS)	108 pages
CLASS	19 pages
GENDER	3 pages
ED	167 pages
TROUBLE (excluding DRUG)	104 pages
GOD	11 pages
ABS	118 pages

Notes: The pages of selected text on various topics are often not full pages. The number of full pages would be perhaps 25% fewer. There were 781 pages of transcribed interviews all together.

Table 12

Demographic Information

Alias	Age	Parents	Education
Alex	20	Mom	Dropped out of 12th grade
Bryant	21	Mom, visits Dad	Dropped out of 10th grade
Charles	19	Mom	Graduated, alternative high school
Derrick	21	Mom, Stepfather	Dropped out, returned, graduated.
Dwight	21	Mom	Graduated alternative high school. DO comm. college
James	19	Mom, visits dad	Dropped out of 11th grade
Jessie	20	Parents together	Dropped out, returned, graduated
John	18	Mom, Stepfather	Attending Community College
Marcus	19	Mom, visits Dad	Dropped out of 12th grade
Ray	21	Parents together	Grad, some Community College.
Simon	20	Mom	Attending four-year college.
Talbot	21	Parents together	Graduated hig school

Table 13

Demographic Information and Opinions and Experiences Concerning Race

Alias	Education	Family	Housing	Opinion	Experienced
Alex	<12	Mother	Public	Significant	Yes
Bryant	<12	Mother	Public	None	No
Charles	12	Mother	Public	Varies	No
Derrick	12	2 Parent	Private	Moderate	Yes
Dwight	12+	Mother	Public	Significant	Yes
James	<12	Mother	Private	Significant	Yes
Jessie	12	2 parent	Private?	Very small	No
John	12+	2 parent	Private	Very small	No
Marcus	<12	Mother	Public?	Small	No
Ray	12+	2 parent	Private	Significant	No
Talbot	12	2 Parent	Private	Significant	Yes
Simon	12+	Mother	Private	Significant	Yes

Notes: The column Opinion refers to the person's opinion of how much racial influences affect the workplace. The column Experienced has to do with whether the person has personally experienced negative racial dynamics at work.

Table 14

Perceptions of the Military

Alias	Perceptions
Alex:	It's not for me. I wouldn't like none of it. I don't like getting up early in the morning. I think, you know they talk about 'be all you can be.' You can't be that much when you are in the army. [also] Doing it their way. I mean, me, I wouldn't mind it, but it's just like I don't want no every day thing for a whole four years doing it YOUR way. I do want some say-so about it.
Bryant:	I been thinking about going into the national guard, and they pay great.
Charles:	Will "probably" join Navy so they will pay for college. Turned down by them once for low math aptitude scores, but told he could bring them up.
Derrick:	I thought about it, thought it over. My wife don't want me in there because she don't like the army period. She hates guns and stuff. I just put it up to her. [He realized that both of them would be in for a major change of lifestyle being in the service, and he abided by his wife's preference not to go.] I don't want to make her do something she doesn't want to do. I don't want to drag her all over the country anyway.
Dwight:	He kept trying to get in, but kept failing to meet the entrance requirements.
James:	Not since I got a family. I did [consider the military] before then, before I had a family. But now I don't want to leave my family.
John	My brother really didn't want me to go in the marines. He said that once you get out of boot camp the government doesn't care about you anymore. [John was in the Marines for two months, but didn't re-enlist after a medical discharge.]
Marcus:	Probably would have joined the military if I had a high school diploma, but I don't have one. He asked me have I graduated and I said "no" And at that time I was still attending school, so he said, I'll come back and see you when you graduate. And by the time it was time to graduate I hadn't graduated. So he told me that I can come and get a GED. But I told him I didn't want to do that. So I never did go back.
Ray	Nope. Cause I wouldn't die for no country. I just wouldn't do it. I wouldn't die for this country. I wouldn't even die for Africa. I wasn't put here for that.
Talbot:	Never considered it.
Simon:	Never considered it.

Table 15

Jobs Held

Alias	Jobs Held
Alex	Factory for a few days. Grocery store for a few months. Five fast food jobs, two for several months.
Bryant	Two fast food jobs. One nepotism job.
Charles	7 fast food jobs. Ice cream bike. Factory for a few days. Factory for a month. Factory for a summer.
Derrick	6 fast food jobs. 1 for a year; 1 for many months. Car Wash. Days at factory.
Dwight	Silkscreening. 1 fast food. Few days at factory. Odd jobs construction work.
James	6 Restaurant jobs. 2 factory jobs.
Jessie	4 fast food jobs. One factory job. Temping as a janitor.
John	2 fast food jobs. The Marines. Detassling corn.
Marcus	1 fast food. 3 janitorial jobs (1 lucrative). Odd jobs
Ray	Long term seasonal city job (5 years). UPS. Factory job.
Simon	Paper route for 3 years. Detassled corn for 2. 2 restaurant jobs. 2 retail clerk jobs. Family business. Child care.
Talbot	Public works garage. 1 factory. Food warehouse.

Table 16

How Jobs Ended Versus Demographics

Alias	Fired	Quit Abruptly	Public Housing	High School
Alex	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Bryant	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Charles	Yes	Yes	Yes	Alternative
Derrick	Yes	???	No	Yes
Dwight	No	Yes	Yes	Alternative
James	Yes	Yes	No	No
Jessie	Yes	???	No	Yes
John	No	No	No	Yes
Marcus	No	No	Yes	No
Ray	No	No	No	Yes
Simon	No	No	No	Yes
Talbot	???	???	No	Yes

Table 17

Aspirations

Alias	Opinion
Alex	"I don't know." Will be happy if he's alive in five years. Would like a job with Diamond Star because it pays well, but has no particular occupational aspirations. Doesn't want police or security work, like sis and dad.
Bryant	Wants to own his own retail business, but offered various answers about what it would be. Once said "sell, like furniture and stuff, or vacuum cleaners or something." In a later interview said he wanted his own business "selling cars or something." He thought his odds of doing that in five years were "about half and half." Also said he would need to go back to school in order to do it, but talked of not planning to go back to school.
Charles	Wants to either play basketball professionally, or work as an auto mechanic. Pro basketball a long shot, because he did not make the junior or senior high teams, and he has never studied auto mechanics.
Derrick	Would like to do construction work, or factory work. Played football in high school, and used to aspire to that, but injuries have made it a long shot. He has construction skills and has taken a lot of shop. Right now he would like to get a job at Hobbico, and they were hiring recently.
Dwight	Wants to work with computers, but in some sort of programming or computer repair, not sales. Has taken a basic computer course at Parkland, and said pretty realistically that he didn't think you could get a very good computer job without a bachelor's degree. Also talked about just getting out of town, and mentioned a brother working for MCI in Arizona who might be able to get him on. By our last interview he was applying for disability due to his thrombosis problems (and back problems?)
James	Wants a steady factory job, and is not real picky about where. Would like to work at Plastipak again, or at Kraft, or at Alloy. Girlfriends father has a job at Alloy, and may be able to get him on, but he has to wait until he's 21.
John	Wants to play pro football. Played in high school, and was scouted by colleges prior to an injury. May still be able to got to college next year and play. Back up plan is to work repairing computers, which he has begun studying at Parkland.
Marcus	Doesn't know what he wants to do, but would like to make decent money. Will keep current janitorial job for the time being. Might like driving a truck or working with electronics. Thought about being a physician, but the schooling takes too long. Doesn't want to be an auto mechanic like dad.

Table 17 (continued)

Aspirations

Alias	Opinion
Ray	Realistically plans college, not sure what he will do after. Dreams of rapping professionally, but thinks it's a long shot. Would like to work at Kraft if he could, but just as a stepping stone.
Simon	Plans, realistically, to finish college and go to law school. Didn't think of planning future until senior year of high school.
Talbot	Has thought about going back to school. Would also like to stay in construction. Would like to run his own construction firm.

Table 18

Certainty of Aspirations

Alias	Certainty	Realistic
Alex	Very uncertain	Fairly realistic
Bryant	Fairly certain	Very unrealistic
Charles	Fairly certain	Somewhat unrealistic
Derrick	Fairly uncertain	Fairly realistic
Dwight	Fairly certain	Varies. Somewhat unrealistic
James	Very certain	Fairly realistic
Jessie	Fairly certain	Fairly realistic
John	Fairly certain	Fairly realistic
Marcus	Very uncertain	Fairly realistic
Ray	Fairly uncertain	Fairly realistic
Simon	Fairly certain	Fairly realistic
Talbot	Very uncertain	Fairly realistic

Note: It should be noted that a number of people with more than one goal were still classified as "certain." Jessie, for example, aspires to factory work or janitorial work. Those classified as "uncertian" either said that they did not know what they wanted to do, or mentioned three or more possibilities.

Table 19

Drug Dealing Experiences and Opinions

ID#	Drugs?	Description
P1	N	P1 said that his friends dealt drugs, and that they would get him started any time he wanted, but he himself never had.
P2	Y	P2 has an extensive record of getting into trouble, and describes a 2-year stint with gangs and drugs in Chicago and Champaign. Became sick of the violence after friends died, and gave it up.
P3	Y	P3 talked of how there's no harm in drugs, people do them because they want to. Talked of a couple years in gangs in Champaign and Chicago, dealing drugs. Gave it up after having a kid.
P4	Y	P4 is very proud of his gang and drug associations. They seem to give him a sense of being important, and cool. He has been arrested for battery a couple of times, never for drugs, but described in detail how one gets into the business. He has not worked legally in 5 months, and has had a pager during that time, but says that he has not dealt drugs since his supplier was busted some months ago.
P5	N	Denies ever dealing drugs or running with gangs, but talks with sorrow of the very high proportion of his acquantances who do that, and of the difficulty of finding a group to hang out with who don't do that. Avoids the entire north end of town.
P6	Y	Awaiting trial on drug charges when I interviewed him, P6 offered an implausible story of being "set up," of finding the stuff on the street just before police nabbed him.
P7	N	Although many friends and family members have been in jail, and P7 describes extensive truancy and "running with the wrong crowd," he reports never selling drugs.
P8	N	P8 denies ever selling drugs, and is angry and disgusted at the many people who do. He feels they are hurting others while trying to get ahead themselves.
P9	Y	P9 begins by telling a moving story of his reform after a criminal history which included gang activities and drug dealing, of turning over a new leaf. Later admitted he continues to deal drugs.
P10	N	P10 has never been in any trouble of any kind, including school problems, legal problems, gangs or drugs.
P11	Y	P11 admits an extensive criminal record, including gangs, theft and violence, but denies drug dealing. Another man in the study claims plausibly that P11 has indeed dealt drugs in the past.
P12	N	P12 has never been in any trouble, and is outspoken against using or dealing drugs.

Table 20:

Perceived Pressure to Conform From Work or Peers

Alias	Pressures to Conform
Alex	Press to conform from jobs. Results in clashes. Challenges from peers about toughness. Never backs down.
Bryant	Claims to experience no pressure from the job. Also claims to encounter absolutely no pressure from peers.
Charles	No mention of pressures from employers. Sometimes called a "sell out" for socializing with Whites.
Derrick	Accepts the fact that he has to overcome stereotypes at work. Experiences pressure from friends to return to gang activities.
Dwight	Seems to enjoy proving he can be professional at work. Sometimes called a "sell out" for that, or for White friends.
James	Not aware of any press to behave a certain way at work. Has trouble finding friends who are not getting into touble.
Jessie	No mention of feeling pressure to behave a certain way at work. Ashamed to have friends see him work fast food.
John	Not aware of a press to behave a certain way at work. Also not bothered by friends expecting certain sorts of behavior.
Marcus	Not aware of a press to behave a certain way at work. Notices some voluntary segregation. Has rarely seen pressure about how to act.
Ray	Notices and accepts a strong expectation from work to behave professionally. Actively resists pressure from friends to drink and use drugs, and their accusations about selling out.
Talbot	Aware of expectation to speak and behave "properly" at work. Can still be himself. Talked of "sell-outs," but explicitly does not see himself as one.
Simon	Strives to meet and exceed work expectations of professional behavior. Stung and frustrated by peers saying "sell out" and "want to be White."

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Appendix A

Areas to be Covered in a Nonschedule Standardized Interview, With Possible Question Phrasings

Introduction

[We will already have discussed the study in general terms, and gone over the informed consent form. (Appendix B).]

As we meet and talk with each other, I will be asking you a lot of questions to try and understand how you see things. The thing that I would like best is if you just tell me about what has happened to you and about what you really think. Basically I want you to tell me the story of what work has been like for you and for other people in your family. I'd like you to tell me your story, and then I am going to write about it. I'd like to interview each of you three times. Today I am going to interview the two of you together. After that, in a week or so I want to interview each of you separately, and go into some more detail on some of these things. After that second interview I am going to write a two or three page description of each of you, writing about all the things you have told me. Then I'm going to come back and show you the description and talk about it. I'll give you a chance to tell me more about parts of it if you want to, and I'll change it around if you don't think I have it right. When I get through collecting stories like this from a bunch of different people, I am going to put them all together and try to make sense out of it, and write about what I found. Does that sound OK?

I. Demographic and work-related information desired of participants

1. First and last name.

2. Address.

3. Phone number, or suggestions for how best to contact the person again.

4. Age and date of birth.

5. Number, genders, and ages of siblings. (Note especially older ones.)

6. Who lives in the home, both now and in past years? (both parents?)

8. What types of jobs have the parents or older siblings held?

9. What types of jobs has the respondent held?

10. What level of education have the parents completed?

11. How do church and religion fit into the life of the family?

12. Did the family migrate from the South, and if so, when?

II. What stories are told of jobs and job satisfaction?

Possible questions:

"Do you have a job?" (if so) "Tell me about it."
(if not) "tell me about your JTPA job last summer."

"What do you like and dislike about the job you have right now?"

"What kinds of jobs have your parents had while you were growing up?"

"What did your mom/dad like about her/his job? What didn't she/he like?

"Can you tell me any of the stories they have told about things that happened on their jobs?"

III. What are future plans and perceived job prospects?

1. What job and career plans does the person have? Possible questions:

"What kind of job would you like to have in two or three years?"

"What do you plan to do for the next year or so?"

"Do you have a plan for how you are going to put together the career that you want?"

"What jobs do you think you might want to have in 10 years or so?"

"What kind of jobs don't you want to have in 10 years or so?"

"What jobs do your parents have? When you get older, do you want to have a job like the ones your parents have? How would you like your job to be different? Would they like a different job if they could get it?"

2. How is the local job market perceived? Possible questions:

"Does getting a job seem to be pretty easy or pretty hard around here?"

"Do you know about any specific jobs that are available in Champaign-Urbana right now? What jobs are they?"

"Are there any jobs that you have heard about someone getting recently?"

3. How does schooling affect job opportunity? Possible questions:

"Does studying harder in school make any difference in getting a good job?"

"How much difference does going to college make in the jobs that you get?"
"Do you try hard in school?" "Why?" [or] "Why not?"

"Can you get a good job around here with just a high school diploma?"

III. Perceptions of the influence of race on wealth, hiring, and job treatment

1. How does race affect hiring and job experiences? Possible questions:

"Do you think race makes any difference in who gets hired?"

"When you are looking for a job, what effect does being Black have?"

"In what ways do you think Blacks get treated differently than Whites once they have a job?"

"Has anything ever happened to you on the job that seemed to be related to your race?"

"Have either of your parents [siblings, friends] talked about things happening on the job that seemed to be related to their race?"

2. Do participants see social class playing a role? Possible questions:

"Do you think starting out in a rich or poor family affects who winds up rich and who winds up poor?"

"When it comes to jobs and income, I'm trying to figure out what difference it makes having Black skin, and what difference it makes growing up poor. Do you have any ideas about that?"

"Do things work any differently for Blacks who are more educated? What types of experiences do college educated Blacks have on the job or looking for jobs?"

3. Do participants hold any personal theories which they can express about the influence of race on wealth and poverty? Possible questions:

"What do you think happens to make some people wind up richer and others wind up poorer?"

"Do you think race affects who winds up richer and who winds up poorer? How does race affect it?"

(or, another question about the same idea)
"Do you ever think about Blacks being poor more often than Whites are? Why do you that happens?"

<u>III. Perceptions of Black identity the and role it plays in job settings</u>

1. How does the participant experience his or her identity as an African American? Possible questions:

"Do you feel as though you have a kinship with other Blacks that you don't have with Whites?"

"Are there any things that you think go with being Black or White besides the skin color?"

"Are there ways of talking or acting that you think of as more Black than White or more White than Black?"

"Do you think that there is a culture that tends to go with being Black?"

2. Is there pressure to act less Black and more White in work situations? If these pressures exist, how are they experienced? Possible questions:

"Do teachers and bosses expect you to speak and behave differently than you would in other places? Do they expect you to behave less like Blacks typically do, and more like Whites typically do?"

"How much do the Blacks that you know typically care whether a person talks or acts more Black or more White?"

"Do Blacks that you know ever get accused of acting White or not really being Black?"

3. Is tokenism or racial mix in the workplace important? Possible questions:

"How would it be different for you working at a job where you were the only Black versus a job where half the employees were Black?"

"How would it be working at a place where there were only a couple of Black employees out of a hundred or so?"

VI. Advice, both from others, and to younger Blacks.

Possible Questions:

"Do you have any younger brothers and sisters? What advice do you have for them about what they should do when they grow up?"

"What would your best friend say about your future plans? Would he / she give you any advice about what to do?"

"Do you think there is a good way for someone who grew up in a poor family to avoid winding up poor themselves?"

"Do you have any advice for Blacks on how to deal with the racial barriers that they might run into?"

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

What I agree to do

I agree to be interviewed for this research project studying what Black Americans think of the opportunities and experiences they have in the working world. My participation involves talking with Paul Hutchinson about my ideas and experiences. Paul will ask me questions about jobs that I have had, about jobs that other people in my family have had, and about what I expect in the future, and about how a person's race can affect what happens on the job. Paul and I will meet three or more times to talk about these things. The first meeting will also include another participant who I already know. Each meeting will take between 1 and 1 1/4 hours. I will be paid $5 for each hour that I meet with Paul, and will be paid extra for meetings which run over an hour. (For example, an hour and 10 minutes would be $6).

My right to drop out of the study if I want to

I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to answer. Many different topics come up in these interviews, so Paul may ask me questions about all kinds of things, but I do not have to answer a question that I do not want to answer or talk about a topic that I do not want to talk about. I am free to stop being in the study any time that I want to stop. If I decide to drop out and I also want Paul to erase the tapes and throw away the notes from our conversations, Paul will destroy all the materials from our conversations and will not use the things I said.

My right to have what I say kept private

Paul will keep my name and the names of other participants secret when he is writing about the things which people say in these interviews. He may write about the things that I say or talk about them with other participants, but he will not tell anyone that I was the one who said them.

What Paul will do with this information

My conversations with Paul will be recorded on tape. The tapes will be transcribed and Paul will read and study the conversations in order to understand and write about the experiences that Black Americans have in the working world. He will talk with me, and with Black graduate students and other Black adults as he studies these things in order to write about them in ways that are fair and respectful to Blacks.

I have read this agreement and discussed it with Paul, and he answered any question I had about it. I understand what is being asked of me, and I am willing to participate. If I have more questions about the study later, Paul will answer them for me.

_____ _____

Participant's name (please print) Participant's signature

Date____/____/_____

_____

Paul Hutchinson's signature

Appendix C

List of content for Simon, session #1

Session #1

1--46	JOB MIN$. Jobs he had held. Detassling. Bus Boy briefly. Burger King, Jewel, County Market. Seoco. JTPA 3 times.
46--106	JTPA. JOB. Centennial, Public Works, School dist print shop. JTPA school in mornings the first year.
108--143	JOB. Current job, after school with kids.
145--241	ED. College. Sociology, pre-law @ UI. Completed 2 yrs at Parkland, transferred. Doing pretty well.
248-261	ADVICE. Mother's influence. Self-reliance. Push for what you want.
269-290	JOB MIN$. Paper route. Detassling.
303-320	JOB MIN$. Taffies. When too young for a real job.
322-366	JOB INDIV ADVICE COPE. "Learned a lot" at jobs. Liked hardest best. Has endurance. Learned confidence from succeeding at hard work. "Just give it one more day."
366-431	MIN$ ABS. Detassling reminds of "the Jungle," child labor. Paid minimum.
431-601	JOB COPE. Office politics at Seoco. Tough boss, a jerk. Make self indispensible. Learn extra skills. (somewhat) Racist boss, anti-gay. Talked about people behind their backs. Hired and fired.
447-460	COPE. Learning extra jobs so he wouldn't be fired.
499-578	COPE BIAS ABS. Learning when to shup up. The workers with no other skills got exploited. pushed around, fired.
578-581	COPE. Keep mouth shut. Go with flow.
581-601	ED ABS. "if you don't have an education they will run over you."
607-702	RACE STORY JOB. Racial stuff at Seoco. Boss opposed Martin Luther King holiday. Like to start debates on it that Simon got tired of.
702-907	ABS JOB. Seoco. They will take advantage if you really need the job.
702-708	COPE JOB. I didn't need job. He didn't have leverage over me.
731-747	JOB BIAS STORY ED. Boss suggested that c's and d's would be good enough for him in school.
747-820	JOB STORY. Didn't cut him slack for finals. Pushed them to work on graduation day. They had to threaten to quit to get the day off.
822-867	ED JOB. Worked Seoco in a school program. How it worked.
868-974	STORY COPE. Were short of people. Needed him. Did job of two people, got raises, kept on.
976--1195	FRIEND. What his friends are doing after high school.
996-1051	ED FRIEND. Half to college, (ISU, Parkland, a couple out of state), some to technical school (ITT, Devry).
1051-1063	FRIEND MIN$. Married or fast food.
1063-1074	JOB. A very few getting apprenticed into father's trade.
1076-1117	MIN$. Some doing nothing. Grocery store jobs. Minimum wage jobs.
1122-1130	ED. Go to college if their parents push them.
1131-1179	ED STORY. Friend in smart minority program, messed up, went to jail. He was selling drugs.
1152-79	ED ABS CLASS ADVICE. System pigeon holes him, gives up on him. "lost in cracks."
1185-1195	ED CLASS. Go to college if a) parents did, or b) parents push you. Class. Upper class kids naturally go to college.
1196--1263	JOB MAD ABS. Learning to control his tongue, not piss off authority figures. Shy at first in a new place, but that wears off.

1253-1263	COPE RACE. Some things you can't let go. Have to speak up.
1265-1269	ASK. Different pitfalls for Blacks and Whites?
1265--1487	STORY ED CLASS RACE. Class versus Race: Story of smart friend who almost didn't go to college. (I had asked about race; he responded with class.)
1271-1278	ED CLASS. Poor Whites also get steered toward auto mechanics.
1279-1368	ASPIRE STORY. His white friend was very smart. didn't aspire to much. His mom didn't push him. Wasn't going anywhere.
1316-1336	ADVICE. Friend's mom didn't push him toward college.
1370-1387	ASPIRE. other guys works some, collects unemployment. Gets by.
1389-1391	ASK. Again, different ptifalls for Blacks and Whites?
1389-1413	RACE CLASS. It's class not race, but most minorities are poor.
1413--1481	RACE. Hispanic families may be left behind like Blacks. Few around Champaign to help figure that out.
1483--1579	DEMO. Family history. Lots of family around Champaign.
1489-1500	DEMO. Grandma, most other relatives started in Mississippi. Other side grandfather from Ireland.
1529-1539	JOB DEMO. Grandmother was a school teacher. Aunt work in U of I kitchens. Uncle head of maintenance at Carle Hospital.
1557-1559	DEMO. Grandmother is 1/2 Cherokee indian.
1563-1569	DEMO. Grandmother helped raise him, (lived together early years?)

Appendix D

Initial and Final Lists of Codes for Qualitative Analysis

INITIAL CODES AS OF PRELIMS - JANUARY 1993

CONTENT CODES

DEMO for whenever they mention of piece of the demographic information that I am looking for.
- AGE - WHERE BORN - PARENTS AT HOME - PARENTS' JOBS
- PARENTS' EDUCATION - WHERE PARENTS BORN - SIBLINGS? (AGES?)

JOB Any general description of a job other than a job story.

STORY story about the workplace, either from their own experience, or from someone else's.

SCHOOL talking about going to school

ASPIRE discussion of their plans for the future.

SEARCH discussion of looking for jobs.

FAM discussion of family other than DEMO information.

RACE The significance of race in the whole picture. Possible subcodes:
SEG segregation in the workplace.
FAKE uncomfortable, insincere interactions.
JERKS Description of racially unkind or insensitive people.
AFFIRM Perceptions of affirmative action policies.

BRO Black identity and loyalty. forgetting where you came from. Blacks climbing over other Blacks. Talking and acting Black and White. Etc.

GENDER discussion of gender issues and gender related patterns.

GOD talk of religion

WORLD The workings of the world. What one can expect out there. Abstract expectations about what will happen and what you gotta do.

ADVICE either from parents or others, or to others, on what to do in the world.

PROCESS CODES

ASK Me asking a content question

RAP Small talk. Rapport building talk (often off topic)

TALK Discussing a topic not directly relevant to the interview.

AWK Awkward moments in the interview, in which we did not communicate well. This especially includes times where I missed a cue, blundered, or misinterpreted something.

NS Non-sequitur

TRANS Transition from one topic to another.

ERROR possible transcription error.

AGREE in the paired interviews, times agreeing with the other speaker.

EMP Me reflecting or empathizing with something that they are saying.

FRAME Me describing the study or the reason behind a question.

FINAL ANALYSIS CODES - AUGUST 1993

CONTENT CODES

Conventions:
1. You may use more than one code for a given passage, such as STORY, BIAS.
2. If you use a more specific subcode, like FACT, you do not assign the more general code JOB.

DEMO — Use for all demographic information AND for all other discussion of family. (This includes family of origin and their own kids, wives, and girlfriends.) Don't use the FAM code anymore. This includes:
- age
- where born
- parents at home
- parents' jobs
- parents' education
- where parents born
- siblings? (Ages?)
- relatives

JOB — Any discussion of jobs that does not fit into one of the more specific categories below. Use it especially for general descriptions of jobs other than minimum wage or factory jobs. Includes where worked, how long, etc. Stories of specific events should be JOB and STORY
- MIN — Discussion of fast food or minimum wage retail jobs.
- FACT — Discussion of factory jobs.
- DRUG — Discussion of drug dealing (need not be them dealing).
- LOOK — Discussion of looking for jobs.
- QUAL — What do you need to qualify for a job? Education? Experience?
- JTPA — Any reference to the JTPA or JTPA jobs.
- ARMY — Any discussion of the armed forces.
- SPORTS — Wanting to work as a professional sports player.

RACE — Any discussion about race that doesn't fit into one of the more specific categories below. An abstract generalization about race could be coded ABS, RACE.
- BIAS — Racial bias or discrimination, either an act or an attitude. Conclusive evidence isn't necessary.
- SLUR — Description of any crude overt racist action or remark.
- SHOULD — How things could be better racially. How things should be. Includes both how things should be in society, and what someone should have done differently in a particular encounter.
- SEG — Segregation in the workplace, either voluntary or assigned by management.
- FAKE — Uncomfortable, insincere interactions. Seemingly false niceness or insincere freindliness.
- CONFORM — Feeling a press to conform to the expectations of an employer, teacher, or friends for how you talk or act. (esp Black - White).
- STERIO — Stereotypes of Blacks and Whites. Being Stereotyped. Trying to prove you don't fit them.
- BRO — Discussion of sense of Black identity and loyalty.

ASPIRE — Discussion of their plans or hopes for the future, including getting jobs, getting education.

COPE — This can be general talk of how to cope with life, or with problems of race. How to succeed. It can also be a description of how he coped with a particular situation.

ADVICE — This should be actual advice that they got or gave about how to cope with a situation. General statements about how to succeed should be coded as COPE. Any discussion of someone

encouraging them or being a role model should be included under this code. The ROLE code has been eliminated.

CLASS Poverty or social class, and how that fits into anything. This includes talk of not making enough money, or of getting by on low wages.

GENDER Discussion of gender issues and gender related patterns.

FRIEND Discussion of friends, what friends are doing, friendship, etc.

ED Discussion of going to school, the role of education.

TROUBLE Being in trouble with the law or at school. Also gang stuff, illegal stuff.

HEALTH Talk of health problems or issues.

GOD Talk of religion.

ABS Abstract ideas about the way the world works. What one can expect out there. Abstract expectations about what will happen, and what you gotta do. The SYSTEM code (workings of the system) has been eliminated because it is too close to this one. Use ABS anywhere you would have used SYSTEM.

INDIV Use this code for statements that seem unique to this person's personality, to their point of view. Not a precise concept, but designed to capture ideographic aspects of the individual.

PROCESS CODES

"Process" refers to noting certain types of interactions. They are somewhat independent of what content we are discussing.

ASK Me asking a question which changes the subject or the focus. Don't code this for a follow up question on a topic already being discussed.

ME Me expressing an opinion or idea that they haven't raised. Note whether they indicate agreeing or disagreeing with the idea.

AGREE In paired interviews, note whether one speaker agrees with the other. When I bring up an idea, note agreement with me.

STORY Telling a story of a particular episode or event. Could be their own experience or someone else's. Also assign a second code to indicate what the story is about, such as JOB STORY.

TALK Discussing a topic not directly relevant to the interview. Often happens at the beginning or end.

INTER Interruption by something outside of the conversation. Code this especially if we don't pick up where we left off.

AWK	Awkward moments in the interview, in which we did not communicate well. This especially includes times where I missed a cue, blundered, or misinterpreted something.
ERROR	possible transcription error.

Appendix E

Individual Description of Dwight

Dwight is 21 (?) years old, graduated from high school in a town upstate, and lives with his mother and sister in his mother's one bedroom apartment. He recently stopped working at a local factory after a new attack of blood clots in his legs. He has worked at a number of jobs, including fast food, factory work, and some residential construction work. He has also attended two community colleges, mainly studying computers, although he has not yet finished his associates degree. In the long run he would like to get a bachelor's degree in computers. Right now he is applying for disability because of the blood clotting in his legs, hoping to get money to cover his medical bills and living expenses.

Dwight's work and school history

I don't know very much about Dwight's early history. He went to high school in a medium sized town in Northern Illinois. At that time he was living in a group home under the care of DCFS, and going to a small private high school arranged by them. He graduated from high school and also got a GED, and soon began attending community college. Since at least the middle of high school Dwight has gone back and forth between times when he was fairly successful in school or at work, and times when he has been getting into trouble. He talks about scoring very well on standardized tests, and about doing well in school most of the time, but he also talks about times when he was into "gangs and women" and "quick cash." I don't know most of the details about the times when he has gotten in trouble, but he has been a gang member, has dealt drugs in the past, and has also been involved in auto theft and some other offenses. Now he seems determined to stay out of trouble and put together a career for himself. He talks about how you can permanently mess up your chances of getting a decent job by building up a prison record rather than a work record, but in the past it has been hard to resist the quick money and nice clothes and status that come with dealing drugs.

Dwight is proud of having scored well on standardized tests, and is also proud of his computer skills, his math skills, and his ability to talk to people and make a good impression in situations like job interviews. His goals now are to get more education, to work towards a job with computers, and to work legal jobs and stay out of trouble. He has found that it is hard to get rid of the reputation he developed while he was getting into trouble. For example, the staff at a local boys club seems not to want him to work with youth because they think he may be a bad influence. He is frustrated that they won't let him put his past behind him, and he thinks that the experiences he has had would make him a good person to work with kids and help them grow up.

Dwight left the first community college during a time when he was getting into trouble. He then studied auto mechanics for a year and got a certificate in that. Then after moving to Champaign he began studying computers at a community college here.

Dwight has worked at fast food places, at a local High School with the JTPA, and at a couple of factories. One was a company that made little plastic signs and other graphic stuff in a town upstate. He did silkscreening for them and liked it very much. It only paid minimum wage, but he worked a regular 40 hour week, so he made more money than he has at most jobs. Dwight's most recent job was a factory job at a company which manufactures plastic bottles. He work there ended just this week because he had an attack of thrombosis (blood clots) in his legs. He has been told not to stand for long periods, because that would make the clotting worse. He got the job through a temporary service. Working through the temp service he gets paid $5.00 an hour and does not get benefits. Until he was forced to quit he had hoped to get hired on as a regular employee at higher wages, although there are some things he dislikes about the job. The work is boring; you sometimes have to rush to keep up with the line; it often involves many hours of standing in

one place, and sometimes requires you to wrestle with semi-molten plastic if a machine is malfunctioning. During the week before his thrombosis forced him to quit Dwight talked about asking his supervisor to rotate him away from a station where he had to stand for a long time, and the supervisor forgot about it for several hours, so he had to stand most of the night. Dwight has also worked at at a volunteer job for a charity, and has worked now and then on small construction jobs, usually working for a minister at his church who does residential construction work.

As Dwight has worked towards a career he has tried or considered a number of different things, but several possibilities have not worked out. He considered joining the Navy or the Air Force, but was told that he needed a GED because he didn't have enough credits on his high school diploma. He got a GED, but when he looked into joining the service again a couple of years later they had raised their standards, and needed 15 college credits in addition to the GED. He has a certificate in auto mechanics, but apparently auto shops won't hire someone without experience and their own tools.

Getting into trouble has set back Dwight's career and education several times. It seems to have started pretty early, and Dwight says that by the time he was 9 or 10 he was already thinking that there "ain't nobody bad enough to tell me anything." He also talks about wishing that there had been someone around taking an interest in him, someone like his brother-in-law who was like a father to him before being shot and killed. During those years he had a hard time resisting the pleasure of "kicking it" with friends on the street, and he got into a gang pretty early. He didn't like always being poor and not having anything. "I see somebody with more than me and I wanted it." He wanted to be like his big brother, who was doing illegal things, but was "the big man," and had status and money. At the time he didn't really care about the consequences. Now that he's older the consequences are important to him, and he doesn't want to mess up his chances of having a career.

Dwight has had a slow and frustrating time of it trying to get an education and get started on a good career in a legal job. Right now his thrombosis is making it hard to work at most jobs, and he has filled out the papers to apply for welfare due to disability. He needs some sort of income, but he seemed a little depressed at the idea of living on welfare. He talks much more enthusiastically about the possibility of going back to school and working on computers, but he thinks he would need a bachelors degree to get a good computer job, and he would have to get his associates degree before that.

Racial issues at work

In most of his jobs Dwight has not felt that anyone was treating him badly or differently because of his race. The one exception to this was his job at Arbys, where a woman working there called him "boy" and "nigger," and kept suggesting that he do the menial jobs. He complained to his supervisor several times, and when the supervisor did nothing for two or three months he got angry and quit. Several other Black employees quit with him.

At the JTPA at the High School job Dwight felt as though he were being given work lifting and moving things because he was male, and the females assigned to the high school got to work in the office on the computers, and do other jobs that interested him more.

Family information

Dwight lives with his mother and older sister in a one-bedroom apartment, with an additional bed in the living room. He has at least two sisters, and at least two brothers. (find out more). His mother used to work as a nurse, although she hasn't worked in the past few years. She has been very involved in many local community activities, taking various leadership roles in the neighborhood. Dwight has an older brother working for a large company in the Southwest, who is living in a nice house, and has even suggested that he could get Dwight a job if he came down there. (What about the older brother who was in trouble?) Dwight

spends a lot of time with his younger brother Charles. Charles' work history is similar to Dwight's. He has worked at fast food places, at a couple of factory jobs, and worked with Dwight at his recent factory job before Dwight had to quit.

Vita

Paul Andrew Hutchinson

Birthdate: April 3, 1962. Birthplace: Seattle, Washington

Education

Ph.D. 1995 University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Major: Clinical Psychology
Minors: Research Methodology
Social Work
Dissertation: Perceptions of the Working World Among African American Participants in a Low-Income Job Training program
Mark Aber, Ph.D., Advisor

A.M. 1989 University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Major: Clinical Psychology
Thesis: Adaptation to Geographic Relocation: An Application of the Transitional Life Events Model.
Robert Felner, Ph.D., Advisor

B.S. 1984 Princeton University
Major: Civil and Structural Engineering
Thesis: Structural Design Flaws in the Dome of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Robert Mark, Ph.D., Advisor

Honors

1984 Graduated Magna Cum Laude, Princeton University

1980 National Merit Scholar

Publications

None

Teaching and Professional Experience

1994 to date Clinical Psychology Resident. Drs. Domitor, Lammers, and Associates. West 801 5th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99204. (509) 838-7400.
Duties include outpatient therapy with individuals, couples, and families, and psychological assessment.

1993-1994 Clinical Psychology Intern. Indiana University School of Medicine.
An APA approved pre-doctoral internship consortium.
Completed four-month rotations at an inpatient VA hospital, an inpatient state mental hospital, and a partial hospitalization day program.

1992-1993 Statistics Laboratory Consultant, Department of Education, University of Illinois.
As a graduate teaching assistant, consulted with graduate students and undergraduates on the statistical analysis of research data.

1991-1992 Data Management Coordinator. Organized data entry and data cleaning on a project studying the adjustment of high-risk urban youth. Supervised 4 to 6 undergraduates each semester.

1990-1991 On Site Research Coordinator. The Cells Extended Family Program; Spent three days per week in Chicago organizing a prevention research program for high risk urban youth. The intervention involved organizing small groups of inner city youth and adults to meet for support, mutual help, and mentoring. Assisted in organizing the programming, and took primary responsibility for managing the data collection.

1986-1990 Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois.
Fall 1989, Spring 1990: Taught advanced undergraduate course in clinical psychology, designing the syllabus and preparing all lectures, tests, and assignments. Fall 1988, Fall 1989, Spring 1990: Taught introduction to psychology, including all lecturing.
Fall 1986, Spring 1987: Responsible for grading written work and conducting office hours for a large, intermediate-level undergraduate course, and a large, upper-level undergraduate course.

1988 Research Assistant. Conducted an evaluation and needs assessment of mental health services for the developmentally disabled in Champaign County. Co-authored a report for the Champaign County Mental Health Board and the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.